

Daily Universal Register

UK: Kwasi Kwarteng, the business secretary, and Lord Hague of Richmond, the former foreign secretary, are among speakers at the Make UK manufacturing conference.

Nature notes



It looked as though a tiny hummingbird was hovering around the purple honesty flowers. It was a dark-edged bee fly, a fluffy

creature with a long proboscis and a characteristic style of flight. That proboscis really comes into its own with deep-throated flowers like those of wild dead-nettles, as it sips nectar it picks up pollen, which is transferred to the next bloom. Bee flies, in common with perhaps 40 per cent of insects, are parasites: disguised as bumblebees, they flick their eggs towards the dark chambers of ground-nesting bees and wasps. When they hatch, the larvae feed on the host's food stores and eat the grubs. MELISSA HARRISON

Birthdays today



Katy Adler, pictured, BBC Europe editor, 50; Steve Barclay, Conservative MP for North East Cambridgeshire, chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, minister for the Cabinet Office (2021-Feb 2022), 50; Patti Boulaye, singer, *Stop It Like It* (1976), and actress, *Bisi, Daughter of the River* (1977), 68; Rob Brydon, actor and comedian, *Marion & Geoff* (2000-03), 57; Kathy Cook, athlete, three-time Olympic bronze medalist (1980, 1984), 62; Poppy Delevingne, model and actress, *Rivera* (2019-20), 36; Peter Duncan, TV presenter, *Blue Peter* (1980-86), and chief scout (2004-09), 68; Ben Elton, author and comedian, co-writer, *The Young Ones* (1982-84), 63; Dr Timothy Evans, apothecary to the Queen and to the Royal Household, 67; Richard Eyre, chairman, Internet Advertising Bureau, 68; Nona Gaprindashvili, chess player, 81; Rebecca Hall, actress, *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2008), 40; Sir David Harrison, chemical engineer, master, Selwyn College, Cambridge (1994-2000), 92; Christina Hendricks, actress, *Mad Men* (2007-15), 47; Ken Hom, TV chef, *Ken Hom's Chinese Cookery* (1984), 73; Mary Hopkin, singer, *Three Were the Days* (1968), 72; Edward Kessler, founder director, Woolf Institute, Cambridge, 59; Michael Kiwanuka, musician, *Kiwanuka* (2019), winner of the Mercury prize (2020), 35; Sir Alan Parker, founder (1987) and chairman, Brunswick Group LLP consultancy, 66; Carlo Rovelli, theoretical physicist and writer, *Helgoland* (2020), 66; Mona Siddiqui, professor of Islamic and interreligious studies, University of Edinburgh, 59; Sandi Toksvig, comedian and presenter, *QI*, 64; Akio Toyoda, president, Toyota Motor Corporation, 66; Sarah Rose Troughton, lord-lieutenant of Wiltshire, 69; Frankie Valli, singer, *Big Girls Don't Cry* (1962), 88; Allan Wells, sprinter, Olympic gold medalist (1980), 70; Rachel Zegler, actress, *West Side Story* (2021), 21.

On this day

In 1494 Christopher Columbus sighted Jamaica, and landed on the island on May 5. The native Arawak tribes were later decimated under Spanish rule: in 1898 Golda Meir, the fourth prime minister of Israel (1969-74), was born in Kyiv.

The last word

"The winds and waves are always on the side of the ablest navigators." Edward Gibbon, historian and MP. *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776)



Labour's Left

Though Sir Keir Starmer has made some progress in restoring the party's credibility, he should move faster and further against his internal critics

Labour's record in general elections since 1979, as Lord Mandelson observed at an interview last year, goes like this: lose, lose, lose, Blair, Blair, lose, lose, lose. He might have extended the point by noting that only three Labour leaders have secured a parliamentary majority, of whom only one was born in the past 100 years.

This weekend marked a quarter-century since Sir Tony Blair's first landslide election victory, and the party faces a mountainous task to win office let alone emulate that achievement. Under Sir Keir Starmer's leadership Labour has made distinct but fitful progress, from a very low base. Little will be gained by caution. Having won the leadership by persuading party members that he was an authentic upholder of left-wing virtues, Sir Keir should make a virtue of boldness in jetsetting these, just as Sir Tony did on becoming leader in 1994.

In local elections across Britain this week, about 6,800 seats in 200 councils are being contested. Despite the damage the government has sustained from successive scandals about the behaviour of its MPs and Downing Street parties during lockdown, Labour may struggle to make gains. The last time most of these seats were contested was in 2018, a comparatively strong year for Labour in a decade of permanent opposition. And

for all their problems since, the Conservatives won a by-election seat from Labour less than a year ago, taking Hartlepool for the first time, in a humiliating rebuff for Sir Keir.

