

Twickenham & Richmond Tribune



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Editors:

Berkley Driscoll
Teresa Read

TickerTape - News in Brief

South Western Railway

Altered train services and buses replace trains in the Barnes area **Sunday 20 October**

The lines in the **Barnes** area will be **closed all day** due to maintenance work.

Queenstown Road station will be **closed all day**. Please use other nearby stations.

Due to the diverted services, some services via **Wimbledon** will be **revised**.

London Waterloo to Reading services will be **revised** and will be diverted between **Clapham Junction and Twickenham**. These services will call additionally at **Wimbledon, Kingston and Strawberry Hill**.

- **London Waterloo to Windsor** services will be **revised**.
An **hourly** service will be diverted between **Clapham Junction and Twickenham via Kingston** calling at all stations.
An **hourly** service will start from **Richmond** calling at all stations.
- **London Waterloo to London Waterloo via Richmond and Kingston** services will be **revised** and will only run between **Richmond and Kingston**.
- **Buses** will run between **Clapham Junction and Twickenham via Richmond**. These **buses** will **not** call at **St Margarets**.
- **London Waterloo to Woking via Staines** services will be **revised** and will start from **Kew Bridge**.
- The afternoon and evening **London Waterloo to Kingston via Hounslow** services will **not** run.
- **Buses** will run between **Clapham Junction and Kew Bridge**.

TFL - Tube strikes planned

Tube strikes are planned by RMT and ASLEF. If strikes go ahead, Tube services will be disrupted between 1 and 13 November.

- Severe disruption is expected on some days
- [Plan ahead](#) and [check before you travel](#)



The Tree Agency

darryl parkin

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Local Picture Postcard Column - Part 271

Marble Hill House

By Alan Winter

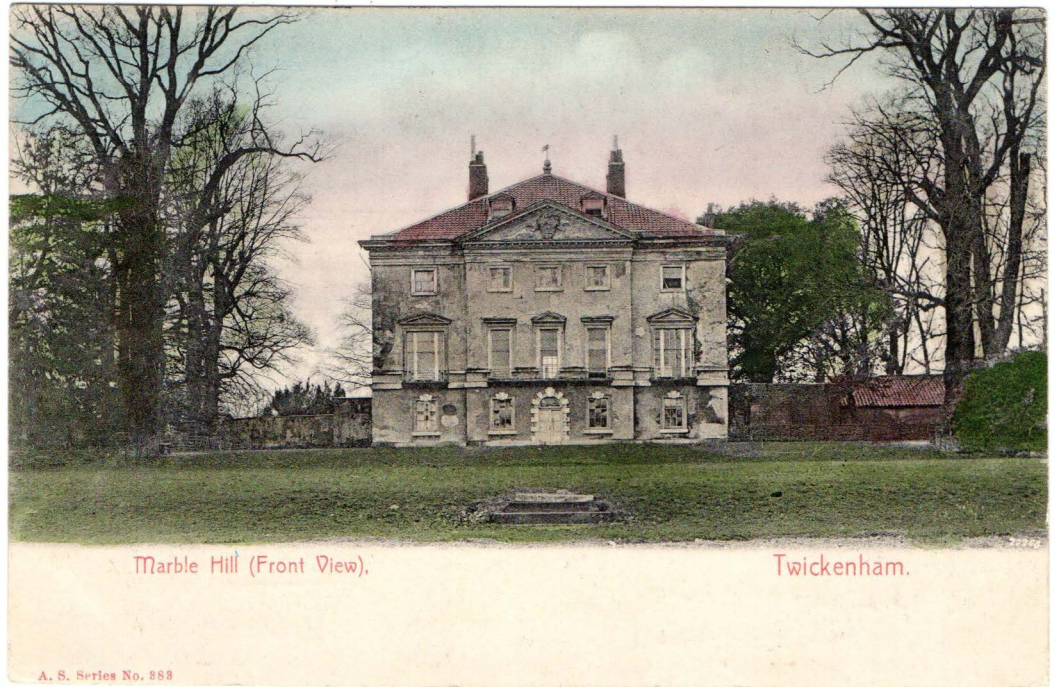
Marble Hill House is a Neo-Palladian villa, now Grade I listed, in Twickenham. It was built between 1724 and 1729 as the home of Henrietta Howard, Countess of Suffolk, who lived there until her death. The compact design soon became famous and furnished a standard model for the Georgian English villa and for plantation houses in the American colonies.

Today's postcards all show the house in various stages of external decoration since 1904 and shows what a difference a tin of white paint can make! They are also all photographed from the river side of the

house as this is in fact the front of the house. Back in the 1700's there were no motor vehicles of course and most of Henrietta Howard's visitors arrived and departed by boat from the river Thames.

The first postcard goes back 120 years to 1904, The second is late 1940's. The third taken after a fall of snow was about 1955 while the final postcard was

photographed from across the river on the Ham side. This last one is fairly modern and was



published a few years ago by English Heritage.

Marble Hill is the last complete survivor of the elegant villas and gardens that bordered the Thames between Richmond and Hampton Court in the 18th century.

Inside the house, you can discover a taste of Georgian life with freshly conserved interiors and new displays that tell





the story of Henrietta Howard, Marble Hill's remarkable owner.

Both Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift were regular guests at the house during the lifetime of Henrietta Howard.

The estate and house came under ownership of the London County Council and was open to the public in 1903. It

was the first eighteenth-century house in England to be preserved by a public body. Restoration by the Greater London Council (GLC) began in 1965 and after the dissolution of the GLC the freehold of the house and estate passed to English Heritage in 1986.

Marble Hill House was used as a stand-in for a plantation house in the 1994 film 'Interview with the Vampire'.

Its extensive grounds are known as Marble Hill Park and provide many leisure facilities including football, rugby and hockey pitches, a cricket pitch and nets, tennis courts, and a children's play area.

My search for old postcards continues. I am always looking for old postcards and old photograph albums etc. The postcards can be British or Foreign, black and white or coloured and of places or subjects.

If you have any that are sitting unwanted in a drawer, in a box in the loft or in the garage or under a bed, please contact me on 07875 578398 or alanwinter192@hotmail.com

I would like to see them and I pay cash!



CrusaderTravel



020 8744 0474

crusadertravel.com

Escapology Experts

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Your friendly local Travel Agency
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With over 50 years experience we pride ourselves on being able to offer an unrivalled service with attention to detail. Come and have a chat with us in our cosy office off the Church Street Square, we are open 6 days a week from 11am until 6pm (Closed Sunday)



Major roadworks on A316 London Road roundabout to start next week

From Richmond Council

Transport for London (TfL) has announced that major roadworks on the A316 at the London Road roundabout are set to commence on Monday 21 October 2024.

The project will involve significant changes to the roundabout which aim to improve safety and traffic flow in the area but will inevitably cause some disruption to local residents and commuters.

TfL will be holding an [online briefing session](#) on Thursday 24 October at 6.30pm via Microsoft Teams. This session will provide an opportunity for residents and commuters to learn more about the works and ask any questions they may have.



Our Network Management Team will be closely monitoring traffic in the area and liaising with TfL to minimise disruption. Residents are advised to plan their journeys accordingly and consider alternative routes if possible.

Read [more information about the A316 roadworks](#).

For details of all the planned and emergency roadworks taking place across Richmond upon Thames, [sign up for our weekly roadworks bulletin](#).

Hear updates on the new Teddington Clinic

From The Friends of Teddington Memorial Hospital

Next Monday 21 October, residents are invited to join The Friends of Teddington Memorial Hospital for an evening of reflection, celebration, and connection.

The League of Friends Annual General Meeting and drinks reception, led by Angela Clarke, NHS Estate Development and Optimisation Director, will feature updates on the new outpatient facility at Teddington Memorial Hospital. The event will also include a Q&A session with the charity's trustees, providing attendees an opportunity to engage directly. Refreshments will be served.

Event details:

Date: Monday 21 October 2024

Time: 7.30pm

Location: Peter & Paul Centre, Teddington



You can [find out more about the League of Friends Annual General Meeting](#).

Thames Tideway Tunnel

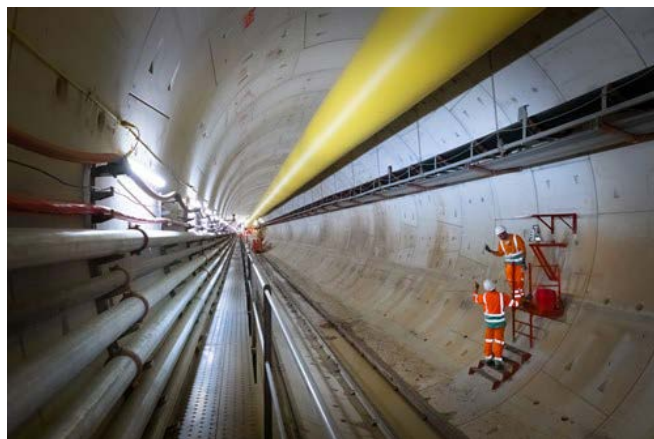
London's £4.5bn Super Sewer Now in Operation

London is ushering in a new era of cleaner waterways as the first phase of the £4.5 billion Thames Tideway Tunnel—dubbed the “Super Sewer”—begins operations. Aimed at tackling the chronic sewage overflows that have plagued the River Thames for decades, this monumental project marks a pivotal step in modernising the capital's Victorian-era infrastructure.

The Thames Tideway Tunnel, stretching 25km from Acton in West London to Abbey Mills in the East, will intercept over 95% of sewage that would otherwise flood the Thames during heavy rains. This vast underground sewer is expected to capture the equivalent of 640 Olympic-sized swimming pools of wastewater, preventing it from polluting one of the city's most iconic rivers.

For years, London's antiquated sewage system has struggled to keep pace with the city's growth. Originally designed for a population of just over 4 million, the current Victorian network has been forced to cope with the needs of nearly 10 million people. The result: tens of millions of tonnes of untreated sewage and stormwater have been discharged into the Thames annually, creating both environmental and health hazards.

Work on the tunnel began in 2016, following years of debate and opposition. With the first four of the tunnel's 21 sites now operational, Londoners can already begin to witness the improvements. On a particularly wet day in September, the system successfully captured 589,000 cubic metres of wastewater, highlighting its potential to protect the river from future storm surges.



A Controversial Start, A Cleaner Future: While environmental campaigners initially criticised the project, arguing that more sustainable solutions such as green roofs and porous pavements could be implemented, others hailed the Thames Tideway Tunnel as essential for safeguarding the city's waterways. Communities Secretary Eric Pickles, in a statement at the time, called it a “*challenging but vital*” infrastructure project.

Thames Water, the company behind the project, has maintained that alternatives would not adequately address the scale of the problem. In 2013 alone, 55 million tonnes of raw sewage were flushed into the Thames—a number set to plummet now that the super sewer is functional.

