Victoria and Boris lead EU exit calls

BY GEOFF BAKER
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KENSINGTON’S MP Victoria Borwick has teamed up with her old friend Boris Johnson to lead the London campaign for Britain to break away from the EU.

Lady Borwick, who was deputy to the Mayor of London from 2012 until her election to Parliament last year, is backing the Out campaign because she believes that Britain’s annual handout of £18,250,000,000 to the EU should go to the nation’s poor and the NHS instead.

The Conservative MP and Kensington and Chelsea councillor for the Abingdon ward, who has long campaigned for bolstering the NHS and ending health inequalities in Kensington, says she wants the UK to leave Europe in order to better care for the needy at home.

“Britain sends £50 million a day of British taxpayer’s money to Brussels. I believe that this money would be better spent on tackling poverty in Britain, on additional funding for our NHS and supporting the most vulnerable in our country,” said Lady Borwick.

“I believe in localism – local people deciding where their money is spent and decisions being made as close to voters as is logical.”

FULL STORY, PAGE 5

Bid to evict Queen

JUST eight weeks before her 90th birthday, the Kensington Labour Party has voted to join a campaign to evict The Queen from Buckingham Palace.

Labour supporters – who include members of the royal borough’s council – also want to see the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry turned out of Kensington Palace and the monarchy abolished.

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Lead and read

CHILDREN will get a chance to try out their reading skills when Danny the greyhound visits Kensington Central Library as part of Paws to Read, a pilot scheme to promote World Book Day.

Reading to a docile listening dog like Danny can help children increase their reading skills and boost their self-confidence.

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Tidy prophet

THE royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea is to play its part in the big clean-up to make the capital’s streets super clean and tidy in time for the Queen’s 90th birthday celebrations next month.

Council leader Nick Paget-Brown explains exactly the challenge that lies ahead – and why Her Majesty has two birthdays.

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BETTER OUT: Kensington MP Victoria Borwick and fellow Conservative Boris Johnson are spearheading the campaign to encourage Londoners to vote to leave the EU in June

We buy Herman Miller Aeron Chairs

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We will buy ANY Aeron chair

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Mayor backs Tottenham’s new goal

The Mayor of London Boris Johnson has given final approval for the £400 million development of Tottenham Hotspur’s new White Hart Lane football stadium.

The North London club’s revised plans will see a new 61,000-seater stadium built on the site of their current home and feature a retractable pitch to host not only football, but two American Football games a season. The stadium, which has a current capacity of 36,000, will also host other international sports events and concerts.

Tottenham’s ambitious plans also include new public space to host dedicated events programmes, a 180-bed hotel, sports and health centre and the Grade II listed Wapping House will be transformed into an interactive club museum. There will also be 585 new homes built on the site with a minimum of £48.4 million secured from the residential development towards the White Hart Lane stadium improvements. Londoners will also benefit from an ‘sky walk’ attraction, which will allow visitors to climb the exterior of the south stand allowing views across the capital.

The improvements to White Hart Lane are at the epicentre of the mayor’s ongoing regeneration of Tottenham. City Hall has invested £28 million from the Mayor’s Regeneration Fund and the London Enterprise Panel to regenerate the area, which includes investment to rejuvenate White Hart Lane High Road, to deliver new highways and parking improvements, upgrades to Tottenham Hale station and investment in employment and training support.

Haringey council gave outline planning permission for the redevelopment plans in December and now the mayor has given his seal of approval, which it’s hoped will now put the club on track to complete the works in time to move back into the stadium for the start of the 2018/19 season.

Mr Johnson MP, said: “White Hart Lane is already an iconic stadium, steeped in history. The new venue will not only almost double its capacity, but provide world-class facilities to watch Premier League football, international sports events and concerts in the heart of the capital.

“The stadium will also be the focal point of a major drive to regenerate Tottenham, breathing new life into the area, creating jobs and boosting growth.”

Daniel Levy, Chairman of Tottenham Hotspur FC, said: “This marks yet another major milestone for this vital and complex scheme and we are grateful to the mayor for his ongoing support.

“We remain focused on completing the final stages of the planning process.

“This new scheme carries enormous public benefits and will play a key role in kick-starting place change, bringing exceptional opportunities for the local community and wider stakeholders.

“We are proud to be part of this important step forward for an area that has been our home for more than 130 years and where we shall continue to live and play our part.”

Haringey council leader Claire Kober said: “The redevelopment of White Hart Lane and our work to bring new jobs and homes to Tottenham will improve the quality of life for thousands of our residents.

“The new stadium will put Haringey on the international stage with Premier League football and NFL games being broadcast around the world helping to attract further investment and significantly boosting business opportunities.”

The £28 million Mayor of London funding includes:

■ £2.5 million for the Growth on the High Road Project to rejuvenate Tottenham High Road
■ £900,000 to invest in employment and training support
■ £3.6 million to transform the Enterprise Centre at 639 Tottenham High Road, including provision for training and skills
■ £18 million for North Tottenham, including £3.5 million to deliver new highways and parking improvements, £2.5 million investment in Tottenham Hale Station (plus £9 million of funding from the council)

£3 million for an Opportunity Investment Fund to invest in key sites on the High Street, informed by the findings of the Tottenham Physical Development Framework.
Birthday lunch guests will be subject to security check

SECURITY forces are to make background and identity checks on all of the 10,000 guests who will sit down with The Queen for her outdoor 90th birthday party in The Mall this summer, writes Geoff Baker.

Due to the current severe risk of a terrorist attack, everyone buying the £150 tickets for the event on June 12 will be subject to security checks, both before the picnic-style party and on the day.

Organisers confirmed the huge security screening operation last week when they announced details of the public ballot for the remaining 2,000 tickets for The Patron’s Lunch – which will be attended by The Queen and Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Prince Harry and other members of the royal family.

The birthday party is being thrown to celebrate The Queen’s patronage of more than 600 charities and organisations on the occasion of her official 90th birthday in June.

Some 7,200 tickets have been allocated for the organisations of which The Queen is patron, and a three-day clean-up of the capital and the country next month in order to make Britain tidy for Her Majesty’s official birthday in June.

Mr Kear said: “We have yet another Royal celebration coming up, for which the taxpayer will be expected to pay. Several people have been outraged at the Palace’s Clean for the Queen campaign. We pay council tax to have the streets cleaned, why pay double in cash and personal effort? The royal family are a constant drain on resources here in the most unequal borough in Britain, where we have four food banks feeding hard-pressed families. I’m glad Kensington Labour members are prepared to stand up and say ‘enough is enough’.

The local party’s vice-chairman, Kensington and Chelsea councillor Emma Dent Coad, said: “In cost terms alone giving financial support of £334 million a year to the monarchy cannot possibly be justified in a time of Government cuts that are devastating our communities. I am delighted that we have finally agreed to take a stand by affiliating to Republic.”

Now the Kensington Left are to approach constituency Labour parties in seven other royal boroughs in England to urge them to join the Republic movement too.

Local Labour chiefs are to write to their counterparts in Windsor and Maidenhead, Greenwich and Woolwich, Kingston and Surbiton, Tambridge Wells, Lewisham, Woolfield and Woolton Bassett.

Last September party vice-chair Emma Dent Coad was a delegate to the Labour Party Conference.

CLP members had agreed two motions, one to stop Trident renewal and the other to ‘Stop Taxpayer Funding of the Monarchy’.

This motion demanded an end to the taxpayers’ subsidy of a family with several members residing in Kensington.

Cllr Dent Coad said at the time: “When many low-income families in the borough are struggling to pay their bills including tax, it is perverse to continue subsidising the extravagant lifestyle of those who are already financially secure and well housed and who are exempt from paying tax themselves. It is estimated that £334m a year could be saved by ceasing these payments.”

In the event it was the Trident Motion that was voted to go to Conference, Kensington Labour have now also affiliated to Labour CND.

■ Royal London, Pages 12 & 13
Tail of the unexpected as Danny joins library

CHILDREN will get a chance to try out their reading skills when Danny the greyhound visits Kensington Central Library on Thursday, March 3, from 4pm to 6pm, as part of Paws to Read, a pilot scheme to promote World Book Day.

Reading to a docile listening dog like Danny can help children increase their reading skills and boost their self-confidence. Parents can bring younger children along and dog-themed books will be provided for the children to read to Danny, but children can also bring their own books as he likes all sorts of stories!

Danny’s owner, Tony Nevett, is a qualified animal-assisted therapist and Danny is a fully trained listening dog. Listening dogs are non-judgemental listeners that don’t criticise or laugh at mistakes and, as such, they allow the children to read at their own pace, thus providing support and confidence.

Danny’s own story is worth a book of its own. Transformed from a homeless stray wandering the streets of Cork, Ireland, Danny and Tony now travel from their home in Northamptonshire to primary schools around the UK, transforming the lives of many children through the Kennel Club ‘Bark & Read’ initiative.

Tony and Danny will be running two sessions on the day. One is for year four pupils from Servite Primary School between 2pm and 3pm.

The second session, which runs from 4pm to 6pm, is open to any child who wants to come along and read a short story to Danny.

Councillor Emma Will, cabinet member for libraries, said: “I think this is a wonderful initiative and we look forward to welcoming Tony and Danny to Kensington Central Library.

‘An enjoyment of reading is key to any child’s development and educational progress. I am sure that the children who come along will be thrilled to read to Danny, who I am sure will have quite a fan club by the end of the day.”

Exhibition a first for UK

The first exhibition to have opened at Leighton House Museum in Kensington this year is called Pre-Raphaelites on Paper, Victorian Drawings from the Langani Collection.

The museum says the exhibition ‘presents an exceptional, privately-assembled collection to the UK public for the first time’. Featuring over 100 drawings and sketches by the Pre-Raphaelites and their contemporaries, the exhibition, organised by the National Gallery of Canada, expresses the richness and flair of British draughtsmanship during the Victorian era.

A spokesman said: “This outstanding collection, brought together over a 30-year period by Canadian Dr Dennis T Langani, comprises works by over 60 of the most prominent artists of the period, such as Edward Burne-Jones, John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Poynter and Frederic Leighton himself.

‘Leighton is represented by five drawings, including a study for Cymry, his last work, which was acquired by Leighton House in 2006. Also featured are works by Rossetti’s wife Jane Siddal and a study by William Morris for his only known easel painting, La Belle Iseult f. 1872.

“In recent years much of the Langani collection has been generously given or promised to the National Gallery of Canada.”

Freedom at a price

Residents whose older person’s Freedom Pass is due to expire on Thursday, March 31 should have received a letter from London Councils in January reminding them to renew their pass.

Renewing can be done online at www.freedompass.org.uk. You will need your unique renewal number from your letter, your date of birth and last four digits of the long number shown on the front of your existing Freedom Pass.

If you cannot renew online, you can return the form enclosed in your letter by post. Send completed forms to Freedom Pass Renewals, PO Box 560, Hull, HU9 6LX.

If your name and/or address details have changed since you originally applied for your Freedom Pass you will be required to provide proof of your new details.

If you are renewing online you can upload the required documentation, or alternatively you can return the required documentation by post. Freedom Passes cannot be renewed at the Post Office.

Your vote

To vote in the Mayoral and Greater London Assembly elections on Thursday, May 5, you must be registered by Monday, April 18.

To register to vote go to www.gov.uk/register-to-vote. Residents can check if they are on the register by contacting the Electoral Services Team at elect@rbc.gov.uk or by calling 020 7361 3444.
Borwick and Boris unite to lead London out of Europe

BY GEOFF BAKER
geoff@londonweeklynews.co.uk

KENSINGTON’S MP Victoria Borwick has teamed up with her old friend Boris Johnson to lead the London campaign for Britain to break away from the EU.

Lady Borwick, who was deputy to the Mayor of London from 2012 until her election to Parliament last year, is backing the Out campaign because she believes that Britain’s annual handout of £18.250,000,000 to the EU should go to the nation’s poor and the NHS instead.

The Conservative MP and Kensington and Chelsea council leader for the Abingdon ward, who has long campaigned for bolstering the NHS and ending health inequalities in Kensington, says she wants the UK to leave Europe in order to better care for the needy at home.

“Britain sends £50 million a day of British taxpayer’s money to Brussels. I believe that this money would be better spent on tackling poverty in Britain, on additional funding for our NHS and supporting the most vulnerable in our country,” said Lady Borwick.

“I believe in localism – local people deciding where their money is spent and decisions being made as close to voters as is logical. I do not believe this can be achieved by handing the purse strings and decision making to the EU.”

The loss of support from two of London’s highest-profile and most influential figures will be a blow to Prime Minister David Cameron’s increasingly-feverish campaign for Britain to stay in Europe, although Lady Borwick’s and Boris Johnson’s vote is against the trend of the capital’s political heavyweights.