The extent of Labour's defeat in 2019 under Jeremy Corbyn makes any notion that the party can secure government by a mere swing of the electoral pendulum improbable. It needs to give voters a reason not just to switch sides but for investing trust in it. Mr Corbyn broke records for negative ratings for leader of the opposition, and it is not credible for Labour to suppose that this was due to unfavourable coverage in the media. Few will forget Mr Corbyn's refusal to tackle antisemitism in the party, his willingness to trust in the good faith of Vladimir Putin, his evasiveness over Brexit and his incomprehension of technical details of policy.

Sir Keir was slow to distance himself from so baneful a legacy, but he has begun the task. He needs now to hasten it. His allies are urging him not just to confront the hard left within the party, but to remove them. Mr Corbyn had the Labour whip withdrawn for claiming that antisemitism under his leadership was "dramatically overstated for political reasons by our opponents inside and outside the party, as well as by much of the media". He must never get it back, and his supporters with-

in the parliamentary party have done quite enough to justify similar action.

Labour in government, though not always in opposition, has supported a strong defence, including a nuclear capability. Nato was in part created by the diplomacy of Clement Attlee's post-war Labour administration. It is extraordinary that, in the gravest European crisis since 1945, not all Labour MPs recognise Russian aggression for what it is. In February, Sir Keir threatened to withdraw the whip from 11 MPs, including John McDonnell, Diane Abbott and Richard Burgon, unless they withdrew their names from a statement on Ukraine by the Stop the War Coalition.

They did, but should not have been given the option. Despite its name, Stop the War is not anti-war at all but anti-western. It holds that the Ukraine crisis has been caused by Nato rather than Russian expansionism. There should not be a place in Labour's ranks for a current of opinion that extenuates aggression and echoes the claim of the Kremlin. Attlee himself ensured that Labour MPs who held such views were expelled from the party. Sir Keir should do likewise. If he does not, the Conservatives will relish the opportunity to depict him as being at the mercy of the party's far left. He cannot allow them that luxury.

Pension Problems

High inflation imposes costs on even supposedly generous retirement schemes

High inflation is damaging. It rewards imprudent borrowers while penalising savers, and especially those on fixed incomes. One effect of the rise in inflation in Britain to its current 12-month rate of 7 per cent is to punish retired people holding what has long been considered the safest form of private pension. It exemplifies how, with an ageing population and economic uncertainty, Britain has a problem with pensions. Millions of retired people face unanticipated risks to their income. The system badly needs review and reform.

A perverse effect of inflation affects roughly 4.2 million former private-sector employees in Britain who draw "defined benefit" (DB) pensions. These schemes guarantee a particular level of income to those who reach retirement age. The risk hence lies with the employer, who may pay up regardless of whether financial markets go up or down. It is a more generous arrangement than "defined contribution" (DC) pension schemes, in which employee and employer contributions are invested in funds, whose performance determines how much income a person then receives.

DB schemes in the private sector are typically

indexed to inflation. Yet almost all impose a cap: the inflation-linked element goes to a maximum of 5 per cent, and sometimes only 2.5 per cent or even zero. With the Bank of England expecting inflation to reach 8 per cent this year, and some private forecasters projecting 10 per cent, the loss to retirement incomes once this is taken into account will be dramatic. With inflation at 10 per cent, the average person with a DB scheme will lose about £400 a year. Even assuming that annual inflation returns rapidly to the Bank's target rate of 2 per cent, this loss will be irrecoverable.

Britain adopted inflation targeting in 1992, since when policymakers have broadly achieved their aim of price stability. Hence the inflation cap on DB pensions has not previously been a problem. It is now. So too is the effect of inflation on the purchasing power of the state pension, which went up by 3.1 per cent last month. Moreover, there is the plight of holders of DC pensions. These schemes have almost entirely replaced DB pensions in the private sector, because of the high cost of guaranteeing benefits in an environment of low interest rates. Global stock markets fell sharply last month,

ensuring that those invested in the markets have lost immediate income. If they take money out of their pension, they will find it harder to make up that lost ground. Investment is for the long term, and people may have an urgent need for money.

Governments have enacted sensible reforms on pensions in the past 25 years. These include raising the state retirement age and equalising it between men and women, abolishing the requirement that people must use their pension pot to buy an annuity, and launching the automatic enrolment of most employees to their company pension scheme. But there is still a potential crisis of pensioner poverty because of these pressures on private provision and the state pension.