Despite the early opposition, the project's completion is seen as a critical victory for urban sustainability. “*We are starting to see the tunnel's impact, and London will soon be home to a cleaner, healthier river,*” Tideway CEO Andy Mitchell said. While more connections and further testing are still needed, he added, “*this is an important moment for the Thames.*”

A Funding Model for the Future: One of the key successes of the Thames Tideway Tunnel is its unique funding structure, which balances public infrastructure needs with private investment. Investors such as Allianz provided capital through a mix of equity investments and green bonds, helping to minimise the financial burden on Thames Water customers. Early estimates suggested that customers would face an additional £80 per year in their bills, but the final figure has been closer to £20–25 annually—thanks in part to the efficiency of the financing model. Beyond its engineering marvels, the tunnel is also reshaping the urban landscape. Sites like Blackfriars, once heavily industrial, are being transformed into public spaces where Londoners can reconnect with a cleaner river.

A Legacy for London: The Thames Tideway Tunnel is more than just a piece of infrastructure; it represents a shift towards a more environmentally sustainable London. With completion expected by 2025, the tunnel is part of the government's broader push to meet its net-zero emissions targets by 2050.

Water Minister Emma Hardy MP lauded the tunnel as a model for future urban projects, combining economic benefits with environmental improvements. She highlighted its potential to boost biodiversity along the river, improving both wildlife habitats and public health.

As the project moves towards full operation, Londoners can look forward to a river that is cleaner, healthier, and better prepared for the future.

Temporary closures scheduled on Hammersmith Bridge

Hammersmith & Fulham Council have confirmed Hammersmith Bridge will be closed for six 24-hour periods on Friday to Saturday evenings in the coming weeks for repair work.

Engineers need to lift the 137-year-old cast iron bridge and replace the corroded, seized components with new rubber bearings.

To keep everyone safe while the bridge is lifted, it will be temporarily closed to pedestrians and cyclists from 8pm for 24 hours on the following six dates:

- From Friday 25 October 9pm to Saturday 26 October 9pm
- From Friday 1 November 9pm to Saturday 2 November 9pm
- From Friday 8 November 9pm to Saturday 9 November 9pm
- From Friday 15 November 9pm to Saturday 16 November 9pm
- From Friday 22 November 9pm to Saturday 23 November 9pm
- From Friday 29 November 9pm to Saturday 30 November 9pm

They will also be carrying out repairs to the footways from Monday 14 October onwards. To do this they will close one footway at a time from 9am to 3pm Monday to Friday. The opened footway will be marshalled and clearly signed.

This work will take about two months to complete both footways and access over the bridge will be maintained during the footway repairs - except for the closure periods listed above. River traffic will not be affected.



Hammersmith & Fulham Council's website has [more information about the works](#).

Visit the Transport for London website to [plan your journey](#).

Leafy Richmond upon Thames

Teresa Read

Many of us think ourselves lucky to live in leafy Richmond upon Thames but at this time of year it can be hard work for those who live near trees, especially large Council trees.

My home is surrounded by trees and leaf fall can be a difficult time.

It is not, as I have been told by a senior Council officer, that I do not like trees, in fact I have ten reasonably large trees of my own (all, except a fig, are evergreen). Additionally, there are two enormous Council trees, a Common Lime and very large Horse Chestnut, overhanging my garage and roof that the present Council refuse to prune. Just across a small side road there are five very mature trees - all deciduous.

Like many of us, I pay for a Green Bin, but this cannot cope with the number of leaves at this time of year, so I store in additional bins, as well as filling LBRUT recycling bags.



If I had the use of green bags fit for purpose, i.e, storing leaves for LBRUT collection, this would be a great help but unfortunately the bags are more a hindrance than help; they disintegrate and tear very easily although stored in a cool dry cupboard.

To arrange LBRUT leaf “sack” collection it is necessary to make a booking with the Council in advance. However, after filling bags ready for collection I discovered that the bags disintegrate and tear, so, I had to put the damaged bags into other Council green bags - that also started to come apart within a day or so.

It must also be difficult for the people collecting the green bags with splits and leaves coming out of the sides. Surely there is a better solution?

LBRUT “Sacks are sold in packs of 10 and cost £22.70 including postage and individual sacks can be bought for £1.89 each.” However, a quick search on the internet show 25 Eco compostable bags for £12.99. And, of course, in some instances the leaf fall goes on for a very long time with one tree’s leaf fall following another. But, we have to use LBRUT expensive green bags.

Perhaps the Council could look into green bag suppliers and the sacks used, or maybe they do not experience the problem themselves, but there must be another answer, and a better cost, than what we have at present.

Dear Editors,

Chief Executive Officer

The Council has been without a Chief Executive Officer since Mike Jackson stepped down back in July. Is it a poisoned chalice?!

Kind regards,

Resident of the Borough
Name and address supplied

Dear Twickenham Tribune

Public Toilets

As a regular reader I am aware of the problem in the borough regarding the Council's Community Toilet Scheme (CTS) and the absence of public toilets provided by the Council of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.

I have read that the Cricket Pavilion on Twickenham Green is in the abovementioned scheme, and I understand that payment is made for this service to the community, albeit a service not clearly publicised.

The lack of "advertising" this so-called member of the CTS is obvious since surrounding residential areas are openly used for toilet purposes.

During the last week or so I have crossed the Twickenham Green path from the Staines Road side to the Hampton Road side and I have seen, on several occasions and most recently on Wednesday, young men running out of the rowdy Pavilion and publicly urinating (and vomiting) in groups, to their shame, not even urinating discreetly but making a show of the "event". I believe that the police call this "disorderly conduct" and no doubt "indecent exposure".

If the people using the Cricket Pavilion with the so-called Community Toilets cannot find them what hope is there for everyone else?

I would add that there are those of us who remember the public toilet building on Twickenham Green, now converted to a food and drinks establishment, but only allowing use of the toilet to customers on the premises. Despite this, I understand that a modern toilet was removed adjacent to the restaurant and an uninspiring collection of plants can now be seen on the land, no doubt with all the plumbing for the toilets still below ground.

Concerned Resident, Twickenham
Name and address supplied

Policy and Performance Review Board

Domestic Refitting, Council Performance, Consultations, and Public Toilets

By James Knight

At last night's Policy and Performance Review Board (PPRB) meeting, several key issues were discussed, ranging from domestic retrofitting and council performance to the Community Toilet Scheme. The discussions offered insight into the council's efforts to improve services but also revealed areas where challenges remain.

Domestic Retrofitting Update: the task group provided an oral update on domestic retrofitting, an initiative aimed at promoting sustainable energy solutions for residents. The task group has been studying various retrofitting approaches, inspired by Devon County Council's retrofit guide. The meeting explored whether digital tools could assist residents interested in installing air-source heat pumps and solar panels.

With Richmond having the second-highest per capita CO2 emissions in London, the task group stressed the need for clear communication on the environmental and financial benefits of retrofitting. The council hopes this initiative will help residents reduce their carbon footprint, but whether this effort will reach the scale required remains to be seen.

Richmond's Comparative Performance: Richmond's performance, particularly in comparison to other boroughs, was a focal point of the PPRB agenda. Claire O'Connor from the performance team presented data from the Office for Local Government (OFLOG) and noted that Richmond ranked second overall in terms of council efficiency and service delivery, just behind the City of London.

While some praised Richmond's strong showing in areas such as planning and business rate collection, there were questions about discrepancies in the data. Councillor Mansfield pointed out differences in planning approval statistics, noting that OFLOG's two-year review period could skew Richmond's real-time data. Business rate collection remains slightly below the national average at 93.8%, compared to a median of 96.2%.

Concerns were also raised about road safety, with Richmond reporting a relatively high number of serious incidents compared to other London boroughs. The board discussed the need for better public communication on these figures, which can fluctuate year on year. However, critics have said the 20 MPH measures have not resulted in the promised safety improvements.

There was also significant concern over the NHS health checks for those over forties not taking place for most adults, storing up problems for the future. Only 10.3% of eligible individuals received their NHS health checks, well below the national average. The board has committed to closely monitoring these areas, with an emphasis on improving health check participation and enhancing safety on Richmond's roads.

Council's Consultations: a significant portion of the meeting was dedicated to discussing the council's approach to consultations. Following feedback from previous sessions, the board looked at ways to make consultations more transparent, timely, and accessible.

The council is adopting a "good practice guide" for consultations, with the aim of publishing results within three months. If this timeline cannot be met, the council has pledged to provide updates. There was also discussion around ensuring that residents are clear about how their feedback influences council decisions. The council's consultation process has come under scrutiny in recent years, particularly in light of the statutory Gunning Principles, that require that consultations are conducted at a formative stage with enough information and time for "intelligent consideration." The board acknowledged that some consultations had not met these standards in the past, with some community groups feeling sidelined.

Although the council is working to enhance its consultation practices, tensions remain. Residents unhappy with previous decisions have often found themselves at odds with senior councillors, and unless these efforts are coupled with a more conciliatory approach, the council may struggle to rebuild trust with the community.

Public Toilets: The board also discussed the growing issues surrounding Richmond's Community Toilet Scheme, a programme that enlists local businesses to offer public toilet facilities. While the scheme has existed for

some time, the pandemic has amplified calls for the council to provide more public toilets, particularly in areas such as Twickenham and Richmond Greens, which suffer from public drinking and associated anti-social behaviour.

The council is expanding the Community Toilet Scheme instead of opening new public facilities. Eleanor Davis, the newly recruited manager, presented updates on her efforts to map participating businesses and identify areas where coverage is lacking. The scheme currently includes 50 businesses, but only 23 offer accessible facilities.

Public awareness of the scheme remains low. The council is working on a new campaign that will coincide with UN World Toilet Day in November, alongside Richmond's Shop Local initiative. However, with a heavy reliance on digital tools, there are concerns about how well these efforts will reach older residents who may not be tech-savvy.

One of the more glaring issues raised was the lack of late-night toilet facilities. While pubs offer broad coverage during the day, they are not accessible to underage residents—ironically, the group most involved in public drinking and anti-social behaviour. Critics argue that the Liberal Democrat-led council is missing the bigger picture. Instead of putting on late night toilet facilities at trouble spots, at great expense to rate payers, they should introduce an alcohol ban instead.

You can see the papers from the committee [HERE](#)

Next week at Richmond Council

On Tuesday morning, the **North West London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee** will meet, with Richmond Council attending in a non-voting capacity. Items on the agenda are the Adult Community-based Specialist Palliative Care (CSPC) Review, Mental Health Strategy, Primary Care Access, and JHOSC Recommendations Tracker. The meeting will take place at 10 a.m. and is being hosted at NHS North West London, Ferguson House, 15 Marylebone Road, London, NW1 5JD

For full details, please follow the link [HERE](#)

The **Adult Social Services, Health and Housing Committee** will convene. Items on their agenda include receiving the RHP Housing Report, the quarterly budget report, Adult Social Services Compliant Reports, the road map to Health Care integration, disabled facilities grant update, and the joint health and overview scrutiny committees report. The meeting will start at 7 p.m. at York House, Twickenham.

For full details, please follow the link [HERE](#)

On Thursday, the **Licensing sub-committee** will meet to determine an opposed licencing application from Lebanese Bites, located next to Richmond Station. The meeting will start at 10:30 a.m. and will be held virtually.

