

# OVERSEAS

THE JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE

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The secrets of the city



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The Royal Over-Seas League is dedicated to promoting international friendship in the commonwealth and beyond. A not-for-profit private members' organisation, we've been bringing like-minded people together since 1910.

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WELCOME



‘Members make their way from all over the world to come and stay at our clubhouse, meeting other members from across the globe, all right on the doorstep of the very best that the capital has to offer’

2024 has been yet another wonderful year for the Royal Over-Seas League, the highlight of which was His Majesty The King's decision to become our Patron. We also hosted fascinating speakers as part of our Public Affairs series, from former President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso to Sir Bill Browder, activist and writer, and our Annual ROSL lecture by historian Sir Niall Ferguson. Our vibrant and varied arts programme saw tenor Dafydd Jones become the 72<sup>nd</sup> winner of our Annual Music Competition. And members were tempted by numerous food and beverage events and collaborations. As the year draws to a close, we're planning another season of stimulating events and delicious dining experiences for the year ahead; watch this space!

The theme of this edition of *Overseas* is the Metropolis, and given ROSL's location at the beating heart of one of the world's most special of cities, it's always enlivening to feel the impact of the city here at ROSL. As well as our UK members from up and down the country, our overseas members make their way from all over the world to come and stay at our clubhouse, meeting other members from across the globe, all right on the doorstep of the very best that the capital has to offer.

Our lead feature is a piece from the new Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Alastair King DL, who shares the inside track about this historic and international role representing the City of London at home and overseas, and we also have an interview with Professor Peter Scott, President and CEO of the Commonwealth of Learning in Vancouver, who gives us an insight into the power of education in promoting equality across the Commonwealth.

Our Heritage at the Heart campaign is now live and gratefully accepting donations to fund the renovation of our lobby area. Anything you are able to donate will contribute hugely to the maintenance of our beautiful clubhouse and the restoration of a space that welcomes visitors from all over the world to ROSL and London.

Wishing you all a very happy New Year.

**Dr Annette Prandzioch**  
DIRECTOR-GENERAL



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## From the EDITOR

As the new year dawns, the city streets outside ROSL provide a much-needed jolt of inspiration. The wind may be chilling and the rain relentlessly driving, but there's something soul-lifting about being immersed in the sights and sounds of the metropolis; the hotchpotch of beautifully preserved churches, cutting-edge skyscrapers, iconic arts institutions and coffee shops packed with the chronically under-caffeinated, all making their way back to work after the Christmas break. This edition is a tribute to cityscapes and their diverse glory, celebrating these melting pots of cultures, communities and ideas, full of surprising contrasts and clashes, each with an undeniable energy all their own.

We're delighted that the new Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Alastair King, has penned us a piece on his very modern plans for this historic role, and how utilising the worldwide appeal of our city's professional and financial services will take the city into a new era; I learn more about a city that must live in the shadow of volcanic eruptions and earthquake threats; and we meet some of our culturally clued-up Food & Beverage suppliers who recommend the must-visit sights of their home cities – it makes for perfect new year travel inspiration. We discover the magic behind traditional Chinese New Year dishes in anticipation of another delicious menu at ROSL this February, and you might be as surprised as I was to learn more about the colourful life of Scottish poet Robert Burns. Wishing all our members a very happy new year.

**Rosie Allen**

editor@rosl.org.uk

# 6

'More diasporic communities call London their home than any other world city... (let's) celebrate each communities' contribution...'



# A CITY FOR THE FUTURE

London's Financial sector, based in the Square Mile, will be key to the UK's growth and social mobility in the coming years. Below: Mansion House – home and office of The Lord Mayor of London

Think 'Lord Mayor of London' and you'll conjure images of historical pomp and pageantry; but for newly elected Alderman Alastair King DL, securing the city's future by encouraging investment in growing financial, services and professional sectors, the most effective engines for social mobility, is key to securing the growth and opportunity that Londoners deserve



**I**n November 2024, I became the 696<sup>th</sup> Lord Mayor of London. This remarkable role dating from 1189 has gone through many iterations in its 835-year history. The current incarnation is to be the Global Ambassador for the United Kingdom's Financial, Professional and Legal Services (FPS) sector. This is a nationwide role, not simply limited to London. It will see me representing to the world the 2.4million people who work in these sectors in the UK, amounting one in 13 of the work force.

#### Priorities of the role

My priority will be to seek to develop investment into these vital sectors of the UK's economy at this crucial moment, following the recent change of the Government. I see the role as the 'Cheerleader-in-Chief' for the sectors; marketing them passionately abroad, while skilfully encouraging the Home Team. In essence, my job will be to travel around the


world encouraging people abroad to raise capital to fund expansion for their business in the UK; to tell them that if they want to insure against catastrophe, the best place to do it is in the UK; mine is a one-year term, so I am keen to start this role running fast.

#### UK Services – World Beaters

According to UNCTAD (April 2024), when these professional, legal and financial service sectors are taken into account, the UK was the fourth-largest exporter in the world in 2022, behind only China, the US and Germany, up from seventh in 2021, overtaking France, the Netherlands and Japan. The UK's service sector is thus truly world class.

The FPS sectors are where I see the greatest potential for the UK's commercial engagement with growing new world markets. I know this from my own experience in chairing an asset management company with interests in many dynamic economies. The contacts that I have made over the years I hope will provide a firm foundation for this ambassadorial role. A one-year term is a short one to effect lasting change, but it can be done. Here, I set out what I hope to do:

#### Regulatory reform

I will work with Government and other stakeholders to seek to enhance a competitive ecosystem to allow FPS businesses to flourish. This may involve presenting some uncomfortable truths to Government and others. The areas that look ripe for reform are pension regulation and measures that seek to revitalise investment into the UK stock market. The advice that I am receiving from industry leaders in these areas is first rate. 





## The Lord Mayor of London A QUICK HISTORY

### INTERNATIONAL AMBASSADOR

In the modern day, the Lord Mayor of the City of London is an international ambassador for the UK's financial and professional services sector, and the Head of the City of London which governs the famous Square Mile. The Lord Mayor is elected annually.

### FORMATION

The role was initially created by 'Bad' King John in the 1200s as a bit of clever diplomatic engineering to get Londoners on



his side – the City was at that time in a period of crisis, a conflicting melange of rich and poor, all affected by high taxes and warring Barons. There had long been a desire for the City to have more independent Governance, so King John decreed in a special charter; 'Know ye that we have granted... to our barons of our city of London, that they may

choose to themselves every year a mayor, who to us may be faithful, discreet and fit for government of the city, so as, when he shall be chosen, to be presented unto us, or our Justice if we shall not be present... and he shall swear to be faithful to us...'

### UP RIVER

One of the conditions of this decree however was that once a year the Lord Mayor must travel up the river towards Westminster to pledge

allegiance to the King – this would become the basis for the historic Lord Mayor's Show.

### FIRST IN THE 'HOT' SEAT

The colourfully named Henry Fitz-Ailwin De Londonstone, an English merchant and landowner was the first to hold the role,



and he was by all accounts rather brilliant at it; after the Great Fire he was key in ensuring that a new building code issued by the government emphasised fire prevention and safety, including efforts to bring in the practice of making buildings from stone.

### MODERN-DAY PAGEANTRY

The internationally famous 'Lord Mayor's Show' is a pageant that takes place the day after the Lord Mayor is sworn into office, traditionally the second Sunday in November. It's known as the 'the oldest, longest, best-loved and least-rehearsed civic



procession in the world!' and apparently features in the works of Shakespeare and the diaries of Samuel Pepys. The procession features famous symbolism from British culture, including wicker recreations of the

mythical pagan giants Gog and Magog.

More details on the history and spectacle of the Lord Mayor's Show and the role itself can be found at

[lordmayorsshow.london/history](http://lordmayorsshow.london/history)

### Mindset Reform

The message to the UK's FPS businesses is clear – do not wait for regulatory reform to occur. The reform process could take five years, or ten years or we may be 'Waiting for Godot', so the time to double down on investment in your businesses is now. Come with me on my trade missions around the world. Get on planes yourselves – particularly to the growing centres in the GCC countries, China, India and SE Asia where economies are growing fast. These countries want so much of what we can sell to them and now is also time to invest into the white heat of new technologies. It is a hackneyed phrase but it does not stop it from being

true: the best time to have done this was ten years ago, but the second best time is now.

### Communities

There is a saying that if you want to meet Americans, go to New York; if you want to meet the world, come to London. More diasporic communities call London their home than any other world city. I will establish City Belonging Networks for the diaspora and other groupings within the

**I will take office at a profoundly exciting moment. The UK looks set to be a beacon of stability in an unstable international political environment**

FPS sectors. These will celebrate each communities' contribution to London, exhort them to double down on their investment into the UK now, and to ask them to speak with others to say that the FPS sectors are the most effective engines for social

mobility. We want these communities to provide the pool of talent to grow the FPS sectors for the next 25 years. The first three City Belonging Networks – those for the Muslim, Jewish and Armed Forces Veterans communities – will be launched before the end of the year. Twelve more are planned for 2025.

### Sustainable finance

Given the ambitions around the world for further development of infrastructure, together with a plethora of major capital projects across the regions, tapping into the UK's deep expertise in both recourse and non-recourse project finance looks to be a sensible way for the UK and developing nations to collaborate. Green finance is a growing sector within the London market and can readily be deployed to finance

development around the globe. The deep and trusted expertise in these areas – as well as the cutting-edge innovation in these sectors – resides in London.

### My role as 'Cheerleader-in-Chief'

I want to expand upon what I mean by being the Cheerleader-in-Chief for these sectors, known colloquially in the UK as 'the City'. I wish to extol London's extraordinary depth of expertise and experience in so many innovative areas of finance and I want people to know that the City is on top of its game when it comes to financing complicated projects.

Yet the role of Cheerleader-in-Chief has another important, UK-internal aspect, which is perhaps less obvious. This internal message will be to exhort those in the UK's FPS sectors to remind themselves of how to

take positive risk once again. It is within the 'muscle-memory' of the sector – we know how to do it. Over the last decade, the sector has become more risk averse. A spirit of 'safetyism' has pervaded the sector – only a few years before, there was more of a 'can-do' attitude.

An example of this phenomenon can be seen in doing business in the high growth markets around the world. Too often, remarkable opportunities in these markets are turned down by UK FPS firms, because the markets are viewed as a little difficult when drafting their internal risk assessments. The number of people within the risk and compliance departments of these firms has in many cases ballooned, yet the number of projects in markets that might have a perception of not being straightforward has declined. These

opportunities have been grabbed with open arms by the UK's competitors.

