

News

Beauty and brutality uncovered in Pompeii

The vibrant reds and blues of the wall painting lay hidden under volcanic ash for nearly 2,000 years but, with a little help from a scalpel, are now being restored to their former glory (Tom Kington writes). "As we clean them, those colours will return to being just as

brilliant as they once were," the Pompeian archaeologist Alessandro Russo said as he admired the architectural designs featured in the fresco. As a golden age of excavations continues in the ancient Roman city, we were given a glimpse yesterday of a two-storey reception room. It once led to an opulent garden, which



has yet to be uncovered. "The quality of the frescoes is exceptional, and we rarely see them covering a whole room," said Sophie Hay, an archaeologist.

Scalpels are used to scrape off the volcanic ash that coated the city after the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD79, and a chemical solution removes any encrusted salt.

The excavation of a city block once owned by an aspiring politician named Aulus Rustius Verus is also exposing a corrupt and cruel side to Pompeii. On the other side of the reception room wall were two businesses



Archaeologists use scalpels to restore the colourful frescoes in a grand reception room. Above, parts of a ceiling

owned by him — a launderette that once stank of the urine used by slaves to clean clothes and a bakery in which slaves and mules turned giant millstones.

Entering a small adjacent altar room in which dates were found — evidence of a last sacrifice before the eruption — Gabriel

Zuchtriegel, director of the Pompeii archaeological park, pointed at a faint election slogan on the wall asking Pompeians to elect Aulus

Rustius Verus to public office. "He was holding electoral dinners here and baking bread to hand out to win votes," Zuchtriegel said.

The unseen suffering of slaves at Pompeii is the subject of an exhibition at the site, which includes shackles used to chain them. "DNA testing of remains is now suggesting some of them were brought from as far away as Britain and France," Zuchtriegel said.



Muslim pupil sues school over 'ban on prayer rituals'

Emma Yeomans

A high-achieving school in northwest London is facing a High Court challenge from a Muslim pupil over a decision to impose a "prayer ban".

The student, who cannot be named, alleges that the policy at Michaela Community School in Brent is discriminatory and "fundamentally changed" how she feels "about being a Muslim in this country", a judge was told.

The pupil described the ban as "like somebody saying they don't feel like I properly belong here", a hearing in London was told yesterday.

In the legal action against the Michaela Community Schools Trust, the free school's governing body, the student claims that the decision "banning prayer rituals" also breaches her right to freedom of religion.

The hearing was told that the school's

stance was introduced in March last year by its founder and head teacher Katharine Birbalsingh, a former government social mobility tsar who has been dubbed Britain's strictest head teacher for her school's policies on behaviour.

Lawyers for the school, which is opposing the legal challenge, had argued that proceedings should be in private because of past harassment, threats and a "bomb hoax".

However, Mr Justice Linden ruled that the hearing should be held in public and that the school and head teacher could be identified.

Sarah Hannett KC, representing the student, told the court that the policy had the "practical effect of only preventing Muslims from praying because their prayer by nature has a ritualised nature rather than being internal". She said it was "a ban uniquely on Muslim prayer", stopping pupils praying "at a time as required by Islam". She added

that Muslim prayer requires "prostration and for the worshipper to face a particular direction" and that the school "wouldn't prevent a Christian child sitting quietly in the corner of the playground from praying".

The pupil was seeking a compromise, her lawyer said, arguing that they should be allowed to pray for about five minutes at lunchtime, on dates when faith rules required it, but not during lessons.

Hannett said the ban at the school, where about half of the roughly 700 students are Muslim, makes the pupil "feel guilty and unhappy".

About 30 students began praying in the school's "wet and dirty" yard in March last year, using blazers to kneel as they were not permitted to take in prayer mats, the lawyer told the court.

Jason Coppel KC, for the school trust, said pupils seen praying outside contributed to a "concerted campaign" on social media over the school's approach to religion, including an online petition that attracted thousands of signatures, which has since been removed.