For full details, please follow the link [HERE](#)

On Thursday evening, the **Education and Children Services Committee** will meet to discuss the annual complaints report for children's services and the complaints policy. The quarterly monitoring report, the digital transformation, contract extension for Achieving for Children, the Achieving for Children Annual Report, and children's mental health services review. The meeting will start at 7 p.m. at York House, Twickenham.

For full details, please follow the link [HERE](#)

How to participate: We encourage all members of the public who live or work in the borough to participate. You can submit questions or speak on an item on the agenda. To ask a question, simply submit it by 12 noon two working days in advance. To speak, you must register by noon the working day before the meeting.

For further details on how to participate, please follow the link [HERE](#)

Bulb Planting Day: Bushy Park

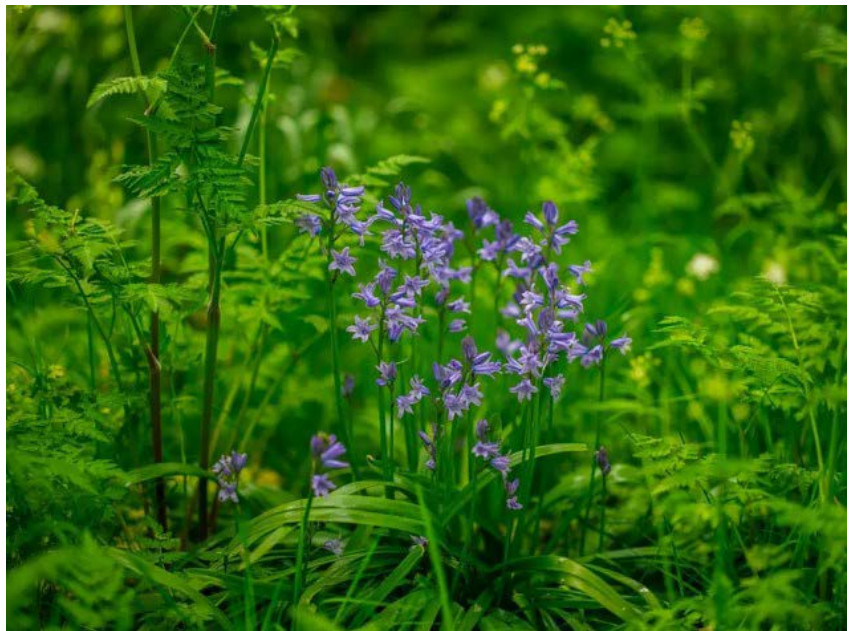
Help us help nature thrive...

Join us and get involved with **hands-on planting** and leave your mark in **Bushy Park** this winter!



What to expect:

- Plant a mix of **woodland bulbs** including: snowdrops, wild garlic, and bluebells. Not only do bulbs provide colourful displays, but they can also provide nectar and pollen for our pollinating bees, flies and butterflies too.
- Meet the team at the gazebo in the woodland gardens (between Triss's Pond and the Pheasantry Cafe at WhatThreeWords: Lake.Amused. Bond) for a quick introduction about what we're doing and to pick up some bulbs and planting equipment.



[Register now](#)

Please note:

- This is a free drop-in event, we ask that you **sign-up** so we have an idea of numbers.
- **Time:** this event will take place between 11am-3pm.
- This opportunity and the **Help Nature Thrive project** are free thanks to support from players of [People's Postcode Lottery](#).
- Please note that photography may be taken during this event. If you do not wish to be included in photos, let a member of staff know on the day. See our [Privacy Policy](#) for more details.



Audit Committee

Richmond Council Under Pressure Over Audit Delays as Fraud Investigations Uncover Housing Abuse

By James Knight

Richmond Council's Audit Standards and Statutory Accounts Committee has come under renewed pressure to resolve ongoing delays in approving its 2022-23 and 2023-24 accounts. During a recent meeting chaired by Councillor Richard Bennett, the committee heard updates from external auditors, Ernst & Young (EY), on the slow progress, as the council faces stringent new deadlines to clear the backlog.

Like many local authorities, Richmond has been grappling with audit delays due to legislative change. The final sign-off is expected by December 13. The council has also set a February 28 deadline for the 2023-24 accounts.

Ben Lazarus from EY highlighted Richmond's strong position compared to other councils. Only one of the 250 authorities that published draft 2023-24 accounts has completed its audit so far. Richmond's management remains optimistic about returning to a regular audit cycle by 2024-25, but councillors raised concerns about the risks of missing the current backstop dates, especially with growing public scrutiny.

The council has delegated authority to the Chair, Councillor Bennett, to approve the accounts once the audits are completed. This will ensure that decisions can be made promptly and within the deadlines. The meeting marked a crucial step as the council seeks to restore financial order and transparency after years of disruption.

Housing Fraud Investigations Recover Key Properties Amid Crisis

At the heart of Richmond Council's financial challenges is a rising housing shortage exacerbated by tenancy fraud. The council's Fraud Investigation Team has made notable progress in addressing the unlawful use of social housing, recovering six properties in the first half of the 2024-25 financial year and eight more cases in the final stages of legal proceedings. Meanwhile, 900 people were wrongly claiming the single-person council tax discount.

Led by Kevin Holland, Assistant Director for Fraud, Risk, and Insurance, the team has set an ambitious target of recovering twelve properties by the year's end. The council has also worked closely with social housing providers to detect and address cases of subletting and other tenancy abuses. However, Holland noted that the recovery process is lengthy, often taking between 18 to 20 months due to legal complexities and resistance from tenants.

Fraud related to housing has become a particularly pressing issue for Richmond, where demand for temporary accommodation is at an all-time high. Every property recovered eases the financial burden on the council, which bears the cost of temporary housing for residents. The housing fraud team's efforts form part of a wider fraud detection strategy aimed at ensuring that those in genuine need have access to housing, while those abusing the system are removed.

The council's collaboration with the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) has been instrumental in these efforts. Data-matching exercises conducted through the NFI have uncovered fraudulent housing applications and misuse of council benefits, leading to an estimated £558,000 in notional savings for the council so far this year.

Council Dismisses Employees Amid Internal Fraud Scandals

Richmond Council's anti-fraud measures have also led to internal investigations, which resulted in dismissing an undisclosed number of employees. Two employees had colluded with the owners of temporary housing and given them preference. When confronted, these employees resigned before they could be dismissed. An agency worker raised a false invoice so that £7,600 was paid into an account they controlled. A small group of officers had claimed more overtime hours than they had worked.

Richmond's broader anti-fraud strategy also includes proactive fraud checks, particularly in areas like council tax reduction and parking permit misuse. To equip staff with the tools to detect suspicious activity before it escalates, a series of data-sharing initiatives and fraud awareness training sessions have been rolled out across the council.

By better using information and technology, the council has enhanced its detection of fraudulent activity. Data matching, real-time fraud alerts, and more robust internal controls have led to more efficient investigations, reducing the time spent on each case and enabling the council to act more quickly. As fraud levels continue to rise, Richmond is focusing heavily on prevention rather than relying solely on reactive investigations.

Enjoy a wine tasting evening with the Mayor

On Friday 1 November, residents are invited to join the Mayor of Richmond for an evening of wine tasting with Doran Wines in aid of the Mayor's charities.

Tickets include nibbles to accompany the wines. All the money raised will go to the Mayor's charities [Home-Start Richmond](#) and [Richmond Borough Mind](#).

The wine tasting evening takes place on:

- **Date:** Friday 1 November 2024
- **Time:** 6.30 to 8.30pm
- **Location:** Sheen Day Centre, 74 Sheen Lane, SW14 8LP
- **Price:** £25

[Book your tickets for the wine tasting evening.](#)

The Mayor regularly holds events to raise funds for his chosen charities. Find out more about the [Mayor's charity events](#).



October Food and Drink News

A good extra virgin olive oil (sometimes called 'eвоo') is such a treat, and I was pleased to discover that one of my favourite Greek and Mediterranean food companies, **Odysea**, has launched a high-polyphenol olive oil here in the UK. Available in Waitrose and Sainsbury's at £9 and £8.50 respectively, the 250ml **Good for You Extra Virgin Olive Oil** is not only really delicious (and Great Taste Award winning), but it's really good for you too. Rich in polyphenols, known for their powerful antioxidant properties such as supporting heart health and reducing inflammation, **Odysea's Good For You** olive oil is the only one of its kind currently available in UK supermarkets. Odysea recommends enjoying straight from the spoon as a tonic, dressing a salad, or drizzling over fish, meat, or vegetables.



You've probably seen **Bold Beans** in supermarkets (and read about them here as I'm such a fan). Well, they've recently launched **Bold Baked Beans**. But these aren't just ordinary ones - they are gourmet, with sustainably grown, top quality beans. Using specially-selected beans for their size and flavour, the Baked Beans come in three flavours: Classic,

Rich Tomato and Smoky Chilli. **Classic**: in a tangy tomato sauce simmered with sweet-sour tamarind and a touch of apple cider vinegar. **Rich Tomato**: echoing flavours of southern Europe, slow-cooked with oregano and virgin olive oil. Finally, **Smoky Chilli** Baked Beans: earthy, gently smoky, with a pinch of smoked chipotle chilli and smoked paprika. Bold Bean Co's Baked Beans are available from Sainsbury's, Ocado and boldbeanco.com. £3.50 for a 325g jar (serves 2).

A wonderful way to ensure that you're never caught short when cooking veggies and herbs is to stock a selection of **JUX** freeze dried herbs, vegetable pieces and powders. Using NASA-developed freeze-drying technology, JUX retains 99% of the natural goodness and extends shelf life for yonks. The products are so handy, and easy to use. The company - a newly launched one just a year old, and strengthened by seed funding earlier this year - has really given a fresh take on dried food. Prices from £4.99 on the website www.juxfood.com



For over a decade, **Biotiful Gut Health** has been producing great Kefir products based on an authentic 2000-year-old recipe, with British milk and billions of live cultures. Pioneering the Kefir category in the UK, it holds nearly 70% market share with its Kefir Drinks. And there are two delicious new ones: **Biotiful Organic Kefir Drink Blossom Honey** 500ml and **Biotiful Organic Kefir Drink Vanilla Chai** 500ml available in Ocado, Whole Foods Market and Sainsbury's at £2.75 for 500ml. And the Kefir Original is available in Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Ocado, and Whole Foods Market.

It's time to stock up with snacks for the festive season, and if you're a fan of top quality nuts, check out **TRULY NUTS!** This is a leading provider of sustainably sourced nuts (Brazil nuts, almonds and mixed nuts), with a collaboration with *One Tree Planted*, a non-profit organisation dedicated to global reforestation. TRULY NUTS! has committed to support the planting of 1 million trees, restoring 1000 hectares of land in the Peruvian Amazon rainforest in Puerto Maldonado, Peru. The commitment to supporting reforestation will bolster biodiversity conservation, alleviate pressure on standing forests, and maintain a harmonious ecosystem. The trees planted will enrich the soil, support local wildlife, and provide traditional medicinal and fruit species for the communities. TRULY NUTS! Products are available at WH Smith travel outlets at £3.99 per 120g pack, with a promotional offer of 2 packs for £6. But the whole wonderful range is available online [here](https://www.trulynuts.com) at [trulynuts.com](https://www.trulynuts.com) with smoked, chilli, chocolate and lots more.