Among the front runner candidates to replace Mr Johnson as Mayor of London in the May election, only Zac Goldsmith, the Conservative candidate, and the Respect Party’s George Galloway are campaigning for Britain to quit the European Union.

The Labour candidate, Sadiq Khan, the Lib Dem’s Caroline Pidgeon and the Green Party’s Sian Berry are all for staying in the EU – as is the London Assembly.

Mr Khan announced last week: “The EU brings huge cultural, social, economic benefits for London. Leaving the EU is a risk and thousands of our jobs will be put in danger – 60 per cent of west London companies have London headquarters. We risk not only our jobs, but our growth.”

Ms Berry said it was “so important for London” to remain in the EU.

She added: “If you think about the number of people you have living and working here and helping to run businesses who are from the EU and how successful the open policy on migration has been for London, it would be so wrong to go back on that now.”

“London has become such a success story in that respect. I’m in favour of being in the EU and I have very warm feelings towards the rest of Europe. I like the way different countries work together.”

Last week the London Assembly also voted to remain credibly important for London’s economic growth and employment prospects. We need the mayor to take seriously the concerns of organisations like London First and the City who have warned that London would be diminished outside the EU, and that the result would be billions of pounds and tens of thousands of jobs wiped off the capital’s books.

“Of course the EU is not perfect, but that shouldn’t mean that we turn our back and run into the unknown, that could be a disaster.”

Stephen Knight, the Lib Dem member who jointly seconded the motion with Green member Darren Johnson, said: “London is the de facto capital of Europe and its economy hugely benefits from EU membership in increased trade and investment across the EU as well as the free movement of people that enables London to be an international city.”

“The EU is also driving forward vital environmental improvements, especially in air quality. By being a member of the EU London has benefitted from very low borrowing costs for vital infrastructure projects such as Crossrail and upgrades to the Tube. Anyone who really wants to put the interests of London first would recognise that it would be foolish in the extreme to walk away from these immense benefits of EU membership.”

The Assembly noted that the jobs of half a million Londoners were linked to the EU and that the capital would be at greater risk to terrorism if the UK pulled out.

The Assembly claimed: “Analysis conducted by the Centre for Economics and Business Research for London First says that EU membership could add £13.9 billion to London’s Economy by 2030 providing a ‘permanent boost’ to the capital’s economy. London and the EU are economically intertwined. Putting up a barrier between us and the world’s biggest free market would be financially devastating.”

It added: “542,000 jobs in London were associated with the EU in 2011. Whilst these jobs would not be guaranteed to go post-Brexit, they would be far less secure if our major trading partner was less favourably accessible. HSBC alone have warned that around 1,000 jobs would move over the Channel if Britain were to exit the EU.”

“Tackling and adapting to climate change is one of the most serious challenges facing London this century. It’s only through working with our European partners that we can ever hope to bring down carbon emissions and create a more sustainable way of living. European directives have driven progress in tackling some of London’s biggest environmental challenge from toxic air, to waste and recycling and combating climate change.”

“The Home Secretary, Theresa May, has stated that the European Union is vital in the fight against international terrorism and that ‘jihadists threatening Britain cannot be defeated by acting in isolation’.

But the boss of Kensington says. In a statement, Lady Borwick said: “I supported the Prime Minister in his efforts to renegotiate Britain’s relationship with the European Union. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity to fundamentally change Britain’s relationship with the EU. Regrettably, in spite of the Prime Minister’s best efforts it appears that other Member States do not want to use this excellent opportunity to bring the EU into the 21st Century.”

“As a member of the EU, Britain sends £50 million a day of British taxpayer’s money to Brussels. I believe that this money would be better spent on tackling poverty in Britain, on additional funding for our NHS and supporting the most vulnerable in our country.”

“I believe in localism – local people deciding where their money is spent and decisions being made as close to voters as is logical. I do not believe this can be achieved by handing the purse strings and decision making to the EU.”

“Over the coming months both Remain and Leave will set out their views and it will be down to British voters – not politicians to decide whether we Remain or Leave. I look forward to the British people delivering their verdict.”

WE WANT OUT: MPs Lady Borwick and Boris Johnson
Megan’s pride is a lifesaver

A FULHAM schoolgirl was flying high after being chosen to name London’s new air ambulance helicopter, writes Jack Dixon.

Six-year-old Megan Stocker decided to name the aircraft Walter, after her late grandfather.

Megan, who attends Holy Cross Primary School, was chosen as one of two winners of a competition to christen the capital’s second chopper, which took to the skies for the first time last month.

“It was so exciting to go to the helipad,” said Megan. “The helicopter was amazing and so shiny, and now with my grandad’s name on it he will help keep it safe from up in heaven.”

Megan’s name was selected by a judging panel of doctors, pilots, paramedics and fire crew who were touched by her heartwarming entry. She added: “I entered the competition because I love helicopters and wanted to make my grandad proud.

“I felt really happy and excited when I found out I had won and could not wait to come see the new helicopter.”

A fundraising campaign last year gathered thousands of donations towards the cost of the city’s second helicopter. The London Air Ambulance is continuing to appeal for financial support to cover the annual £6 million cost of providing the service.

A spokesman said: “We need your support now more than ever to maintain the delivery of our advanced trauma care to London and people can help by donating, volunteering, taking part in an event or asking the organisation they work for to support us.”

Retailing report predicts 900,000 shop workers could lose their jobs

BY LWN REPORTER editorial@londonweeklynews.co.uk

LONDON shop workers were given a bleak assessment of their future prospects this week when it emerged that there could be 900,000 fewer jobs in retail within the next decade as the effects of the national living wage and digital advances are felt.

Shop closures will have a varied effect across the country and impact already-vulnerable areas the most, a report from the British Retail Consortium said.

While the pace of change could mean thousands of jobs lost by 2025, those that remain will be “more productive and higher earning”, the BRC said in its report entitled Retail 2020 Fewer But Better Jobs.

The retail industry is being reshaped by the digital revolution, the BRC said, as it described how 15 per cent of sales are now made online and there are around 40,000 fewer shops now than there were 10 years ago.

The introduction of the national living wage will cost the industry up to an extra £3 billion each year by 2020, the report predicted, although it added that retailers are generally supportive of the principle behind it.

Other costs are likely to come from business rates increases and the apprenticeship levy which is due to be introduced next April, the BRC said.

Employees who find it difficult to transition to newly created roles are likely to be most affected by changes, it said, and called on the Government to work with retailers to ensure the posts remain are more productive and better-paid.

BRC chief executive Helen Dickinson said: “As an industry we expect the years ahead will see accelerating change.

“Retailers will develop better propositions and compete harder across an increasing range of business models from modern multi-channel formats through to discounts and online businesses.

“Recent policy announcements, in particular the national living wage and the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, will increase the pace of some of these changes.”

The BRC is due to release two further reports - one on what retail workers think, and another on how the industry can meet challenges and take advantage of new opportunities.

Sir Charlie Mayfield, chairman of the British Retail Consortium (BRC) and head of the John Lewis Partnership, said that although retailers supported the introduction of higher pay, there would be an effect on employment.

The retail sector employs three million people – a number that could fall by nearly a third in less than a decade.

Sir Charlie told the BRC that many shops would also close, as increasing costs and changes in the way millions of consumers shop take hold.

Of the 270,000 shops in the UK today, up to 74,000 could shut, the BRC report claims.

Nearly 30 per cent of closures could be in Wales and the north of England.

“People are not realising just how significantly the workplace is changing and I think that is dangerous,” he said.

“It means that people assume that somehow things are going to carry on as they are, when that’s unlikely. Some of the places that will be affected will be some of the most economically fragile.”

The BRC report says retailers are facing a heavy tax burden and that business rates have yet to be reformed.

Sir Charlie said there needed to be a fundamental review of retail taxes. Stores such as John Lewis pay far higher levels of tax in the UK than companies like Amazon.

Safety checks disrupt trains

RAIL services between Heathrow Airport and London were disrupted on Monday due to trains being recalled for unplanned safety checks.

A spokesman for Heathrow Express confirmed that the majority of its trains have been taken out of service due to a “technical issue”.

As a result the non-stop 15-minute service between the airport and London Paddington is being operated by trains which are usually seen on the Heathrow Connect route.

The Heathrow Connect service – which stops at several intermediate stations – was suspended.

Heathrow Express director Fraser Brown said: “While we regret the inconvenience this will cause to our customers and airport colleagues, safety remains our top priority.

“We are working with Siemens engineers, who manage our depot site and the maintenance of our trains, to understand the extent of this issue.

“When we are aware of what we are dealing with we will be able to make a decision on when a full service will resume.”

The Heathrow Express trains are being inspected at Old Oak Common depot, west London. The operator said it had reduced ticket prices until the issue was resolved.

Passengers travelling to stations between Heathrow and Paddington were advised to make alternative arrangements.

Assembly’s business view

The number of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in London has grown over recent years, but the jury is still out on whether they have been a success.

A major benefit of BIDs is their ability to respond quickly to local priorities with the mandate of local businesses. They have demonstrated value in making improvements to high streets, but there are concerns around their accountability to local communities and that they may be asked to step in and fill gaps left by local councils.

The London Assembly Regeneration Committee report, Business Improvement Districts: The role of BIDs in London’s regeneration, published this week, finds that BIDs have the potential to deliver significant local improvements, despite concerns over regulation not being their core remit.

The report makes a number of recommendations:

■ The next mayor should establish a London-wide fund for BIDs and encourage all BIDs in London to sign up to a set of principles governing management.

■ The next mayor should continue to fund BIDs in the set-up phase, where there is local business demand for them, but the Greater London Authority (GLA) should also use funding to support a diversified offer to established BIDs.

MEGAN’S PRIDE: Megan Stocker and the new air ambulance, named after her grandfather Walter
Crossrail has royal visitor – although not everyone is on board

BY LWN REPORTER
editorial@londonweeklynews.co.uk

THE Queen visited the Crossrail station worksite at Bond Street last Tuesday – and discovered that the new railway will be known as the Elizabeth line in her honour.

Mayor of London Boris Johnson, who accompanied the Queen on her tour of the site, said that the Elizabeth line would “transform travel across the city, boosting the economy by billions of pounds and supporting thousands of new jobs and homes”.

The mayor was joined by Secretary of State for Transport Patrick McLoughlin MP, London’s Transport Commissioner Mike Brown MVO, the Crossrail infrastructure company’s chairman Terry Morgan and chief executive Andrew Wolstenholme, as they gave the Queen a tour of the Bond Street station site, which will see 24 trains per hour in each direction when the central section of the Transport for London-run railway opens in 2018.

The Queen was presented with a commemorative Elizabeth roundel, and met a wide range of people involved in the construction of Crossrail, Europe’s largest infrastructure project. This included apprentices working on building the railway, engineers fitting out the station and drivers of the trains that will serve the line.

In the same year, the Queen opened Heathrow Central station (Terminals 1, 2, and 3) on the Piccadilly line. In the aftermath of the July 7 terrorist attack on the London Underground, the Queen unveiled a plaque at Aldgate station in 2010, remembering the lives of the 52 victims who had died.

In 2013, the celebrations of London Underground’s 150th anniversary saw the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall take a trip on the Underground, and the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh and the Duchess of Cambridge visit Baker Street station.

Mr Johnson said: “Crossrail is already proving a huge success for the UK economy, and as we move closer to bringing this transformative new railway into service, I think it’s truly wonderful that such a significant line for our capital will carry such a significant name from our country. As well as radically improving travel right across our city, the Elizabeth line will provide a lasting tribute to our longest serving monarch.”

Mr McLoughlin MP said: “Given Her Majesty the Queen’s long association with UK transport, it is very fitting that this vital link across our capital will be named the Elizabeth Line in her honour. This is an example of British engineering at its best and will transform the way people travel across London and beyond from 2018, bringing better and faster journeys, while boosting jobs and driving economic growth.”

Mr Brown said: “This new railway is absolutely vital to meeting the needs of the capital’s rapidly growing population. The Elizabeth line will transform the way people get around our city and will enable London to continue to succeed, contributing to the economic health of the entire country. In running this important new railway we will ensure that it serves as a fitting tribute to Her Majesty the Queen.”

Mr Morgan said: “Construction for the new railway is now over 70 per cent complete and is being delivered on time and within budget.

“The Crossrail project is one of the most ambitious and complex infrastructure programmes ever undertaken in the UK, so the scale of engineering being delivered under the capital is quite incredible. The opening of the Elizabeth line in 2018 will be a significant moment for London.”

Stretching from Reading and Heathrow in the west across to Shenfield and Abbey Wood in the east, the Elizabeth line will change the way people travel around London and the South East and add much needed new capacity to London’s transport infrastructure. A fleet of brand new 200 metre long trains will run on the Elizabeth line, featuring nine walk-through carriages, air conditioning, CCTV and real-time travel information.