The court was told that the school was targeted with "threats of violence", abuse and "false" allegations of Islamophobia. The police were called to respond to claims of bombs being placed at the school, prompting it to hire a security guard and close two days early at the end of term.

Glass bottles were thrown over the school railings and a brick through a window, leaving staff fearing for their lives, Coppel said. He added that the situation had since calmed.

He said that Birbalsingh was concerned that coverage of the hearing would cause "serious risk" of "physical danger to our school community".

Mr Justice Linden noted that the school had received "disgraceful" abuse but concluded: "I do not accept that the evidence in this case establishes a risk to the lives or safety of members of the school staff or the school community that would justify holding the hearing in private." The judge ruled that there should be no reports of the case featuring the identity of any school pupils and staff, except for Birbalsingh.

The hearing continues.



Katharine Birbalsingh, the head teacher, introduced the policy last March

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The Roys (and The Bear) reign at Emmys

Succession, the drama about a warring media dynasty, ensured there will be no doubts over its own legacy following a dominant night at the Emmy awards (Keiran Southern writes).

The series, which ended after four seasons last year, won the top drama prize during a star-studded ceremony in Los Angeles and almost swept the major acting categories.

For their *Succession* swan songs, Kieran Culkin won best actor, Sarah Snook best actress, and Britain's Matthew Macfadyen took home best supporting actor.

The show won six Emmys — its creator, Jesse Armstrong, won best drama writing, and Mark Mylod was recognised for directing. "It was a great sadness to end the show," Armstrong said while accepting his award. "But it's a great pleasure to do it."

The 75th Emmys, which honoured excellence in American television, had been postponed from their original September date by the actor and screenwriter strikes that



brought Hollywood to a standstill. *The Bear*, a comedy-drama depicting the wild ups and downs of a family-run sandwich shop in Chicago, matching *Succession's* six prizes. *Beef* was another multiple winner, with five trophies. The show, which depicts a long-running feud that stems from a road rage incident, was named best limited series, while its performers were also honoured. Quinta Brunson was

named best actress in a comedy series for her lead role in the school mockumentary sitcom *Abbott Elementary*, while Jennifer Coolidge won best supporting actress in a drama series for *The White Lotus*. The night, however, arguably belonged to *Succession*. It joined the ranks of other heavyweight shows that bowed out with a best drama win, including *The Sopranos*, *Breaking Bad* and *Game of Thrones*.



Succession was successful — as was *The Bear*, starring Jeremy Allen White, left. Sir Elton John won a first Emmy to add to his Oscars

Culkin, 41, thanked Emily Gerson Saines, his manager of almost three decades. "I just have to thank you for keeping my name in the conversation when no one was talking about me," the actor, who played Roman Roy, said.

Sir Elton John joined an exclusive showbusiness club. The 76-year-old's *Elton John Live: Farewell from Dodger Stadium* won the Emmy for outstanding variety special (live). The victory made John

The big winners

- Best drama series**
Succession
- Best actor in a drama series** Kieran Culkin (*Succession*)
- Best actress in a drama series** Sarah Snook (*Succession*)
- Best supporting actor in a drama series** Matthew Macfadyen (*Succession*)
- Best supporting actress in a drama series** Jennifer Coolidge (*The White Lotus*)
- Best comedy series** *The Bear*
- Best limited or anthology series** *Beef*
- Best live variety special** Elton John *Live: Farewell From Dodger Stadium*

an Egot winner, completing his collection of the major American awards that include the Grammys, Oscars and Tonys.

The in-memoriam segment included tributes to the biggest names in entertainment who have died since the most recent Emmys ceremony in September 2022. Charlie Puth, the pop singer, performed a cover of the *Friends* theme song *I'll Be There For You* in honour of the late Matthew Perry. Norman Lear, Barbara Walters, Harry Belafonte and Kirstie Alley were also celebrated during the segment. The Egot club, Times2

William 'could cut ties with Church of England' as king

Kate Mansey, Kaya Burgess

Unlike his grandmother, Queen Elizabeth, who regularly attended church with a bank note in her handbag for the collection, the Prince of Wales is not known for his Sunday attendance.

