

## Mexican wave at Westminster

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Easter Sunday yesterday. Anzac Day today. And you-know-what on Friday. Yes: bugles, pageantry, a spectacle all but defined by the squeaky-bum anxiety felt by the event's innumerable viewers, nearly all of whom will be hoping against hope that these two glowing representatives of a once mighty institution can get over the line without catastrophe or controversy, and so lift themselves, if briefly, to bathe in the warm sunlight of universal regard. That's right! It's the Broncos versus the Bulldogs in the NRL's Friday Night Footy! What? No? Ah, yes. That's it. It is in fact the right royal tying of the Windsor knot. Well, what do we know today? The London *Sunday Mirror* has reported Will and Kate head to Queensland's Lizard Island for their moneyhoon, following in the footsteps of Princes Charles, who visited the hideaway in his bachelor days. Though, true, equally they might not. We hear Kate will follow Princess Di's example and decline to say "obey" in her wedding vows. And AAP reports a poor young woman (in more than one sense) from Mexico has been given an airfare by a so-called "Good Samaritan" after her 16-day hunger strike had failed to "wrangle" a formal invitation from the Windsors (we can listen for her famished cries, as she will watch from just outside Westminster Abbey, apparently).

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### CHASER'S FERGIE LINK

Staying with the matters royal ... that the Duchess of York, **Sarah Ferguson**, has not been invited to the wedding is old hat. And it was no surprise anyway. The very last thing the royal family wants is an audience of billions distracted from Kate's dress (and Will's frowning memorising of his lines) by the sight of Jolly-What-Ho!-Sarah and the swift succession of vivid mental associations (toe-sucking, a briefcase stuffed with lots of lovely lolly, saucer-eyed glee) that such a sight would dependably prompt to flicker in the global mind's eye. Besides, most of their anxiety quotient will be expended wringing their hands over what Harry might at the last minute decide to wear. But their fears are, in a small way, perhaps to be realised after all as we hear the Chaser is offering a "Fergie-Cam" in its live coverage of the wedding which will "track the snubbed duchess's movements on the big day". With any luck - for her, for us, for everybody - she'll sleep in.

### TEAPOTS, ANYONE?

Tea, eh? Dependably refreshing. Kept warm by those snug little covers we delightedly call "tea cosies". A foundation stone of the British Empire. Infamously tossed overboard in a "party" in Boston. And there to comfort the huddled masses during the Blitz. It's got history in other words, has dear old tea. But is it art? Before you say "Don't be daft" and flounce out of the room with a snap of your cape (or, better yet, invite the Sulman Prize judge **Richard Bell** to toss a coin to decide for you) let's give Rozelle's Paper Plane Gallery its say. The gallery is running an exhibition displaying the response of an array of artists working in various media to transform a seemingly mundane, though for some frankly indispensable household item, into a work of art. "Rather than have the artists modify something like a vinyl toy, they'd take an everyday item and turn it into objet d'art," says **Rebecca Murphy**, curator and the conceptual spark of the show. "There are some pretty famous examples - Duchamp's urinal, Warhol's soup cans." Murphy stressed the importance of unconventionality in modern art. "They're few and far between in Australia. They say if you can't find a way, make a way. I love art that isn't just for the art crowd, the kind that gets everyday people excited." The work exhibited ranges from the poetic and profound to the utterly bizarre. "Can you imagine pouring a cup of tea out of the snout of a pink grub with writhing black tentacles?" No, at least not until she mentioned it. "All the teapots are so different, you really have to see them for yourself," said Murphy. "There will definitely be more shows like this on the horizon, so keep an eye out." If **Jim Jarmusch** can make a film about coffee and cigarettes, why not?