I know the BBQ season is officially over now (unless you're particularly hardy!) but I had to tell you about this Japanese inspired sauce from **Sauce Shop®**. **NEW Miso Teriyaki BBQ Sauce** has a dash of miso, a splash of sesame, and loads of flavour. It's the ideal sort of product you'll reach for when you just want to add a little extra 'zing' to a recipe. With sweet tomato, sesame and a serious red miso umami punch, it's also great as a ketchup, of course, and perfect for grilling, glazing, marinating - plus a host of other applications. **Sauce Shop® Miso Teriyaki BBQ Sauce 320g**, rrp **£2.80, exclusively in Sainsbury's**. And this sauce is suitable for vegans too.

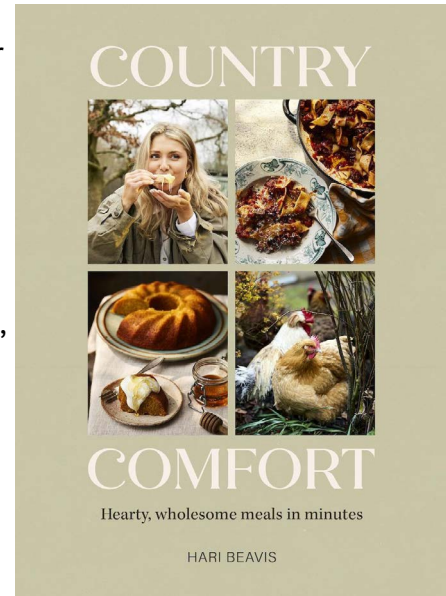
If, like me, you're keen on choosing sustainable products, here's a really good British vodka that's made with surplus grain spirit, carefully redistilled to create a smooth, clean and surprisingly characterful, tasty vodka. **Respirited Sustainable British Vodka** has already been named 'most innovative product' and won a raft of awards including 'Best Vodka' by the *Good Housekeeping Institute*. This is crisp, bright and smooth and also comes in a 100% recycled glass bottle. Charcoal filtered five times and copper distilled, it makes a great vodka soda, and will be a star in a martini. Available at £25 a bottle from [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com)



Here's an interesting, and very reasonably priced, English sparkling wine, that's organic, and produced exclusively for **Tesco**. It's from the **Kingscote Estate & Vineyard**, renowned for its award-winning, English wines and its picturesque vineyard nestled in the heart of West Sussex. Made using the Charmat method and the traditional sparkling wine varietals of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier, it's available from most major Tesco stores. It's a fine and elegant sparkling, offering fresh, yet subtle aromas of citrus fruits, supported by minerality and freshness. It pairs well with cured meats, prawns, soft cheeses and smoked salmon canapés - so a perfect wine for entertaining. Both Brut or Rosé options are £18 a bottle, and great value for an English sparkler.

Country Comforts – Perfect for Autumnal Days

As evenings draw in, and the weather becomes chillier, we start to think about warming, hearty foods. I've been a fan of **Hari Beavis** on Instagram and TikTok for a while. She's just produced her debut cookbook, **Country Comfort**, published by **Carnival** at £26 for a hardback with great photos, and it's perfect for this time of year. The creative force behind 'Baking with Beavis' and 'Peeled Back', has skyrocketed to social media stardom in the foodie realm, boasting over 700K followers. **Country Comfort** contains 90 recipes for quick and easy comfort food, inspired by country living. Each chapter is conveniently organised by time - **Comfort in 10, 20, 30 or 40 minutes** – with a baking chapter at the end for an extra special treat. Quick bites such as **Honey-Kissed Camembert** and **One-Pan Salmon Orzo**, and recipes which take a little bit more time, but worth it, such as **Mushroom and Prosecco Risotto** and **Butter Chicken Pie**. There are plenty of easy wins including **Leftover Roast Dinner Hotpot** and **'Wellies Off; Traybake In'**, plus a host of moreish bakes from **Almond Bundt Cake** to **Traditional Tiffin**. Every recipe comes with a list of swaps and additional options, so you'll be able to create a tasty fix for every occasion. Here's a recipe to demonstrate Hari's appeal and it's particularly appropriate, of course, for autumn in Twickers:



Welsh Rarebit – our Rugby Game Day Staple

“When the Six Nations comes around, our family gets a bit competitive. I am half Welsh, half English, so it gets complicated when we sit down to watch England vs Wales. To defuse the situation, I bring out my cheesy Welsh rarebit. For those that don't know what a rarebit is, it's glorified cheese on toast, and it is marvellous. I used to make it as a starter with little pieces of ciabatta during ski season and everyone would go nuts for it. Whip up 'the rarebit' mix an hour or two in advance if you want to prep before a sports game, then at half time just whack it in the oven and enjoy piping hot!”

- 1 thick slice of sourdough bread
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 large egg
- 30g (1oz) mature (sharp) Cheddar cheese, grated
- ½ tsp (or a shake) of Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp wholegrain mustard
- salt
- pinch of chopped chives, to serve

EQUIPMENT

chopping board—knife—grater—grill (broiler)—baking tray—medium bowl whisk or spoon

GRILL THE SOURDOUGH

Drizzle the sourdough with the olive oil and sprinkle with salt, then place on a baking tray under a hot grill until golden brown and crispy – it needs to be crispy enough so it doesn't go soggy when you add the egg mix.

MAKE THE RAREBIT AND SERVE

Mix the egg, half the grated cheese, and the Worcestershire sauce and mustard in the bowl. Spoon the mixture onto the grilled sourdough, spreading it out into an even layer. Sprinkle over the remaining cheese and put it back under the grill until the egg mixture is no longer running and the cheese on top is bubbling. Remove from the grill and add another sprinkle of salt and a showering of chopped chives. Serve hot and enjoy straight away

ALTERNATIVE INGREDIENTS

Sourdough: use whatever bread you fancy, as long as it's quite thick – ciabatta works well

Cheddar cheese: use Gouda, a Swiss hard cheese, Gloucestershire or even a feta

Wholegrain mustard: use Dijon, or teaspoon of English mustard



Spirit Of Christmas Time

And a Discounted Ticket Offer

Much as I become frustrated at Christmas seeming to start earlier every year (particularly television ads and 'Advent' calendar promotions), I do really love my annual visit to **The Spirit of Christmas Fair** at Olympia. The fair marks the start of the countdown to Christmas for me, and it runs from 4-10 November - with over 600 independent brands exhibiting. It gives the chance to buy, in one place, a range of gifts from all manner of top companies, including: ladies fashion, homeware, Christmas decorations, children's clothes as well, of course, as fabulous food and drink from award winning artisans and producers, including many **Great Taste Award** winners. (I know all about the quality of these awards, as each summer I help with the judging and there will be some really top-notch products there to taste and buy.)



Just to add to the fun of the day, acclaimed Spanish chef, **José Pizarro** is returning, with his specially crafted tapas menu that showcases his signature dishes, alongside exclusive creations designed for the show. Afternoon teas will also be available - and bookable in advance.

The popular, complimentary, creative Workshops offer inspiration to visitors, who can enjoy a range of interactive sessions and interesting conversations including Strictly judge Shirley Ballas and Irish TV chef and author, Clodagh McKenna.

And when you want to relax over a festive glass of fizz, four Louis Roederer Champagne bars provide a relaxing place to rejuvenate with a glass or two in-between shopping. Also, if you haven't spent all your money already, two adjoining Fairs can also be enjoyed whilst visiting: the **Winter Art & Antiques Fair**, taking place on the Grand Hall gallery (4-10 November), and **The Luxury Travel Fair**, taking place from the 7-10 November on the National Hall gallery.

Tickets are available now to buy from the website www.spiritofchristmasfair.co.uk,

Special Discount: If you're happy to book in advance, you can use the code **EMLOYAL7** and save over £6

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Book 24th to 26th December, 2 nights £595

For 2 guests in Super Yacht Superior Room

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Worth a thought...

By Deep Patel

~ Through the Eyes of a Twickenham Shopkeeper ~

As a shopkeeper, one of my main jobs is to talk (and listen) and the selling role comes secondary in my shop (which is something many of my regulars know and enjoy about shopping at Meet & Deep Newsagents...it's good to have a friendly chat...does the soul good...maybe not so much the profits though...but oh well). You may ask, what can a person possibly want to talk about to a newsagent shopkeeper? Well, the short answer is anything and everything...from what the new government will achieve to what colour pants people like best...there is always something to chat about. Very often conversations are focused around the headlines in the papers I sell...this week sadly it was not such a nice topic, but it was one that made me think deeply and so I thought to share it with you all here.

You may have heard of a very popular boy-band named "1D" or "One Direction"? I certainly have, there was so much merchandise about them that we sold in my shop, stickers, magazines, even cup-cakes with the band members faces on... "One Direction" could be considered to be the biggest and most well-known boy-band over the past decade or more, selling over seventy million records worldwide and playing in nearly every single country in the world. The group was formed from reality TV show "X-Factor" where the group was put together by music industry mogul Simon Cowell as a "last minute" chance group as he was short of one group to compete in the final stages of the reality TV talent show in 2010.

Fame is one of those things that so many of us desire but so few of us get, yet all too often, the outcome isn't what the person involved has hope for. Liam Payne was a key vocalist in the mega boy-band One-Direction, sadly he passed away aged just 31 on Wednesday 16th of October last week, it has been speculated that the troubled star took his own life as he was found fallen from the third floor of the hotel onto the Patio in Buenos Aires. It has sent an enormous shock through the entire music industry as yet another young and very talented artist loses his life far too soon.

Over the past few days, customers in my shop have been discussing this news with me and I have been reflecting on it. What was the reason a young man who was at the top of his game and heading to the peak of his career took his own life? On paper, Liam Payne looked like he had ticked ALL the boxes of a dream life...