Now a biography has gone further, saying that Prince William could become the first British monarch to break official ties with the Church of England. William is also said to want to make his coronation service "less spiritual", "shorter" by cutting it to about an hour and ten minutes, and "more discreet".

The revelations feature in a book, *Charles III: The Inside Story*, by the journalist Robert Hardman. He writes: "In royal circles, it is no secret that [the Prince of Wales] does not share the King's sense of the spiritual, let alone the late Queen's unshakable devotion to the Anglican church."

Hardman quotes "a senior Palace figure" saying: "His father is very spiritual and happy to talk about faith but the prince is not. He doesn't go to church every Sunday, but then nor do the large majority of the country. He might go at Christmas and Easter but that's it. He very much respects the institutions but he is not instinctively

comfortable in a faith environment."

Last month William accompanied his wife, the Princess of Wales, at her annual carol concert at Westminster Abbey along with their three children.

William, 41, was confirmed into the Anglican faith at the age of 14 in 1997. However, he is thought to go to church only "a handful" of times throughout the year, mainly at Christmas, Easter or for weddings, funerals and christenings. The King, by comparison, sees his faith and connection to other religions as a major part of his life and work.

The suggestion that William may cut ties with the Church when he becomes king could threaten to create a rift in the Anglican community and forever change the relationship between the Church and the monarchy.

The reigning monarch holds the title Defender of the Faith and Supreme Governor of the Church of England. The title dates back to Henry VIII, who was granted the title Defender of the Faith in 1521 by Pope Leo X.

The sovereign is anointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and takes an oath to "maintain and preserve" the Church. The King's duties include appointing archbishops and bishops on the advice of the prime minister. Parish

priests take an oath of allegiance to the monarch upon ordination, while bishops and archbishops require royal authority to resign.

Yet William is thought to want to scale back his involvement with the Church. Nor does he wish to have a grand investiture as the Prince of Wales, such as that of his father in Caernarfon in 1969.

Hardman also reveals in the book that William prefers to watch box sets rather than spend time reading, which is one of his father's passions. However, father and son have both refused to watch *The Crown*, the Netflix drama about the royal family.

Hardman quotes a source saying: "The prince ... rolls his eyes when people say that it's just drama. Yet he will not give it any greater publicity by complaining. He doesn't like the idea of being seen as a complainer all the time."

The King's warmth towards his daughter-in-law Catherine also emerges in the biography. A source tells the author: "He thinks Catherine is doing a wonderful job, not just with her royal duties but also bringing up his grandchildren."

Kensington Palace and the Church of England declined to comment.

Animal welfare groups angry over China's cloned monkey

Rhys Blakely Science Correspondent

Animal welfare campaigners have expressed concern after Chinese researchers succeeded in cloning a species of monkey that is widely used for animal testing.

The rhesus monkey, called ReTro, has survived for three years, a record for a cloned primate, after being born in July 2020.

The scientists behind the work believe that cloned monkeys could accelerate drug research and development, as using animals with the same DNA removes a key variable in trials of new medicines, giving greater confidence in results.

Professor Poo Mu-ming, director of the Institute of Neuroscience in the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Shanghai, said: "We can produce a large number of genetically uniform monkeys that can be used for drug efficacy tests." However, the technique would first have to be made far more efficient. Only one monkey survived after 113 cloned embryos were implanted into surrogate mothers.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals argued that the experiments could not be justified. "There is no immediate application for this study. We are expected to assume that human patients will benefit from



The monkey has survived for three years, a record for a cloned primate

these experiments, but any real-life applications would be years away," it said. "Primates are intelligent and sentient animals, not just research tools."

Luis Montoliu, of the National Centre for Biotechnology in Madrid, who was not involved in the cloning, said the experiments that created ReTro would not have been legal in Europe.

The monkey was created using somatic cell nuclear transfer, which involves extracting the DNA from a cell of the animal researchers want to clone. The genetic material is then implanted into an egg from another animal, from which the DNA has been removed.

The process was described in the journal *Nature Communications*.