### Rediscovered entrepreneurialism

I will take office at a profoundly exciting moment. The UK looks set to be a beacon of stability in an unstable international political environment over the next five years. We have an opportunity to reset and regrow our entrepreneurial potential. This five-year window coincides with remarkable opportunities across the world, where the thirst for development and investment shows no sign of being quenched.

The Cheerleader-in-Chief for the UK's FPS sector will soon be coming to a financial centre near you. The mission is to show how harnessing the UK's newly rediscovered entrepreneurialism in these sectors can assist development. It's time to take off the handbrake.



# My City

From Manchester's thriving arts scene, to Porto's gorgeous architecture and riverside restaurants, via the classical beauty and world-beating wineries of Bordeaux, three experts give us a guide to the local cities they love

**MY MANCHESTER**

*Professor Linda Merrick CBE*



Principle of Manchester's own Royal Northern College of Music and friend of ROSL, Professor Linda Merrick CBE is an internationally renowned clarinet soloist and recording artist.

*Describe Manchester in three words*  
Ambitious, vibrant, diverse.

*What are the cultural or gastronomic highlights that make Manchester a must-visit destination?*  
We are truly spoiled for choice, but my favourite cultural destinations would have to

be the Bridgewater Hall, Aviva Studios (home to Factory International and the biennial Manchester International Festival), and our cultural neighbours on Oxford Road: Manchester Museum and the Whitworth Art Gallery. We also have two of the most unique theatres in the country with HOME, an acoustically superior space due to the central theatre's novel construction, and the unmistakable Royal Exchange Theatre – a domed performance space set in the round, entirely constructed on the trading floor of a former financial building.

We are a diverse city that attracts people of all ages from all over the world who delight in sharing their culture and passions with all of us. We have a legendary culinary

scene in Rusholme, known as the 'Curry Mile' for its mile-long selection of South Asian restaurants, and in the city centre Chinatown has long been a leading UK destination for authentic cuisine. A new generation of food and drink entrepreneurs have also transformed areas such as the Northern Quarter and Ancoats into gastronomic hotbeds, with a wealth of independent restaurants and bars for all tastes dominating the landscape from morning until late.

*Do you have any tips for under-the-radar places of interest?*  
I would start with the RNCM, because we're both a leading conservatoire and a venue

Whitworth Art Gallery



*A literary gem*

Chetham's spellbinding Library has been in continuous use as a public library for over 350 years, and is located in a beautiful sandstone building, erected in 1421 to accommodate the priests of Manchester's Collegiate Church.

old (opened in 1862 and under its current name since the 1930s) and new at the same time following a £3.5-million

showcasing the next generation of extraordinary musical talent. Around 100 of our shows in the year ahead (all programmed by students and staff) are free to attend, and they sit in a carefully programmed suite of performances that feature guest artists and touring performers alongside our young professionals. We have a collection of historic musical instruments of international significance to see for free, too – a unique archive in the city, all of which absolutely makes us a surprising visit.

The city's illustrious musical heritage means we have a wealth of grassroots venues for touring artists. One of my favourites is right on our doorstep: the Deaf Institute, a unique former lecture theatre up in the attic of the building. I am also fond of Band on the Wall, in the city centre, which is both

major extension to its bar and live space. A magical secret spot that not everyone in Manchester will let visitors in on is Chetham's Library, set in the heart of Chetham's School of Music – known locally as Chet's. It's the oldest free public library in the UK inside a former 15<sup>th</sup>-century manor house, a time capsule that is home to a book collection of national and international importance.

In its reading room is the very table where Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels came together, in a quiet alcove, to read and discuss the ideas that would become the basis of Marx's Communist Manifesto. The desk, the alcove, and the books they read all remain in the possession of Chet's.

**The city's illustrious musical heritage means we have a wealth of grassroots venues for touring artists**

At the other end of Deansgate, in the Great Northern Warehouse, is the Spirit of Manchester Distillery, probably one of the most elegant distilleries you could dream of visiting and the home of Manchester Gin. Great cocktails, great food, all served in an iconic former industrial warehouse, and you can watch the distillers at work as you dine, or even have a go at distilling your own gin, should you be game.

*How would you spend a weekend in the city if you had a free 48 hours?*

Manchester is a city of juxtapositions, with restored and reinvented buildings from our industrial past set against stunning modern architecture. Just walking around the city, you get a feel for when this city has boomed – including right now. And so, I would start with a stroll around the streets and extensive canal paths, planning a strategic finish line in New Islington Marina and Ancoats to take in the thriving independent restaurant scene there. I would probably end my day in this area, too, with some live music at Halle St Peters or Halle St Michael's – both former places of worship impressively reinvented as fine concert halls.

On day two, I would indulge in our



museum and gallery scene, and top of my must-visit list would be our neighbour on Oxford Road, Manchester Museum, which we recently collaborated with for a special evening of live performance celebrating the natural world called Nature's Music. A little further down the road from us is the Whitworth Art Gallery, the city's prestigious home for modern and contemporary arts, which also has a very fine café. I'd then travel into the city centre to its sister site, Manchester Art Gallery, before heading to the Castlefield area to take in the Science and Industry Museum and see the latest epic exhibition from Factory International at the nearby Aviva Studios, before heading to a concert at the Bridgewater Hall.

**What's the best time of year to visit?**

Spring: our student scene is one of the most vibrant around, attracting a strong cultural offering of live music and performance, and our green spaces spring into life as they fill with plants and people!



**MY CITY LONDON**

*Discover the capital from the comfort of ROSL*

With one of the world's liveliest cities just on our doorstep, Over-Seas House makes the perfect base from which to explore and create a 'must-see' list of your own. Enjoy a delicious dinner in the Art Deco splendour of the 1910 Dining Room, and take advantage of our well-situated accommodation – for accommodation offers please visit [rosl.org.uk/clubhouse/stay/](http://rosl.org.uk/clubhouse/stay/)

**MY PORTO**

*Alexandra Mariz*



Brand Manager with Sogevinus, Portuguese wine specialists that supply ROSL with delicious bottles from the Porto region and beyond, Alexandra Mariz is uniquely placed to recommend the very best of Portugal's bar and cultural scene

*Porto is of course known for port, but its table wine is rightly lauded too. What would make a great wine-focused activity in the city?*

Wine culture is strongly rooted in the city of Porto, especially in Cais de Vila Nova de Gaia. On every corner, in every port wine cellar, in every traditional restaurant, on every Rabelo boat, we live and breathe wine. There's an unparalleled energy here that's certainly felt by first-time visitors. I always suggest a visit to Calem Cellars which receives over 350,000 visitors per year and enables you to immerse yourself in the history and traditions of port wine and includes a tasting with two or more Porto Calem wines. To end your tasting I suggest you enjoy a concert of *fado*, a typical type of Portuguese music, which takes place every late afternoon at Calem Cellars.

We'll also soon be opening our new Hotel on the Cais de Gaia. The Hotel Tivoli Kopke Porto-Gaia will be a must-visit for any wine lover visiting Porto, whether you choose to enjoy a tasting of Port, sip a coffee on the rooftop while enjoying the view, or take a massage in the spa overlooking the Douro.

*What are the cultural highlights that make Porto a must-visit destination? Do you have any tips for under-the-radar places of interest?*

I would start by visiting Baixa do Porto, first making a visit to the Jardins do Palácio de Cristal, a very beautiful garden overlooking the Douro. Then walk a little to the Torre e Igreja dos Clérigos. You can climb the tower's 225 stairs and visit the Baroque-style church, which dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Very close by, you should also visit Livraria Lello, which inspired the Harry Potter books. It is also mandatory to visit Avenida dos Aliados, the city's main square and from here see the recently restored and iconic Mercado do Bolhão where you can enjoy a snack from the



Steeped in history and bursting with beautiful architecture, Porto is a heady blend of classic and contemporary, evidenced by its thriving street food scene and vibrant history as the centre of Portugal's wine trade

*A beautiful bookstore*

Livraria Lello is a Porto bookstore famed for its stunning interiors and rich history. The famous red staircase (above) is built in reinforced concrete despite its elegant wood-like appearance

Mercado's diverse offering of foods.

Another must-visit is the imposing São Bento station, which impresses with its historical-themed tile panels, and then walk along Rua das Flores towards Porto's riverside area. On the way, stop for a guided tour of the spectacular Palácio da Bolsa, headquarters of the Porto Commercial Association, and then visit the Church of São Francisco. After this, you will arrive at Porto's riverside area to admire the beauty of Porto's old traditional houses. It is also mandatory to visit the cathedral, Sé do Porto. From the Cathedral, you can walk across the Dom Luís I Bridge to Gaia, to see the view from Serra do Pilar and then stroll down to Cais de Gaia. Here, you can ride the cable car, and take in a breathtaking view over Porto and the Douro River, or even take a short cruise under the six bridges that connect Porto to Gaia. I also recommend visiting the Serralves Foundation, where you can see the contemporary art exhibition as well as the gallery gardens.

A stroll through Foz do Douro, a residential area that includes some beaches and good restaurants, is another must.

If you want to avoid the usual tourist activities, I recommend going to see the sunset at Passeio das Virtudes, or Passeio Alegre, especially with a few local beers.

*Food is a huge part of the Porto landscape – if you had 24 hours to eat and drink your way around the city, where would you go?*

For food, I would definitely go to Baixa do Porto to eat the traditional francesinha (a kind of sandwich made with cured meats and cheese), or maybe tapas at Orpheu or Cantina 32. In downtown Porto, enjoy a drink at Galerias do Paris, where there are several bars with music, and for a traditional port tonic (a cocktail made with white Port and tonic water), try Casa do Livro. To end the day or night, swing by Base Porto or Bosco, with its wonderful views of the Douro River.

*How do you think the architecture and rich history of Porto has shaped its cultural landscape? Does its location on the river Douro have an effect on the food and arts scenes?*

Definitely! Porto is a city rich in history and culture, blending the past and present in its architecture. For example you can still see the

Fernandina wall, which evokes the medieval history of the city. The city is closely associated with gastronomy, and everything that goes hand in hand with that food culture, including port wine and, increasingly, still wines. Architecture and history are closely associated with Porto and this culture also ended up shaping the city itself.

Being a relatively small city which has grown a lot in recent years, Porto has managed to maintain its authentic personality. The people who live here are genuine and remain faithful to their city, offering themselves as excellent hosts. There is hardly a more welcoming city than Porto!

**The city is closely associated with gastronomy, and everything that goes hand in hand with that food culture**

*What's the best time of year to visit?*

There are activities for all seasons but May and September are a great time to visit thanks to the milder weather and fewer tourists compared with the summer months. ☺





MY BORDEAUX

*Benjamin Richer*



ROSL supplier Benjamin Richer de Forges, owner of the iconic Chateau La Tour de By in the northern Medoc region, takes a break from the hectic harvest period to recommend a few of his favourite places to explore in Bordeaux.