What I found was that the majority of customers I spoke to read the headlines and jumped to the same conclusion that I also did initially "too much money and drugs probably". Although being a shopkeeper, I am used to such headlines on the newspapers I sell, for some reason, this case awakened a lot of curiosity within me and I decided to look into it a lot more than other similar cases in the past. The life of Liam Payne over the past 10 years or so, I'm not talking about newspaper articles, I mean his actual life. Having read about his life, I can genuinely say I was so embarrassed and ashamed of myself after having researched Liam Payne's life. Liam was 16 years of age when he auditioned for the X-factor TV talent show and was always known as "the level headed, most approachable one" of all the band mates. As One Directions popularity massively rocketed within a year as they became the world's top band. They travelled the world and were adored by millions, but in 2016 the band chose to split and go their own ways, and due to their existing world popularity, pretty much all of the band members had successful solo careers within months and were doing well. The split wasn't "nasty" and they

were still close to each other. Liam felt a little lost without the support of his band members, but he carried on. Liam had a happy relationship with Cheryl Cole (former "Girls Aloud" band member) and the relationship produced a son which both loved. Sadly the couple announced they had decided to go their own ways but remained close also. Liam was very transparent and in a recent interview admitted to an alcohol reliance issue that he had developed. Reading that, many of my customers and me too jumped to that conclusion "another good looking, popular young celebrity alcoholic, it's his own fault...more money than sense"...Liam was known by industry experts for being extremely transparent, and in the recent interview where he discussed his reliance on alcohol, he said that although he didn't blame anyone, at the peak of the boy bands world tours, in order to "secure the band members" each member was pretty much locked into their hotel rooms so they would be "secure", however Liam admitted how there would be nothing to do and it would be lonely in a room like that but the one thing all the hotel rooms had was a mini-bar included so he said he fell into the practice of drinking alcohol alone whilst stuck in his room and didn't realize how it would impact him in the future and his later reliance on alcohol. Liam was known by those who really knew him as "a kind, funny and brave soul". He was the most approachable of the band members and always spent extra time greeting fans and speaking to them more than other would even. He was a sensitive, transparent and kind hearted very talented performer who was struggling but not helped enough perhaps. Even his recent songs had lyric such as "I might die on the weekend". Following the bands split, Liam always felt a little lost and his solo career was slower, just days before Liam took his life it has been reported that due to his slower solo success in comparison to his success in the band, his record label Universal dropped him and his publicist/manager resigned...on top of other difficulties, that would be a lot to deal with for anybody I feel. To make matters worse, a couple of days before his tragic death he was sent a legal order from his ex-girlfriend to never send her messages or try to contact again as she complained he kept trying to contact her...how one deals with something like that with someone you loved I can only imagine, a couple of days after that he was taking drugs and breaking up furniture and the television in his hotel room just hours before he was sadly found dead on the patio outside his hotel room balcony.

So this past week, conversations surrounding Liam Payne were very much of the thoughts "another good looking, popular young celebrity alcoholic, it's his own fault...more money than sense"...as I said...embarrassingly even I thought of him this way initially before I spent time researching his life. Sometimes, we can all be a little too quick to judge those in the media without realising that we know so little about their ACTUAL lives? It's certainly not all glamour or luxury, and all too often we see things wrongly and forget to see them for what they actually may be. Liam Payne was a sweet natured, gentle and fun-loving individual from personal accounts of those who actually knew him, and knew him best. Much of the time, we are all too quick to point the finger and blame the person, rather than look at the shortcomings of all those around the person, what they could have done to help him or even recognize the signs that there were cries of help that were somewhat ignored...had Liam received help when "secured" alone in those hotel rooms during One Directions world tours, could things have been different? Those we blame are more often than not also victims themselves...to judge them can make us the perpetrators...not them...on reflection of this during the past few days in my shop, I was left with the notion, sometimes what a person needs more than anything to save their lives is not a doctor, sometimes it's just showing kindness, empathy and support that can save a troubled life, things that we can all do for free if we really want to...all too often we

are too quick to remember our “rights” as individuals whilst forgetting our “duties” as humans... to love, support and just be kind...you may never truly know what someone is going through... but going forwards, I would like to make an appeal to everyone reading this article right now, that please in memory to Liam Payne of One Direction and as a mark of respect to his life, if we can all just do one thing and support and be kind to anyone we see struggling like he was, look out for the signs and find compassion within us rather than blame...we may help prevent future lives like his being lost far too soon. Doing this may not bring Liam back, but each time we show kindness and support rather than criticism and punishment towards someone who is struggling like he was, a part of Liam will keep living on and in this way and he will live on through our acts of kindness and support to become immortal. From this Twickenham shopkeeper, Liam Payne I salute you. You will always occupy a place in my heart for the rest of my days here too, thank you for entertaining so many millions of people throughout your life and for making so many fans so happy with your talent and songs. God bless you today, tomorrow and always...



LIAM PAYNE...29 August 1993 – 16 October 2024

Remember...

“Never be so fast to remember your rights that you forget your duties...BE KIND...”

MY CREATURE-KINDNESS TIP OF THE WEEK...

STOP FOXES, MICE, SQUIRRELS & RATS KINDLY (GOOD KARMA):

Place empty bowls filled with white vinegar around places where you don't want them to come...they will go without you having to harm them...use humane mouse & rat traps and release them back out in parkland areas. Use electronic plug in deterrents with good reviews around your house to stop them coming (the smell of white vinegar also stops ants kindly).

For ANY specific tip to stop any “pest” or insect KINDLY (for good karma/blessings), email me: InsectLoversUnite@gmail.com or join my Facebook page: “INSECT LOVERS UNITE”

Evita

by Andrew Lloyd Webber, lyrics by Tim Rice

HLO Musical Company at the Hampton Hill Theatre

A Buenos Aires cinema, July 1952. Suddenly a newsflash interrupts: the death of María Eva Duarte de Perón, Argentina's First Lady, known simply as Evita. The strong opening to this ambitious rock opera continues as a coffin is brought on. Argentinian actor Sergio Altamirano saunters onto the stage in the role of the cynical Che. A dark and witty force with a strong voice, he strikes a monumental figure against the black coffin.

Flashing back in time to 1934 and fading tango singer Agustin Magaldi (Ewan Ridgewell) is coerced into taking the young Eva to Buenos Aires. So we met a young Eva, played by the skilled Beth Garcia, who is increasingly captivating to watch as the story unfolds. The tender and calculating duet of *I'd Be Surprisingly Good for You*, sung with Andy Cox as Juan Perón, sets a sensual atmosphere. When events have propelled Eva into power as Evita, the strong figure of her nation, Garcia comes into her own with the landmark *Don't Cry for me Argentina*, sung against a large cast as the people of Argentina. Her glamorous costumes and accessories makes Evita stand out as the figurehead.



As Perón and his army officers form a dictatorship, the backlash from the Argentinian aristocracy and military as depicted with the hauteur and disdain for a working-class First Lady. Meanwhile Peron's Mistress, played by glamorous Rachael Nolan, sings the poignant *Another Suitcase in Another Hall* beautifully, full of acceptance and melancholy.

High Flying Adored is a touching duo between Che and Eva, and the two singers work particularly well together. *Rainbow High* is a very strong number as Elizabeth Malone and Veronica Martin dress Eva for the part she is destined to fulfil.

Gareth Bevan directs this powerful story in great detail, and musical director Lee Dewsnap and conductor James Hall bring a sharp tempo and innovative meaning to these wonderful numbers; although sometimes the dry witticisms of Tim Rice's lyrics sadly get lost under the music. Choreographers Sian Bowles-Bevan and Karen Gravestock really make the numbers stand out, while Tim Edwards' lighting is both moody and accurate.

A montage of songs as Eva lies dying creates a strong atmosphere of loss. *Evita* is a poignant, yet uplifting, show.

Read Heather Moulson's review at www.markaspen.com/2024/10/11/evita-hlo

Photography by Annemarie Heinrich

Il Tabarro by Giacomo Puccini, libretto by Giuseppe Adami and *Rita* by Gaetano Donizetti, libretto by Gustave Vaëz

Instant Opera at Normansfield Theatre, Teddington

These two seldom performed operas, completely different from each other, provides a fascinating evening's entertainment. *Il Tabarro* by Puccini is a typical melodrama with the customary corpse at its ending, whilst Donizetti's *Rita* is a wonderfully funny romp, with a sprightly entertaining score.



Rita is brilliantly staged. There are three principals in the opera, but the entire company turn into the customers who frequent the Pensione da Rita and join in the fun. There is some wonderful business with P.C. Bortolo (Douglas Somers Lee) and amongst the customers, Rose Rands puts a little extra cream on her performance as Midinette. The three principals, soprano Callie Gaston (*Rita*), tenor William Diggle (*Beppe*) and established baritone Simon Wilson (*Gasparo*) play splendidly together. With their obvious talent for comedy, their strong singing voices blend perfectly and the pace is first-rate. Donizetti's

music is infectious, and director Valeria Perboni has created a magnificent and well thought-out production

Il Tabarro, with its much larger cast, suffers from Normansfield's small stage, where its busy opening makes it difficult to know who everyone is. However a clear highlight is the velvety mezzo Anna Loveday (*Frugola*), making us sit up with a well-rounded performance. The entire cast do great job and musically no-one falters. Naturally though, the action is concentrated on the three main roles, soprano Emily Sloan (*Giorgetta*), Italian baritone Emil Vicenzi (*Michelle*) and tenor Joshua Baxter (*Luigi*), all of whom have considerable presence and give tremendous vocal performances. Nevertheless, sharper focus would help to propel us to the climax so that we are as horrified as *Giorgetta* is when she discovers the body.



The setting of *Il Tabarro* is changed from Puccini's Parisian location, to a canal-side warehouse in Venice in 1966, although it does not seem to be particularly Venetian. Simon Pike's lighting becomes gradually more subdued as the opera itself becomes darker. For *Rita* it is absolutely right and is lit beautifully, giving the authentic atmosphere of the piazza.

The production premieres a wonderful new orchestral arrangement of *Il Tabarro*, which is ably conducted by Lewis Gaston, and undoubtedly the musicians of the Instant Opera Orchestra do full justice to the score of both operas.

Read Salieri's review at www.markaspen.com/2024/10/14/tabarro-rita

Photography courtesy of Instant Opera



Death and the Maiden

by Ariel Dorfman

Putney Arts Company at Putney Arts Theatre until 19th October

'When crazy people have power you indulge them'. Set in Chile twenty years after the fall in early 1990 of Pinochet's regime, *Death and the Maiden* recounts one woman's revenge for the torture she experienced during this desperate time.

I visited Chile in late 1997 and saw the memorial to the tens of thousands of the 'disappeared', those who lost their lives or livelihoods for their beliefs. In an obscure part of Santiago, it took some finding. Clearly it was period of history Chileans prefer to forget.

But some can never forget. Paulina Salas, the heroine of Dorfman's play, has tried for two decades to bury her memories of being raped and tortured. But they are violently triggered when a man, Dr Miranda, arrives at her house with her lawyer husband Girardo, whom he has helped following a car breakdown.



Paulina is unshakeably convinced this respectable doctor is the man who raped and tortured her and thus intent on 'trying' and killing him, as he had tried to do to her. Girardo happens to lead the investigation into the crimes of the regime, but now has to negotiate between Miranda and Paulina (Sharon Czudak). Aidan Kershaw gave a well-studied portrait of the gentle Girardo, bringing out his conflicted loyalties.

The sympathetic set design by Rich Evans adds irony in the tranquil seclusion of the Escobar's beach house, nicely enhanced by Nick Wells' soundtrack of breaking waves ... and Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* quartet which was played to torture victims. In the intimate Studio the themes of the play become powerfully confronting.

All three actors gave committed and courageous performances, but the performance of the evening came from Paul Dineen as Dr Miranda. Even bound and gagged his reactions could be seen in his eyes alone. His performance was mesmerising, unflinching and totally magnetic. His spoken 'confession' was chilling in its honest simplicity.

Disconcertingly I found my sympathies being pulled towards Miranda: surely Paulina is the wronged one ... or is she?