Pensioners are especially vulnerable to high inflation, and the Bank of England has a statutory obligation to bring inflation back to target. There needs to be a political consensus to ensure that workers fully understand how important it is to belong to occupational pension schemes and to build up a pot of savings throughout their careers. Their happiness and life plans may well depend on what they accrue.

Raise the Tone

A young composer stresses melody in preference to noise

Mozart began his career as a composer at the age of five, and Mendelssohn at the decidedly more mature milestone of ten. Alma Deutscher, aged 17, likewise possesses virtuosity well beyond her years, having premiered a violin concerto, a symphonic piece and an opera by her tenth birthday. Having been raised in Surrey, she now lives in Vienna and has amassed a big following of young people on the TikTok social media platform.

Perhaps as distinctive as Deutscher's talent is her taste. To those new to classical music, she stresses the importance of melody in contrast to the ugliness she perceives in some modern music.

She explains: "People who push noise down the throats of audiences and pass that off as music that only very educated people can understand — these are the people killing classical music."

Concertgoers of all ages will surely nod in recognition. Atonality — that is, music without a sense of key or tonal centre — is an immense force in the music of the 19th and 20th centuries, and with good reason. Music develops, and atonality is not synonymous with being dissonant.

But it has to be said that some other modern movements do appear to have more devoted to the orchestra than the audience. Their music may

have mathematical elegance without being easy on the ear. It takes an effort of will to, for example, sit through the evening-long performances of Karlheinz Stockhausen's 1970s works with electronics such as *Sternklang* (which, according to the composer "is music for concentrated listening in meditation, for the sinking of the individual into the cosmic whole").

By contrast, Deutscher seeks audiences rather than disciples. She is surely right to hold that the surest way to introduce her generation to the joys of classical music is to provide something beautiful rather than merely ingenious.

Falklands conflict still an open wound, says Argentine ambassador

The memory of the Falklands conflict is an "open wound" for Argentina, its ambassador to Britain said to mark the 40th anniversary.

Javier Figueroa said fighting over the islands' sovereignty was "ridiculous", comparing it to the relationship between North and South Korea.

He said most young people in the UK had no idea "Britain has a beef with Argentina" in the South Atlantic but in

Argentina it has "huge visibility in public opinion and the ruling class".

"In Argentina the war is still a wound, an open wound. It's almost 40 years, but in Argentina it's a deeply emotional issue," he said. "It's not only emotional, it is political as well. The question is the highest priority of my country in foreign policy."

He said the issue was like a "monster in a room roaring" when it came to rela-

tions between the two countries, and he wants to re-engage in negotiations with the British government to discuss the islands' sovereignty.

"It's unbelievable that after 40 years we have a situation like North Korea-South Korea in the South Atlantic, which is ridiculous," he said.

Figueroa referred to polling by the veterans' charity Help for Heroes which suggested the conflict could

become forgotten. Half of those aged 18-34 said that they did not know when it was; one in ten thought the islands were in the Channel.

"I am completely sure that the new generation [do not] have any idea regarding the war or that Britain has a beef with Argentina regarding the South Atlantic," Figueroa said. "Any war is a mistake. I think it's a tragedy, but there were almost 1,000 lives lost in

that war, 600 Argentinean soldiers and servicemen, and 300 or more British soldiers lost their life, and I think we have to pay homage for the families."

"Argentina recovered democracy more than 40 years ago and in a way the war was instrumental in that, in a way accelerated a process in which the civil society and the political parties in Argentina began to regroup and fight against the dictatorship."

Teenage melody maker is a classical hit on TikTok

Enough with the dissonance of the modern age, the teenager said. And let TikTok do the talking.

A 17-year-old British classical music composer who has rejected "ugly" modern music in favour of the "beautiful melodies" of the past has become a hit on the very modern TikTok social media platform (David Sanderson writes).

Alma Deutscher was raised in Surrey but moved to Vienna with her family where she now studies at the city's university.

She has been frowned upon by the musical elite for her rejection of "atonal" contemporary classical music in favour of unfashionable melody.

The teenager has however begun to attract enormous social media audiences, with one video of her



conducting a small Viennese choir attracting nearly a million views within hours of it being posted.

Deutscher said the size of her audience on TikTok, which is primarily used by those under 30, showed that classical music could attract new listeners, if it was easier to listen to.

"The essence of music is melody and if you take that away there is nothing," she said.

"People who push noise down the throats of audiences and pass that off as music that only very educated people can understand, these are the people killing classical music."