*Wine is central to the Bordeaux story. Where should people start if they want to understand the part it plays in the city's history?*

If you want to understand the story of wine, which is of course a huge part of the reason people come to Bordeaux, you have to visit La Cité du Vin, which invites you to discover how the history of heritage and history of wine in this region has shaped the lives of the people in it, through a series of immersive experiences. It's also worth visiting Saint Emillion, just a short trip from the city itself, to explore prestigious vineyards, cobbled streets and charming castles.

And, of course, you must come to Chateau La Tour de By for the ideal combination of a fascinating castle visit and the discovery of Médoc heritage. Located on the banks of the river, we offer a unique panorama of the Gironde estuary, welcoming you free of charge and without



appointment for a tasting visit.

The estate features remarkable architectural heritage and a beautiful 110-hectare vineyard. You can even follow a trail that will take you to the Domaine Tower, built in 1825, to appreciate the breathtaking view of the estuary.

*Which cultural and leisure experiences should visitors to the city explore?*

Le Grand Théâtre is a wonderful building, a monument to elegance in the heart of Bordeaux. It's been around for more than three centuries and has one of the most beautiful performance halls in the world.

If you love the sea, take the trip to La Dune du Pyla & Le Bassin d'Arcachon where you can explore a beautiful forest, majestic sand dunes and of course the beautiful ocean – it really feels like a world apart. And if you're visiting the region for a little longer, try the Soulac-sur-Mer, a beach resort town and the most beautiful place in the Medoc area. Here there are beaches as far as the eye can see, and you can surf, swim, or walk the beautiful pine forests and marshes.

*Amazing food and wine is central to the Bordeaux experience; can you recommend any must-visits for gastronomes?*

You must visit BIG – Bistrot Girondin in the city itself. You can tell the decorator here had fun, using mirror-tiled walls, frosted glass chandeliers and moleskin benches. It feels like a place steeped in history, and the menu will delight lovers of traditional French cuisine.

*Wine, culture and beaches*

Bordeaux offers a unique blend of experiences, from the immersive wine journey at La Cité du Vin to the architectural splendour of Le Grand Théâtre. Just a short drive away, the breathtaking La Dune du Pyla provides stunning views of the Atlantic Ocean.



# Heritage at the Heart

A NEW WELCOME



## RESTORE AND PRESERVE ROSL'S UNIQUE HERITAGE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

As ROSL continues its journey in restoring our Grade-I listed clubhouse, Over-Seas House, we invite our members to support us to complete the final piece of the architectural jigsaw.

Vernon House dates back to 1835, and constitutes a significant part of the architecture. Our plan is to restore the entrance hall within Vernon House to its former glory. The arrival experience members and their guests receive is at the very heart of ROSL; a first impression is often the last impression.

We are a London-based institution with global reputation and outreach; the entrance is a gateway to a world of culture, heritage, public affairs, arts and dining.

To deliver this project, we need to raise £300,000. We are asking for the generous support from our

membership to reach this ambitious target. This would equate to £40 per member, an amount that we hope may be realistic for many, but any size donation will make a difference.

Should you be able to support this final significant development to the Royal Over-Seas League clubhouse, we will have an entrance hall that will preserve ROSL's architecture and heritage, creating a welcome that is fit for a King!

To make a donation, please scan the QR code, or contact the Director-General Dr Annette Prandzioch: [b.neale@rosl.org.uk](mailto:b.neale@rosl.org.uk) or visit the ROSL website <https://rosl.org.uk/product/wc-donation-heritage-at-the-heart-a-new-rosl-welcome/>



Thank you for your anticipated support

Director General | Dr Annette Prandzioch



# ON THE BRINK: A CITY

Active volcanoes loom ominously over the populations of towns and cities all over the world. But, with such a present and visceral threat to lives and livelihoods, why do people still choose to live in these areas? And what happens when an eruption occurs? Rosie Allen finds out.

The eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD is the enduring example of a city destroyed by the tempestuous might of mother nature. One of the deadliest volcanic eruptions in human history, Vesuvius – a still-active volcano rising above the Bay of Naples, southern Italy – ejected clouds of gases and boiling flumes of lava, radiating 100,000 times the thermal energy of the

atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The eruption devastated several surrounding towns and villages in the Campanian region, including most famously the once-thriving and fashionable resort town of Pompeii. Pliny the Younger, writer of the only surviving eyewitness account, was just 17 at the time of the eruption, and recounted the visceral impact of the disaster; 'broad flames shone out in several places

from Mount Vesuvius, which the darkness of the night contributed to render still brighter and clearer... It was now day everywhere else, but there a deeper darkness prevailed than in the thickest night...'

Every year, around four million tourists make the pilgrimage to Pompeii to see the eerily preserved forms of bodies killed by the mountains pyroclastic flow, leaving casts of calcified ash long after biological decay has taken place. The result is a tragic monument to one of the darker chapters of Southern Italy's history.

But for the 800,000 inhabitants of Naples' 'red zone' in the shadow of Campania's active volcanoes, the threat of volcanic eruption is still a very real one.

The Campanian Volcanic Arc encompasses

Mount Vesuvius, and Campi Fleigri (the *fiery fields*) a 15km-wide volcanic crater, which lies 40 minutes from the centre of the Naples, and presents an ominous threat to the inhabitants of their surrounding areas, as well as to the city itself.

'The Neapolitan area lies in a region where the outer crust of the earth is much thinner than average,' says Professor Christopher Kilburn, Professor of Volcanology and Geophysical Hazards at the University College London, who specialises in forecasting eruptions at volcanoes reawakening after generations at rest. 'This means that patches of hot rock can melt about 10 - 20km underground. Volcanoes form where the molten rock can push its way to the surface. This has happened all

around Naples, producing Mount Vesuvius to the east, Campi Flegrei to the west and the islands of Ischia and Procida offshore from Campi Flegrei. Indeed, the city of Naples itself is built on ground that was once volcanically active.'

While the region last experienced a volcanic event 80 years ago, local authorities take the threat of eruption very seriously. At the Vesuvius Observatory of Herculaneum, founded in 1841, volcanologists constantly monitor the surrounding area for signs of changes in the behaviour of these sleeping giants. A designated Civil Protection Plan details instructions for residents in the Naples 'red zone', a demarcation area encompassing around 25 communes and 800,000 residents to be evacuated in the threat of imminent eruption. The plan lists the following risks for residents should a volcanic eruption occur: 'the formation of an eruptive column of gas, burning lava clots, and several kilometres high ashes; the fall of volcanic material, both large (like volcano bombs and blocks) in the area closest to the eruptive vent and smaller particles (like ashes and lapilli); pyroclastic flows, which are avalanches of gas, ash, and volcanic fragments at elevated temperatures'.

# IN THE SHADOWS





The eruption of Mount Vesuvius which destroyed Pompeii in 79 AD looms large in the minds of those who live in the Campanian Volcanic Arc

and speed for several kilometres down the slopes of the volcano; Seismic activity may occur before the eruption and accompany its different stages, resulting in particularly severe damage to buildings already hit by falling ash and lapilli. It makes for sobering reading. In addition to these hazards Professor Kilburn says is 'the fall of fine volcanic fragments which is disruptive because it damages electrical components (from electricity substations to computers), blocks air traffic (by damaging aircraft engines and coating runways with a slippery carpet that prevents safe take-off and landing) and hinders road transport (by creating slippery roads). It also causes breathing difficulties, especially to those already suffering from respiratory ailments. In the worst case, the weight of thick ash layers (especially when wet) may cause roofs to collapse.

'To be clear, there are people out there exaggerating the likelihood of an enormous volcanic event for dramatic purposes in television documentaries and online. But we can't know definitively what's going on under the surface, so we can never really be sure. One day people will have to deal with eruption, and with any luck there'll be warning. Pyroclastic clouds, as well as ashfall, will also threaten the rest of Campi Flegrei between Naples and the Tyrrhenian Sea. This is why emergency plans have to take account of the possible need to evacuate the whole volcanic area.'

It might be baffling to most of us that communities would choose to live in the danger zone of such a visible and oppressive hazard – so why do people stay in these

regions despite the obvious threats?

'Firstly,' says Professor Kilburn, who designs warnings that can be easily understood by vulnerable communities, 'because soils from volcanic rocks are extremely fertile. Secondly, the volcanoes are close to the coast and to natural harbours for shipping and trade. Also the countryside is beautiful and intervals between eruptions are long enough for communities to grow

**Even if we could forecast an eruption perfectly, people might not necessarily listen and act**

up without being threatened.' When it comes to warnings, the science isn't exact and must be made with caution given the enormous scale of disruption a mass evacuation would cause, and the trauma that communities would endure in the undertaking. Techniques such as seismographic detection, monitoring the nature of gas emissions and measuring the critical flow rate of lava can create a picture of when an eruption might occur – but there are no guarantees. 'A fundamental problem,' says Professor Kilburn, 'is that we cannot directly see magma underground. Instead, we must rely on indirect signals, such as how changes in the molten rock may cause movement of the ground or small local earthquakes.'

In the case of gentler eruptions, often

there is little warning – sometimes days, even hours; but signs can also take months or years to develop as new pathways for molten rock are formed within the volcano.

'The problem here is that, even when part of a new pathway forms, it might not extend to the surface. We can then end up with a false alarm. This creates a new problem, because when the volcano goes through another cycle of rupture, vulnerable communities may be less inclined to believe that an eruption is possible, even though the chances of magma reaching the surface are probably the greater second time around.

'Even if we could forecast an eruption perfectly people might not necessarily listen and act. So in addition to the scientific problem of making forecasts is just as important to understand the psychology behind the messaging, to encourage a population to act. Our experience suggests that communities tend not to worry too much about eruptions until clear warning signs are felt. This is often when people are first forced to think seriously about an eruption and then realise that, in practice, they are less confident in understanding what is happening. They then have to confront the fear of the unknown, which is fertile ground for rumours to spread misinformation and confusion.'