Powerful in its ambiguity, *Death and the Maiden* is an intensely raw exploration of the worst aspects of humanity. Under Kim Dyas' assured direction it is a compelling and impressive production that leaves open many questions about our human frailties.

Read Claire Alexander's review at www.markaspen.com/2024/10/16/death-maiden-ptc

Photography by Steven Lippitt

Turn of the Screw

by Benjamin Britten, libretto by Myfanwy Piper

English National Opera at the London Coliseum

Every turn of the musical screw and twist of the dramatic knife is beautifully realised in this magnificent performance. The varied colours and sheer tension conjured up by Duncan Ward and thirteen musicians of the ENO orchestra arise naturally from the music rather than being imposed. The audience is completely enthralled in a way that comes with the finest performances.



Turn of the Screw plugs into that contemporary subject, child abuse. Premiering in 1954 when the vocabulary to describe abuse didn't exist, it could be thought that the real abuser is the Governess who uses the children, Miles and Flora, to indulge her neurotic fantasies, as her obsession with the recently deceased Peter Quint and Miss Jessel, the Governess's predecessor, takes hold.



Director and designer Isabella Bywater's setting is in a psychiatric ward, where the Governess relives her disturbing experiences at Bly, the isolated country house with only a housekeeper for adult company. There is no suggestion that it is a fantasy of the Governess. "Even if the ghosts are not real, there is something amiss at Bly", Bywater clarifies. It is left ambiguous whether the Governess is a dangerous scapegoat for Miles's death or has been utterly traumatised by her experience.

The stark white walls of Bywater's set seem alive. It is beautifully lit by Paul Anderson, while Jon Driscoll projected images, a stately house and garden, the local church and wood add dynamism. Whether a scene is in Bly or the psychiatric ward, whether it is hallucination or recollection, is left hanging. This might be intended to intensify the sense of unease, but can lead to confusion rather than constructive ambiguity.

Ailish Tynan's Governess and narrator Alan Oke's prologue are outstanding. They make Britten's angular vocal lines into things of beauty, which is all too rare. Tynan avoids febrile neuroticism but effectively conveys the distress of a mind adrift. Louth and Victoria Nekhaenko are vacant children who reveal nothing, which is more disturbing than fake malevolence. Their games are sinister: something nasty is going on, which we are not allowed to see.

We are left wanting to know more. Although hitherto not a fan of *Turn of the Screw*, I came away with a renewed respect.

Read Patrick Shorrock's review at www.markaspen.com/2024/10/12/turn-screw-eno

Photography by Manuel Harlan



Kettner Concerts in Twickenham



Unheard Harmonies

a piano and cello recital

LYDIA HILLERUDH (cello), CRISTIAN SANDRIN (piano)

Saturday, November 16, 2024 6pm

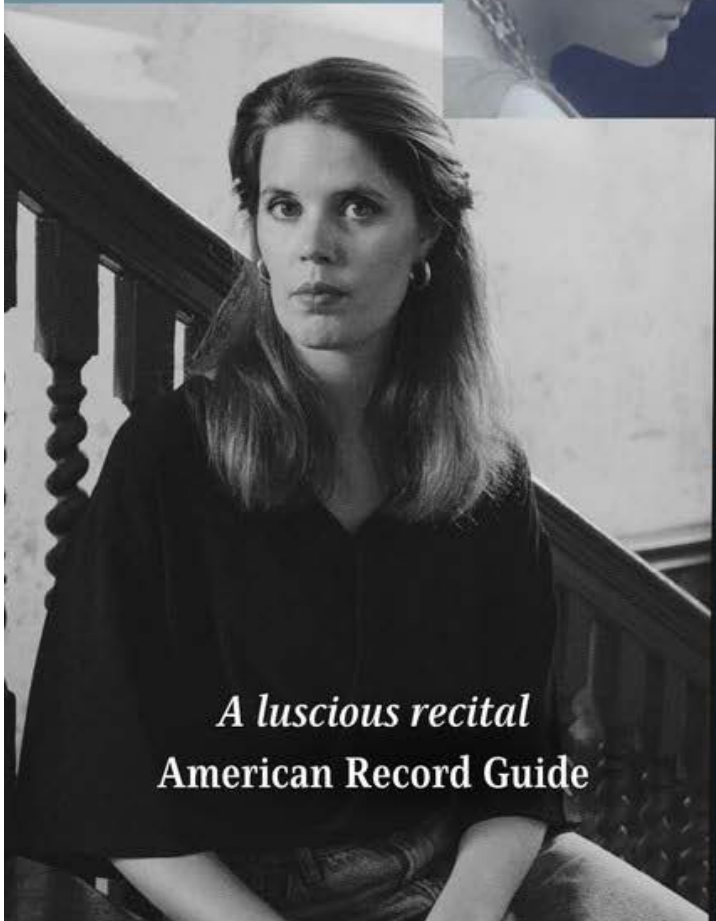
Tonight our outstanding young artists have joined forces to perform sonatas by two unjustly neglected Edwardian women composers alongside lesser-known works by Beethoven and Vaughan Williams, the Seven Variations on Mozart's Marriage of Figaro, and Six Studies in English Folk Song respectively. All the compositions are hidden gems of the cello and piano repertoire that deserve a wider audience. Join us to celebrate a programme of musical revelations.

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ARDEN of FAVERSHAM

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A rare opportunity to see the young Shakespeare's (and his collaborator's) 1592 dramatization of a recent, real and notorious crime featuring, not the nobility, but ordinary people. Alice Arden plots to kill her husband and, although aided by her lover, servants, neighbours and a duo of professional killers, makes several failed attempts.

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See it onstage at the Mary Wallace Theatre from October 26th - November 2nd

Black Will and Skakebag : "We do violence. Gouging, maiming, knocking about, removing bits, right up to assassination. We're very good at it."



Booking available now at
www.richmondshakespeare.org.uk – find us on
Twickenham's Embankment, close to the Barmy arms.



Richmond's Tree of the Year announced

From Richmond Council

The Chestnut Leaved Oak in Ham Common has been crowned Tree of the Year.

Last month, our Parks team partnered with Habitats & Heritage and Health Walks to run a Tree of the Year competition at the recent Full of Life Fair. The competition was held to celebrate the natural beauty in our borough. Our tree officers identified six lovely specimens for attendees to vote on.



Winner

With 46 votes, the Chestnut Leaved Oak in [Ham Common](#) emerged as the winner. It's an unusual specimen, with a characterful globular crown and hairy acorns.

Shortlisted trees

In addition to the Chestnut Leaved Oak, five other trees were shortlisted.

Ulmus 'Sapparo Autumn Gold' - Ham Street

Elm was a common species along the river before Dutch Elm Disease devastated the population. These resistant specimens, seen on [Ham Street](#), now provide critical habitat for the White-letter Hairstreak butterfly.

Dawn Redwood - Westerley Ware

A living fossil tree, they display excellent autumn colour as a deciduous conifer. This specimen is easily visible in [Westerley Ware](#) when entering the borough over Kew Bridge.

London Plane - Bridge House Gardens

How big do they grow and how long do they live? The first specimens of this hybrid are still going so we don't know yet. Find out more about [Bridge House Gardens](#).

Sweet Chestnut - Murray Park

Naturalised to the UK this species is the source of roasting chestnuts. The specimens in [Murray Park](#) are part of the historic landscape of Whitton Dene and the later rifle range.

Cedar of Lebanon - Grove Gardens

This species is native to Lebanon and Syria, and the timber is recorded as being supplied to King Solomon to construct the First Temple. The trees, as seen in [Grove Gardens](#), have distinctive architectural form and upwards facing cones.

Explore our green spaces

In Richmond upon Thames, we're fortunate to be surrounded by thousands of beautiful trees that provide immense benefits to our communities, from improving our air quality to boosting physical and mental wellbeing through a connection to nature.

If you are looking to explore our beautiful green spaces, [join our activities](#) to stay active and meet new people.

Scarily fun activities for the kids this Half Term

Need some inspiration to entertain the kids during the holidays? Embrace spooky season with Butterfly Conservation's top five weird, wild and wonderful things to do this October Half Term.

1. Carve a butterfly or moth pumpkin

Get ready for spooky season by carving a butterfly or moth inspired pumpkin. Simply head over to the Butterfly Conservation website and pick a [butterfly](https://butterfly-conservation.org/butterflies) [https://butterfly-conservation.org/butterflies] or [moth](https://butterfly-conservation.org/moths) [https://butterfly-conservation.org/moths], copy their outline onto your pumpkin and cut out your design! If you want to make things more detailed, print out a picture, trace the butterfly or moth using tracing paper and thick pencil, and transfer it onto your pumpkin. Then it's time to get carving! Share your designs with Butterfly Conservation on their social media channels @savebutterflies



2. Go on a weird and wild walk

Autumn is the season when things tend to get a bit weird in the wildlife world. Grab your wellies and your raincoat (just in case) and head out to see what weird and wild things you spot! From zombie caterpillars to skeleton leaves, check out Butterfly Conservation's spooky spotter sheet for some ideas of what to look out for - <https://butterfly-conservation.org/discover-and-learn/activities-and-resources/spotter-sheets>



3. Stay up after dark!

Although the nights are drawing in, there's still lots to see after the sun goes down! Make your own moth trap using this handy [tutorial](https://butterfly-conservation.org/news-and-blog/how-to-make-your-own-moth-trap) [https://butterfly-conservation.org/news-and-blog/how-to-make-your-own-moth-trap] and see what's lurking in your outdoor spaces after dark. No time for DIY? Grab a torch and check out fallen fruit, berries or Ivy to see which moths are enjoying a sweet treat. You can even make your own moth cocktail with some wine (not for you, parents), sugar and a rope. Simply heat a bottle cheap red wine (do not boil) and stir in and dissolve 1kg sugar. Allow the mixture to cool and then soak a length or lengths of rope in the sugary concoction. Drape the "wine ropes" over low branches, bushes or fences just before dusk and check for moths by torch light during the first two hours of darkness.



4. Play hide and seek

Ever wondered what butterflies get up to during the colder months of the year? Some overwinter as caterpillars, some as eggs or chrysalises, and a few species, like the Brimstone, Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock will spend the winter as adult butterflies. To help them stay snug and safe over winter, encourage the kids to get outside and make butterfly and moth hiding places! Leaf piles and log piles are brilliant spots for caterpillars to hunker down or pupate, and leaving your hedges and Ivy uncut can help provide hiding spots for adult butterflies and moths. You can even create a "butterfly door" in outbuildings, sheds and other cool, dry places by leaving a hole or a gap to allow adult butterflies to enter in the winter and leave again in spring. For more ideas of what to do in your outdoor spaces this autumn and winter, visit <https://wild-spaces.co.uk/incredible-ivy-bring-your-wild-space-to-life-with-this-wildlife-wonder-2/>



5. Make a moth mask

Need some Halloween costume inspiration? Try [making your own moth mask](https://butterfly-conservation.org/discover-and-learn/activities-and-resources/make-a-moth-mask). This fun craft will have the kids entertained even on rainy days and can make a fun party activity. Head to this page <https://butterfly-conservation.org/discover-and-learn/activities-and-resources/make-a-moth-mask> to download your moth mask template and follow the simple steps. You can even get creative with natural materials you collect from your weird and wild walk.