## A BIG WEEK FOR A RIGHT ROYAL DRESS UP

WHAT everybody wants to know about this royal wedding is what the couple will be wearing. Your wish is The Diary's command, so above we offer you a cut-and-keep Will-and-Kate paper doll souvenir to put you, the reader, in their dressing rooms. As the secrecy around Kate's wedding dress continues to stand as an almighty bulwark even WikiLeaks has been unable to penetrate, about the only thing we know about the gown is that it's going to be white, says The Diary's fashion czarina, **Georgina Safe**. Well, maybe. For the record, the two rumoured front-runners to design it are **Sophie Cranston**, of the London label Libelula, and fellow Brit **Sarah Burton**, who is now at the creative helm at Alexander McQueen. **Bruce Oldfield's** name has also been bandied around. But in the absence of any actual facts, Safe is tipping Kate will wear something more modern than the monumental meringue in which William's mother, Diana, walked down the aisle in 1981, and with a slimmer cut to show off her enviable figure. But she will still require gravitas and glamour - the stadium-like size of Westminster Abbey demands a dress that will not be silenced. For William, on the other hand, deciding is a less complicated affair. He could opt for a traditional morning suit, but it's more likely he will don a military uniform, as did his father, **Prince Charles** when he wed Diana. But with a plethora to choose from - his Royal Air Force uniform as a helicopter search-and-rescue pilot, or an army or naval dress uniform, since he has served in those branches too - even Wills's pick remains tantalisingly tenuous.

## KEEP IN TOUCH ... WITH RAINING WOMEN

AND now for the weather on the Sunshine Coast. All today and tomorrow, continuing from Friday, it will be raining women in and around Toogoolawah. The women will be plummeting often in groups of four and eight but at other times in higher concentrations. Conditions are expected to persist until Sunday. In that time more than 100 women - "skysisters" - looking to complete 5000 or more jumps and break "six all-female national and world records including the impressive eight-way wingsuit world record with a 10-way of jumpers in multicoloured webbed 'wingsuit' outfits joining in perfect formation". No, we've no idea - but it sounds good. The skysisters supremo, **Susie McLachlan**, has been running the all-female parachuting conventions since 2005 when she realised that only one in seven of the 3000 registered skydivers in Australia were women. "It's great for women because they're not afraid to ask questions and it's confidence-building," she told us, adding that pregnancy is the only excuse she'll take for a no-show. "In the past five weeks, we've had five pregnancies." The convention, on her dad's property, is more a niche business than a separatist political statement. Giving tips this year is the celebrated parachutist **Norman Kent**: "A guy once said to me the best way to get more people into the sport is to get more girls, then the guys will come." A second-generation parachutist, McLachlan said she liked operating from the family property as it was a place where she'd "had a lot of ups and downs".

## ... WITH BASEL'S BIG STINK

IT SEEMED paradoxical but the thing causing the biggest stink in Basel over the weekend was a flower. Associated Press reports the titan arum (*Amorphophallus titanum*), also known as the corpse flower on account of its putrescent odour when in bloom, attracted thousands of plant lovers to the northern Swiss city to see the plant's first flowering. No doubt many readers will now be thinking "been there, done that" because Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens also has titan arums and intermittent flowerings here have also aroused great interest. The Basel Botanical Gardens expected 10,000 people to see the flower in its full, perishing glory before quickly wilting. Surely only anosmic (unsmelling) spectators lingered. The plant, growing to two metres and native to Sumatra, rewards (if you can call it that) patience. The Basel specimen, 17 years old, had never bloomed before. The last blooming in Switzerland was 75 years ago; there have been only 134 recorded blooms from artificial cultivation. The flower emits the smell of rotting flesh to attract insects for pollination.

## ... WITH THE MAN WHO KILLED VINYL

IT'S the 21st-century equivalent of the passing of **Thomas Edison**, the inventor of the phonograph. The former Sony president **Norio Ohga**, who died on Saturday aged 81, did not invent the CD player per se, but he led Sony, with co-developer Royal Philips Electronics, to wrench the music industry out of the vinyl era and into the world of the CD. Looking back, was it an advance? CDs were slick, neat and generally harder to ruin permanently. But they forced a generation to shell out yet again for, say, the same favourite Bowie albums. Against that, as an Agence France-Presse report says, it was "Ohga, a passionate baritone singer, who pushed for the 12-centimetre format with 75 minutes of recording capacity to fit Beethoven's Ninth Symphony without interruption". Indeed, Ohga was contrary to the stereotype of a technology executive. No mere spectator, in 2001 he was conducting the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra at the Beijing International Music Festival when he suffered a stroke. And in 2003, he donated his \$US13.5 million in retirement pay to build a concert hall in Karuizawa, Nagano.

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