POSITIVE ENERGY



WINEMAKING

Volcanic soils add a unique terroir to wines made in this area, prized for their mineral quality



FARMING

A stronger nutritional profile can be found in volcanic soils, perfect for growing healthy crops



TOURISM

Pompeii alone attracts millions of history enthusiasts each year, making it one of Italy's most visited attractions



ENERGY

The geothermal energy of volcanoes potentially provides a promising eco-friendly energy source for the future

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ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE

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21.00

Champagne and canapés reception

21.30 - 00.15

Four course dinner followed by live music from the 1920s and 1930s American and French songbook performed by renowned pianist and singer Oliver Lord and sensational double bassist George Georgiev

23.50

Countdown, glass of Champagne and live screening of London's firework display

## MIDNIGHT

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

00.30

Carriages

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# SECRETS *of the* CITY

Delving into the unique history and forgotten stories of our own cities can help us to foster a deep connection with the urban landscapes around us. Friend of ROSL and host of some of our most fascinating London events, Tim Potter, explains how a love of London became a career, and how we can be more curious tourists in our own towns and cities

*What first prompted you to delve into London's history and how did that develop into you giving tours and talks about the city?*

I had always been interested in history and had always loved being a Londoner. It was retirement that enabled me to bring the two passions together. I started going to occasional courses on the history of London and the more I learnt, the more London opened itself up to me. I walked all over central London, discovering the remnants of the past. At the time I was also volunteering in museums and started leading walks for them but I rapidly got bored repeating the same walk so branched out, developing historically themed walks across London. As I became a bit more well known I started getting invites from individuals, organisations and clubs to deliver talks and lead walks for them. Now I do a walk or a talk once or twice a week whenever I'm in London.

*How would you suggest that people get to be more curious local tourists?*

Exploring London has become a passion for me and one of the most satisfying experiences of my retirement. It's easy to start; there are plenty of resources to help you on your way. Buy a couple of good guidebooks and get walking. Anywhere in central London you will be surrounded by history. I found that I would be intrigued by a blue plaque or a particular building and I'd follow that theme by doing a bit of research or reading a few books and suddenly a whole new world was revealed. You do the same walk again but through very different eyes. My top tip though is that as you walk, keep looking up. Behind the shopfronts, you'll always glimpse some remnants of the past.

**Exploring London has become a passion for me and one of the most satisfying experiences of my retirement**

*What's your favourite story or fact about the city, or something that surprised you most as you uncovered more history?*

Every neighbourhood has its own stories to be discovered and every period leaves traces on the present. Some are very well known, others are waiting to be unearthed. As an example, in my latest book I started researching the suffragette movement and rediscovered the whole area around the London School of Economics where the Women's Social and Political Union led by the Pankhursts (Emmeline Pankhurst along with her daughters Sylvia and Chrystabel were important figures in the women's suffrage movement, eventually gaining women in England the right to vote) was once based. I went to LSE fifty years ago but never really understood the history of the area. Once you delve into the past, the place suddenly becomes alive. Every area of London has these stories waiting to be rediscovered.

I recently organised a walk around my home area of Wanstead in East London. To the outsider, it is just a very pleasant suburb but it has an extraordinary history dating back to the Romans. It once hosted one of the greatest stately homes in England, owned by the richest woman in the country. Within ten years, she was

reduced to penury by a drunken, profligate husband and the great house was demolished, leaving only a beautiful church and the ornamental park behind. I'd lived there for years without understanding what I was looking at.

*Apart from London, is there another city that you find particularly compelling and rich in stories and history, and why?*

I think London is unique, certainly in Britain and perhaps the world, for the richness of its past allied to a contemporary vibrancy. Few other cities come anywhere close. Having said that, if I had to live somewhere else, it would have to be Rome. For me, nowhere can compare to its physical beauty as well as its rich and layered past.

*What do you think of the concept of psychogeography as a way of exploring our urban environments?*

There is a rich tradition of writing about London influenced by 'psychogeography' and I've certainly enjoyed the books of authors such as Peter Ackroyd and Iain Sinclair which some see as within the tradition. I haven't consciously gone down that route but all my walks focus on particular eras rather than a scatter gun approach to an area. So, for instance, I do two walks down Whitehall; once in the footsteps the Suffragettes and a second following the events during the Civil War. Same streets and buildings, but a very different atmosphere.

*What's next for you?*

Keep on walking as long as I can and then, perhaps, a couple more books.

*Keep an eye out on our events page for more for London walks and talks hosted by Tim at [rosl.org.uk/events](http://rosl.org.uk/events)*



## EXPLORE FROM ROSL

Our rooms make the perfect place to relax after a day exploring, and the 1910 Dining Room and Duke of York Bar provide a warm welcome and a reviving selection of delicious food and drink.

Visit [rosl.org.uk/clubhouse](http://rosl.org.uk/clubhouse) for more information

## Hidden London

Secret churches, labyrinthine passageways and layers of history make London an intriguing city to explore away from the bright lights and bustle of the tourist trail. Here are three lesser-known but awe-inspiring oddities to start you on your very own journey around hidden London



### THE RUINS OF ST DUNSTAN IN THE EAST

Emerging from a sea of silver skyscrapers and coffee shop chains in the heart of London's Financial district is a Tolkienesque vision of crumbling beauty; the haunting ruins of a church destroyed in the Blitz, has been transformed by creeping ivy into a picturesque monument to London's resilience during the bombing of World War II. In 1967 the ruins were turned into a public garden, and it's still popular with photographers and lunch-breaking city workers to this day.

### THE MEMORIAL TO HEROIC SELF-SACRIFICE, POSTMAN'S PARK

Tucked away in the old City of London, not far from the iconic dome of St Paul's Cathedral, lies a pretty but unassuming garden with a heart-wrenching hidden treasure; Postman's Park is the home of The Memorial to Heroic Self-Sacrifice, featuring a series of 54 ceramic

tiles commemorating the lives and selfless deeds of London inhabitants who lost their lives in the service of saving others. A plaque near the memorial explains artist George Frederic Watts' decision to erect the memorial, stating 'The material prosperity of a nation is not an abiding possession: the deeds of its people are.' The park also features a pretty stone fountain and seasonal planting.



### LEADENHALL MARKET

Step away from the hustle and bustle of central London and into the shelter of the ornately ceiled Leadenhall Market to feel like you've walked into the pages of a picture book. The site has been a popular market since the 1400s, and the beautiful domed roof, added in 1881, cobbled stones and enchanting atmosphere made it the perfect shooting location for the fictional Diagon Alley in the Harry Potter films.







## RAISING THE GAME

Education is at the heart of the Commonwealth of Learning's ethos, empowering the inhabitants of member countries through learning that leads to economic growth, social inclusion and environmental conservation. Here, President and CEO Professor Peter Scott tells us how the power of distance learning is breaking cycles of inequality and changing lives across the globe



**Professor Scott, please could you tell our members a bit more about what the Commonwealth of Learning does and how it facilitates education and learning across the CW?**

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is one of the three inter-governmental organisations (IGOs) of the Commonwealth. It works alongside the CW Secretariat and CW Foundation in the service of our member nations. Unlike our two sister IGOs, we don't work from the UK, but instead have our headquarters in Vancouver, Canada, and a base in New Delhi, India.

COL works directly with Governments of Commonwealth Member Nations to improve quality in education and reach, via policy creation and increased capacity to implement. Over the last three years, we've directly worked with 137 educational institutions to regulate and support high-quality digital, online and open learning, training over 31,000 teachers and academics. In the process,

and true to our model of change, we have co-created over 800 new and improved courses and over 9,600 learning resources designed to be open and shared beyond one use in one place. Finally, we reach directly to learners (710,000 learners have enrolled in COL courses in the last three years). Everything we do is driven by the education strategies of our member nations and created in partnership with members, designed to be shared. For the really isolated, we still provide distance learning using paper and verbal communication, but increasing digitalisation offers us the chance to scale up impact significantly via mobile and increasingly smart technology-mediated systems.

**Your career has been based on leadership in the field of open and distance learning. What attracted you to this space and what has kept you so interested in it throughout your career? Did your work on Artificial Intelligence in Education at**

**the Open University give you a different perspective on the future of learning and how AI can transform this space?**

My 20 years at the Open University certainly framed my passion for the mission of open learning; driving down the cost, driving up the quality, and opening 'doors to change' for millions of adult learners is a pretty compelling job to have. The open learning of the OU does not require a classroom or a conventional teacher to change lives but takes innovation with technology to connect learners to learning. It is still very human and personal but scalable, effective and affordable.

And yes, I have been compelled by the promise of AI all my career, but I must note that it is actually just a technology, not magic. We forget sometimes that a pencil is a technology, as is a phone, a TV or a book. Folks are always initially frightened by any innovation that seems mysterious and may have some corrupting potential.

Any historian will tell you that books turned out to be pretty dangerous things, but as with everything, thoughtful use of new things can also be very empowering. I'm very excited by the potential we now have for big, positive changes in some of the chronically hard challenges we face.

**In addition to more traditional 'academic' learning, you also facilitate training in sustainable livelihood and agriculture using audio and visual messages delivered 'in-the-field'; how have these programmes been received and what are the benefits of promoting further training and education in these more practical disciplines?**

Actually, learning is just learning, so learning critical practical skills, where it matters – where you work – just makes a lot of sense for everyone. Done well, and with big changes in access to mobile and more affordable smartphone tech, it is possible to design compelling, high-quality, in-the-field support for critical workers in any area, including agriculture. Good learning must always be embedded in a powerful context to work, so in farming we must connect learning to change and a sustainable business model for this industry must be planned to intersect with any lesson.

**Women, girls and at-risk boys are a very high proportion of disadvantaged learners – could you tell us more about why this is, and how your programmes are created to target these demographics? What are the benefits of doing so?**

Without intervention, advantage and disadvantage are self-sustaining, with parents passing both on to their kids through a simple causal model: if parents have access to quality education, their children will likely move up; if they do not, then it is likely that their children will also not. So, in societies that choose to disadvantage women, for example by holding them back from school or with social pressures requiring them to leave school early, then this disadvantage is passed on through the generations of girls. Open education can break this cycle. A critical part of the recipe for us is that learning must take place in, and with the support of, a whole community. Context, again, is key. When the leaders and the men of a community can see the value of advantage, they can become part



COL is creating high-quality, in-the-field support for critical workers



of the solution and advocate for change themselves.

For COL's work specifically targeting gender, in this last year alone, we have helped to bring over 34,000 women, girls, and over 8,500 under-achieving boys back into learning, sensitizing more than 41,000 communities to this 'advantage opportunity'.

**What would you say are the biggest barriers to access to education across the commonwealth? Are threats such as increasing political instability throughout the world, and the escalation of climate change making these barriers harder to tackle? Or do you think that the Commonwealth, in general, is proving resilient to these challenges?**

We are currently in a world of climate and political shocks, where the things that we do now matter a great deal to our future, but as I have noted, the challenges we face today in learning inequity are chronic and have persistently remained outside the reach of conventional classrooms. Like all our sister IGOs, we would call on our members to increase their GDP spend on education, but for us, it is innovation that requires a big investment, not just the small incremental changes we must continue to also drive. The Commonwealth is valuable here because our level of partnership and collaboration is already high, relative to other

international groupings, with what we share together being greater than that which holds us apart – that's less about current resilience than future opportunity.