For more fun activities for the family, visit <https://butterfly-conservation.org/discover-and-learn>

St Mary's University

St Mary's Graduate Made Journo Resources Fellow

Sam Sheppey, an MA Sports Journalism graduate from St Mary's University, Twickenham (SMU), has been selected for the Journo Resources Fellowship 2024/25.

Sam Sheppey, an [MA Sports Journalism](#) graduate from St Mary's University, Twickenham (SMU), has been selected for the [Journo Resources Fellowship 2024/25](#).

opinion pieces, short stories, match previews, and reports.

As part of Fellowship application process, Sam pitched a piece exploring how important it actually is for a sports journalist to know about every sport. Sam will now work on writing this up to be published on the Journo Resources website.



Speaking on becoming a fellow, Sam said, "Being accepted onto the 2024/25 Journo Resources Fellowship is the next step in my sports journalism journey, building on my master's degree from St Mary's. I learned a lot from my time at St Mary's

The Journo Resources Fellowship is a highly competitive fellowship awarded to 15 emerging journalists each year. Fellows will receive six months of bespoke support to help them find employment in the industry, as well as paid commission opportunities for writeups on the [Journo Resources](#) website, with support from professional editors.

Previous fellows have gone on to work at media organisations such as the BBC, The Guardian, PA Media, and The Sun.

Sam graduated from SMU in 2024 and has been published in publications including talkSPORT, VAVEL, Blues Focus, and Late Tackle. His work to date includes interviews,

and the course allowed me to find the area of sports media I'm most interested in through workshops, industry experience, and lectures.

"The Journo Resources Fellowship, lasting six months, will enable me to publish work that I'll be paid for, learn from industry mentors, and work alongside fellow journalism graduates on joint projects. The end goal of the Fellowship is to land my first paid role in sports journalism, and my master's degree at St Mary's has gone a long way in helping me achieve this goal."



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

Richmond-upon-Thames among Highest Council Tax Rates in England

Living comfortably always comes at a price – especially when it comes to council tax.

A new study by specialist tax consultants at [Tax Accountant](#) has revealed England's priciest council tax areas. Using historical council tax data from gov.uk, the study determined the areas of England where high property values and the demand for top-tier services contribute to steeper bills.

Elmbridge has the highest council tax rate in England, with an average of **£2,646 per dwelling**.

Elmbridge's high council tax rates are driven by its affluent status, expensive properties, and the need to fund extensive local services and amenities in line with the area's high standard of living. The area is currently focused on several key initiatives, such as revitalising town centres and improving recycling services.

Surrey Heath has the second-highest council tax rate in England, with an average of **£2,501 per dwelling**.

Surrey Heath Council has prioritised enhanced flood prevention measures and improving waste collection, with the aim of protecting homes and improving local services. These infrastructure initiatives contribute to the elevated tax rate in the area.

Waverley places third, with an average council tax rate of **£2,488 per dwelling**.

The area's wealthy population and costly housing contribute to the high council tax rate. The council is currently investing heavily in local road infrastructure and sustainable housing development projects, all of which require significant funding.

Ranking fourth is **Mole Valley**, with an average council tax rate of **£2,482 per dwelling**.

New environmental initiatives, including plans to enhance green spaces and biodiversity, as well as a commitment to upgrade local leisure facilities, contribute to the high rate of council tax.

Tandridge occupies fifth position, with an average council tax rate of **£2,480 per dwelling**.

Tandridge Council is focused on many long-term projects that require significant funding, including the development of affordable housing schemes and modernising waste collection systems

Richmond-upon-Thames places sixth, with an average council tax rate of **£2,404 per dwelling**.

As a prosperous London borough, the tax reflects high property values and the cost of providing a wide array of services and maintaining high standards for public infrastructure. These public realm improvements include upgrading high streets with new public spaces and enhancing the cycling infrastructure.

Wokingham Unitary Authority ranks seventh, with an average council tax rate of **£2,396 per dwelling**.

The council is currently prioritising investment in education with new school facilities, as well as expanding social care services for its growing elderly population. These critical investments are key drivers behind the area's elevated tax levels.

In eighth place is **Rutland Unitary Authority**, with an average council tax rate of **£2,395 per dwelling**.

Being primarily rural, Rutland's high council tax rate reflects the costs of providing services over a wide area and the high property values typical of the region. The council is directing funds toward enhancing rural transport links and improving the area's digital infrastructure.

Epsom & Ewell ranks ninth, with an average council tax rate of **£2,394 per dwelling**.

This London borough's affluent status and high property values contribute to this elevated tax rate. Current priority initiatives include town centre regeneration projects and improved flood resilience.

Reigate & Banstead rounds out the top ten, with an average council tax rate of **£2,379 per dwelling**.

Environmental project such as expanding tree planting and improving waste recycling programs are the current focus of the local borough council. These projects, aimed at making the area greener, require considerable investment, which is reflected in the high rate of council tax.

Aatif Malik, Director of [Tax Accountant](#), commented on the findings:

"These findings highlight a clear trend: areas with higher council tax rates are predominantly affluent, with a strong correlation between property values and the cost of local services.

"In regions like Elmbridge, Surrey Heath, and Waverley, the elevated rates reflect the substantial investment required to maintain public services, infrastructure, and amenities that align with the expectations of their affluent populations.

"This study underscores the financial pressures on councils to balance service provision with rising costs in wealthier areas, where property values drive the tax base higher."

Termination of OWL (31st Oct)

From Gary Fenton Creator of OWL, Direct Path Solutions

This message is coming from the company that created OWL, it is **not** a police or Neighbourhood Watch message.

It is with deep regret and much sadness that I must inform you that OWL will be terminated on 31st October.

The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) will no longer be funding OWL and the Met will not take over its funding. Without funding to maintain and operate OWL, we have no choice but to shut it down.



OWL was adopted by 18 London boroughs over the last 10 years so that your local police, their partner agencies, and Neighbourhood Watch coordinators can send urgent messages directly to residents and businesses. Over 1,700 Met police officers were trained to use OWL and many diligently kept the public informed on local issues. Each year, 14,000 alerts and updates for Londoners were published on OWL which generated 6 million emails and 12 million push notifications per year.

Your borough police in Wandsworth and Richmond upon Thames mostly stopped using OWL over a year ago, but we kept access open to a handful of officers in your borough who wanted to keep using OWL to reach out to the residents on their wards.

Proud to have been part of it:

Thank you for being part of OWL. During its time, many residents responded to appeals which helped the police find suspects, stolen cars and vulnerable missing people. As an example of how effective OWL has been in just one borough over a 5-year period, OWL members helped resolve £8.3m of crime and prevent £10m of further crime from happening. These are modest estimates based only on cases we were made aware of.

OWL helped boost public trust & confidence in the Met among the thousands who rely on OWL for information and reassurance. According to MOPAC's Trust & Confidence survey of Dec 2023, 75% of boroughs using OWL had above-average trust compared with the rest of London. Boroughs ranked #1, #2, and #4 with the highest trust were using OWL. A survey among users in Enfield and Haringey showed that 76% said OWL provides the most up-to-date information from the police compared to social media platforms.

You may continue to receive messages until the end of 31st Oct.

Stay safe, London.

<https://www.owl.co.uk/>



COVID-19 Epidemiological Update

World Health Organization

Teresa Read

Regional Level

During the reporting period (19 August to 15 September 2024), the highest SARS-CoV-2 activity was observed in the European Region (changed from 16.4% to 13.5% across 31 countries), followed by the Region of the Americas (from 11.5% to 7.1% across 21 countries), the Eastern Mediterranean Region (from 5.8% to 7.0% across 7 countries), the Western Pacific Region (from 7.7% to 4.3% across 7 countries), the South-East Asia Region (from 3.7% to 1.1% across 6 countries), and the African Region (from 1.8% to 3.4% across 17 countries)

European Region

The SARS-CoV-2 weekly percent test positivity from sentinel sites in the European Region changed from 16.4% to 13.5% across 31 countries that reported at least once during the four-week period. No country reported an increase of more than 2.5% in percent test positivity during the four-week reporting period. Eighteen countries showed elevated SARS-CoV-2 activity (10% or more) in the final week: Cyprus (100%), Poland (60%), Slovakia (50%), Netherlands (46%), Azerbaijan (33%), Ukraine (24%), Switzerland (23%), Ireland (21%), Belgium (20%), Greece (18%), Serbia (17%), Germany (16%), Slovenia (15%), Belarus (13%), Spain (13%), Estonia (11%), Armenia (11%), and the United Kingdom (10%). During the reporting period, the weekly average number of specimens tested was 1,667.

The European Region reported over 254,000 new cases, a 19% increase as compared to the previous 28-day period. 18 (29%) of the 62 countries for which data are available reported increases in new cases of 20% or greater, with the highest proportional increases observed in Ukraine (5788 vs 973 new cases; >100%), Poland (36 435 vs 11 599 new cases; >100%), Czechia (8425 vs 2891 new cases; >100%), Lithuania (11 546 vs 4239 new cases; >100%), and Slovakia (993 vs 374 new cases; >100%). The highest numbers of new cases were reported from the Russian Federation (95 943 new cases; 65.7 new cases per 100 000; >100%), Poland (36 435 new cases; 96 new cases per 100 000; >100%), and Greece (18 021 new cases; 168.1 new cases per 100 000; -18).

The number of new 28-day deaths in the Region decreased by 22% as compared to the previous 28-day period, with 815 new deaths reported. The highest numbers of new deaths were reported from Sweden (205 new deaths; 2 new deaths per 100 000; +49%), Greece (144 new deaths; 1.3 new deaths per 100 000; -13%), and the Russian Federation (112 new deaths; <1 new death per 100 000; +93%).

WHO is currently tracking several SARS-CoV-2 variants, including:

- Variants of interest (VOIs): BA.2.86 and JN.1
- Variants under monitoring (VUMs): JN.1.7, JN.1.18, KP.2, KP.3, KP.3.1.1, LB.1 and XEC

2025 U20 Six Nations Venues Confirmed

The Recreation Ground and Kingston Park will host England U20 Men's home Six Nations fixtures in 2025, with tickets available to purchase this coming Tuesday (22nd).

The U20 world champions travel to The Rec to take on France in Round 2 (Friday 7th February, 20:00 GMT kick-off) and Italy in Round 4 (Friday 7th March, 19:45 GMT kick-off), with a meeting against Scotland set to take place at Kingston Park on Friday 21st February (19:15 GMT kick-off) in Round 3.

Bath Rugby's home venue will welcome England for the third consecutive year following on from 2024 matchups with Wales and Ireland in Somerset en route to their first Six Nations title since 2021. Last year's edition also saw England pick up a famous away victory at the Stade du Hameau to clinch the Six Nations title, their first tournament victory over Les Bleuets in three years. A match-up with Scotland sees the U20 Men return to the North East for the first time in seven years for a Six Nations fixture. Capped senior men's players Fraser Dingwall and Joe Heyes contributed to a 37-12 victory over Wales on their last visit to Newcastle in 2018.

England open their 2025 U20 Six Nations with a trip to face Willie Faloan's Ireland on Thursday 30th January (19:45 GMT kick-off) and conclude their campaign away to Wales (Friday 14th March, 19:30 GMT kick-off). BBC iPlayer and S4C are confirmed as the domestic broadcaster for the competition's fixtures. Cambridge Rugby will host the U20 Men in the latter's first match of the 2024/25 campaign (11th January, 14:00 GMT kick-off) in preparation for the approaching tournament, with confirmation of further friendly fixtures to be announced in due course.

Head coach Mark Mapletoft and assistant coach Andy Titterrell named their 50-strong Elite Player Squad (EPS) in September with 12 previously capped U20 players included. The recent Men's Professional Game Partnership established the expanded EPS to enable greater playing opportunities in the international arena for those in the 'Confirmation' phase of the pathway development system.

Mark Mapletoft said: *"The lessons on offer for this EPS over the coming months are incredibly important for their development as rugby players. Playing at Premiership-level grounds will be a new challenge for many, but we still expect the performances to exceed the occasion. The opportunity to play in rugby strongholds, both home and away, are sure to create memorable experiences at two fantastic venues in particular next year. We're thankful to our hosts in Bath and Newcastle and can't wait to take to the field. With the primary goal of development in the Men's Pathway remaining key, we now challenge these young men to tactically and mentally adapt to win with full intent on retaining the Six Nations in 2025."*

Tickets to see the reigning U20 Six Nations and world champions will be available on general sale next Tuesday (22nd) via [this link](#). Closed groups within the Bath Rugby and Newcastle Falcons fanbases now have access to tickets via their respective club's website. For more information on this, please contact the relevant club directly.

England U20 Men's confirmed 2025 fixtures

- Cambridge Rugby vs. England U20 Men – Saturday 11th January – 14:00 GMT kick-off – Ellgia Fields
- U20 Men's 2025 Six Nations Round 1 – Ireland vs. England – Thursday 30th January – 19:45 GMT kick-off – Venue TBC
- U20 Men's 2025 Six Nations Round 2 – England vs. France – Friday 7th February – 20:00 GMT kick-off – The Recreation Ground, Bath
- U20 Men's 2025 Six Nations Round 3 – England vs. Scotland – Friday 21st February – 19:15 GMT kick-off – Kingston Park, Newcastle
- U20 Men's 2025 Six Nations Round 4 – England vs. Italy – Friday 7th March – 19:45 GMT kick-off – The Recreation Ground, Bath
- U20 Men's 2025 Six Nations Round 5 – Wales vs. England – Friday 14th March – 19:30 GMT kick-off – Venue TBC



Match Preview: Manchester United v Brentford

Analysis, team news, match officials and more. Here's everything you need to know ahead of Brentford's Premier League game against Manchester United on Saturday (3pm kick-off GMT)

Written by Brentford Football Club

Brentford return to Premier League action with a visit to Manchester United on Saturday (3pm kick-off GMT).

The Bees beat Wolves 5-3 in a pulsating final fixture before the October international break – a result which left them 11th in the table – while United sit 14th having drawn 0-0 with Aston Villa last time out.

Analysis, team news, match officials and more. Here's everything you need to know ahead of the meeting at Old Trafford.

Pre-match Analysis

Stephen Gillett, Playmaker Stats: McTominay-inspired late heartbreak leaves Brentford with a score to settle at Old Trafford

Brentford's two Premier League fixtures against Manchester United last season could best be described as frustrating.

Two stoppage-time Scott McTominay strikes proved a total buzzkill for the Bees in a 2-1 reverse at Old Trafford last October, as Thomas Frank's side snatched a "brutal" defeat from the jaws of victory after Mathias Jensen had put the visitors ahead midway through the first half.

The return fixture at Gtech Community Stadium saw the Bees record a 1-1 draw, thanks to a late goal of their own: Kristoffer Ajer's strike in the ninth minute of injury-time enough to earn his side a share of the spoils.

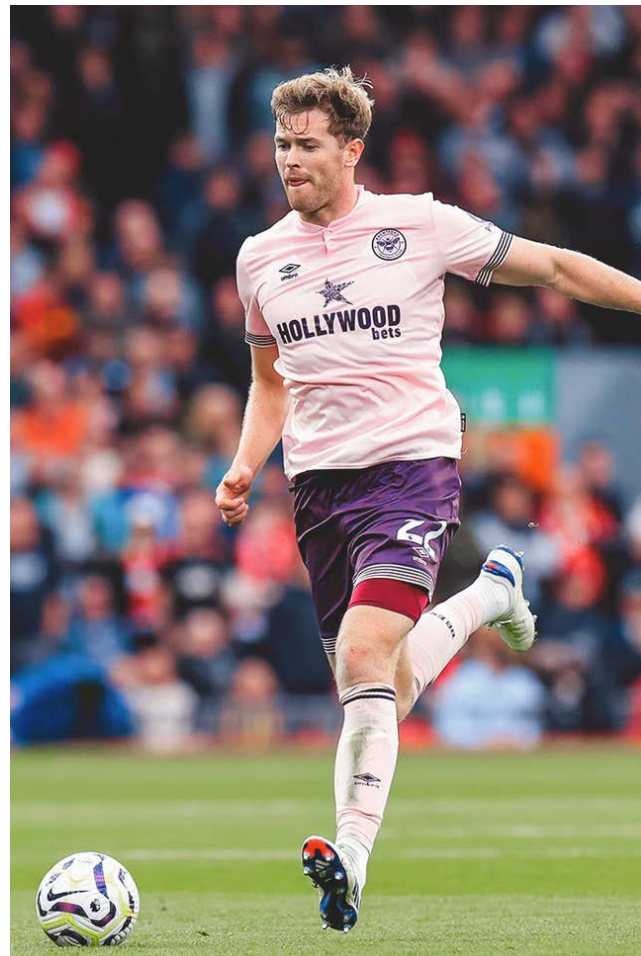
What looked a good point on paper, however, was tempered by Brentford's sheer dominance of that evening encounter last March.

In total, Brentford fired in 31 shots on United's goal - a Premier League record for the Bees - and took 85 touches in the Red Devils' penalty box, thus joining Man City as the only team since 2008/09 to take 80+ touches in an opponent's 18-yard box.

Oh, and the Londoners also hit the woodwork four times! No wonder Frank afterwards stated that the Bees had "smashed" Erik ten Hag's side and branded United "unbelievably lucky".

It is fair to say Brentford have a score to settle then ahead of the latest instalment in the saga, as the Bees and the Red Devils return to domestic action after the international break.

Brentford currently sit 11th in the table, three places and two points better off than United, who are under pressure after a difficult start that has seen them pick up just eight points - their lowest tally in





the opening seven matches of a season since 1989/90.

There are plenty of stats to put a spring in Brentford's step ahead of their visit to the Theatre of Dreams, but others to be wary of.

Bryan Mbeumo 6 Manchester United 5 read the Premier League goal charts this season, and the fantastic goalscoring form of Brentford's flying forward

contrasts sharply with the Red Devils' well-publicised struggles in front of goal.

Only Erling Haaland (10) has hit more goals than the Cameroon international in the top flight this season and Mbeumo's clinical form is clearly underlined by his goals-per-shot ratio of 0.33, which is up there with the best in the division - Liam Delap (0.36), Jhon Duran and Jamie Vardy (both 0.40) the only players to boast a better shot conversion rate.

United, meanwhile, finished last season with a negative goal difference (-1) and have continued to stutter in front of goal this term.

The Red Devils are currently on a streak of 270 minutes without a goal and have notched only one league strike at home so far. At present, they also have the second-worst xG differential (-5.96xG) in the Premier League.

That said, there is underlying data that suggests United are a more competitive outfit in 2024/25. The Red Devils have been criticised in the past, even by Ten Hag himself, for their application in games, but this season the Dutchman's side lead the league for tackles won (22.3) and interceptions (12.6) per game.

Further, only Liverpool (5) have kept more Premier League clean sheets than the Red Devils during the current campaign and a shutout percentage of 57 per cent suggests that United are tight at the back.

Brentford have some statistical monkeys of their own to get off their back. All 10 of the Bees' points this season have been earned at the Gtech and Frank's side are yet to keep a clean sheet this term - so a defensively sound performance on the road would be lovely from a Bees perspective.

With United struggling on their own patch and Brentford looking to find their feet away from the Gtech, a cagey game could be in store and one area the Bees could look to exploit relates to their exemplary disciplinary record.

This season, no team has picked up fewer bookings than Brentford (12) and the London club have also conceded the joint-fewest free-kicks (46) in the Premier League, level with champions Manchester City.

United, meanwhile, have committed 85 fouls and been cautioned on 24 occasions; captain Bruno Fernandes sent off against Spurs, even though the dismissal was later overturned on appeal.

Small details such as free-kicks conceded can exponentially influence matches at the highest level and Brentford's set-piece specialists will no doubt be looking to punish the Red Devils should their discipline waver.

A set-piece that will definitely come Brentford's way this weekend will be at least one kick-off... and the Bees will no doubt look to dial up the pressure up at Old Trafford on Saturday with a trademark early goal!

In the Dugout

Erik ten Hag

Before he became a manager, Erik ten Hag had a 13-year playing career as a centre-back in his native Netherlands, the majority of which was spent FC Twente, whom he signed for on three separate occasions. He lifted the KNVB Cup in 2000/01 and retired at De Grolsch Veste, aged 32 in 2002.



He spent the four years that followed his retirement as a coach in Twente's youth set-up, before working as the first-team assistant to Fred Rutten and, later, to Steve McClaren during his first spell in charge of the Dutch club. Rutten brought Ten Hag with him to PSV in 2009, helping the club to successive third-place finishes in the Eredivisie.

Four months after Rutten was sacked in 2012, Ten Hag was appointed as a manager in his own right for the first time at Eerste Divisie side Go Ahead Eagles, whom he led to promotion in his first and only season in charge. He then moved on to Bayern Munich II, who he guided to the Regionalliga Bayern in 2013/14, with a squad that included Emre Can and Pierre-Emile Højbjerg.

In May 2015, he joined former club Utrecht and left after two and a half years, and a 51 per cent win ratio, to join Ajax three days after Christmas in 2017. It was at the Johan Cruyff Arena that he really started to make a name for himself.

In four and a half years, his team won the Eredivisie three times, the KNVB Cup twice and the Johan Cruyff Shield on one occasion, as well as reaching the semi-final of the Champions League in 2018/19 and the quarter-final of the Europa League in 2020/21.

Ten Hag signed a new two-year deal with Ajax in May 2021, but, 11 months later, it was announced he would become the new Manchester United manager. He later left the Dutch club earlier than expected to begin work at Old Trafford after Ralf Rangnick's short spell in charge.

The Dutchman – who signed a new two-year deal in July - reached 125 games in charge before the October international break and has the third-best win ratio of any permanent manager in United's history with 55.2 per cent, behind only Jose Mourinho (58.3%) and Sir Alex Ferguson (59.7%).



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