Deutscher, who in her 2019 acceptance speech for the European Culture Prize said she hoped a "more tolerant age is dawning when melody and beauty will



once again be permitted", admits that her musical influences do not extend much into the 20th century.

While there is Mahler, Mozart and Beethoven there is no Igor Stravinsky, whose influential *Rite of Spring* in 1913 brought



experiments in dissonance to the forefront of the classical music world. "It is extremely easy to create ugliness," Deutscher said. "That needs absolutely no talent. But to create beauty? That is a challenge. And I don't want to inflict misery on

my audience or myself. This fanatical, ideological idea that anything that has a hint of melody is old fashioned and that anything that is not "noise" is derivative, is nonsense. People say that music has to reflect the ugliness of the



Alma Deutscher made her debut at Carnegie Hall in New York in 2019. She had written a violin concerto by the age of ten

modern world. But you can take the ugliness of the world and through music turn it into something beautiful and you can see it has such a strong effect on people."

While producers of classical music events such as the BBC Proms, and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra have made huge strides in attracting younger audiences, there is still a perception among younger generations that classical is a "stuffy, rule-ridden" world.

Deutscher said it had been a "dream" to reach young people and show them that classical music "has the best tunes and harmonies".

She started playing the piano aged two and by ten had premiered a violin concerto and an opera, said she was pleased she could not now be called a "child prodigy". "I was furious when I was called that," she said. "But I am too old now."

Not too old for TikTok though. In music beauty should trump integrity, leading article, page 27

Order is restored for the man who lost his manhood

Tom Whipple

A man has spoken of his delight at having his penis restored after an operation involving a skin graft from his arm.

Malcolm McDonald, 47, spent six years with a reconstructed penis attached to his arm, awaiting an operation to move it to his groin. He said that he had given up hope of regaining his penis, and did not believe the nine-hour operation would be successful.

"The first thing I did was I looked down and I was like, 'Oh my days. They got it right this time'."

McDonald, a former alcoholic, lost his penis after a blood infection. Doctors constructed a replacement from a skin graft but had to abandon an operation in 2015 to attach it to his groin because of a lack of oxygen in the blood, possibly caused by drinking and smoking. This meant it stayed on his arm.

Having it there, McDonald told a Channel Four documentary, which was broadcast last night, made choosing clothes difficult. It also caused problems when cooking but made little difference when he played darts.

A follow-up operation, costing an



Malcolm McDonald had his newly constructed penis attached to his arm for six years

estimated £50,000, was delayed in part because of the pandemic and in part because McDonald did not turn up for appointments. The operation to attach the penis was performed by surgeons at University College Hospital, in London. It will be followed up by more surgery, which will include attaching a

pump in the scrotum so that he can have sex.

McDonald said it was strange coming to terms with having a penis again. "It's been 12 years. It didn't come with instructions," he said. Referring to the scar on his forearm where it used to be, he said: "It's been a nightmare but it's gone now, the little bummer, put to rest." He added that he was looking forward to a "bit of normality. I walked around for six years with a [penis] on my arm. Something to tell the grandkids."

Operations to construct penises are used in transgender people transitioning from female to male, and also in those born with intersex disorders. What marked out McDonald's experience was the length of time in which he had it on his arm. McDonald said he hoped the operation could be a turning point. "My luck in life hasn't been too good so far," he said, "but it can only go bad for so long, can't it?"

Pregnant climber won't give up in face of online 'bullies'

Nadeem Badshah

Britain's most decorated elite climber, Shauna Coxsey, has defended her decision to continue the sport while pregnant and has hit back at online "bullying".

The double World Championship bronze medalist is 38 weeks pregnant with her first child and has faced criticism on social media for her decision to keep climbing.

Coxsey, 29, who has been involved in the sport since she was three, told the BBC: "I wouldn't put my baby in danger. People think I might be able to fall and land on my stomach, which is something I have never ever done or seen happen before."

"For me to share a bit and communicate how I have gone about this pregnancy and say it is possible to keep climbing in a safe way has been really important. It's frustrating that other women are getting this judgment and choosing to give up something they love and are comfortable with because



Shauna Coxsey said that the sport was not a danger to her unborn baby

of the fear of judgment. It is bullying."

Coxsey retired from competitive climbing after the sport's Olympic debut in last year's Tokyo Games, where she created history as Britain's first competitor in the event.

"People perceive me climbing as risky when I am actually climbing so well within my comfort zone," she said. "It feels way more risky for me to walk down the street. I feel much more likely to trip over on a bumpy road than I do to go up an easy climbing wall."