**Lastly, this edition is about cities, and you're based in Metro Vancouver, on the West coast of Canada. Could you tell us a bit about what makes COL's home city so special?** Canada is a great home for a Commonwealth Intergovernmental Organisation, and Vancouver is a wonderful, complex, connected mosaic of 21 municipalities in a huge, multicultural conurbation. Famed for its rainy weather, British Columbia can feel a little like London at times. But under those cool skies, we are right on the Pacific Ocean with beaches and sails in the harbour, while behind us are serious mountains with bears and cougars between the trees and wild salmon in the rivers. In summer, after work, you can grab your towel and head to the beach and in winter, grab your skis and head to the slopes. Yes, Vancouver is a special city: it is a 'west coast' innovations hub, which is strongly connected to the environment, celebrating and supporting, with trademark Canadian kindness, the many diverse cultures of our wide community. Our diverse, special city helps us to feel, deliver and act in a special way for our equally diverse, special Commonwealth.





## STEP INSIDE THIS CHRISTMAS

A warm welcome awaits where splendour and historical richness intertwine perfectly this festive season. Members are invited to celebrate in style choosing from one of our overnight stay packages or simply join us for our Christmas Day lunch.



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- 25 DEC, 2.30PM  
King's speech

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Festive drinks reception in the Princess Alexandra Hall
- 25 DEC, 1PM  
Delicious Christmas lunch, half a bottle of wine per adult, coffee and gift of festive chocolates
- 25 DEC, 2.30PM  
King's speech

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\*BOOK CHRISTMAS LUNCH (ONLY) AT ROSL.ORG.UK/CHRISTMAS-LUNCH

# AISPA

The Anglo-Italian Society for  
the Protection of Animals



## AISPA, Anglo-Italian Society for the Protection of Animals

For over 70 years AISPA has been supporting animal protection organisations throughout Italy. Our support involves the rescue and rehoming of cats and dogs, neutering campaigns and conservation initiatives including birds, bears and turtles. Please complete the form below and return it to us by post or email us at [info@aispa.org.uk](mailto:info@aispa.org.uk)  
Please check out our website [www.aispa.org.uk](http://www.aispa.org.uk) for further information.

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ROSL/12/24



# A taste of Rome

**Actor and restaurateur Nicolas Vaporidis explores the dishes that make Italy's capital a treat for food lovers**

**Nicolas, autumn saw a collaboration between ROSL and your Roman restaurant in Clapham. Could you tell us a bit more about what makes typically Roman food so special? How does the city's wonderful history, architecture, people and culture shape its unique style of food?**

Roman cuisine is unique due to its strong connection to the city's history and the simplicity of its ingredients. Rooted in *cucina povera* (translated as 'kitchen of the poor' this refers to a creativity and rusticity in Italian cooking), it features dishes like *cacio e pepe* (spaghetti prepared simply with pepper, parmesan and butter), carbonara and amatriciana (tomato-based pasta dish with cured pork such as guanciale), which rely on staples such as pecorino romano, guanciale, and fresh produce like artichokes. The food culture is shaped by the city's rich history and vibrant urban life, where dining is a communal and social experience. Roman dishes reflect the city's enduring traditions, combining rustic flavours with the grandeur of Rome's cultural and architectural heritage.

**Does Rome's geography and location affect the kind of ingredients you'd typically find in Roman cooking?**

Rome's geography significantly shapes its cuisine by providing a variety of local ingredients. The fertile plains of the Lazio region supply fresh vegetables like artichokes and fava beans, while the pastoral landscape supports sheep farming, leading to the

widespread use of pecorino romano and lamb. Guanciale, a cured pork cheek, also reflects the region's agricultural traditions.

**How would you describe Rome's eating culture – is street food a big thing for example? Or is there more formality?**

Rome's eating culture is a fascinating blend of street food and traditional dining, offering something for everyone. While it might not be as famous for street food as Naples, Rome still has a lively street food scene with favorites like *suppli* (those delicious fried rice balls) and *pizza al taglio* (pizza by the slice), perfect for a quick, tasty bite as you explore the city. On the other hand, Romans also love their traditional meals, which are often long,

multicourse affairs. Dining out in Rome, especially in a cosy trattoria or osteria, usually means savouring classic dishes like carbonara or saltimbocca (veal wrapped in prosciutto and sage in a white wine sauce) over a leisurely evening with friends or family. So, while you can definitely enjoy a casual snack on the go, Rome also invites you to slow down and experience its rich culinary traditions in a more formal setting.



**What's your favourite typically Roman dish? Carbonara and amatriciana.**

**You're dual nationality, Italian-Greek – how does that influence your eating and thinking about food?**

Being of Italian-Greek dual nationality deeply influences how I view food. In both cultures, eating is much more than just a meal, it's a communal experience centred around the table, family, and tradition. In Italy, meals are a time to connect with loved ones, while in Greece, the concept of the *symposion* (an ancient celebration of ritualized feasting) emphasises the sharing of food and ideas. For me, food is about celebrating life and building connections, rooted in the rich traditions of both my Italian and Greek heritage.

*We're delighted that we'll be repeating our popular Roman menu again in 2025; keep an eye on our events calendar for more details*



# LONDON'S HISTORIC CHEESEMONGER

**The sights and smells of historic cheese specialists Paxton & Whitfield's beautiful Jermyn Street shop will be a familiar sight to members taking a stroll round St James's. We asked them why this part of the city is so important to the businesses' heritage and history and how they curate their huge range of artisan cheeses**

*How important is the city to the Paxton & Whitfield identity?*

London, and particularly Central London around Regents Street and Piccadilly are hugely important to our identity.

Although Paxton & Whitfield was first recognised as a named partnership in 1797, we have had a presence in the city for over 275 years, as the business's original founder Stephen Cullum founded a Cheese stall in Clare Market, Aldwych in 1742.

We have had a brick-and-mortar shop in Central London since 1772 when the business was moved to Swallow Street, which used to link Piccadilly and Regent Street, to make use of the bustling trade that was blossoming in the area.

Later the business changed location to Jermyn Street and we have occupied our current site since 1896, surviving there through two world wars.

In each of these locations we have seen many generations of Londoners pass through our doors and that human connection to this City is what drives and motivates us to continue selling the best-selling cheeses from the UK and abroad.

*Is your history and heritage important to the way you do business today?*

Our history and heritage is unique in an ever changing City, as we have largely continued to trade with the same goal since Stephen Cullum's first market day: to sell the best-tasting cheese possible to our customers.

We are proud to have been serving the Royal Family for many years now. Paxton & Whitfield gained its first Royal Warrant to Queen Victoria in 1850 and today we hold a Royal Warrant of Appointment to His Majesty The King as of 2024.

*How do you source and curate such a vast range of cheese given the huge range of choice from both Britain and across Europe?*

Dan, our buyer, works closely with a number of key producers and suppliers to carefully curate the range of cheeses we stock to offer a

breadth of options that appeal to a wide customer base. Often we visit producers and taste cheese with them to make sure we are sourcing flavour profiles we believe our customers will enjoy.

We tailor cheeses to each shop, offering a selection of local offerings and options that will appeal to those living in the surrounding areas. We also hold regular sample sessions where, as a team, we taste new products to choose the next cheese to add to our counters.



*Given that online shopping has changed our food-buying habits in recent years, why would you encourage members to stop by the Paxton & Whitfield store on Jermyn Street? What's the buying experience like?*

Our Shop in Jermyn Street is staffed by expert cheesemongers who will happily guide you through a cheeseboard purchase, offering you samples as you deliberate. We pride ourselves on our customer service and this shopping experience is why I would encourage people to visit our stores.

*How important is sustainability in how you conduct business?*

Sustainability is a core principle of how we operate our business model, and we recently became Planet Mark certified as we look to reduce our business carbon footprint.

We source the highest quality products possible, through working closely with small suppliers of excellent quality goods, always buying for quality rather than price.

We promote traditional and artisan methods of production, doing our best to keep local traditions alive and profitable.

Providing commercial opportunities to those suppliers that have the highest product quality, environmental and social standards is important.

*Paxton & Whitfield are cheese suppliers to ROSL, and their products are available as part of our cheeseboards and other dishes in the 1910 Dining Room. See our menus and book a table at [rosl.org.uk/dining](http://rosl.org.uk/dining).*



# THE YEAR

# OF THE SNAKE

As we celebrate the dawn of the new lunar Year of the Snake with a sensational collaborative menu with Chef Daren Liew, we take a look at the story behind this globally celebrated festival, discovering the delicious food traditions that make the season so special

## What is Lunar New Year?

Celebrated by billions of people across Asia, the Lunar New Year takes place after the first new moon of the year (though the date can vary depending on regional variation). Known in China as Spring Festival, where it has been celebrated for thousands of years, the festival embraces the freshness and optimism of a new year and ritualises saying goodbye to the old. Many traditions are linked to this concept of sweeping away the 'bad' and welcoming the 'good' – for example, cleaning the house and decorating the freshly decluttered space with lanterns, decorations and new furniture. While each country celebrates Lunar New Year differently, feasting, fireworks and parties

are a colourful and common part of celebrations, taking place across a fortnight. In Chinese New Year tradition the Lantern Festival marks the end of the holiday, featuring a parade of brightly coloured lanterns carried through the streets. Dragon and lion dances are another famous feature, and those of you who have ventured just five minutes away from ROSL to Soho's Chinatown at this time of year may have seen the spectacle for yourself; a vibrant parade of costumed dancers filling the busy streets – festooned with red lanterns – and sensational smells from local restaurants filling the air.

## The Year of the Snake

In the creation myth of the Zodiac, the Jade Emperor, recognising a need to mark the passing of time, decreed that a swimming race should dictate the naming of a 12-year-

cycle, with the first dozen animals to finish the race having a year named after them, in the order of their passing the finish line. The rat used its cunning to finish first, followed by the ox, who had allowed the rat to sit on its head while he swam, only for his passenger to leap off the ox's head and into first place upon reaching the bank. Next came the tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog and pig, each being rewarded with a year named in their honour. The sneaky snake claimed his sixth place by coiling around the horse's leg, only to frighten the creature once on the bank, using the chaos as an opportunity to slither ahead into the lead. In legend these are similar qualities to those you'll find in real life 'snakes' born in his namesake years; strategic and intelligent, with an inclination towards the mysterious and even a hint of deviousness.

## GOOD EATS

### Chef Daren Liew: The magic of New Year feasting

Following on from our popular Chinese New Year set menu with Daren Liew last year, the Chef has created another spectacular set menu for ROSL members to help them enjoy the flavours of this wonderful festival. He tells us:

'Lunar New Year is celebrated all over Asia. But in China, it holds a special significance as it marks the time of family reunions and joyful gatherings. The focus is deeply centred on food, not just for its taste but also for the symbolism each ingredient and dish carries. Traditional foods are often chosen for their homophones (a word which has two meanings) and the good wishes they represent, which are believed to bring fortune, prosperity, and happiness in the coming year.