The mayor’s office said: “When the railway fully opens it will significantly increase the capital’s rail capacity, carrying over half a million passengers per day – the same number of annual visitors to Buckingham Palace. Some 1.5 million people will have better access to the jobs and opportunities of London’s main employment centres, and an estimated £42billion will have been added to the economy of the United Kingdom.”

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‘Fit more than one fire alarm’
WORRIED senior officers at Londond Fire Brigade are urging Londoners to check their smoke alarms in the home, saying one device is not enough.

New figures show that in two thirds of fatal fires over the past three years smoke alarm(s) not alert people to the fire because they hadn’t been installed or were fitted too far away from where the fire started.

This has lead to the LFB warning people should think about getting more smoke detectors in their homes.

According to LFB, fire deaths have come down dramatically. For the last three years the number of people who have died has been under 50 a year but numbers.

THE number of mortgages approved by high street banks has topped 80,000 in a month for the first time in two years as buy-to-let investors rushed to beat a stamp duty hike.

Some 80,285 mortgages with a collective value of £13.6 billion got the go-ahead in January - marking a jump of one third (33 per cent) compared with January 2015, the British Bankers’ Association said.

It is the first time since January 2014 that mortgage approvals have edged above the 80,000 mark in a single month.

Boris says annual budget builds on the good progress we’ve made
BY LWN REPORTER
THE Mayor of London Boris Johnson’s annual budget was approved by the London Assembly last week – fulfilling his manifesto commitment to reduce the mayor’s share of Londoners’ council tax bills by ten per cent during his second term in office.

The decision means a typical Band D council taxpayer has saved around £500 over Mr Johnson’s eight years as mayor.

The 2016-2017 budget will see the mayor’s share of council tax fall by 6.4 per cent - a reduction of £19 to £276 for Band D taxpayers. The budget also includes plans to protect police officer numbers and key transport improvements while supporting the construction of a record number of new homes and creating thousands of new jobs.

Mr Johnson said: “This budget delivers the growth and investment London needs to meet its surging population, supporting the delivery of new homes, vital transport infrastructure and protecting frontline policing. At the same time, we are relentlessly bearing down on unnecessary costs in order to once again put more money back in the pockets of Londoners by trimming council taxpayer has saved around £500 over Mr Johnson’s eight years as mayor.

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Mr Johnson said: “This budget delivers the growth and investment London needs to meet its surging population, supporting the delivery of new homes, vital transport infrastructure and protecting frontline policing. At the same time, we are relentlessly bearing down on unnecessary costs in order to once again put more money back in the pockets of Londoners by trimming council tax, leading to a ten per cent cut over my second term of office.”

The mayor’s 2016/2017 budget covers the entire Greater London Authority Group – including Transport for London, the London Legacy Development Corporation, the Metropolitan Police service and the London Fire Brigade. It includes:

- The permanent re-opening of the former Olympic Stadium in the summer.
- Support for the new Mayoral Development Corporation for Old Oak and Park Royal, a regeneration opportunity for west London which will deliver thousands of new jobs and homes.
- Continuing to ensure young Londoners have the digital skills they need to access jobs in London’s thriving technology sector.
- The protection of police officer numbers at around 32,000 including a reinvention of neighbourhood policing by getting 2,000 extra officers into local neighbourhoods. It also includes investment in the latest digital technologies such as body worn cameras.
- Investment in upgrading the Tube network including £250million on making more stations step free, the delivery of a northern Line extension to Nine Elms and Battersea and continued support for the delivery of Crossrail, which will increase London’s rail capacity by ten per cent.
- A £4billion investment on London’s roads. £913million is due to be spent on cycling improvements, including cycle superhighways, quietways and mini-Hollands, £200million has been earmarked for bus priority schemes and 800 Routemaster buses will be delivered by 2016.
- Continuing the increase in the supply of affordable homes with a target of delivering 100,000 affordable homes over the mayor’s eight years in office.
- Ensuring the London Fire Brigade can continue to meet their response time targets.
- A commitment to continue funding from the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime for Survivors UK work with the victims of male rape.

SOLID FOUNDATIONS: The mayor’s target is to build 100,000 affordable homes during his time in office

Military concerts ‘will continue’
MILITARY concerts hailed as better than the Royal Albert Hall’s proms are expected to continue at an historic south west London site, despite Government plans to sell it.

Defence minister Mark Lancaster told MPs last week he understood the British Army would carry on playing proms to the public in the grounds of Kneller Hall, and to re-consider its plans.

He questioned if this would be a good use of taxpayers’ money for what was an “aging site that houses fewer than 73 staff”, noting that 192 houses could be built in its place while the school of music would be relocated.

But Conservative MP Tania Mathias (Twickenham) warned the Government not to rip the “heart and soul” out of Whitton, the community which houses Kneller Hall, and to re-consider its plans.

She said: “It’s tragic and extraordinary that in peacetime the Ministry of Defence has managed to create so much hostility in a peace-loving community.”

Concluding a Westminster Hall debate, Mr Lancaster said: “I want to make clear that I acknowledge and recognise the emotive nature of closing sites, especially ones like Kneller Hall that have been at the centre of the community for many years.

“I’m delighted to be able to say that I understand the army will continue to play proms to the public in the summer.

“I appreciate wholeheartedly the concerns of (Ms Mathias) and her constituency and I want to assure her that great consideration is given to all military establishments along with their historical and national significance.

“But, as I’ve already mentioned, this isn’t about individual communities, individual bases, regiments or units, this is about ensuring defence has an updated, efficient, rationalised estate – fit for purpose and fit for it to operate now and into the future.

“This is about ensuring that the right resources are in the right place to keep Britain safe.”
Working to support shops and markets

Across the country, shopping streets are struggling. A government-commissioned review in 2011 found that high streets receive less than half of consumer spending in the UK and another report discovered that one in ten shops is empty.

Where once the threat to shops was large chains making each high street look exactly like the next, the rise of internet shopping means that those chains need fewer and fewer stores and the space returns to independent shops with a new challenge - getting enough customers through the door.

Portobello Road and Golborne Road are still thriving shopping areas, our markets are world-famous and the shop spaces on the Westway estate receive enough demand to mean none is ever empty for long.

However, shops and stalls in the area aren’t without their problems. In 2010 the council produced a market visitor survey, which we intend to work with them to repeat soon, to help us understand the visitors to the area.

In the last survey a quarter of those visiting Portobello’s Saturday markets said that they were browsers with little intention of spending any money.

In addition, 60 per cent of the visitors were tourists and only one in five came from the local area. When just a 15 per cent drop in takings can put a shop in trouble and 40 per cent of local retailers last year said they experienced a drop in income in the previous year, it’s clear that no matter how exciting and vibrant our shops and markets are, their continued presence, which contributes so much to the character of the area, cannot be taken for granted.

We believe that we can help to support our local shop-owners and traders building on the existing culture and vibrancy by bringing even more people to the area and encouraging local people to shop here more regularly.

We’ve secured funding to animate Thorpe Close, the stretch of road under the Westway between Ladbroke Grove and Portobello Road. I hope we can turn this lane from what is normally a dull stretch of parked cars into a thriving space that supports businesses and enterprise activities in its own right while also bringing more people towards the Portobello markets and up to Golborne Road.

It was clear when my team and I recently went to meetings of the Golborne Forum and Market Street Action Group that there was a strong backing for bringing more life to Thorpe Close throughout the week.

We’ve secured significant funding from the Mayor of London’s High Street Fund to create small pop-up units for start-ups and arts and cultural activity on Thorpe Close. This fund has already had a huge impact on Thorpe Close throughout the area.

In Waltham Forest, Wood Street, a fading local shopping street with a market has been brought to life by helping owners brighten their shopfronts and bringing activities, art and other changes to the street space making it a place people want to stay and spend.

We bring no preconceptions about what will happen in and around the new spaces on Thorpe Close, what they’ll look like, or even what they’ll be made of. Starting with just a shape on the ground, we want local people and businesses to help design the spaces and how they’ll be used.

We’re working with a world-leading design studio that specialises in designing spaces in partnership with those that will be using them.

On our website you’ll find details of two public workshops they’ll be leading for us outside on Thorpe Close. The first, announced soon, will try to understand what people want the spaces to be used for and the second will use those ideas to start creating the spaces themselves.

We hope this ground up approach will produce something that truly reflects the character of the area and creates new opportunities for business, arts and enterprise in North Kensington while also providing a boost to the existing shops and markets.

Under the Westway

Angela McConville, Westway Trust Chief Executive, talks about how local people and businesses will help bring Thorpe Close to life

Marble Arch business-boosting project

Businesses from Marble Arch and northern Park Lane, throughout Connaught Village and Seymour Place and up Edgware Road to the Marylebone Flyover, voted Marble Arch Business Improvement District to lead on a new programme for the area that will see £2.5 million invested over five years.

Throughout February, Westminster City Council ran a formal ballot for businesses to submit their votes for the launch of the new BID. Marble Arch Business Improvement District is now the eighth BID in Westminster, and will work with the council, the Mayor of London’s office and Transport for London to drive a better future for businesses and locals in this thriving area.

Marble Arch BID will work to harness investment into the area and bring businesses across the area together to deliver public realm improvements, reduce levels of anti-social behaviour and introduce new visitor and business services.

The BID aims to improve trading conditions and make the area more successful for all.

London’s the one place in the world I actually feel less disabled

Robyn, 29. An author and trumpet player with Asperger’s syndrome and cerebral palsy.

Real time arrival information for buses on her phone and a frequent tube service help Robyn feel completely independent in the city. To see her full story search TFL Accessibility and see if you could take more journeys than you think.

@TfLAccess · tfl.gov.uk/accessibility · 0343 222 1234*

*Service and network changes may apply. See our website for details.
Work to do for teenagers in our schools

BY LWN REPORTER
editorial@londonweeklynews.co.uk

TEENAGERS in London are lagging around half a school year behind their peers in many other major cities and regions worldwide, a new study claims.

In maths alone, secondary school pupils in Shanghai are around three years ahead of those in the capital, according to the research. It suggests that while London is known in England for high school standards, performing well in GCSE exams, and boosting the results of poorer youngsters, internationally its pupils are being surpassed by those from cities and regions in East Asia, Europe, North America and Australia.

The study, by researchers at the UCL Institute of Education, used data collected from the 2009 and 2012 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests which measure the abilities of 15-year-olds in reading, maths and science.

The results from around 1,057 London pupils were compared with those of youngsters around the world.

The study found that London was consistently outperformed in all three areas by Shanghai, Singapore, Hong Kong, Maastricht, Helsinki, Milan, the Australian states of Western Australia, New South Wales (Sydney), Ontario and Shanghai,” the research concludes.

It also says: “Despite strong performance in England’s national examinations, educational achievement in London remains some way behind that observed in other leading economies. Further progress is therefore needed.”

Student author Dr John Jerrim said: “London schools have been rightly lauded in recent years for improving performance, particularly among pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

“However, London’s comparatively poor PISA results seem to stem from certain groups performing worse than expected, including girls, ethnic minorities and young people from lower socio-economic groups. This is especially surprising as these groups end up doing much better on their GCSEs just six months after the international assessments.

“However, it is important to remember that this is just one assessment, and is a single piece in a much bigger jigsaw.

“London’s success in GCSE examinations is still a cause for celebration, though clearly much more also needs to be done to ensure children in our capital city are able to compete with the best in the world.”

London’s deputy mayor for education and culture, Munira Mirza, said: “While young Londoners get the best results in the country at GCSE, this research highlights the challenges still faced by London’s disadvantaged students in achieving as well as their peers.”

READ ALL ABOUT IT: Author and David Walliams has teamed up with Joanna Lumley to support her charity – The Peter Pan Moat Brae Trust – in a special event for families at Cadogan Hall, London on Saturday, March 19. The two stars in conversation promise a hilarious, interactive morning of tall tales and quirky questions. They will share their comic chemistry and love of stories with a theatre full of young fans and avid readers of David’s popular books. Every ticket-holder will also receive a copy of Grandpa’s Great Escape and can have it signed by author David himself. He will help highlight the work of the Peter Pan Moat Brae Trust, of which Joanna is patron. Tickets priced £25 (including a copy of Grandpa’s Great Escape) are on sale from the Cadogan Hall box office: 020 7730 4500

Crossbow bolt park incident

A GOOSE has been left with a “horrible injury” after being shot with a crossbow bolt in east London.

The bird was discovered in Hornchurch Country Park in the London borough of Havering with the bolt sticking out of its body on February 23.

The creature was taken by an RSPCA inspector to a local wildlife hospital, where X-rays showed the bird had a crossbow bolt through its pelvis and into the abdomen.

The inspector, Mitchell Smith, said: “This is a horrible injury and the goose must have been in a lot of pain. Fortunately he has now received veterinary care at a nearby wildlife hospital but we don’t yet know if he will survive this ordeal.”

The goose is expected to undergo an operation on his injuries in the coming days.

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, anyone who causes or allows an animal to be killed, injured or tortured faces a £20,000 fine and up to six months in prison.

The RSPCA said it is not known who carried out the attack or whether it was deliberate.

Anyone with information about the incident should contact the animal welfare charity in confidence on 0300 123 8018.

Man died in bid to get dog

A MAN died after being hit by a car as he ran into the road to catch his dog, police said.

The 35 year old was struck by a silver Peugeot 307 at 10.40pm on Friday, February 19.

He was treated by paramedics but died at the scene on Stockley Road roundabout in West Drayton, west London.

The driver of the Peugeot was not arrested and was helping the Metropolitan Police, whose officers have appealed for witnesses.

Detective Sergeant Stephen Pidgeon, leading the investigation, said: “We understand the deceased was trying to catch his dog, described as a German Shepherd or Alsatian, in the moments prior to the collision. As a result of this the deceased ended up in the road where he was struck by the car.

“Anyone remembering this scenario or the collision itself, please contact police.”

Officials seize hoverboards

TRADING Standards officials seized about 90 hoverboards at Heatons in Wigan after they were supplied by Argos and Dixons.

The machines, imported from Hong Kong, were broken up to stop them being sold and possibly harming consumers.

Some of the self-balancing scooters burst into flames and had to be destroyed by a fire extinguisher as they were destroyed.

Trading Standards officers had intercepted the packages containing £73,500 worth of hoverboards before sending them for electrical tests. The boards were found to have faults which could have led to them unexpectedly exploding.

Gurkha fan Harry looks forward to Nepal trip

PRINCE Harry is “really looking forward” to his first trip to Nepal next month, Kensington Palace has said.

Harry’s four-day trip begins on March 20 and is being carried out at the request of the UK Government.

The Prince has wanted to visit Nepal largely due to his admiration and respect for the Gurkha troops he served with in Afghanistan.

He is also keen to see how the country’s rebuilding effort is progressing following the devastating earthquake in April last year.

A Kensington Palace spokesman said: “Prince Harry is really looking forward to his first trip to Nepal. It is a country he has long wanted to visit.

“He has been moved by the stories of resilience of the Nepali people following the earthquake last year and is now eager to learn more about their country and culture.

“With his visit and Nepal currently celebrating 200 years of co-operation, Prince Harry will experience the strength of the relationship and traditional warmth of the Nepali welcome.”

Harry’s tour will start and finish in the capital Kathmandu, where he will meet the nation’s first woman president, Bidhya Devi Bhandari, voted into office last October.

Nearly 9,000 people were killed during the earthquake and aftershocks that struck Nepal last year and almost a million houses and buildings were damaged.

Harry will meet people rebuilding their lives after the earthquake to learn about work to restore historic buildings and efforts to prepare for future disasters.

The Prince, who left the Army last summer after 10 years as an officer, served two tours in Afghanistan and worked as a forward air controller from 2007-08.

One of the highlights for the Prince was the chance to live and work with a unit of Gurkhas, men from Nepal famed for their fighting prowess.

Harry will visit the British Gurkha Camp in Pokhara, where he will commend the bravery and service to the Crown of the Gurkhas. He will also learn more about recruitment and the assistance offered by Gurkha forces to surrounding communities after the earthquake.

Nepal is known for its stunning scenery and the Prince will get the chance to take part in a trek, and will visit one of Nepal’s national parks.

The last members of the Royal Family to tour Nepal were the Duke of Edinburgh and Princess Royal in November 2000.

Royal London, Pages 12 and 13

Gurkha in the capital K athmandu, where he will meet the nation’s first woman president, Bidhya Devi Bhandari, voted into office last October.
Sophie backs services of sight charity

THE Countess of Wessex is coming to Kensington next week to go charity shopping and aid a drive to help the 175,000 Londoners with sight loss.

As patron of the Greater London Blind for the Blind, the Countess will open the new Geranium Shop in Kensington High Street.

The new charity shop will be the 12th that the GLFB runs in the capital. The shops specialise in selling quality clothes, books and furniture and are staffed by volunteers.

The Countess’s visit coincides with the launch of a new campaign by the Royal National Institute for the Blind to recruit more volunteers for its Online Today project to help people with sensory loss to get online.

“Since its launch last year, Online Today events throughout the UK have helped thousands of people with sight and hearing loss get online,” said a spokesman. “Now RNIB is appealing to local people to commit a few hours a month to visit blind and partially sighted people in their own homes and help them develop digital skills like browsing the internet, sending emails, and using an e-reader.”

Karen Foggatt, head of volunteering at RNIB, said: “It’s fantastic that people in London are so keen to volunteer locally. This is why we want even more enthusiastic and committed people in London to become Digital Skills Support volunteers.

Spending a few hours a month helping a person with sight loss to develop the online skills many of us take for granted can transform that person’s life, and boost their independence.

“There are more than 175,000 people with sight loss in London, many of whom would benefit from being supported by volunteers to learn online skills.

For more information about volunteering for Online Today go to www.rnib.org.uk/onlinevolunteer

Underground bug triggers travel fears

BOSSES at Transport for London blamed a software bug for causing several travel apps to report that all London Underground lines were closed during the morning rush hour on Thursday.

The problem meant that several of the most popular travel apps for smartphones were showing that all Tube lines, as well as the Overground, were running no services.

TFL’s social media pages were soon flooded with queries, while one app – Tube Map – sent out a notification to users confirming the bug and asking them to report any problems experienced.

The problem began at around 8am, according to reports – during the morning rush hour and one of the busiest times of day for the Underground. TFL said the issue was reported to 10am, after receiving messages from worried passengers on social media.

The bug spread across several apps as TFL shared its service information with developers, who then use it to feed into their own apps. According to the BBC, TFL initially said there was no problem with its feed but this soon changed, with the firm saying it had been made aware of an issue which would be looked into. Many were told to access TFL web pages in order to see “accurate” information.

Lords in focus

STUDENTS and staff at the University of West London, along with members of the public, were given a fascinating glimpse into the workings of the House of Lords on Monday, February 8 when Lord Finkelstein, political commentator and Associate Editor of The Times, came to the university to be interviewed by former barrister and BBC journalist Clive Coleman.

Philip Ells, Head of Ealing Law School, introduced the event, which was held in the William Barry Theatre.

Lord Finkelstein talked about his career and ennoblement, and revealed that one of his proudest moments was when his mother, a Holocaust survivor, was able to attend his investiture. He also explained to the riveted audience the role of the House of Lords in the making and scrutiny of legislation, and that his maiden speech in the House was about gay rights in UK foreign policy.

On yer bike

THERE’S a chance to see the best cyclists in the world as they converge on London to prove their speed, strength and tactical skills as they take part in races and time trials during the 2016 UCI Track Cycling World Championships at Lee Valley VeloPark. Limited tickets remain for the event, from March 2 to 6, and are available from £15 for adults and £10 for concessions via Ticketmaster.

Positive verdict after sober assessment of sobriety tags

BY LWN REPORTER

AN innovative pilot to keep criminals sober will be extended throughout London, after it was shown to be successful in 92 per cent of cases.

Thanks to new funds from the Ministry of Justice and the Mayor of London, courts in the capital will be able to put an ankle bracelet on offenders whose crimes were influenced by alcohol.

The tags perform around-the-clock monitoring of alcohol in an offender’s perspiration. If they drink again, breaching their alcohol abstinence order, they can be returned to court for further sanctions.

The Ministry of Justice is contributing £400,000 towards the cost of extending the scheme past its initial four pilot boroughs to the whole of the capital from April. The initiative will be run by the London Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), which is contributing £450,000 to the extension.

Justice Secretary Michael Gove said: “I am absolutely committed to reducing re-offending – so we can cut crime and better protect the public.

“By giving courts this new power and making the latest technology available, we are helping offenders understand the detrimental impact drinking alcohol can have on their behaviour.

“This innovative approach has delivered impressive results so far and we will be building on them with this this wider London roll out.”

Mayor of London Boris Johnson said: “Alcohol-fuelled crimes put a huge strain on frontline services, costing the taxpayer billions of pounds each year.

“From assault, to drink-driving, to theft and criminal damage, this innovative technology is driving down re-offending and proving rehabilitation does not have to mean prison.

“After such a success in South London, it’s time to roll out these tags to the rest of the capital and rid our streets of these crimes, by helping even more offenders stay off the booze and get back on the right track.”

The Mayor’s office for Policing And Crime has overseen an 18-month pilot of the sobriety tags across four London boroughs.

Last week’s report found the tags enjoyed a 92 per cent compliance rate. In the first 12 months of the pilot, 113 alcohol abstinence requirement orders were made and offenders were required to remain sober for up to 120 days. This compares favourably with the compliance rate for other community based orders.

Luan Anderson, Deputy Director of Rehabilitation at the London Community Rehabilitation Company, said: “In the initial trials, the sobriety tag has already proved hugely successful in helping those convicted of alcohol-related crime to deal with the damaging impact of alcohol.

“Through sobriety tagging, we have seen a significant rise in the number of people who comply with their community order and we are really keen to expand this success by using this innovative ‘tool’ to achieve meaningful results.”

Alcohol-related crime costs up to £13 billion per year – with a significantly higher number of incidents in London than elsewhere in the country. Police officers spend on average half of their time dealing with alcohol-related casework and around 40 per cent of A&E attendances are related to drinking.

The tags have been well welcomed by the police, courts and probation officers to help reduce alcohol related re-offending, ease the pressure on police and the criminal justice system and make town centres safer, particularly at night.

BY LWN REPORTER

A positive verdict after sober assessment of sobriety tags
Londoners who missed the opportunity to be at The Queen’s official 90th birthday party have until next week for a last-ditch chance to try to get some sort of a place at it – or else risk the no-mercy of ticket touts who are already cashing in on the occasion.

Thousands were disappointed when 25,000 tickets for the four-day party went on sale in November and were all snapped up within hours.

The big bash, Her Majesty’s 90th Birthday Party, will take place in Home Park at Windsor Castle from May 12 to 15. Members of the royal family will be attending the swish do on each night, with The Queen going on the last night.

“Her Majesty’s 90th Birthday Party will be a celebration of The Queen’s life, her love of horses, her dedication to the Commonwealth and international affairs and her deep involvement with the Navy, Army and Air Force,” say the organisers.

“Over 90 minutes, 900 horses and more than 1,500 participants from around the United Kingdom and the world will create an anniversary salute: The Queen’s love of horses will be reflected in the forthcoming celebration of her birthday.

90-year journey will take us from the excitement of the birth, through to World War Two, her marriage, the coronation and a reign of more than 60 years. The celebration will use horses, actors, bands and dancers to tell the story.

The participants will reflect the Queen’s private and public interests. Performers will come from a number of countries, including Oman, Chile, New Zealand, Canada, Fiji, Australia, Azerbaijan and the UK. The military will be well represented and will include The Queen’s Mounted Troops and more than 100 pipers.

The celebration will be created by the team that organised the successful Diamond Jubilee Pageant in Windsor in 2012. This time, technology will play an important part in the celebration.

The 90-minute experience will be a fusion of the latest video projection, LED effects and theatrical lighting. The finale will be a kaleidoscope of memories and achievements,” say the organisers.

Clearly the party promises to be the hottest ticket in town and now an extra 2,500 people can win the chance to be guests at it. A draw for 5,000 free tickets [2,500 of which are to be set aside for residents of Windsor] has opened, but will close on March 14. Although the free tickets do not exactly provide a place in the royal box, they will enable those lucky in the lottery to join the celebrations at the Long Walk at Windsor Castle for the last night, where the two-mile stretch will be turned into a huge party scene, with food and drink stalls, sideshows and giant screens erected for viewing the pageant, which will be screened live on ITV in a royal birthday show hosted by Ant and Dec.

Those wanting to be at the party in the park can apply for up to four tickets online at www.hmg90.co.uk

Meanwhile, those who fatter wallets can always turn to the touts, who are already re-sell- ing seats in the party enclosure that originally cost £55 now selling online for £600.

**Anne sets the pace with 544 royal engagements**

**SHOULD the royal family be bottling whatever super-vitamin Princess Anne is on and selling them in the shops at the royal palaces?**

Although she marks her 66th birthday this August, the inexhaustible Princess Royal continues to lead the field when it comes to cramming her diary with public engagements. Last month she officiated at 22 appearances and this month she has already committed to get out and about for at least another 29.