For instance, jiaozi (dumplings) are a staple, especially in the northern provinces, where they are shaped like ancient Chinese ingots and symbolise wealth. Similarly, tangyuan represents family unity because its name is a homophone for reunion, and its round shape symbolises togetherness.

'I have had the pleasure of participating in the vibrant Lunar New Year celebrations in London's Chinatown, near the ROSL clubhouse. These celebrations are filled

with colourful parades, dragon dances, and, of course, food stalls offering traditional New Year treats. It's a joyous occasion that brings the community together and echoing the familial warmth found in New Year celebrations.

'As we approach the Year of the Snake, I plan to honour this symbol of wisdom and renewal through thoughtful menu selections and personal reflections on the year's themes. The Snake represents transformation and keen insight, qualities I aim to embody in my cooking and in my approach to life and career.'



## LUNAR NEW YEAR at ROSL

'For ROSL's Chinese New Year menu, I have elevated traditional dishes by combining classic flavours with a modern twist, ensuring the dishes remain deeply rooted in Chinese culture while providing a unique and memorable dining experience.'

### To begin

- Steamed Mongolian chilli dumplings
- Honey-pepper Hampshire pork puff
- A trio of mushroom fritters with chive and onion

### The Reunions

- Sichuan chili prawns with macadamia nuts
- Wok fried angus beef with black pepper and red wine
- Sautéed asparagus with shiitake mushroom and pinenuts
- 'New year treasure' lotus rice

### Sweet Memories

- Golden mango soup with fresh strawberry

## BOOK NOW

Daren Liew's Lunar New Year menu is available at ROSL from 20 January in the 1910 Dining Room. Book your table now to avoid disappointment at [rosl.org.uk/events](http://rosl.org.uk/events)



# HEART IN THE HIGHLANDS

## The genius of Robert Burns

Charismatic and an incurable romantic, writer Robert Burns was a fascinating character whose astounding body of poetry and prose remains central to Scottish identity, and continues to delight readers across the globe centuries after his passing. To celebrate the return of our ever-popular Burns night supper on 23 January, James Fairbairn – former President of the Burns Club of London – gives us a glimpse of the man himself, from his sometimes-tragic personal life, to his wonderful works.

### Could you tell us a little about Robert Burns and his importance to Scottish culture, as well as his impact globally?

Robert Burns was born on 25 January 1759 to the wife of a poor and obscure market gardener in Alloway in Ayrshire. There was no reason to suppose that the infant would become famous, but the flame of genius burned within him and he was to receive public recognition in July 1786 when he published his first book *Poems, Chiefly in the Scots Dialect*. It made him nationally famous almost overnight and he spent the next year in Enlightenment Edinburgh being fêted by all society.

The appeal of his poetry is that he wrote of everyday matters, often in the rhythms and vocabulary of his native Ayrshire, for example *To a Mouse, On Turning her up in her Nest, with the Plough, November 1785*, and that he was a champion of the poor and unprivileged: *The honest man tho' e'er sae pair / Is king o' men for a' that* to quote from *A man's a man for a' that*, which has been taken up as the anthem of freedom and equality all over the world. The Soviet Union was the first nation to issue stamps



### DID YOU KNOW...

Burns was the first person to feature on a commemorative bottle of Coca Cola

The first Burns Supper was held in 1801, by a group of friends to commemorate the fifth anniversary of his death

He was a strong advocate for Scotch whisky, often praising it in his poems like *Tam O'Shanter* and *John Barleycorn*

*Auld Lang Syne* is one of the top three most popular songs in the English language

In 2013 a book of Burns' poetry was taken into space by British-American astronaut, Nick Patrick

with his image in 1956; the Post Office followed suit but not till 2009.

He was also an incurable romantic and having first fallen in love at the age of 15 with his harvest companion, Handsome Nell, he was never without a love interest. His most famous songs – apart from *Auld Lang Syne* – are on some aspect of love: unrequited love, deserted lovers, the trials of wooing, the pain of parting, the joy of companionship, the thrill of reunion; *O my Luve is like a red, red rose / That's newly sprung in June*. He fathered 13 children with half a dozen women including his wife Jean Armour. Many of his offspring died in infancy or childhood, but he acknowledged them all and made the best provision he could for them.

He is sometimes berated for this, but *houghmagandie* and pregnancy out of wedlock was then common in rural Scotland and he was far from alone in these exploits. We know about his affairs because he wrote about them in verse as well as in the many letters that he sent throughout his life, of which he usually kept copies.

He was charismatic and people sought his company. Walter Scott met him in Edinburgh as a boy and said, 'there was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his [Burns] lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, and glowed (I say literally glowed) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men in my time.' He expanded his book of poems and it was published as the Edinburgh edition in 1787. He then sold the copyright for 100 guineas and with his newfound, though ephemeral, wealth went off on a tour of Scotland. This was a fertile

trip as he collected many tunes and fragments of songs.

He spent the last years of his life in Dumfries as an excise man. His main poetical output in those years was some 350 songs which he wrote, repaired, expanded and carefully set to airs of his choosing. Many appeared in separate collections of Scottish songs by Edinburgh publishers James Johnson and George Thomson. After Burns died in 1796 Thomson procured arrangements from Beethoven, Haydn and other Viennese composers, so far had his fame spread.

Burns became particularly popular in North America. Abraham Lincoln kept a volume of his poems by his bed. Cassius Clay (before he became Muhammed Ali) visited the Alloway cottage and recited *The Slave's Lament* by Burns, which all his family knew by heart.

### What is the history of Burns Night? Who came up with the concept and how did its popularity spread?

For Scots, celebrating Robert Burns is a way of affirming their identity. Even a small gathering of expatriate Scots will soon organise a Burns supper to celebrate – and argue about – what it means to be a Scot.

The first Burns supper reportedly took place in Greenock in 1801 to mark the fifth anniversary of the poet's death. It was convened by various friends of *the Bard* as he became known. However, the first written record is from the Paisley Burns Club in 1805, whose minutes contain the first mention of the 'toast to the Immortal Memory [of Robert Burns]'. Ian McIntyre in his biography *Dirt & Deity* reports that 'by the early years of the 19th century the vogue for Burns Suppers was well established, with recitations of the *Address to a Haggis*'. The tradition was established and has carried on, and every year on or around 25 January suppers to the Bard's memory are held all over the world. I have a photograph of my father in Hong Kong in 1958 bearing the haggis on a salver at the St Andrew's Society's Burns night. My first Burns supper occurred at school in Scotland in the 1960s when I recited three of his songs.

It is a celebration that combines food,

strong drink, music, song, poetry and sometimes dancing, a heady combination designed to induce conviviality among the participants.

### Theatre is an important part of the Burns Night supper – how does the inclusion of poetry and music add to the enjoyment of the food?

As noted earlier Robert liked an audience and was never happier than when in company and able to express himself freely. When composing his comic, dramatic narrative poem *Tam O'Shanter* his wife reported, 'he would gesticulate wildly, croonin' to himself with tears of delight beside the river'. He had an ambition to write plays and attended the theatre in Dumfries, but the only time he came close was the cantata *The Jolly*

### When composing Tam O'Shanter his wife reported, 'he would gesticulate wildly, croonin' to himself with tears of delight beside the river'

*Beggars or Love and Liberty*. It is an exploration in song of the human condition through the eyes of a group of vagabonds. Mrs Riddell who wrote the first brief obituary said, '...none certainly ever outshone Burns in the charms – the sorcery, I would almost call it, of fascinating conversation, the spontaneous eloquence of social argument,

or the unstudied poignancy of brilliant repartee...'

Performance was second nature to Burns and he would delight in the recitation of his poems and the singing of his songs. We know from *Tam O'Shanter* that he enjoyed the sound of the bagpipes and from that and other sources that he loved to dance having taken lessons in his youth and danced at the Edinburgh Assembly Rooms with the Duchess of Gordon (who famously raised a regiment – the Gordon Highlanders – by offering a shilling and a kiss to all recruits).

### Could you tell us what makes a perfect Burns Night dinner to you – from the food to the entertainment?

Burns suppers tend to follow a formula with the haggis piped in, usually to the tune of *A man's a man for a' that* and then addressed in the eight stanzas that make up the *Address to a Haggis*, which give plenty of opportunity for drama (or melodrama). Speeches follow: the *Immortal Memory*, which should be informative and tell the audience something relevant to them about the life and work of the Bard – and the *Toast to and Reply from the Lassies*, which should be light-hearted, witty and brief. There may also be a toast to the guests and a reply, and a vote of thanks. These, too, should be light and brief. The speeches are interspersed with songs and recitations and instrumental pieces on the fiddle. The audience can even join in singing the chorus to *The Star of Robbie Burns* and of course *Auld Lang Syne* at the close. Burns Suppers are a great aid to getting through a dark January.



### BOOK YOUR TICKETS NOW!

ROSL'S Burns Night supper will take place on Thursday 23 January, with James Fairbairn as Master of Ceremonies and includes a delicious haggis supper.

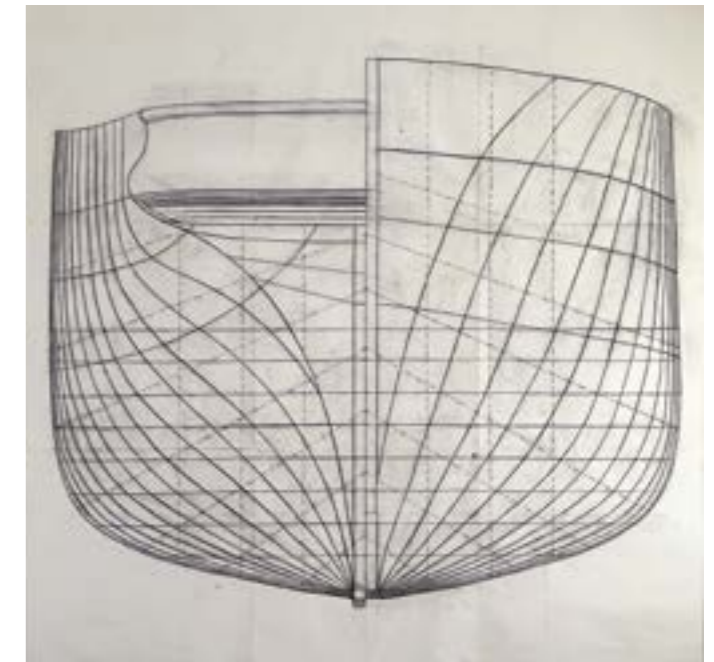
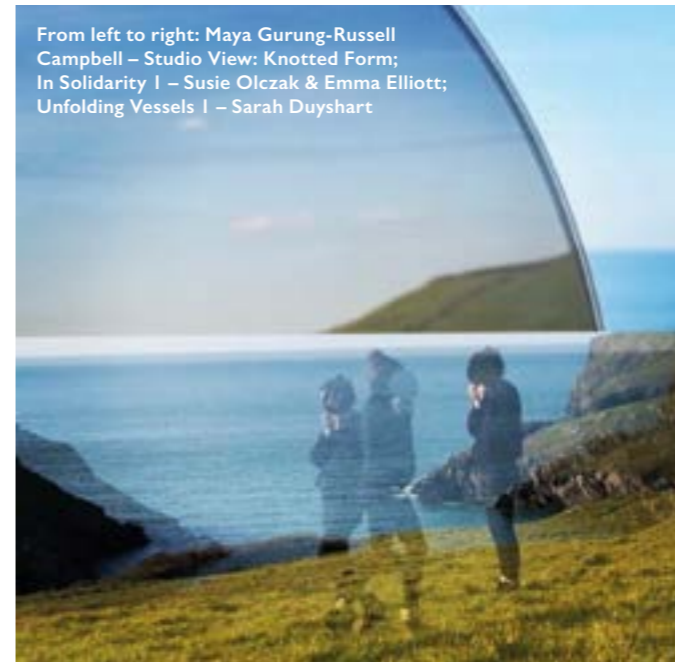
See [rosl.org/events](http://rosl.org/events) for more details



# RAFT

Artist Susie Olczak presents her upcoming RAFT exhibition, which she hopes will encourage us to reconsider movement across water and strengthen our international relations

From left to right: Maya Gurung-Russell Campbell – Studio View: Knotted Form; In Solidarity I – Susie Olczak & Emma Elliott; Unfolding Vessels I – Sarah Duyshart



Artist Susie Olczak is fascinated by the humble raft as a symbol of both adventure and necessity; a vehicle for leisure, but also a vital vessel in a struggle for survival. Here, Susie explains the curation and creation process behind her upcoming exhibition at ROSL, presented in collaboration with ROSL Art Curator Louis Chapple, and her hopes of challenging our perceptions of movement across waters.

“The exhibition RAFT is both timely and important; it responds to the ongoing developments around the globe that see increasing polarisation, both in Britain (for example shifting political dynamics) together with the growing amount of disinformation and ‘fake news’ we find ourselves exposed to everyday. Throughout history, people have frequently migrated to different places to escape hardship or to seek a better life. The exhibition aims to start a dialogue; to make people reconsider why, as well as how, people from different places and backgrounds might live together. RAFT is a call to rethink the relationship that Britain has with its surrounding waters and with the wider world, in terms of the movement of people across and between these spaces, and investigates the role of water in relation to diasporas (the dispersion of peoples from their homeland) in different places. I hope it challenges us all to rethink this in ways that strengthen international relations, rather than breaking them down.

## Reimagining the raft

The raft is highly symbolic; a small vessel used to move across water, it represents a journey. Rafts are often stored and inflated when required, or made in a way that is contingent on need. They are used both for adventure and for survival. In the same way that rafts can acquire different meanings, so too are migrants given various meanings at different times. Just as the raft has been adapted to different purposes, so have societies and migrants across the world made innovative use of objects in order to survive. For example, structures such as

**RAFT is a call to rethink the relationship that Britain has with its surrounding waters**

tents that are used for shelter and to move from one place to another have been employed by the homeless, by holidaymakers and by refugees. The exhibition draws parallels between this ongoing societal adaption and the intuitive processes through which artists produce their artworks. Taking inspiration from this ability to adapt, it suggests a method through which we might reconfigure our ways of thinking about timely issues.

For instance, the innovative use of a lightweight boat called a coracle, a dugout canoe and different kinds of raft might help us to think about more hopeful narratives in relation to climate change. These vessels all offer an object on which to float above the rising waters: what ways of thinking might do the same?

In the exhibition, there are recurring



SUSIE  
OLCZAK

Susie Olczak is a multidisciplinary artist with a focus on sculpture. She graduated with a BA Honours in fine art, sculpture and environmental art from the Glasgow School of Art in 2010 and with an MA in sculpture at the Royal College of Art in 2019. Her work considers ideas of contingent making and adaptation in relation to climate change and asks the viewer to look again at the world. It is about the perception of geometry, pattern, and the elements while moving through transitory spaces, such as corridors, underpasses and the walkways between buildings. Her work has been shown internationally in Berlin, Japan and the United States. She has exhibited around the United Kingdom, attended residencies in Finland, and in Panama and Chile with La Wayaka Current. She has also been commissioned to produce public artworks by BBC Scotland, Charles Saatchi at the Big Chill Festival, and the National Trust.





From top, clockwise: Camp Banner – Anna Chrystal;  
Water Safer than Land – Ghafar Tajmohammad;  
Sculpture by Samuel Zealey; Flood – Anna Chrystal;  
Opposite: Sculpture – Ian Wolter; Jonathan Parsons – Raft

motifs such as flags and vessels. Flags can sometimes be symbolic of nationalism, used to exclude the 'other'; or they can be used for laying a claim or even in calling for help. Vessels are a way to move ourselves, but can also be symbolic of rescue or instability. There are also many artworks that use water and materiality, emphasising the acts of tying things together or hanging items; works that weave or layer, or ask the viewer to question their initial assumptions of the object they are looking at. Through these different motifs and methods, the artworks consider what it means to migrate, or even to celebrate national identity.

#### The idea of 'Britishness'

Rather than turning inward on a particular idea of Britain or 'Britishness', this exhibition is outward looking, concentrating on this country's connections with the wider world. The exhibition therefore foregrounds artists who have diverse practices and backgrounds in terms of class, geographical location and ethnicity. Highlighting these artists who hail from different places and with varied life experiences and perspectives, the exhibition helps us to question how humans adapt and

thrive in new places, along with the role of activist approaches, and the importance of decolonial art making and curatorial practices.

Rather than ignoring the colonial narratives that have long been dominant in many institutions, RAFT wants to open them up for discussion, including some of the history of the Royal Over-Seas League's venue and its location, in both London and in Great Britain. The idea of a journey is referenced further in the exhibition space within the ROSL, where works are hung around a central staircase, along with using the flagpoles outside the building. More broadly, the exhibition challenges all of us to rethink the role of water in relation to diasporas that have both arrived in and left this country. In doing so, it can make space for new dialogue about migration in modern Britain.

The artworks shown include pieces by myself, Ghafar Tajmohammad, Emma Elliott, Ian Wolter, Samuel Zealey, Maya Gurung-Russell Campbell, Anna Crystal Stephens, Sarah Duÿshart and Jonathan

Parsons. These works are placed in dialogue with John Behan's Ghost Boat from the Ingram Collection.

Louis Chapple, Arts Curator at ROSL adds 'I am very excited that we will be hosting RAFT here at ROSL. The exhibition's concept, which at its core delves into the relationship between bodies of water across the world and the movement of people across them, is seemingly as pertinent now as ever before. I believe ROSL is the perfect place for these dialogues to evolve, with the

**This exhibition transforms the notion of a humble vessel into a symbolic emblem of our tested times**

very foundations of our institution's history inextricably linked to Britain's sea-faring past. Yet rather than solely dwelling on these complex pasts, RAFT looks outward beyond our seas and borders, repositioning these discourses within the continuously shifting tides of our modern globalised world. This exhibition transforms the notion of a humble vessel into a symbolic emblem of our tested times, centring these ever-changing currents as crucial for understanding and building our global future.'





# THE PASS IT ON PLEDGE

When you're finished with your copy of *Overseas*, please don't throw it straight into the recycling, pass it on!

We're encouraging our members to spread the word, so if you know any non-members that might enjoy reading the articles and the great window they provide into the world of ROSL, please pass it on to them.



## NEWS & EVENTS

*The latest from our Clubhouse; branches; art, music and announcements*



### INTRODUCING *our new luxurious suite*

We're delighted to reveal ROSL's new suite, designed to offer an elegant and comfortable overnight experience at the Clubhouse. The suite was designed by longtime ROSL collaborator Afra Affara, using premium furnishings and added utilities such as wifi speakers and extra storage space. 'I wanted to encapsulate a really elegant feel with a nod to the Clubhouse's 18<sup>th</sup> century beginnings. So we chose soft greys and pinks for the colour palette, with beautiful premium furnishings, such as chairs designed and made in the UK from real wood.

An added bonus is the suite's location, which overlooks leafy Green Park.

The suite can be booked at [rosl.org/clubhouse/stay](https://rosl.org/clubhouse/stay), or by telephone or email at [reservations@rosl.org.uk](mailto:reservations@rosl.org.uk) / +44 (0)20 7408 0214







## 'Try' January

Let the promise of a fresh new year be your inspiration to discover something new on the Duke of York drinks menu, including a delicious selection of low-and-no alcohol options for enjoying after the indulgences of Christmas.

Here are Director of Food & Beverage Serge Pradier's recommendations to enjoy this season.

### Non-alcohol

#### Cielo Zero, 0% abv

If you're taking a pause from Prosecco this January, let us suggest this lovely non-alcoholic Italian alternative, bursting with delicious citrus flavours and notes of fresh white flowers. The winemakers, Famiglia Cielo, have been making wine for over 100 years, and were awarded B-Corp certification in 2020, which makes a glass of this vivacious fizz taste all the more virtuous.



alcohol, this is made by a quality-focused producer, which prioritises low yields from carefully selected plots of land.

#### Flint Fumé, Norfolk, England, 11% abv

England is coming up trumps with its white wines at the moment, and this vivaciously fresh example, made from Bacchus grapes hand harvested from the Flint winery's own vines in the Crouch Valley, Essex, serves to prove it. Expect notes of ripe orchard fruits and delicate floral flavours too.



### Low-alcohol

#### Post Tree Chenin Blanc, Swartland, South Africa, 10.5% abv

South Africa's Swartland region is fast becoming renowned for its high-quality fruit and unparalleled value, as evidenced in this delicious, tropical-fruit and gooseberry-packed white, made from the country's flagship chenin blanc grape. Naturally lower in



Von Buhl Armand Riesling, Pfalz, Germany, 9.5% abv  
Riesling is deliciously reliable as a source of naturally lower-alcohol wines, and this refreshing citrus and peach-packed example still packs a punch in the flavour department. A delicious match for the lighter dishes that come into their own at this time of year.