Last year Princess Anne overtook her brother Charles for the first time in eight years, to become Britain’s hardest-working royal. She undertook 544 engagements, 456 in the UK and 88 overseas, whereas Prince Charles officiated at 527 events, 147 of them abroad.

The list of who did most last year makes interesting reading, with The Queen and her children taking the top five positions in the chart of the 15 busiest royals.

Here is the 2015 busy list: The Princess Royal, 544 engagements; Prince Charles, 527; Prince Edward, 354; The Queen, 341; Prince Andrew, 275; the Duke of Gloucester, 270; the Duke of Edinburgh, 250; the Duchess of Cornwall, 235; the Countess of Wessex, 218; the Duke of Kent, 202; the Duchess of Gloucester, 145; Prince William, 122; Prince Harry, 108; Princess Alexandra, 88; the Duchess of Cambridge, 62.

So what is Princess Anne’s secret? How does she manage to fit in so many engagements? The answer, say her spokesman, is a sandwich and not faffing about. By grabbing a sammie in the back of her car she avoids long lunches and can zip from one engagement to another with ease.

**Friends helping great charities**

No doubt you want to remember your family and friends first, but leaving a gift to charity in your Will makes a significant difference for generations to come. And it won’t cost you anything now!

If you are 55 or over, have your simple Will written free of charge by one of the solicitors listed and consider which Free Wills Month charities you would like to remember.

Appointments are limited so make yours soon. Please mention Free Wills Month when you call – and leave your lasting legacy.

**ROYAL FAVOURITE: Princess Anne maintains an exhausting itinerary of nationwide royal appointments**

FRANK BRAZELL AND PARTNERS LTD
Simon Levy - 020 7485 8626
Busworks United House, North Road
London N7 9DP

TULIPS SOLICITORS
Kivanc Yuvanc - 020 7263 3311
76 Holloway Road
London N19 3JF

ARIF JAKORS SOLICITORS
Khizar Arif - 020 8528 1132
10th Floor, 88 Wood Street
London EC2V 7RS

FAROOQ BAJWA & CO
Patrick Lally - 020 3174 0332
45 Charles Street
London W1J 5EH

www.freewillsmonth.org.uk

The campaign pays for simple Wills. If your Will is complex, you can pay the solicitor for extra advice. There is no obligation to include a gift to any of the charities. The campaign is intended for those aged 55 and over.
Surely we won’t forget the Duke’s birthday (will we?)

SPARE a thought for the Duke of Edinburgh this summer, for although he will turn 95 no state nor any other celebrations are yet planned and he’s even got to work on his birthday, writes Geoff Baker.

To be fair to the Duke, as The Queen’s greatest supporter there will probably be nobody prouder than he in St Paul’s Cathedral on June 10 [his birthday] when the Church of England throws a Service of Thanksgiving for Her Majesty’s 90th birthday.

And it is entirely likely that somebody senior at the Palace will trust a word in the ear of the officiating clergy to get them to add a line praising Prince Philip to whatever sermon is planned to honour The Queen.

But even so, notching up 95 years is a great achievement in anyone’s book and as the Duke continues to be the second busiest royal in the family [after Princess Anne] with 14 days already set aside for public engagements this month and whatever days he has spare set aside for administration on the more than 800 organisations of which he is patron [as opposed to Prince Harry’s 12], one would have thought that the Who’s Who of the wildlife trade, the Indian industry, the MCC, Royal Yacht Squadron, various polo clubs or even the actual Royal Navy might have something up their sleeves to mark their appreciation of his years of that.

One might have imagined that the Government too could have come up with an appropriately-marked recognition of his 95th, but there is currently no sign of anything. Of course, this may be due to the Duke’s request that he wants “no fuss” for his 95th, just as he asked for on the occasion of his many previous birthdays, but still it is a surprise that a hunt for celebrations planned for Prince Philip’s 95th reveals absolutely nothing.

A Google search of celebrations to mark The Queen’s birthday provides 334,000 listings, but not one for her husband’s big day.

Not even the Royal Collection Trust appears to be making any effort. The Trust, which eagerly sells all manner of royal souvenirs, is about to launch a new collection of crockery and whatever sermon is planned to honour The Queen.

It is entirely likely that somebody senior at the Palace will trust a word in the ear of the officiating clergy to get them to add a line praising Prince Philip to whatever sermon is planned to honour The Queen.

But even so, notching up 95 years is a great achievement in anyone’s book and as the Duke continues to be the second busiest royal in the family [after Princess Anne] with 14 days already set aside for public engagements this month and whatever days he has spare set aside for administration on the more than 800 organisations of which he is patron [as opposed to Prince Harry’s 12], one would have thought that the Who’s Who of the wildlife trade, the Indian industry, the MCC, Royal Yacht Squadron, various polo clubs or even the actual Royal Navy might have something up their sleeves to mark their appreciation of his years of that.

One might have imagined that the Government too could have come up with an appropriately-marked recognition of his 95th, but there is currently no sign of anything. Of course, this may be due to the Duke’s request that he wants “no fuss” for his 95th, just as he asked for on the occasion of his many previous birthdays, but still it is a surprise that a hunt for celebrations planned for Prince Philip’s 95th reveals absolutely nothing.

A Google search of celebrations to mark The Queen’s birthday provides 334,000 listings, but not one for her husband’s big day.

Not even the Royal Collection Trust appears to be making any effort. The Trust, which eagerly sells all manner of royal souvenirs, is about to launch a new collection of crockery and whatever sermon is planned to honour The Queen’s 90th, but among the hundreds of royal items it markets through its shops at the Palaces and online there is not one item that specifically tributes Prince Philip – in fact the only item that even comes close to acknowledging his presence, let alone his vast contribution to the standing of the royal family, is a £595 bowl made to mark his and The Queen’s 65th wedding anniversary, and that was made long ago in 2012.

A bit of a poor show. No wonder, when once asked to reflect on his life, he said, “I’d much rather have stayed in the Navy, frankly.”

We should all make the Duke’s 95th a bit special.

THE Queen is to launch London Zoo’s Land of the Lions next month, with designated family-friendly nights and adult only nights to ensure each stay is specially tailored to its guests. There are nine lodges in total, each will provide accommodation for up to two adults and two children.

The night with the lions package includes:

• One night’s accommodation for two people (and up to two children aged 5-13 years or family nights) in a twin or a double lodge
• Complimentary drink on arrival

• A two-course dinner
• Breakfast
• Exclusive tours led by zoo staff; sunset, torchlight and morning walks
• Free car parking at ZSL London Zoo

The Queen will officially open London Zoo’s Land of the Lions next month 2,500sqm exhibit with thrilling, immersive Indian-themed areas to explore – including a train station, crumbling lion temple, high street and guard hut.

“The experience will run six nights a week from May until December, with designated family-friendly and adult only nights to ensure each stay is specially tailored to its guests,” says the zoo.

“Three walkways cover the Gir Forest, and lend a hand to the veterinary team who come to the rescue.”

But it is the up-to-£558-a-night lion hotel which is tipped to become the zoo’s big lure for families from Easter.

“Within roving distance of the lions, Gir Lion Lodge is hidden away within our Land of the Lions development.

“Guests will bed down for the night in beautifully-decorated lodges inspired by the welcoming charm of hotels in the lion’s native Gir Forest home in India,” says the zoo.

“In addition to the bespoke, luxury accommodation, guests will enjoy a delicious two-course dinner and full-English breakfast. Entry into the zoo on both days and exclusive tours led by our passionate and knowledgeable hosts, are also included in the experience.

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“For the first time, big cat lovers can embark on an interactive Indian adventure as they help ZSL’s forest rangers deal with a ‘lion-emergency’ in the

Where to see a royal this week

FULL details of events in the ever-busy diaries of the many members of the royal family are available from the official website www.royal.gov.uk but here’s the schedule for the week ahead for Where To See A Royal

**March 1**

- **The Duke of Edinburgh**, as Patron, The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, will attend Receptions for young people who have achieved the Gold Standard in the Award, at St. James’s Palace.

- **March 2**

- **The Duke of Edinburgh** will hold a Reception for the International Tribology Council at Buckingham Palace.


- **March 3**

- **The Queen**, as Patron, The Queen’s Trust, will visit Lister Community School, St Mary’s Road, Plaistow.

- **The Duke of Edinburgh** will visit the Exhibition, Samuel Pepys: Plague, Fire, Revolution, at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

- **The Duke of Edinburgh**, as Patron, Wildscreen, will hold a Lunch at Buckingham Palace.

- **The Duke of Edinburgh**, as Honorary Member, Imperial Polonia Yacht Club, will attend a Tiffin at the Royal Thames Yacht Club, 60 Knightsbridge.

- **The Princess Royal**, as President, National Equine Forum, will attend the National Equine Forum at the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, One Birdcage Walk SW1.

- **The Princess Royal**, as President, Riding for the Disabled Association, will attend and 40th anniversary celebrations of the Hyde Park Group at Hyde Park Barracks, Knightsbridge.

- **The Princess Royal**, as Patron, Trust of Trinity House, will visit Trinity House, Tower Hill.

- **The Princess Royal** will present the Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers’ Princess Royal Award at Buckingham Palace.

- **The Duke of Gloucester**, as Patron, Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust, will attend a Luncheon at Savills, Margaret Street W1.

- **The Duke of Gloucester**, as Patron, British Homeopathic Association, will attend a Reception at Vintners’ Hall, Upper Thames Street E2.

- **The Duke of Gloucester** will visit Park Lane Primary School, Park Lane, Wembley.

- **March 4**

- **The Duke of Gloucester**, as Patron, the London Chorus, will attend a Concert at the Royal Festival Hall, Southbank Centre.

- **March 8**

- **The Princess Royal** will open a new Nuclear Medicine Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography Unit, will attend the Launched Tomography Department at the Hillingdon Hospital, Field Heath Road, Uxbridge.

- **The Princess Royal**, as Chancellor, University of London, will attend the Royal Society of Arts Graduation Ceremony at the Barbican Centre.

Pride of place for royal visitor

BY GEOFF BAKER

geo@londonweeklynews.co.uk

THE Queen is to launch London Zoo’s Land of the Lions next month, with designated family-friendly nights and adult only nights to ensure each stay is specially tailored to its guests. There are nine lodges in total, each will provide accommodation for up to two adults and two children.

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“We should all make the Duke’s 95th a bit special.”
**Capital nights**

**EDITED BY GEOFF BAKER**

WELL here’s a world first – the bosses of the Eurovision Song Contest have made changes in the voting system so that the Planet Earth’s most risible music festival will become “exciting”.

Although it has long been felt that the only thing that could make Eurovision “exciting” would be for the stage to fall down, the contest’s administrators believe they are now set to cause an adrenaline frenzy by changing the way they do the sums. 

What that will do, calculi never fails to cause a riot in our house.

Eurovisionaries are changing the rules in order to try stop most of Britain going down the pub half-way through the 210-minute saga.

As we know, watching Eurovision is usually an agony of a forgone conclusion as the nations vote according to their prejudices: the French demonstrate their remarkable capacity to forget Waterloo by marking down the UK, Asia expresses its displeasure at our irritating stand on the poisoning of Litvinenko by giving us nil points, Norway low votes us for protesting against their national bent for slaughtering whales and everybody else who has an axe to grind on British foreign policy follows suit.

And this year, with more than half of the UK already singing So’long, Farewell, Auf Wiedersehen, Goodbye before the song contest even starts, the UK would be doomed to get even fewer votes than usual as Europe gets the hump with our enthusiasm for a quick Brexit back to the joyful days of curry cucumbers.

Consequently, most of us can tell pretty early on in the Eurovision voting that the UK will never catch up and so we may as well switch off and go have a pint.

So they have changed the rules in order to keep us riveted in our seats, feverishly dribbling anticipation in the hope that our typically-rubbish entry might just pip at the post Malta’s marching band of bearded lady goatherds.

The trouble is, being a Euro decision, nobody quite understands it and song contest websites are currently awash with devotees asking “what does it mean?”

According to Eurovision chiefs it will work like this: “In previous years the results of the professional juries and viewers have been presented as a combined result, each accounting for 50 per cent of the final score. From 2016, the professional juries and televoters from each country will award a separate set of points, from 1 to 8, 10 and 12. This now means the top 10 countries in both the jury and televote will receive points, adding a new level of excitement for hundreds of millions of viewers in Europe and beyond.

“After viewers have cast their votes by telephone, SMS or using the official app, each national spokesman from the 43 participating countries will be called in to present their votes of their professional jury.

“After the presentation of the scores from the juries, the televoting points from all the participating countries will be combined, providing one vote for each song. These televoting results will then be announced by the host, starting with the country receiving the fewest votes from the public and ending with the country that received the highest number of points, building towards a guaranteed climax.

Confused? Join the gang. Although we are assured by one Martin Osterdahl, executive producer for this year’s contest, that the new rules will cause us to be gagging in our seats.

“In previous years the winner has been known up to 20 minutes before the end of voting and that’s not good TV,” says Mr Osterdahl, courageously assuming that Eurovision could be “good TV” in any circumstances.

“This format change will inject a new level of excitement into the finish of the Eurovision Song Contest. Under the new system, the winner will only be known in the final minutes of the show."

Alternatively, here’s an idea: why not restrict Eurovision entries to those songs which convey the music industry’s usual rule of thumb for a hit, a memorable melody, and therefore cut the length of the entire contest to around one minute?

Auntie, are you being serious? Another re-make in store?

THE BBC has denied that London’s most famous pantomime, Julian Assange was originally in mind for the lead role in its forthcoming remake of Are You Being Served? but we are a bit sceptical.

Despite his remarkable similarity to actor John Inman, it seems that the Wikileaks editor was not the first choice to help Mrs Slocombe look for her pussy in the restaging of the saucy department store sitcom of 30 years ago, which is the BBC’s big hope to persuade the Government that it is a thrilling broadcaster in need of a bigger wad, and other such typically-Grace Brothers jokes.

This will doubtless come as a blow to writer and former MP Louise Mensch and the thousands of other Twitter enthusiasts who noted Assange’s stinging resemblance to Inman when photographs of the pair went viral a little while back and social media types asked if they were perchance related.

Unfortunately, as Mr Assange is currently appearing daily as Roger The Lodger in the popular face running at the Ecuador Embassy in Knightsbridge he was not available to mouth Mr Humphrey’s parts, especially not the famous “I’m free!” line.

Instead, BAFTA-winning Jason Watkins will play the mincing sales assistant in the special one-off which will co-star Coronation Street’s Sherrie Hewson as Mrs Slocombe, the dragon whom Mollie Sugden made a mistress of the double entendre. The BBC says the return of Are You Being Served? will pick up where the series last left off, which is handy for anyone born before 1985.

However, it stands to be an eye-opener for those since-born who may be confused by such Mrs Slocombe classics as, “I met my husband in a German air raid. His face was hit from an incoming incendiary. He threw me flat on me face and said: ‘Look out, here comes a big one!’”

Are You Being Served Again? will air on BBC One later this year as part of a BBC80 special which will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the television sitcom, but as the BBC of now is a different, inclusive beast from the broadcaster of back then, there are fears that the remake will be lacking in its characteristic sauce.

But as former Hollyoaks star Jorgie Porter has been cast to play Miss Croft, an assistant to Young Mr Grange, we are assured that the new show will have ample assets in that direction.
The Beatles sons hooked up to record James’s new single Too Hard, and the result reveals that as guitarists the pair are both well up there with the playing of their famous fathers. James, who was given his first Stratocaster by the legendary Carl Perkins, has been playing blistering guitar since he was a young teenager, impressing and delighting his parents that one of his first influences was Jimmy Hendrix, their old pal, with whom they used to go clubbing down at The Speakeasy.

Hence, one can hear the intensity of Hendrix’s passion in the superb lead guitar that James ripped out for The Light From Within, a gutsy, brave and brilliant song that Linda McCartney wrote for her posthumous solo album, Wide Prairie.

Linda’s song, the definitive anthem for those put down by life, was banned by the BBC on its anthem for those put down by life, Prairie.

For the Light From Within, a gutsy, brave and brilliant song that Linda McCartney wrote for her posthumous solo album, Wide Prairie.

Linda’s song, the definitive anthem for those put down by life, was banned by the BBC on its release in 1998, due to the idol of millions’ veggie queen’s bitter use of certain words that Radio 1 gets riled about. This was a shot as it denied many the chance to hear James’s singing guitar on Linda’s superb song. James recently hosted a sold-out, three-

ALTHOUGH Sir Paul McCartney has been having trouble getting VIP access to guest list-only events of late, the former Beatle has revealed that in the old days before the planet became celebrity-obsessed he himself would let anyone in, including Jesus.

Sir Paul, who was recently embarrassed when he was turned away on camera from the Grammys after-party hosted by the LA rapper Tyga, told a story from the back in the days they called The Sixties, it was a lot less hassle getting past the doorman especially when Macca was the man on the door.

He recalled that the night when The Beatles stayed away from their usual haunt at Abbey Road to record at Regent Sound Studios in Tottenham Court Road instead, he surprised his bandmates by turning up with the Messiah in tow.

"It was the night we were recording Fixing A Hole for the Sgt Pepper album," he remembers. "I brought along a guy who was Jesus."

As you do. The Beatles bassist had been at home in St John’s Wood when there was a not-unusual knock on the door. “I always used to answer it to anyone. If they were boring I’d say no and they would go away. But this night there was this guy saying ‘I’m Jesus Christ’. I was a bit shocked but I said ‘Well, you’d better come in’. I thought that probably wasn’t him but just in case it was, I wasn’t going to be the one to turn him away. So I gave him a cup of tea and we had a chat but then I had to go to this session.

“So I said to him, ‘Look, I’ve got to go to a session now but if you promise to be quiet and just sit in a corner, you can come’. So he did, he came to the session. The other guys were a bit surprised, asking ‘who’s that?’ I said, ‘It’s fine, be cool, he’s Jesus’. But I never saw him after that.”

Paul is not the only legend to have been turned away in his time. His pal Keith Richards once suffered the same fate in St Tropez, when a bouncer barred him from entering the wedding ceremony of fellow Rolling Stone Mick Jagger, at his marriage to his first wife Bianca Macias. As Keith was meant to be the best man at the wedding, which was swamped by a crush of international press, this could have been something of a problem until – legend has it – Keith drew attention to being left outside by throwing something heavy through a window. The shattering glass made the point and he was hastily rushed in.

Mind you, there were no breaking windows the night that Mick himself was barred from entry at the Blitz club owned by the late Steve Strange, for not looking cool enough.

Fellow New Romantic Tony Hadley recalled: “If you didn’t look right, Steve wouldn’t let you in, at The Blitz you couldn’t look normal. I remember one night he was feeling quite pleased with himself because he turned away Mick Jagger. I said ‘Steve, you’re not serious, you haven’t!’ He said, ‘Oh yes, he just didn’t look right.’”

FOR many people it is the quintessential nightmare scenario: you’re trapped in front of the camera’s glare wearing nothing but your underpants.

But that is exactly how Sacha Baron Cohen choose to promote to the media for his new film, Grimsby, in Leicester Square last week.

One of comedy’s most daring performers, it’s all part of the act.

No stranger to shock tactics, the west London actor has come to be known for his wild stunts and red carpet antics.

He turned up for the launch of his 2006 film Borat riding a cart pulled by a mule and befuddled countless celebrity guests as alter-ego rap poser Ali G.

In his latest role, the dim-witted football fan Nobby haphazardly flung into the perils of an all-out action adventure, the Golden Globe winner surprises once again.

Baron Cohen says it was always his dream to take on an espionage thriller but he had trouble convincing directors he could pull it off.

“I approached JJ Abrams and said,”

“Listen, I want you to cast me as an action hero’, and he said, ‘No’. Then I approached Spielberg and he said, ‘No’, and it went around until I realised I had to do my own action film.

“So I came up with this concept. The idea was: what would James Bond’s idiotic brother be like? What if James Bond was really from Grimsby and was actually a little thug as a kid?”

Following the comedy capers of his most recent reality-bending characters Bruno (Bruno) and General Aladdin (The Dictator), Nobby is a closer-to-home comic creation.

But co-star Mark Strong, who plays Baron Cohen’s MI6 assassin brother in the film, admits there was madness on set.

“Sacha’s on a mission to poke fun at everything he can and create disorder wherever possible,” he says.

“One particular day Sacha fell on me and smashed a bottle over my head repeatedly. Then I was drowned in a car, spent three days in a silicone sleeping bag, had a day on the African plains and was subjected to three days in a small house with Nobby’s entire family.”

Grimsby is in cinemas now.
BRAND new musical will land in the West End with a bang next month as Miss Atomic Bomb makes its world premiere at the St James Theatre. The show, which boasts a truly all-star cast, is set in the 1950s as the US military proudly tests its atomic bombs within sight of the Vegas Strip, writes Nicky Sweetland.

I was invited to watch a sneak preview of the musical, which somehow manages to encapsulate all of the innocence of the era without the show feeling at all old fashioned. From the small excerpt which we were treated to, it seems the writers have been able to bring the ideology of an old-time musical and mould it into a modern show which includes plenty of comedy, high tempo tap and some dazzling original music. Miss Atomic Bomb stars award-winning star of TV and theatre Catherine Tate, who is reunited with West End star Simon Lipkin following their critical and audience success in Sondheim's Assassins at the Menier Chocolate Factory.

They are joined by Daniel Boys – a finalist in BBC 1's Any Dream Will Do, rising musical theatre star Florence Andrews, the youngest member of the Strallen musical dynasty, Sasi Strallen and Dean John Wilson, who will take the lead role in Disney's Aladdin this Summer.

Dean plays a young soldier called Joey in the show and took some time out of rehearsals to chat to me about the new musical and about landing the title role in Aladdin. He told me a bit about the premise of Miss Atomic Bomb, which is based on real life events around the testing of nuclear bombs in the 1950s and the huge tourist trade which sprung up in response to the public's interest.

Tourists are flocking into town to cheer the blasts and see who will be crowned the Miss Atomic Bomb beauty queen and it seems only Joey can forecast the trouble ahead.

Dean tells me: “Joey’s a very interesting character. He’s very vulnerable but he’s lovable at the same time. He’s also intelligent, he’s very bright. He knows things that most people around that time didn’t know. The idea of radiation and of the radiation around these atomic blasts. You know the life span of atomic blasts is 50,000 years?”

The radiant new musical comedy is co-directed by the Olivier award-winning star of TV and theatre Catherinie Tate, who is reunited with West End star Simon Lipkin following their critical and audience success in Sondheim’s Assassins at the Menier Chocolate Factory.

The show, which boasts a truly all-star cast, is set in the 1950s as the US military proudly tests its atomic bombs within sight of the Vegas Strip, writes Nicky Sweetland.

The show goes through so many dynamics. One minute you’re laughing hilariously at some of the great actors in the show and then the next minute you just want to pour your heart out. In musical theatre nowadays you don’t really get a chance to care for characters but this show does that. This is what musical theatre’s about and this is what’s going to move musical theatre forward.”

Following his limited run in Miss Atomic Bomb, Dean is set to take on the biggest role of his career to date when he jumps upon a magic carpet at the Prince Edward Theatre for the big budget Disney musical version of Aladdin. The show transfers from Broadway, where it has achieved huge success, but gaining one of the most coveted roles in musical theatre wasn’t an easy task.

Dean said: “I had 11 auditions and I was living at home in Middlesbrough at the time. It was a hard process. I was living at home with my mum and coming down here and living on sofas."

When the young actor eventually got the call to say he had scooped the part, it came as a shock.

“I dropped the phone and had an almost out of body experience. My whole body went cold. I sat up and without me even thinking about it, tears just started dripping. I told my agent I had to call him back but because my tears had gone on the phone I couldn’t press the touch screen.”

Dean has had to fit in the preparation for Aladdin whilst rehearsing for Miss Atomic Bomb and has even been over to Broadway with his co-star, former Sugarbabe Jade Yousouf, for photo shoots and costume fittings.

The gruelling schedule is a synch for the athletic star however, who takes his fitness and diet very seriously and enjoys the challenge of getting his body ready as part of the preparation for a role.

“I eat incredibly clean and try to exercise every morning before I come to work. I’m an early bird and go for a power work and listen to an audio book or just go to the gym. I just try to set myself up for the day.”

You can see the West End heart-throb in Miss Atomic Bomb at the St James Theatre from March 7 until April 9. If you would like more details, you can visit the theatre’s website, stjamestheatre.co.uk
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This war is lost

War of the worlds **

THERE’S no doubt that Jeff Wayne’s 1978 concept album is a true rock masterpiec and gives the classic stories by HG Wells a depth and feeling only good music can achieve.

The part staged production, which opened last week at the Dominion Theatre, relies totally on this sumptuous score to give it any credibility in a show which feels for its entire duration like it hasn’t quite hit the mark, writes Nicky Sweetland.

Wayne himself conducts the onstage orchestra, which fills the auditorium with the booming soundtrack, but that’s where the majestic spectacle ends, as much of the rest of the production is very underwhelming.

No doubt the stage effects have cost a pretty penny but I found them corny, particularly the 30-foot alien which tiptoed across the stage every now and then and the overuse of fire and seemingly ill- choreographed flying sequences.

Performance-wise, the ensemble worked hard but a lot of the direction was repetitive and I found some of the plethora of stars who were wheeled in to promote the extravaganza, including David Essex, Daniel Bedingfield, Jimmy Nail and Michael Praed, needed to up their vocal delivery both in tone and pitch.

Although only fulfilling small roles, the girls were much better, with Heidi Range shining as the angelic Beth and Madalena Alberto once again proving her quality in both her exquisite singing and her general stage mastery – which totally outdid all of the other performers.

I shut my eyes for large parts of the show, partly because the lights flashing into the auditorium were at times blinding but also because it seemed like the best way to enjoy the music, which is worth the ticket price on its own.

There’s not really any need of the added accoutrements, in my humble opinion.

WEST End legend Michael Ball will host this year’s Olivier awards.

Dubbed by many as the theatre world’s answer to the Oscars, the Olivier Awards with MasterCard are the UK’s most prestigious stage honours and this year celebrate their 40th anniversary. They will be presented at a star-studded ceremony on Sunday, April 3 at the Royal Opera House.

Michael Ball, the celebrated musical theatre star, is a two-time Olivier Award winner whose illustrious career in the West End and on Broadway has spanned more than three decades. He won the Olivier Award for Best Actor in a Musical in 2008 for Hairspray and in 2013 for Sweeney Todd, and previously co-hosted the awards in 2011 and 2012.

Ball has now opened for the Magic Radio Audience Award. The award, created to celebrate London’s long running shows, is the only category voted for entirely by members of the public. This year there are 16 eligible shows for which theatre fans from across the world are able to vote.

To vote for your favourite long-running West End show visit www.olivierawards.com. Voting for the award closes at noon on Friday, March 11.

The four shortlisted shows will then perform on the ITV Stage in Covent Garden Piazza on April 3. The full event on the public stage in Covent Garden, featuring live performances from the Magic Radio Audience Award shortlisted shows and others, will be live-streamed worldwide via the new Olivier Awards’ YouTube channel.

Tony Moorley, content direc- tor, Magic Radio said: “We are thrilled to be asking our two million strong London audience to vote for their favourite West End Show at this year’s Olivier Awards. Our listeners love theatre and we can’t wait to bring the show to them live on air as well as announce the Magic Radio Audience Award winner live on the night from the Royal Opera House. May the best show win!”

This year’s awards will be broadcast live on Magic Radio’s new digital spin-off station, Mellow Magic. Extensive highlights of the awards will be broadcast on ITV on April 3, with the show available to view on the ITV Hub.
Mrs Henderson Presents

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I RE-WATCHED the 2005 film adaptation of Mrs Henderson Presents over Christmas in readiness for this highly anticipated theatrical event and I couldn’t wait to see how director Terry Johnson would adapt it into a full musical, writes Nicky Sweetland.

Of course, Martin Sherman’s plot already lent itself to the genre, as the tale is set in the famous Windmill Theatre in Soho, but I couldn’t have imagined just how much more charm and heart could be added to an already glorious story by giving it a soundtrack.

It starts in 1937 when Mrs Henderson (Tracie Bennett) finds herself as a widow with plenty of money but really nothing that interests her to spend it on.

She invests in the iconic theatre and with the help of manager Vivian Van Damm (Ian Bartholomew) transforms the venue into the place to be with a non-stop revue.

Then, as business begins to fail with the interruption of the Second World War, the pair are inspired by the Moulin Rouge and hit upon a way to keep the home fires burning within the hearts and loins of their loyal following.

Tony winner, Bennett is a tour de force as the lovable but formidable Mrs Henderson, a role which was played by the formidable Dame Judy Dench in the film version. Bennett trips about with a light gaiety and puts her heart and soul into the character, who has lost many of the people she loves and so channels her hopes and dreams into the Windmill and the cast of misfits who make it their home.

The rest of cast, which includes charming turns from Bartholomew, Jamie Foreman and Emma Williams, will be best remembered however, for showing more than their usual character traits.

The Windmill Theatre was one of the first and possibly the most famous theatres to use nude tableaux vivants as part of their revues.

The “living pictures” sought to marry the art forms of the stage with painting and photography and within this production are understandably the biggest talking point. Lit beautifully but at all times maintaining a homely realism, the models led by the golden voiced Williams expertly portray the art form without there ever being even the slightest suggestion of sordidness.

This is a really delightful show with great music, fabulous staging and a wholesome story which reminds us of the perils of war but also of the human stories behind each fallen hero. Highly recommended.

Win new soul EP

UP and coming soul artist Joanna Cooke has enjoyed huge success as a sampled vocalist but is now ready to take the next step in her recording career and following her acclaimed EP Remember Me is recording another set of tracks in the hope that an album will follow later in the year.

We have some copies of Joanna’s first EP to give away to some lucky London Weekly News readers. To win a signed copy of Remember Me simply send an email with JOANNA COOKE COMP as the subject heading along with your name, address and phone number to: competitions@londonweeklynews.co.uk

Closing date for entries is March 7, 2016.
THE Hippodrome casino in Leicester Square is fast becoming the capital’s premier cabaret venue, with a multitude of stars queuing up to perform within its opulent and intimate surroundings.

With an already packed schedule, the popular club has announced it will also be offering a regular comedy night on a Wednesday to get everyone over by that midweek, ‘hump day’ misery.

The programme offers some of the very best in UK and international comedy, with stand-up and alternative comedians sharing the billing and a catalogue of well known names gracing the stage at the central London casino.

Star of hit Channel 4 comedy Catastrophe Rob Delaney will headline at the venue on March 2. Delaney was awarded Funniest Person on Twitter by Comedy Central as well as on sites Rolling Stone, Huffington Post, Vice, Paste and Funny or Die. Rob is widely regarded as one of America’s most gifted stand-ups.

He will be joined by acclaimed stand-up host Jarlath Regan and YouTube star Adam Regan and YouTube star Adam Kay for an evening which promises to put a spring in your step.

Comedy at The Hippodrome takes a variety twist on March 30 with a selection box of alternative comedy circus and cabaret. The avant-garde, machine-gun comedy magician and vaudeville impresario Christian Lee invites the best cabaret stars and the comedy elite from the four corners of the world.

Comedy at the Hippodrome on Wednesday nights looks set to become a popular feature within the West End, with the club’s reputation for offering high quality entertainment only increasing.

For more information or to book tickets visit the website hippodromecasino.com

THE OLD VIC has announced further acts for the second of its Variety Nights which will take place on Sunday, March 6.

Poet and comedian Tim Key, the Echoes of Ellington Jazz Orchestra and winner of the Brass Category of BBC Young Musician of the Year 2014 Matilda Lloyd will join the previously announced line-up including world renowned magicians Jeff McBride and Eugene Burger, DJ and musician McKlasty and sensational all-male vocal group Only Men Aloud.

The evening will once again be hosted by comedian Mark Watson.

Artistic director Matthew Warchus said: “Following the enormous success of our debut event last November, I’m delighted to announce the next date in this hugely popular series of Old Vic Variety Nights.

“I’m very happy to say that comic genius Mark Watson will return as host to lead us, in his inimitable style, through a fun-filled evening of the best in comedy, music and magic.

“We’re looking forward to another wonderful evening in this wonderful theatre.”

NINA My-skow says society has lost its innocence and is hoping to bring back memories of a more simple era with her new venture, which reflects a golden age for many mature women.

The writer and broadcaster made the comments at the launch of a new musical based on the classic girl’s magazine Jackie. My-skow was the editor of the publication from 1974-78, which was famous for its hunk pullout posters and problem pages and at its height attracted more than one million readers.

My-skow has been brought in as part of the creative team behind the new production, which also includes the veteran choreographer Arlene Phillips.

My-skow said: “I think every woman will identify with what she’s going through.”

The weekly publication was first printed in 1964 and by its closure in 1993 had produced a whopping 1,534 issues. Celeb fans of the magazine include Emma Thompson, who had a photograph published on the readers’ letters page, and Fiona Bruce, who appeared as a comic strip model on a number of occasions.

Enthusiasts of the magazine can look forward to scenery which incorporates some of the most iconic page designs and songs by 70s heart-throbs including Donny Osmond and David Cassidy, in this affectionate portrait of life before smart phones and social media.

My-skow said: “I could never possibly have – fast forward nearly 50 years – imagined that Jackie could flourish and flower as a musical on stage. “If hope makes it resonate today still with those readers of all those years ago is the fact it was based, it was underlined, with a healthy dose of realism with the Cathy and Clare page and with the articles we tried to give them.”

Press were invited to watch a rehearsal of the new show last week and were treated to a very lively dance number to Mud’s Tiger Feet, with a young and vibrant cast lead by Janet Dibney, who is to play the eponymous heroine.

Dibney, who is best known for the 1980s ITV series The Two of Us alongside Nicholas Lyndhurst, is joined by the former EastEnders star Nicholas Bailey and the acclaimed West End actor Graham Bickley for the show, which will tour the UK. Jackie the Musical will visit the New Wimbledon Theatre in June.

If you would like more details you can visit the website jackiethemusical.com

Jackie’s back: read all about it!
Heat is on in this Fulham kitchen

Belinda Donovan is an experienced chef who was trained at the prestigious La Varenne cooking school in France. She compiled the Hammesrsmith and Fulham Cook Book in 2013 and is a regular writer of cookery columns and reviews. An enthusiast for all things Fulham, she has also written articles about the area’s rich local history. She is currently a Labour councillor for the Addison ward and served as Mayor of Hammesrsmith and Fulham for the year 2012-13

The Food and Drink page for West London

MARK HIX’S RECIPE OF THE WEEK

Asparagus tempura

Serves four

DEEP-FRYING asparagus in a light, crisp batter makes a delicious snack, starter or canapé. You can vary the sauces you serve this with from a classic Japanese number to Vietnamese nuoc cham, or even a wasabi-flavoured mayonnaise.

Ingredients

- 300-400g asparagus, with the woody stems removed
- Vegetable or corn oil for deep frying
- For the batter
  - 100g tempura flour
  - 1tbsp olive oil
  - 100g tem pura flour
  - 10g butter

M ethod

1. First, make the batter: mix the tempura flour with enough water to make a batter; then season.
2. Preheat about 8cm of oil to 160-180°C in a large, thick-bottomed saucepan or electric deep-fat fryer.
3. Dip the asparagus in the batter a few pieces at a time, drop into the oil and cook for 2-3 minutes, turning with a slotted spoon until lightly golden, then remove and drain on some kitchen paper and sprinkle lightly with sea salt.
4. Serve with a sauce of your choice on the plate or in little dishes.

L O N D O N W E E K L Y N E W S 21

Tuesday, March 1st 2016

editorial@londonweeklynews.co.uk

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On 15 February 2016 the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in pursuance of the powers conferred on him by Regulation 7 of the Regulations directed that the provisions of Regulation 6 of the Regulations shall be applied to the following applications within Class 3A of Schedule 3 of the Regulations for the sale and letting of premises in or land in the following areas of the designated conservation areas detailed below.

The direction shall have effect for a period of ten years and commence on 21st March 2016. The affected areas are:-

Hammersmith Grove Conservation Area:
- All properties/addresses within the Conservation Area
- Olympia and Avonmore Conservation Area:
  - All properties/addresses within the Conservation Areas
- Gunter Estate Conservation Area:
  - All properties/addresses within the Conservation Areas
- North End Road (62 - 70 evens on west side, 62B evens)
- Harwood Road - all addresses including Harwood House
- Walham Grove
- Parsons Green and More Park Conservation Areas:
  - All properties/addresses within the Conservation Areas
- Glazbury Road (4-34 evens, 1-31 odds)
- Gliddon Road (1 - 9 evens on east side)
- Gunterstone Road (1-103 odds, 2-44 evens)
- Edith Road (25 - 107 odd, 22 - 124 even) including Auriol Mansions.
- Glazbury Road (4-34 evens, 1-31 odds)
- Gliddon Road (1 - 9 evens on east side)
- Gunterstone Road (1-103 odds, 2-44 evens)
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The text contains information about planning applications in London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham. The applications include variations, extensions, and alterations to various buildings, such as the construction of new roofs, extensions, and changes to existing structures. The text also mentions the Planning Applications database and how to contact the planning department for more information.
Systems Support Technician

Based Penge SE20 £28,000

A new position has arisen within the South London business for a Systems Support Technician.

The role has varied responsibilities, most importantly the smooth running of our technical systems, managing the active directory, desktop support, printers and telephone systems.

Knowledge of or previous experience of ‘Future Proof’ booking system and ‘Crystal Reports’, is advantageous but not essential. South London Press is a multi media business and therefore operates a proactive digital strategy, incorporating social media, website and digital editions.

The successful candidate will be someone who is conscientious and hard working and holds the necessary qualifications to undertake this role.

Please email your current CV along with a covering letter outlining your experiences and skills relevant to this position to:

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Please feel free to call if you wish to discuss the position further.

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The South London Press, Mercury and London Weekly News are looking for Media Sales Executives. We need new team members to join our existing sales force to sell advertising solutions to businesses right across London.

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Book-keeper
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Capital Media Newspapers Ltd is the parent company of some of London’s oldest local newspapers, South London Press, The Mercury series and London Weekly News series based in South London and we are also Pulmans View from series in Dorselt.

Due to a recent change of ownership and re-organisation, the Penge office is looking for a Book-keeper.

The successful candidate will be an all-round accounting person who can deal with the Purchase Ledger, the Credit Control and Sales Ledger as well as other sundry accounting functions.

Along with the relevant qualifications to do this job, the successful applicant will have an excellent work ethic, able to work to deadlines, prioritise work load during busy times and roll up sleeves to help during quiet periods.

Contact Karen Sheppard
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Salary: £28,000

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Tel: 020 8768 4903
**Improving Rangers in cruise control**

IT may not quite be a distant memory yet, but at least the pain of Queens Park Rangers’ recent home drubbing by local rivals Fulham has been eased by a new unbeaten run of three games in a week.

First half goals from Tjaronn Cheyrou and Junior Hoilett (a penalty) sealed R’s fortunes against Birmingham City on Saturday. The victory was just QPR’s third since Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink took over as manager and the first time they had scored more than once at Loftus Road since December 15.

Rangers move up to 11th, 11 points adrift of the play-off places with 12 games to go.

Hasselbaink said: “It was a very satisfying performance from us. We played good football, took control of the game from minute one and were deserved winners.”

“The first goal was very pleasing, with an overlapping run from ‘Percy’ (James Perch) and a lovely finish from Chey, who took his chance very well. “We looked in control then and kept our concentration well against a very good Birmingham City team.”

**Front to back**

He added: “I was pleased with how we defended from front to back. Alex (Smithies) had to punch a few balls and come from a few crosses. He had one save to make from a header and he did. “The guys in front of him were good. They defended well – and that gave us the base to produce a good performance. “I thought we got it right tactically, which is something we worked on. That is always pleasing. “Let’s not forget, Birmingham are a very good side. They are well organised and have only conceded three goals in their last eight games. “Credit has to go to us for the win today – I can’t have any complaints with any of the boys. I thought we cruised home in the end.”

Victory rounded off an unbeaten week for R’s following back-to-back away draws at Bolton Wanderers and Sheffield Wednesday, and Hasselbaink added: “It was needed today. We owed it to ourselves and to the fans after our last performance here against Fulham. “We showed – the boys showed – the fans that we care. “It was a very solid performance from us.”

After visiting struggling Milton Keynes Don’s this Saturday, Rangers return home to face Peris County on Tuesday.

**THE Football Association is investigating an alleged coin-throwing incident at QPR on Saturday.**

R’s players were apparently targeted as they celebrated Junior Hoilett’s penalty goal.

Police made three arrests – one for racially aggravated assault on a police officer, one for entering the pitch and one for a Public Order offence.

All three men arrested at Loftus Road have been bailed pending further enquiries.

Meanwhile, QPR has begun its own investigation into the incident, while Birmingham have promised stern action against anyone found responsible.

A QPR statement said: “A coin from the School End stand, in which the visiting supporters were situated, was thrown towards the Rangers players as the R’s celebrated their second goal. “The club will continue to review video footage and liaise with the Metropolitan and West Midlands police. “A Birmingham City FC spokesman said: “If anybody is found to have thrown a coin, we will take the strongest possible action. As a club, we utterly condemn that sort of behaviour. “We will be liaising with the relevant bodies, including West Midlands Police to investigate such allegations.”

A Hoops fan was also treated for a broken nose in the aftermath of the game but it was reported that one supporter from the home end was able to encroach onto the playing surface unimpeded and confront Blues fans.

A statement from the police read: “From around 2.30pm on Saturday, February 27, a large number of Birmingham supporters caused a disturbance in Ellerstreet Road near to Loftus Road Stadium. “Cordons were put in place to assist police officers in ensuring public safety. In addition, officers used batons to restore order where the behaviour of supporters was violent and potentially dangerous.”

**FOOTBALL FIXTURES**

Saturday, March 5

CHELSEA v Stoke City, 3.00

Milton Keynes Dons v QPR, 3.00

Reading v FULHAM, 3.00

Tuesday, March 8

FULHAM v Burnley, 7.45

QPR v Derby County, 7.45

Wednesday, March 9

CHELSEA v Paris Saint-Germain (UCL), 7.45

**Beware ‘combustible’ Conte**

CURRENt Italy manager Antonio Conte is the man set to replace Guus Hiddink as Chelsea boss at the end of this season. It’s believed that the controversial manager, who led Juventus to three consecutive Scudettos in the years in the doldrums before taking up his role with the national side in 2014, has accepted a three-year deal and will officially take over the helm at Stamford Bridge once Italy’s Euro 2016 campaign is over. But the 46-year-old is no shrinking violet. If Jose Mourinho is viewed as a combustible character, then Conte will certainly fan the flames in what looks set to be another volatile period in Chelsea’s history.

**Court case**

However, there is still the prospect of a court case hanging over Conte’s head for possible sport control.

And let’s not forget that he was handed a 10-month ban – reduced to four – over allegations of failing to report a match-fixing attempt during his time as Siena’s manager. Conte has always protested his innocence.

There are numerous suggestions with his team-talks when things are not going well make Sir Alex Ferguson’s legendary in-your-face ‘hair-dry’ rants at players look like nursery rhyme renditions.

**CHELSEA could launch a bid for Crystal Palace’s highly-rated centre-back Scott Dann if they decide to give up on long-term target John Stones of Everton.**

Manchester City are keen on the 21-year-old, too, so a swift move for Dann, 29, could ease Blues’ central defensive problems if, as expected, John Terry leaves Stamford Bridge at pastures new in the summer.

**FULHAM from back page**

Hammersmith end saw Fulham fall behind and unable to recover despite creating numerous chances.

“It is true that we created many chances,” Jokanovic said. “We could have scored some goals but we showed many weaknesses in our defence. They punished us right at the very beginning of the game. “We gifted them with many presents. We need to be more solid with a more positive mentality in order to compete. “We prepare for a very long game and we aim not to give them very many chances. With the first touch in our half they scored their goal. “We then had a period with an injured player (Ryan Fredericks) and we gave away a penalty. At that stage we are down two goals. “Then it’s not easy against a team like Middlesbrough to recover. We tried, we made chances but we did not play a particularly good game. “We were unable to score the goal to make it difficult for them at the end and they deserve these three points.”

Some fans questioned why Fredericks, who was virtually a pedestrian in the build-up to Boro’s second goal, was still on the field having suffered a heavy fall on his back which clearly troubled him. Moussa Dembele replaced him soon after the penalty and was unlucky to see an overhead kick touched over the bar. The fact that the striker, who has 10 goals to his name this season, began the game on the bench was another cause for raised eyebrows when a somewhat defensive Fulham team was announced to the crowd.

Maybe Jokanovic has decided that with Dembele almost certain to be leaving Fulham in the summer, he will use the remaining months of this campaign as a period for experimentation. It will also be interesting to see if he keeps faith with his favoured back three formation, which has so far produced mixed results.

Defeat by the side now lying third in the second tier saw Whites slip to 20th place. To add insult to injury, a late red card was awarded to Richard Stearman, who had been recalled in place of the suspended Fernando Amorebieta after he had been sent off in the 1-1 midweek draw at Leeds United.

Not that the head coach was looking for any excuses. “It has been from last year that we have been inconsistent,” he continued. “It is very important for us to remain positive, believe in ourselves and push very hard to do our jobs. “We have to move forward in this way and we have an obligation to fight to the very last moment.”

Fulham visit Reading on Saturday bidding to complete a league double over the Royals, who were thumped 4-2 at The Cottage last October. Back in SW6, Whites face another tough examination next Tuesday when current leaders Burnley are in town.
CHELSEA match-winner Branislav Ivanovic and Gary Cahill are likely to retain their central defensive partnership for Saturday’s home Premier League game against Stoke City while John Terry continues his battle to regain full fitness.

With crucial matches the following week, starting with a Champions League second leg at The Bridge against Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday and a tricky FA Cup tie at Everton three days later, manager Guus Hiddink is weighing up the prospect of keeping Terry out of the side to keep him fresh for the vital cup matches, the only trophies left to fight for this season.

The skipper is fighting a twin battle to overcome a hamstring problem and prove to Roman Abramovich that he deserves another contract after his current deal expires at the end of June. Terry himself has revealed that the club have yet to offer him a new one and feels sure they won’t.

Even if it, it appears that Hiddink is reluctant to reinstate Terry to his centre-back berth, because Cahill and Ivanovic are proving themselves more than capable replacements for him and the injured Kurt Zouma, whose season has already been curtailed by an anterior cruciate ligament injury.

Despite ‘return to training last week, Hiddink has said that it was the 35-year-old who decided he wasn’t ready to play in the 2-1 win at Southampton on Saturday.

Not ready

“We looked at it and asked him how he was feeling. He said, ‘I feel OK but not ready to play’,” confirmed Hiddink.

LWN Sport went to press before tonight’s league clash at Norwich City, although Hiddink revealed that Terry would be an unlikely starter.

“I have experience in the past with these kinds of injuries,” said Hiddink. “When someone thinks ‘Ah, I’m OK’ but the demands of the game are a little bit different. Then I prefer to wait, especially in relation to the games coming up (PSG and Everton).

But surely Terry is chomping at the bit to prove himself worthy of a new contract?

“Yeah, but I talked to him and I said, ‘Let’s take some time, not to rush things.’ It’s nothing to do with the contractual situation,” said the interim manager.

Terry injured his hamstring and tendons in the 5-1 grumping of Newcastle United two weeks ago and Hiddink is not surprised it has taken so long for the defender to recover.

“For hamstring and tendon injuries, it depends on the grade of the seriousness of the injury. But normally it is longer than, say, an ankle injury, and I have the experience to wait even longer than everyone thinks.”

That comment hints that Hiddink will keep Terry out of the frame on Saturday against Stoke. Will Terry need a league game under his belt before he is ready to face PSG?

“We will see how he reacts and if he needs a game, we might organise an intense game – not a 11 v 11 but maybe six v six, with intensity, at Cobham, but it will be very tight (for him to be ready).”

While Terry is out of action vice-captain Ivanovic is revelling in the responsibility of leading the side. Ivanovic popped up in the 89th minute at St Mary’s to head home the winner after Cesc Fabregas had levelled Shane Long’s first-half strike with 15 minutes left. Hiddink was not surprised.

“It is part of his job and he is doing it very well,” he said.

“We execute the corners in training every week. But training is different to a real game. He has done it many times.

“Firstly, he is a very courageous character. Secondly, you have to be equipped in the timing and execution, which he is perfect at doing.

“He is not a big shot but he is good at the short commands and that is what I like very much as a manager, because we do in training and discuss in team meetings. I want the key players to do in matches.”

Dressing room leaders

So without a Frank Lampard, Petr Cech and Didier Drogba, all now plying their trade away from Stamford Bridge, are there enough leaders in the squad? Unsurprisingly, Hiddink thinks so.

“Yes, that is why I am happy,” he said. “Players like Cesc Fabregas are doing that job too. So it’s good to see some players step up. Not just in their personal performance but in their organisation tactically.

“Aripi (Cesar Azpilicueta) does a lot of shouting and coaching,” he said. “Diego (Costa), in his way, does some coaching. But I also like Oscar and Willian, who are gifted by nature and also take command in this team.”

After registering their first back-to-back Premier League wins of the season, Blues are 11th in the table, well outside the top four needed for Champions League qualification. But on the other hand, they are also now a long distance away from relegation, a looming prospect under Jose Mourinho’s tutelage. Did the players simply stop playing for the former manager, Hiddink was asked?

“Of course they were disappointed about (the first) half of the season,” he said.

“And the crowd were fully right to react in the first two/three games (after Mourinho’s sacking). I am convinced that the team had to react. We talked about that. The team is key to reacting. They must try to get the support of the crowd again.

“You can’t ask the crowd, ‘don’t think about what happened in the bad results’ – the team must show the desire to play. Then the crowd will start supporting again, and against Southampton they were tremendous in their support.”

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Focus on Craven Cottage

By TONY MCDONALD

FULHAM striker Ross McCormack admits he is aiming for the top of the league goal scoring charts.

Although McCormack says he had set himself no personal goals target for this season, the fact that he is just four goals behind the Championship’s leading scorer, Andre Gray of Championship’s leading scorer, Andre Gray of

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