### Mocktails

Try our expertly crafted alcohol-free creations based on well-loved classics

#### Elderflower Fizz

A summer's day in a glass, this blends premium elderflower cordial with zesty lime, apple juice and a refreshing twist of mint soda.

#### Bloody Shame

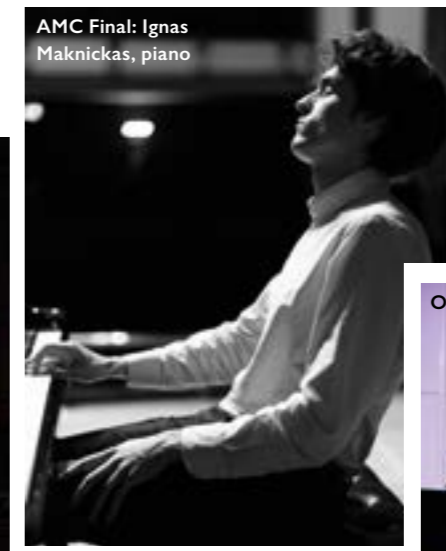
With all of the bite, but none of the vodka, this simple concoction combines the savoury heft of top-quality tomato juice with a spicy kick of Tabasco.

#### Virgin Mojito

A twist on the rum-based classic, this mixes punchy ginger ale with a twist of lime, mint and sugar for a cocktail that really doesn't miss the liquor.



AMC Finals at Wigmore Hall: winner Dafydd Jones



AMC Final: Ignas Maknickas, piano



Overseas AMC awards



A 'spring awakening' tablescape for an event organised by our Six Park Place team

## Year in REVIEW

Look back over a wonderful year of events, dining and talks at ROSL, in a year that saw us host a fascinating roster of Public Affairs guests, welcome more talented contemporary artists to take part in thought-provoking exhibitions, and delight guests with more delicious dining experiences



RBA Rising Stars at ROSL



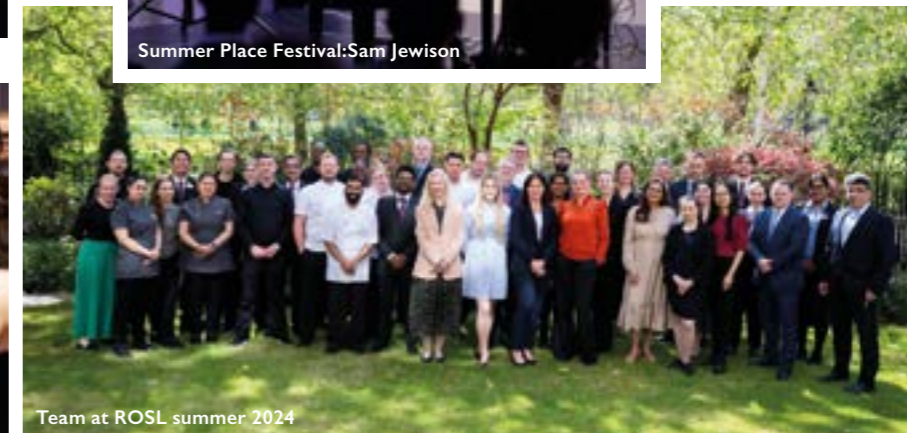
Public Affairs event: Nick Ferrari



Summer Place Festival: Sam Jewison



Summer Place Festival: Marmen Quartet



Team at ROSL summer 2024



## The Great Game 3.0: A World on the Brink of WWIII?

Co-Secretary of the Switzerland Branch, Michael McKay, reports back from the branch's Annual Dinner

The continuation of the Annual ROSL Dinner at the EHL Lausanne took place recently, with attendance almost double that of last year.

Our Guest of Honour, Dr David Chikvaidze, presented an original, well-researched, methodical interpretation of the dynamic that has played out over the last 300 or so years between the Russian Empire – in its various incarnations – and the collective West, whether coalesced as Pax Britannica, or Pax Americana.

With a historian's insight, our guest speaker provided a credible frame of reference for a serious analysis of how we got to where we are today, in lieu of the current interpretations of the actions of

these two conflicting sides.

The basic premise of this theory is that this unstable relationship has gone through three stages: The first, from the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries when the Russian State emerged in the international arena as a fully fledged empire and engaged in the original 'Great Game' with the British Empire over areas that today constitute the Near East, Central Asia, the Caucasus, all being the northern approaches to the jewel in the British Crown at the time, India. This original Great Game ended with the dissolution of the Russian Empire in the throes of WWI and the convulsions of a succession of Russian revolutions in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



How will the world organise itself after the shooting in Ukraine stops?

Guest speaker Dr David Chikvaidze



The second iteration of this historic standoff, the Great Game 2.0, begins in 1918 with the creation of Soviet Russia, transforming into the Soviet Union in 1922. The area of confrontation became practically the entire world due to the ideological underpinning of this

### The war in Ukraine has shown that the post-Soviet transition has gone disastrously off the rails

stage that permeated every and all actions of both sides.

During this stage, towards the close of WWII, Britain handed the baton over to America. The Great Game 2.0 would come to

an abrupt end with the implosion of the USSR at the close of 1991.

According to this theory, we are currently living the Great Game 3.0, with the same cast of characters, minus the ideological divide of the previous iteration. The war in Ukraine has shown that the post-Soviet transition has gone disastrously off the rails, dashing the initial hopes for the 'Peace Dividend' and other similar lofty concepts. The conundrum some 30 years later, at the beginning of what clearly is the second stage of the post-Soviet transition, raises the crucial question: how does the world organise itself after the shooting in Ukraine stops?

The speaker brilliantly interspersed historic narrative and analysis with essential elements of the psychological sensitivities involved, drawing parallels with contemporary popular culture references to illustrate some of his points. You should have been there to hear it! Our distinguished Guest of Honour remarked in conclusion that the dysfunction of the multilateral system, exemplified by the disappointing performance of the UN Security Council provides a worrying backdrop to today's international affairs.

If you are in Switzerland, or neighbouring France, join us for dinner in Lausanne next year; ROSL welcomes non-members.

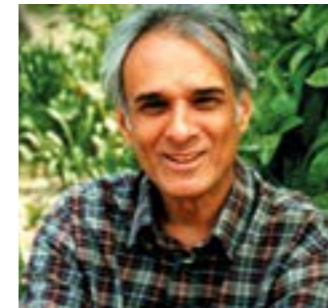
## Support Us

To allow ROSL to continue funding art and music education projects in the UK and around the Commonwealth, please consider donating at [www.rosl.org.uk/supportus](http://www.rosl.org.uk/supportus)

## Patronage Announcement

Ontario Chapter, Royal Over-Seas League

We are delighted to announce that Her Honour, the Honourable Edith Dumont, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario has granted Honorary Patronage to the Ontario Chapter of the Royal Over-Seas League. Since being founded in 1994, the Ontario Chapter has received Honorary Patronage from the sitting Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, beginning with the Honourable Henry 'Hal' Jackman. This news will be warmly welcomed by all members of the Ontario Chapter.



## Remembering Rohan De Saram

Celebrated British cellist passed away at the age of 85

Rohan won our Annual Music Competition in 1955 when he was only sixteen years old, the same year he started studying with Sir John Barbirolli and Pablo Casals, who said of him: 'There are few of his generation that have such gifts.' Rohan will be remembered for his massive contribution to the industry and will be missed.

## MEMBER EVENTS

### BOOK GROUP

The Book Group meets in person at the Club, as well as on Zoom for overseas members, on Wednesdays, once a month, to discuss primarily novels. The discussion starts at 5pm, but we meet beforehand for a drink and a chat and afterwards for dinner (optional) at 6.30. Dates of meetings with books: 11 Dec, *Sofia Petrovna* by Lydia Chukovskaya; 22 Jan 2025, *Peacock Cries* by Hong Ying.

### BRIDGE CLUB

The Bridge Club meets at ROSL every Monday 2pm - 4pm (except on Bank Holidays) to play ACOL Bridge. New members are welcome. Lunch at 12.30 is optional.

### BACKGAMMON CLUB

Meets on Wednesdays 2pm - 4pm and for lunch (optional) at 12.30. New members are welcome.

### THEATRE & OPERA GROUP

We go regularly to the theatre, opera, ballet and modern dance. We also go to Glyndebourne every year.

To join any of the Member-led activities, please contact Eve at [E.Mitleton-Kelly@rosl.org.uk](mailto:mitleton-kelly@rosl.org.uk)



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News & views

HIGHLIGHTS

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Go online to get full details and book your next event at [www.rosl.org.uk/events](http://www.rosl.org.uk/events)

EXHIBITION  
PRIVATE VIEW: RAFT  
Tuesday 10 December

ROSL CHRISTMAS  
CONCERT WITH  
THE TEMPLE  
CHURCH SINGERS  
Tuesday 3 December

CHRISTMAS  
LUNCH  
Wednesday  
25 December

BURNS NIGHT  
Thursday 23 January

CHINESE NEW  
YEAR DINNER  
From Monday 20 January

ROSL AT ENO'S  
PIRATES OF  
PENZANCE  
Friday 24 January

NEW YEAR'S  
CONCERT:  
CANDLELIGHT  
CONCERT & DINNER  
Monday 27 January

AMC FINALS  
From Tuesday  
11 February

AMC WOODWIND  
AND BRASS FINAL  
Tuesday 11 February

AMC VOCAL FINAL  
Tuesday 18 February

AMC KEYBOARD  
FINAL  
Tuesday 25 February

AMC OVERSEAS FINAL  
Tuesday 25 March

AMC STRINGS FINAL  
Tuesday 4 March

AMC ENSEMBLE A  
Tuesday 11 March

AMC ENSEMBLE B  
Tuesday 18 March

73<sup>RD</sup> ROSL  
ANNUAL MUSIC  
COMPETITION  
EST 1952



73<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL MUSIC COMPETITION 2025

We're delighted to announce the return of the ROSL Annual Music Competition, the jewel in the crown of our year-long arts programme. With an increasingly international reach, talented young musicians apply each year to compete for over £75,000 in prize money. Our Section Finals see performers from six disciplines – Wind and Brass, Keyboard, Singers, Strings, String Ensembles and Mixed Ensembles – compete for a place in our grand final at Wigmore Hall, and the opportunity to win our prestigious Gold Medal Prize.

Full dates are available in the Arts and Events calendar (left) or online at [ROSL.org.uk/events](http://ROSL.org.uk/events)



# LET THE LEAGUE BE YOUR LEGACY

Continue to support your home from home in the heart of Mayfair by bequeathing a gift to ROSL in your will. Your generosity will give young people around the world an education, it will give talented young musicians, artists and writers the chance of a career, and it will safeguard the future of your beautiful Grade I listed clubhouse.

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or call +44 (0)20 7408 0214



**ROSL**  
ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE