

# Twickenham & Richmond Tribune





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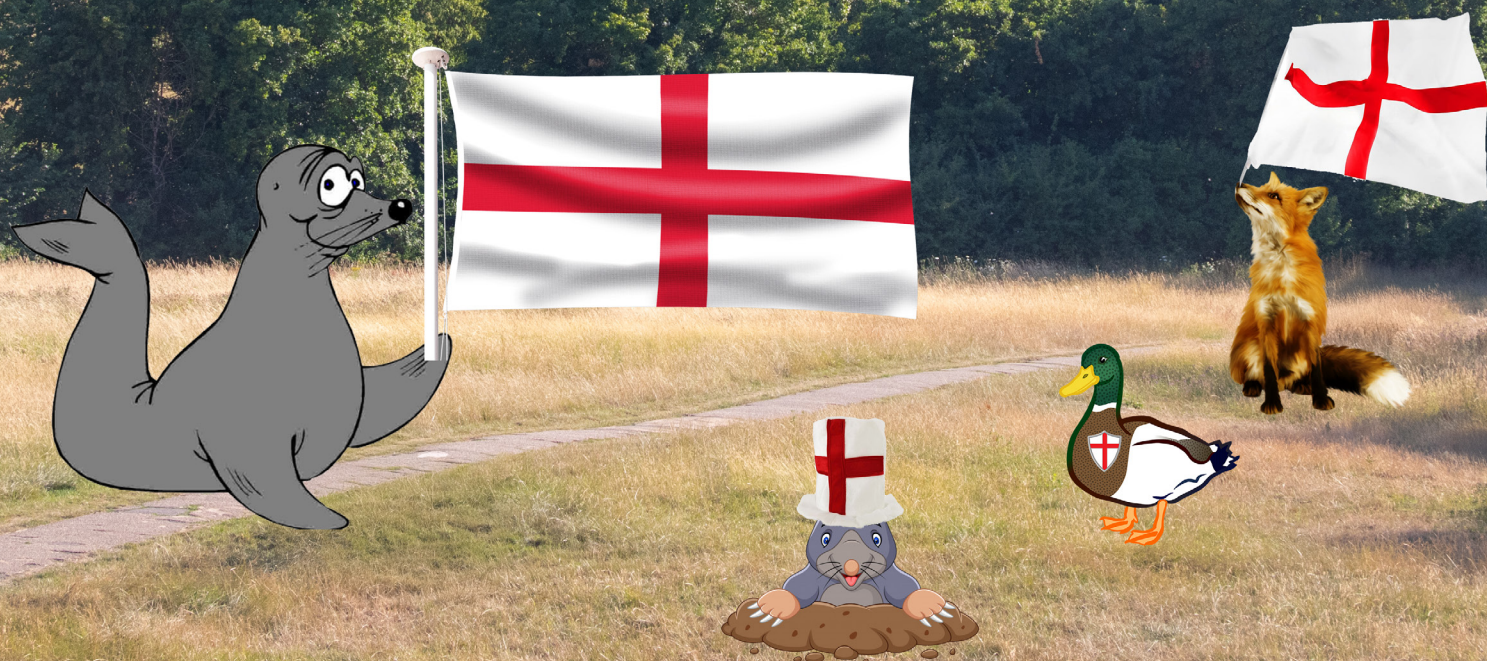
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TwickerSeal and chums were out celebrating. The wonderful **Red Roses** had opened the Women's Rugby World Cup with a resounding win (England 69 – 7 USA).

They already have their tickets for the final at Twickenham Stadium on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September, ready to see the Roses crowned champions.

TwickerSeal and chums will be proudly flying and wearing the England flag in support.





# TickerTape - News in Brief

## South Western Railway

Altered train services and buses replace trains in the Barnes Bridge area **Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 August**

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

### Saturday

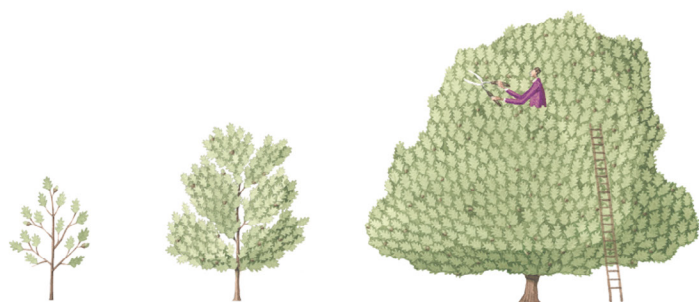
- **London Waterloo to Weybridge via Staines** services will start from **Kew Bridge**.
- **Buses** will run between **Barnes and Kew Bridge**.

### Sunday

- **London Waterloo to Woking via Staines** services will start from **Kew Bridge**.
- **Buses** will run between **Barnes and Kew Bridge**.
- The afternoon and evening **London Waterloo to Kingston via Hounslow** services will start from **Kew Bridge**.

### Monday 25 to Friday 29 August

- **London Waterloo to Weybridge via Staines** services will start from **Kew Bridge**.
- **From Tuesday to Friday**, the **London Waterloo to London Waterloo via Hounslow** peak hour services will start from **Kew Bridge**.
- **Buses** will run between **Barnes and Kew Bridge**.



The Tree Agency

darryl parkin

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*The Tree Agency*



# The Sixties Return To Twickenham

By Doug Goodman

Twickenham was packed on Sunday with local residents and visitors enjoying the music and atmosphere of the 1960s. Throughout the day bands played on the stage in Church Street and included Eel Pie All Stars, Uncle Dynamite, The Terraplanes, Carnaby Army and 60s All Stars. Stalls and activities for children were set up in the grounds of St. Mary's Church and the pubs and restaurants did a roaring trade. Many people wore 60s style clothes while motor scooters and a fleet of Mini Cars brought back memories of 60 years ago. Perfect weather added to a brilliant day.





# Tribune VJ80 Special

Last week's Tribune story, 'My Uncle Ken' by Sue Weaver, has elicited a considerable number of compliments from our readers.

In particular, one from a young ex-soldier who has seen much action in Iraq and Afghanistan, said:

*'Thank you for sharing this moving tribute to Sue Weaver's uncle, Captain Baker.'*

*It is beautifully written—clear, warm and profoundly respectful—blending personal memory and military history in a way that feels both intimate and significant.*

*What most lingers are Ken's own voice and the vivid, sensory details: the moonlit troopship, the curries that summoned childhood, washing at the village well, and the simple, powerful account of his burial. Those images make the story immediate and human rather than merely historical. The inclusion of letters and the film reference lends authenticity and roots the emotion in tangible evidence.*

*The tone is particularly well judged—affectionate without being mawkish, restrained without losing feeling. Sue never sentimentalises his sacrifice; she conveys instead the pride, humour and character that made him so beloved. The extracts from condolence letters—especially Lt. Col. Prince's scene-setting—are especially effective in conveying the solemnity and poignancy of the moment.*

*Her final reflections—on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's care, the family's ongoing curiosity about Japan, and the plea against further conflict—give the piece a thoughtful, wider resonance. It transforms private loss into a reminder of remembrance and the human cost of war.*

*Thank you for preserving and sharing Ken's story so eloquently; it will be read with the compassion and respect it deserves.*

*It reminds me of something someone once told me that I strive to live by:*

*'We owe it to the people we lost to live the life they can't'*

Sue's story was published in last week's Tribune, Edition 458, 15 August 2025, for the 80th Anniversary of VJ Day 1945, entitled: 'My Uncle Ken - Who Never Saw That Victory'.  
With thanks to Michael Jay.



Come and join in the fun at the  
**KEW HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY**  
**80th SUMMER SHOW**  
Saturday 23rd August 2025  
on Kew Green



Marquee open 12.30-3.45pm . Auction 5pm  
For more details visit [kewhorticulturalsociety.org](http://kewhorticulturalsociety.org)



# Local Liberal Democrat Councils Divided on Asylum Policy

By James Knight

From Paddington Bear in Richmond to protests in Spelthorne, the party speaks with two voices on the issue of asylum.

## Philosophical Divergence at the Border

Richmond and Spelthorne are neighbouring boroughs both led by the Liberal Democrats, yet they hold fundamentally different philosophies towards asylum seekers.

In Richmond, the council has officially adopted the status of “Borough of Sanctuary.” A comprehensive strategy has been published, a Sanctuary Board established, and free health-club memberships granted to those referred to as “sanctuary seekers.” Community groups are encouraged to apply for grants of up to £10,000 to run projects supporting refugees and asylum seekers. The council’s message emphasises welcome, inclusion, and the celebration of diversity.

In Spelthorne, however, the focus is on the Park Hotel in Ashford, long used as asylum accommodation for a mix of families and single females. This summer, the Home Office proposed to change its use to house only adult male asylum seekers. The council responded with strong resistance, commissioning legal advice, passing emergency motions. Whilst outside the hotel there have been nightly protests straining police resources

## Public Signals from Leadership

The divergence drew attention when this newspaper’s recent editions examined Richmond’s sanctuary strategy. Cllr James Chard, the Liberal Democrat group leader (effectively the shop steward for Lib Dem councillors) posted a photograph of himself beside a Paddington Bear statue, writing that it was “good to catch up with an old pal and sanctuary seeker on holiday in Norfolk.” Council Leader Gareth Roberts retweeted the image, signalling approval from the very top. Cllr Piers Allen, chair of the borough’s Health and Wellbeing Board, rejected the Tribune’s coverage altogether, calling it “a bumper crop of bile, barb and mistruth.” The sharpness of these responses highlights both the political sensitivity of the issue and the divide within the party.

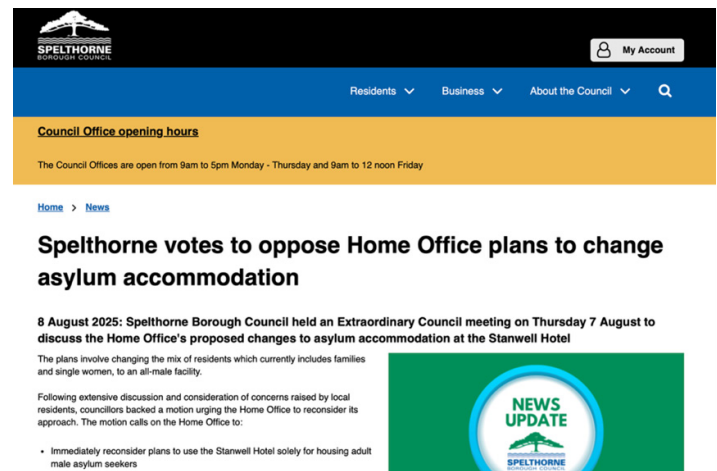
## Paddington in Twickenham, Protests in Spelthorne

Richmond’s Liberal Democrats hold up the bear as a symbol of welcome, posing with statues and talking of sanctuary. On the other side of the border, their colleagues are passing emergency motions and resisting the Home Office’s plans for asylum hotels.

Paddington may embody kindness and belonging, but real asylum policy demands choices about housing, services and fairness. By clinging to a children’s story in one borough and striking a very different note in another, the Liberal Democrats risk looking less like principled campaigners and more like politicians telling people what they want to hear.

## Opportunism or Principle?

At its core, the contrast prompts a vital question. Is this Liberal Democrat opportunism, with one message of kindness in Richmond and another of caution in Spelthorne, carefully tailored to local audiences? A party that advocates compassion as a moral duty must face scrutiny when its actions seem so inconsistent





## **The Green Party's Perspective**

The Greens establish a clear but firm stance: asylum is a right, and councils must be prepared to offer support. They go further than the Lib Dems by extending “refugee” to include those displaced by climate change. This clarity may appeal to their core supporters, but it also exposes the Liberal Democrats’ challenge. While the Greens speak with a unified voice, the Lib Dems are divided between welcoming refugees in Richmond and opposing their arrival in Spelthorne.

## **Conservative Concerns and Continuity**

Conservative voices have reframed the debate in terms of fairness and local accountability. In Ashford and Stanwell the complaint is not only about immigration numbers but about hotels being repurposed without consultation and about public services under strain. In Richmond, Conservatives question the fairness of offering free health-club memberships to sanctuary seekers at the very moment when long-standing concessions for senior citizens in gyms and swimming pools are being phased out. Assistance for one vulnerable group, they argue, must not come at the expense of another.

In Spelthorne, Conservative councillors went further still. At the extraordinary council meeting on 7 August, they proposed an amendment calling for the immediate and permanent closure of the Stanwell Hotel as an asylum centre and for its return to community use. That motion gained 13 votes but was voted down by Liberal Democrat and Independent councillors, who preferred a less absolute stance, urging the Home Office to reconsider its plan for an all-male facility but not to close the hotel entirely. For Conservatives, this was a dividing line: while they pressed for closure to protect local services and restore community trust, the Liberal Democrats refused to support such a definitive move.

## **Liberal Democrat Defence**

Liberal Democrat leaders maintain that sanctuary is about principle, not politics. Richmond’s “Borough of Sanctuary” strategy, adopted in 2024, established a Sanctuary Board and pledged to work with local charities, schools and community groups. The council also argues that free health-club memberships help reduce isolation and improve wellbeing for new arrivals, easing integration at a vulnerable stage. Some residents, however, question why new arrivals receive concessions just as long-standing discounts for pensioners are being withdrawn.

In Spelthorne, councillors emphasise that their stance reflects process, not principle. They say the Home Office acted without consultation and risked straining local services by moving suddenly to an all-male facility. Even so, the contrast with Richmond is striking: one borough promotes sanctuary as civic identity, while the other resists the practical consequences.

## **Credibility, Trust, and the Politics of Sanctuary**

Nationally, the Liberal Democrats portray themselves as defenders of a compassionate asylum system. Locally, however, their record is mixed. Richmond has integrated compassion into its civic identity, while Spelthorne has opted for caution and resistance. For residents, the issue is not about empty slogans but about trust. Are councils guided by principles, or are they merely telling people what they want to hear? Would the Richmond LibDems’ stance change if the Home Office announced they were opening an all-male hostel in the borough?

As discussed in this publication’s recent three-part series on sanctuary in Richmond, these choices involve resources, confidence, and credibility. Sanctuary cannot be judged by gestures alone. It must also be assessed by whether it maintains fairness for all vulnerable groups, rather than favouring one at the expense of another. For voters, it leaves one unavoidable conclusion: the Liberal Democrats are speaking with two voices on asylum.



# Hot Work In Twickenham

By Doug Goodman

At about 10.30 last Sunday morning a fire broke out at a commercial property and flats in the car park behind the Eel Pie Pub in Church Street Twickenham. The building at the rear of the Ristorante Italiano Mediteranneo was badly damaged by smoke and water but there were no casualties. Ten fire appliances with 60 fire fighters from Twickenham, Richmond and Heston tackled the blaze while several police vehicles diverted traffic. At times clouds of smoke filled the car park and drifted over the crowds celebrating the 60s event. Smoke could also be seen coming from the restaurant's upper windows in York Street.





Dear Tribune,

### **Common Sense Down Under, But Not Here**

It was reported last week that an English backpacker, Alicia Kemp, who hit and killed a man while riding an e-scooter in Perth, Australia, has pleaded guilty to dangerous driving causing death while under the influence of alcohol. The report states that she was carrying a passenger when she struck the pedestrian. The charge carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in jail.

Her lawyer was reported as saying: *'She just wants to get on with her life'*.

Well, so would the man she killed.

The City of Perth and other local councils have suspended such hiring indefinitely.

How nice it would be if Richmond Council showed the same concern for its residents.

Every day here we see similar bad behaviour and accidents although this can hardly be called an accident because drinking and driving is deliberate.

In a recent online meeting hosted by Richmond Council some of the e-bike and e-scooter hire companies were asked what they were doing about the misuse of these machines. There was no result, of course, just the usual hollow promises immediately followed by the same dangerous misuse and continual law-breaking. Naive to think otherwise, really.

Here, an e-bike rider, Dylan Green, who was also illegally carrying a passenger, has just been jailed for more than eight years for killing an 86-year-old man by dangerous driving.

Nothing has changed and nothing WILL change while this lethal behaviour is condoned by our authorities and there are no police around to enforce the law. Every day we see these machines go through red traffic lights, ridden on pavements and dumped there to endanger us all.

Some European cities have banned them – as has Hounslow Council.

So why doesn't Richmond do the same?

Richmond is proud of its twinning with Fontainebleau, France; Richmond, Virginia; and Konstanz, Germany.

So how about twinning with Perth? This would not only encourage our councillors to go and see how a proper local authority looks after its residents but also let their Australian counterparts come and help us get Richmond back to being the nice place it was before our own council imposed its misguided and dangerous ideology on us.

Michael Jay  
Hampton



# Is a Wealth Tax on the Family Home Coming?

By Michael Jones

Speculation is mounting that the Government may use the Autumn Budget to introduce what is being described as a “mansion tax,” but in practice could mark the first step towards a broader wealth tax on housing.

At present, when you sell the house you live in, any profit is tax-free. The Treasury is said to be considering removing this protection for higher-value homes, possibly those worth more than £1.5 million. While billed as a mansion tax, such a change would open the door to taxing the gains on family homes, something no government has attempted before.



## What it means for Richmond

With average prices in Richmond now over £825,000, and detached and semi-detached homes regularly selling well above £1m, many local households could be drawn into the net. A threshold that begins at £1.5m may sound like it only affects the wealthy, but over time, more and more ordinary family homes would be caught.

For older residents who bought in the 1980s or 1990s for modest sums, this could mean a large, unexpected tax bill when downsizing. Younger families who aspire to trade up from a flat in St Margarets to a terraced house in Twickenham could find those moves far riskier if gains on the new home are no longer protected.

## The political backdrop

The Liberal Democrats, led locally by Council Leader Gareth Roberts, have long been vocal supporters of land and property taxes, arguing that higher-value homes should contribute more. Rachel Reeves' proposals would, in many ways, bring a Lib Dem idea into Labour's national agenda.



Critics argue this approach risks punishing aspiration. For generations, families in Richmond have worked hard, often making sacrifices, to buy a home and move up the property ladder. A tax on gains would blunt those incentives, reducing mobility in the housing market and making it harder for younger families to find the right home as their circumstances change.

### **Beyond CGT: the Onward proposal**

Another idea gaining traction comes from the think tank Onward, which has proposed replacing both council tax and stamp duty with an annual levy based on a home's current value. Their model suggests a rate of 0.44% on homes up to £500,000, rising to 0.54% between £500,000 and £1m, with an extra 0.28% on values above £1m.

Critics, including commentators such as Allister Heath in *The Telegraph*, argue this would in effect be Britain's first annual wealth tax, punishing homeowners for holding an illiquid asset. Some fear it would reduce incentives to improve or maintain properties, push the cash-poor into forced sales, and mark the end of the English tradition of freehold homeownership.

### **A double squeeze**

The mooted tax comes on top of other financial pressures. The imposition of VAT on private school fees has already strained budgets for many professional families in the borough. Add in higher mortgage costs following recent interest rate rises, and the picture is one of the middle classes being squeezed to the very limit.

Local estate agents warn that if both measures go ahead, households may simply cut back heavily on discretionary spending, or in some cases, consider leaving the UK altogether. Indeed, wealth-migration data shows Britain is already experiencing a significant outflow of high-net-worth individuals, and professionals with international experience and options abroad could easily join their ranks.

### **Why it matters**

Property has always been more than an asset. For many, it represents security, stability, and the ability to pass something on to the next generation. The prospect of a wealth tax on housing would challenge that assumption.

It also raises a deeper question: what is the role of property in our society? Should the family home remain a protected cornerstone of financial independence, or should it be treated like any other investment? Economists and philosophers have long disagreed on this point, from Milton Friedman's defence of individual liberty and incentives, to Edmund Burke's view of family and inherited property as the building blocks of society.

For now, one thing is clear: the Treasury may be "flying kites" to test public reaction, but the speculation alone risks denting market confidence. If families fear a heavy tax raid on their homes, they may hold off on moving, investing, or improving their properties. In an already fragile housing market, even the hint of a shift towards wealth taxation can be destabilising.





## Come along to our Open Day in support of The Fire Fighters Charity

**Date:** Sunday 31st August 2025

**Time:** 12:00 until 16:00

**Location:** Twickenham Fire Station  
30 South Road TW2 5NT



To donate, scan the QR code with your smartphone camera or QR code reader app.

[www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/open-day-donate](http://www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/open-day-donate)

Royal Patron Her Majesty The Queen

Registered office: The Fire Fighters Charity, Level 6, Belvedere, Basing View, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 4HG. Charity registered in England & Wales (1093387) and Scotland (SC040096).



# The Richmond Society Annual Forum

## An opportunity to review and discuss the Council's Vision for Richmond Town Centre

From The Richmond Society

Thursday, September 18 · 7:30 - 9:30pm

Richmond & Hillcroft Adult Community College

Parkshot Richmond TW9 2RE

This year's Forum will review and discuss the Council's Vision for Richmond plans for the town centre. Since 2023 the Council has been consulting with residents and businesses, and the feedback has been used to develop a number of ideas for the Vision. Councillor Katie Mansfield, who is leading the project, will present at the Forum along with Councillor Phil Giesler, lead Councillor for business and the night-time economy.



Key areas for discussion will be: Roads and Public Space; Retail; Provision for Young People; the River and Riverside; the Night-Time Economy; and Policing. This is a great opportunity to give your views and also comment on the Festival that is being held in George Street and Whittaker Avenue on Saturday 13 September.

The Forum will be held at Queen Charlotte Hall, Richmond & Hillcroft Adult Community College, Parkshot, Richmond TW9 2RD on Thursday 18 September at 7:30pm. Doors open at 7:00pm with wine and soft drinks available. Members and guests welcome. There is no charge to attend but places are limited, and admission cannot be assured without booking a ticket in advance.

Get tickets [HERE](#)





# Patriotism or Vandalism?

## LibDem Councillor Calls Police on St George's Cross

By James Knight

A St George's Cross painted on the mini roundabout at Hanworth Road and Powder Mill Lane has sparked controversy in Whitton after Liberal Democrat activist councillor Michael Wilson, husband of Twickenham MP Munira Wilson, reported it to the police as "mindless vandalism."



On the Whitton Village Facebook Group, Wilson told residents: *"Yes, it has been reported to the council and the police. Mindless vandalism on a newly resurfaced Powder Mill Lane does nothing except generate additional costs to taxpayers... Trying to badly copy something on social media also shows a lack of creativity."*

### A national movement

The Whitton row is part of a broader movement. Across England, painted St. George's crosses have appeared on roundabouts, bridges, and underpasses, promoted online under the banner of Operation Raise the Colours. Councils have responded differently. Dorset Council insisted: *"Graffiti of any kind, regardless of its content, is classed as criminal damage."* A BBC report described the sudden *"explosion of patriotism"* as *"intimidating."*

National politicians are now weighing in. Robert Jenrick, the former immigration minister, has warned of a *"two-tier"* approach to justice in which English patriotism is policed more harshly than disruptive protests by groups such as Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil.

### Residents challenge double standards

In Whitton, Wilson's comments provoked an immediate backlash. One resident asked: *"What's the difference between this and rainbow pedestrian crossings that LBRUT are so keen on? I see*



*that as vandalism and more of a danger to visually impaired people. The irony when you say cost to tax payer is not lost on me.” Wilson responded: “There are TWO rainbow crossings. How is that ‘so keen’? Are you suggesting that our council funded St George’s crossing that was painted in Whitton High Street is ‘virtue signalling rubbish’?”*

Others were less forgiving. One resident said the crosses looked “*sinister*.” Another commented: “*Spraying flags on public property looks trash ...and no different to any other rubbish graffiti, instead stick up nice flags.*” But others hit back against criticism of the St George’s Flag: “*Nothing racist about our flag! You’re just uneducated about the history behind it.*”

### **A progressive party’s dilemma**

For local campaigner Amisha Patel, Wilson’s stance epitomised inconsistency. She argued that he condemned the cost of removing a St George’s Cross while defending the rights of groups like Extinction Rebellion and Palestine Action. These movements have cost the taxpayer millions. In her words, his politics “*are firmly on the left,*” whatever label he wears locally.

That charge highlights a broader problem for the Liberal Democrats. As they have become an increasingly progressive party, they have long struggled to embrace patriotism without hesitation. Where voters see a flag, too many Lib Dem politicians see a problem.

### **With the activists, not the people**

The row in Whitton lays bare the divide. A councillor calling the police on a St George’s Cross sits uneasily with residents who feel their national pride is treated as a crime. For them, it confirms the sense that politicians like Wilson are quick to defend activists who glue themselves to the road yet cannot stand up for the ordinary people who simply want to celebrate their flag.

As one resident put it, it is politicians who “*don’t stand up for ordinary people.*” And in this dispute, many believe Wilson has shown exactly which side he is on – with the activists, not with them.

## **Missed Opportunity to Reinstate an Outside Pool on Twickenham Riverside**

Support for the return of the pool on Twickenham Riverside continues

This week’s support from residents is 5,022 (an increase from 4,870 on 1st August 2025)

You can view and sign the petition [HERE](#)

Read comments from over 5,000 people [HERE](#)

Previous Lido concepts: <https://twickenhamlido.com/video.html>

### **The Cost of the Current Council Plan**

The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames’ present Twickenham Riverside Housing and Pub plan to cost an estimated **£67.2 million** (recent reported borrowing **£16.8 million**)



# Ham Common takes a summer break from mowing

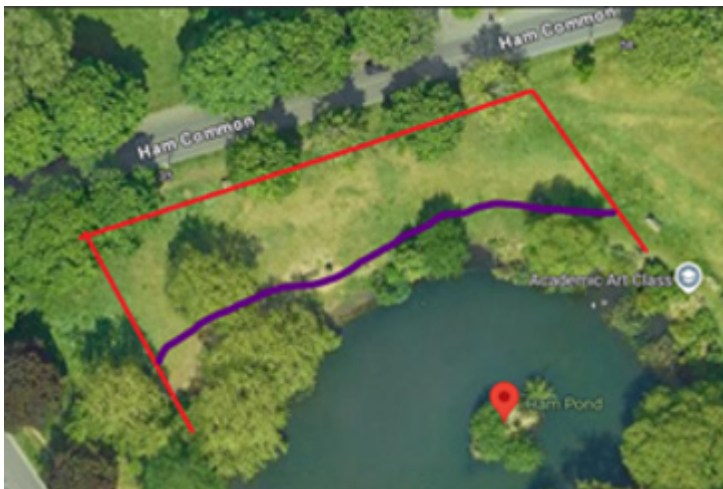
From Richmond Council

Until Sunday 31 August, a no mow scheme is being trialled around Ham Pond to help local wildlife thrive.

This summer, a small proportion of the grass adjacent to Ham Pond will be left uncut as part of a trial to support local wildlife. Paths will be mown so people can still access benches.

The longer grass will provide a food source for birds in the area, such as grazing waterfowl through an increased number of grass seeds and insects.

Ham Pond is home to a number of wildfowl that graze the surrounding grass. The grass is especially important at breeding season as the young birds are unable to travel far in search of food.



Through adjusted mowing practices, we hope to benefit local wildlife and enhance the surrounding ecosystem- the regular mowing, which currently takes place every four weeks, leaves insufficient food to support young birds. This will help us see if a permanent summer mowing break is the right move.

## New Richmond Climate and Nature Strategy (2025 to 2030)

This no mow trial is part of our wider effort to restore biodiversity across the borough.

Our recently launched strategy addresses the ecological challenges our borough faces, aiming to accelerate our pathway towards becoming a Net Zero borough by 2043. It also focuses on enhancing our adaptation and resilience towards the effects of climate change.

Find out more about the [Richmond Climate and Nature Strategy](#).

## Look after nature together

As we spend more time outdoors, it's important to remember these areas are shared with local wildlife. There are many opportunities to give back to nature, and your small actions can make a big difference.

Find out more about [volunteering in parks](#) and [supporting our street trees](#).



# The Battle for the Family Home: Property, Liberty and Inequality

By Michael Jones

The renewed speculation that Rachel Reeves may introduce a so-called “mansion tax” is more than a question of fiscal arithmetic. It touches on one of the great debates of political economy: What is property? Should the family home be taxed like any other investment? And is inheritance a stabilising force, or an engine of inequality?

## **Friedman: incentives and liberty**

Milton Friedman, the Chicago economist, treated property primarily as a matter of freedom and incentives. Taxing homes and inheritances, he argued, blunts the motivation to work, save and invest. Capital levies encourage consumption over saving and erode family independence. For Friedman, the tax-free home was not a loophole but a bulwark of liberty. Yet Friedman’s critics note that by leaving housing gains untaxed, governments allow wealth to compound in the hands of the already-advantaged, exacerbating inequality between owners and renters.

## **Burke: family and continuity**

Edmund Burke, writing in the 18th century, reached a similar conclusion from a different starting point. He saw the family, not the individual, as the true unit of society, with property as the means by which duty, responsibility and stability were transmitted across generations. To heavily tax inheritance was, in his eyes, to dissolve the cement that held society together. But in today’s housing market, where average London prices can exceed £700,000, Burke’s reverence for inherited property risks appearing, in the eyes of some, to defend entrenched privilege rather than opportunity for all.

## **Mill: liberty with limits**

John Stuart Mill, still revered by many Liberals, charted a middle ground. He defended property rights but drew a sharp distinction between wealth earned by effort and the “unearned increment” that comes from rising land values. Such gains, Mill argued, could rightly be taxed for the common good, and he was sceptical of large inheritances. Mill provides the philosophical roots of modern Liberal Democrat support for land and property taxation. Yet his critics argue that in treating land value rises as unearned, he underestimates the investment and risk homeowners often take, and ignores the practical difficulty of distinguishing between earned and unearned gains.

## **Keynes and the centre-left**

John Maynard Keynes pressed further. He believed taxing property gains and inheritance was not only fair but economically stabilising, reallocating capital into productive investment. Where Friedman saw deterrence, Keynes saw redistribution as a spur to growth. Yet redistribution is not cost-free, it risks reducing incentives for upward mobility, dampening entrepreneurial spirit and encouraging tax avoidance. This is particularly salient today, when state spending already stands at a post-war record share of national income. The push for ever-higher taxation risks diminishing returns, both politically and economically.



## **The socialist challenge**

Further left, Thomas Piketty argues for progressive annual wealth and inheritance taxes to prevent dynastic elites, while Karl Marx demanded the outright abolition of inheritance rights. These arguments resonate in an age of inequality. Yet critics note that calls for still more redistribution sit uneasily with the fact that Britain's public sector already consumes a historically high proportion of GDP, raising questions about the efficiency of spending rather than its quantum. Wealth taxes in Europe, moreover, have often raised little revenue, driven capital abroad and imposed heavy compliance costs. Marx's more radical approach remains politically unviable and economically destabilising.

## **A spectrum of thought**

The debate is therefore broad but contested. Burke saw inherited property as the glue of society, Friedman as an incentive to work and save. Mill legitimised taxing windfalls, but at the cost of blurring the line between effort and fortune. Keynes sought redistribution as stability, but risked undermining incentives. Piketty and Marx, at the far end, saw property not as a cornerstone of liberty but as a mechanism of inequality to be heavily taxed or even abolished.

## **Why it matters now**

For Britain, the question has immediate relevance. Reeves is "flying kites" about breaching the long-standing taboo on taxing the primary residence. Proposals range from extending capital gains tax to main homes, to an Onward-inspired property levy replacing council tax and stamp duty with an annual charge.

In Richmond, where average homes already exceed £700,000, such policies could mean thousands of pounds in additional liabilities. Critics warn of consequences, forced sales among the cash-poor but property-rich, reduced housing mobility, and the flight of internationally mobile professionals who have other options abroad. International evidence is sobering, most European countries have abandoned wealth taxes, citing high avoidance and low returns. At a time when the UK's tax take is already at its highest in modern history, further redistribution risks eroding confidence and stifling growth rather than achieving stability.

Local politics add another twist. Richmond Council leader Gareth Roberts frequently describes himself as a "progressive." But on property taxation, that may put him well to the left of the political centre ground. The Liberal Democrats have long supported land taxes, and Roberts has echoed those arguments. For many middle-class families in south-west London, the risk is that national Treasury speculation and local cheerleading combine to erode the financial security once guaranteed by home ownership.

The debate over property taxation is thus not only about balancing the budget. It is about Britain's self-image, whether the family home is a taxable asset, a family trust, a generator of inequality, or a cornerstone of liberty. Each answer draws on a different tradition, but the choices made in the coming months will shape the very foundations of middle-class life for decades to come.



# Your Community Centre Week returns this September

From Your Community Centre Week

Between 22 and 28 September, residents are invited to learn more about the fantastic community spaces Richmond upon Thames has to offer.

This year's Your Community Centre Week will have various activities on offer so you can truly experience the vibrant community spirit across the borough.

As part of the festivities, you can join a tour of your local area in a vintage Routemaster Bus, with a delicious cream tea made locally and live music.

Tours are available on:

- Tuesday 23 September – Tour of the local area, finishing at Linden Hall, Hampton for cream tea provided by The Avenue Club, and live music. [Book tickets for 23 September](#)
- Friday 26 September - Tour of the local area, finishing at Mortlake Hall for cream tea provided by The Avenue Club, and live music. [Book tickets for 26 September](#)

Visit Richmond will be on board to provide informative commentary about the local area.

Both tours will start at Richmond railway station bus stop Z. Please meet at 1pm and be prepared to begin the tour at 1.30pm. Lifts back to Richmond town centre on the vintage bus will be available at 4pm.

Children are welcome but they must be accompanied by an adult. Tickets cost £8.

If you have any accessibility requirements, email [info@etnacentre.org](mailto:info@etnacentre.org).





## August Food and Drink News

Whether or not you've been (or plan to go) on holiday this month, you can recreate the holiday vibe with all the fabulous products from **unearthed®**. A recent discovery for me is the Basque Cheesecake - frozen, so can always be at the ready. You get two indulgent Basque cheesecakes, produced in Spain, using full-fat cream cheese, cream, and eggs. While British and American cheesecakes are smooth and creamy with crust, Basque Cheesecake is rich and creamy with a rustic edge and a golden burnt surface. They are also suitable for vegetarians. Once defrosted, keep desserts refrigerated below 5°C and consume within 24 hours. **unearthed® Basque Cheesecake (2x100g)** is available from Waitrose and Ocado £5



We have a fabulous fig crop this year and we're indulging ourselves by combining them with **Cypressa's traditional Halloumi Cheese**. Sourced from Cyprus, made with cow's, goat's and sheep's milk with a hint of mint, it's widely available in Ocado, Tesco, Sainsbury's and Waitrose. Grill or bake it or pop it in the air fryer. This mild, salty, and tangy cheese keeps its shape during cooking, so it's also a perfect barbecue partner. Go on, you can imagine yourself in Greece.

Plant-based brand, **The Happy Pear**, has now launched into Ocado, with its delicious, all-natural and plant based hummus, tapenades, pestos and Dip & Snack pots (for healthy eating on the go). The Happy Pear chilled range is suitable for vegan and gluten free diets. FRRP £3.49 (pesto and tapenade), £2.69 (Happy Hummus and Reduced Fat Hummus) £2.89 (Sweet Beet Hummus and Red Pepper Hummus) and £2.99 (Dip & Snack).



And while we're indulging in all those lovely salads this summer, these new mayonnaise flavours and a new jam from **Tracklements** will add the perfect finishing touch. **Sriracha Chilli Mayonnaise** with fermented red chillies and garlic delivers a bold, smoky heat, acidity and a touch of garlic. **Indulgent Garlic Mayonnaise** is rich, smooth, and unapologetically bold, combining the creamy, classic mayo with the warm, depth of garlic. £3.10 / 200g

per mayonnaise. **Special Edition Shallot & Garlic Jam** is rich, savoury, and subtly sweet with a gentle chilli warmth. It layers deep umami flavour from slow-cooked shallots and mellow garlic purée, with a hint of red chilli giving just enough heat. £3.95 / 190g available from fine food delis and farm shops nationwide and online at [www.tracklements.co.uk](http://www.tracklements.co.uk).

British chocolate brand **Ombar** has launched a Dairy-Free 'Blonde' caramelised white chocolate bar in Tesco Extra Stores. It's a luxurious dairy-free bar, with a caramel and vanilla taste and a creamy texture, that rivals traditional white chocolate - but with a healthier twist. Fair Trade, with organic ingredients, it's vegan and gluten free too, with about half the sugar of normal white chocolate and no 'nasties'. £2.75 for a 70g bar.







If you're planning a spontaneous summer barbecue or relaxing over the bank holiday with friends, **Promised Land** wines bring a touch of Australian attitude and lifestyle to your glass. Part of the **Wakefield** portfolio, Promised Land wines are named after an area in the Clare Valley in South Australia, a region that company founder Bill Taylor believed was perfect for crafting world-class wine, a 'promised land' for viticulture. **Wakefield Promised Land Pinot Grigio:** Bright, crisp, and refreshing, this Pinot Grigio is great for lighter moments. Expect zesty citrus, tropical fruit and a whisper of honeysuckle. With no oak influence, the wine stays light – perfect with grilled seafood, summer salads, or simply on its own with a bowl of olives in the sun. **Wakefield Promised Land Shiraz Cabernet:** This smooth, medium-bodied red combines the richness of Shiraz with the structure of Cabernet. Ripe plum, cassis and a hint of liquorice shine through, balanced by soft oak tannins. It's a comforting match for hearty pasta, roasted meats or a night in with a good film and better company. Each is £10 a bottle in Tesco.



I've long been a great fan of **Codorníu** cava (and was lucky enough to visit the winery itself last year) but I also really like Codorníu's still wines: **Codorníu Organic Rose** - (Ocado, RRP: £10) a single varietal, organic rose wine made from 100% Grenache, with subtle aromas of ripe red fruits and fresh citrus notes. And I was delighted that they also produce one of my favourite Spanish whites: **Albarino Organic Wine** – (from £8.50 from **Co-Op** and **Ocado**) an elegant, refreshing wine crafted from grapes from two distinct vineyards, each fermented separately with selected yeasts to enhance complexity and texture. Aromatically, it begins with vibrant citrus notes of lime and grapefruit, evolving into delicate aromas of stone fruits and subtle white flowers against a mineral backdrop. Followed by freshness that gradually reveals more texture, leading to a prolonged, refreshing finish.

### Festival Fun this Weekend

And last, but by no means least for this forthcoming Bank Holiday weekend, it's the **Food Festival at Hampton Court Palace** (August 23-



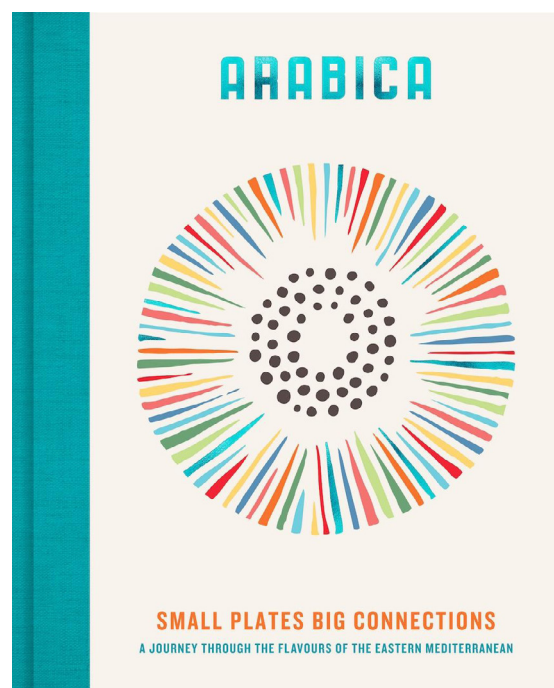
25). In this spectacular historical setting, the glorious grounds of Henry VIII's former palace, you can taste new dishes, discover a new favourite flavour, sip on a cold drink and while away the hours with some traditional garden games, enjoying the sweet melodies from the live music performers and tick off your cultural visit. Members go free and your ticket price includes entrance to the palace itself. Open from 10.00 to 18.00 For ticket info and opening times click [here](#)





## Arabica - Small Plates Big Connections

Wouldn't it be lovely to have a cook book that celebrates the vibrant flavours of the Eastern Mediterranean – whisking you on a culinary journey through the fertile valleys, mountain villages, coastal towns, and vibrant cities of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Turkey? Well, there is, and it's called **Arabica**, and with all our gorgeous Mediterranean food shops springing up, you'll be able to buy the ingredients easily. But if you don't have a store handy, you can visit the Arabica website, where a host of wonderful ingredients awaits. Back to the book, author and founder of Arabica restaurants, **James Walters** draws inspiration from his extensive travels across the Eastern Mediterranean to create a cookbook brimming with colourful meze and small plates from one of the world's most exciting food cultures.



Published by **Carnival** at £28 for a lavishly illustrated hardback, and photography by Joe Woodhouse, the book contains recipes like Grilled halloumi with black honey, Spinach & feta gül böreği, Chicken & pistachio shish, Baked chermoula cod with sweet potato, Lebanese meatballs, Lamb with pea tahini. Treat yourself to Turkish-style künefe, Chocolate halva mousse with sesame brittle, and cool off with cocktails and sodas, such as the Pomegranate margarita and Batroun lemonade.

Here are a couple of recipes to persuade to buy a copy of the book:

### **MUHAMMARA** Serves 4 | Vegan

*A vibrant Levantine-style romesco hailing from Aleppo, Syria, that combines sweet, smoky peppers, toasted walnuts and tangy pomegranate molasses with a hint of spice. Traditionally savoured as a dense, rich dip, it truly excels as a condiment when thinned slightly with a few tablespoons of water. Ideal for spooning over roasted vegetables, chicken thighs, grilled prawns, lamb chops, or roasted scallops. Alternatively, spread it inside a Khobez flatbread (see page 206), brush with oil and crisp it up over hot embers for the ultimate vegan arayes, which is a classic Middle Eastern street food!*

- 200g (7oz) walnuts
- 3 red bell peppers
- 40g (1½oz) harissa
- 40g (1½oz) tomato purée
- 4 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp pomegranate molasses
- 2 tsp Maldon sea salt
- Pinch of Urfa chilli flakes

1. Toast the walnuts: Preheat the oven to 180°C/Fan 160°C/350°F. Spread the walnuts on a baking tray in a single layer and toast lightly in the preheated oven for 8 minutes.





2. Grill the peppers: Preheat the grill to its hottest setting.
3. Blacken the peppers approximately 5cm (2in) below the grill. Turn them regularly until the skin is fully charred and starting to collapse. Transfer the peppers to a bowl, cover with cling film and leave to sit for 20 minutes until cool enough to handle. Peel away the skin and discard the stem, seeds and white membrane.
4. Blend the muhammara: Combine the peeled roasted peppers with the harissa, tomato purée, 2 tablespoons of the olive oil, 1 tablespoon of the pomegranate molasses and the salt in a tall beaker. Reserve a tablespoon of the walnuts to garnish and add the remaining nuts to the beaker. Blend to a fine purée using a stick blender.
5. Plating up: Spoon the dip into a shallow bowl or onto a plate. Use the back of a spoon to create a textured pattern. Drizzle the remaining olive oil and pomegranate molasses over the top. Finely chop the reserved walnuts, retaining some coarser chunks for crunch and contrast, then sprinkle them over the muhammara with the Urfa chilli flakes, and serve at room temperature.

**Storage:** Muhammara improves with time and will keep for up to 5 days in the fridge. Just remember to take it out an hour before serving to allow it to reach room temperature.

## **TOMATOES, PEACHES, BASIL & ZA'ATAR** Serves 4–6 | Vegan

- 800g (1lb 12oz) ripe tomatoes
- 2 ripe peaches, de-stoned and sliced into wedges
- 1 shallot, finely sliced into rounds
- 2 tsp Maldon sea salt
- $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp freshly milled black pepper
- 120g (4 $\frac{1}{3}$ oz) extra-virgin olive oil
- 90g (3 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz) red wine vinegar
- Finishing touches
- Handful of basil leaves, torn
- 2 spring onions, green part only, finely sliced
- 2 tsp za'atar

**Shopping tip:** When it comes to choosing tomatoes, my personal favourites include the small, super-sweet Sicilian Datterini, the meatier and full-flavored Cuore del Vesuvio, the robust pink bull's heart tomatoes and the superb, old-fashioned beefsteak variety known as Costoluto Fiorentino. For an off-season workaround, skip the peaches and consider the crunchy, thick-skinned Sicilian Marinda winter tomatoes. And look out for a good-quality Cabernet Sauvignon vinegar.



1. Prepare and marinate the tomatoes and peaches: For larger tomato varieties, like Cuore del Vesuvio, pink bull's heart or Costoluto Fiorentino, cut into bite-sized pieces after removing the core (peeling is optional). Halve any small tomatoes.
2. Slice Marinda winter tomatoes into thick wedges or rounds without peeling. Place the tomatoes, peaches and shallot in a mixing bowl. Season with the salt, pepper, olive oil and vinegar, and toss to coat. Leave to marinate at room temperature for 10 minutes.

**Plating up:** Transfer the marinated tomatoes and peaches to a serving bowl. Garnish with the torn basil leaves, a scattering of green spring onions and a sprinkle of za'atar.

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# Would you donate your blood to help a pregnant female...?

By Deep Patel

~ Through the Eyes of a Twickenham Shopkeeper ~

Everyone knows that I am a shopkeeper in Twickenham running Meet & Deep Newsagents on Hampton road for the past 40 years with my family, and everyone knows by now I have a soft spot for promoting kindness towards all living beings, but maybe everyone does not know that I am also a certified entomologist (insect behaviour specialist)...yes that's maybe why I always hold compassion for them! I have a natural love of all insects, however, one insect that customers always tell me they hate is the humble mosquito and we are now in peak mosquito season and customers have been telling me that how awful mosquitoes are?

I am here to tell you they are not so bad...they are not "pests" they are ecological assets...did you know mosquitoes actually help pollinate plants? There is a common misconception that mosquitoes go around drinking blood all the time, but it's not true...the males don't even drink blood (so they are incapable of spreading diseases!) and male mosquitoes are actually vegan! They primarily live on plant nectar and fruit juice (no wonder they are always so agile and fast). It is only the females that consume blood and can spread disease (however important to remember that is more a concern when abroad, but not when in the UK), and female mosquitoes drink blood only for a short time when they are pregnant, to help form eggs...so next time you think of swatting a mosquito, remember you may be killing a pregnant female...we wouldn't want to harm a "pregnant lady" would we?

Even putting this moral dilemma aside, it's worth remembering that mosquitoes do help us in other ways too...they are often mother nature's first indicators of when it comes to monitoring water quality and environmental changes. Mosquitoes help in the medical field too. Mosquito saliva has even been used in laboratory trials due to its potential for developing anti-clotting drugs and life- saving medications for human beings. Along with these "human benefits", mosquitoes are also a very important food source for bats, fish, birds and other insects so eradicating them would cause us more harm than good in some ways. It is very important to note that I am primarily discussing here mosquitoes in the UK, however if travelling abroad, you should be very cautious of mosquitoes as in other countries, mosquitoes can spread deadly diseases like malaria, dengue and many more.

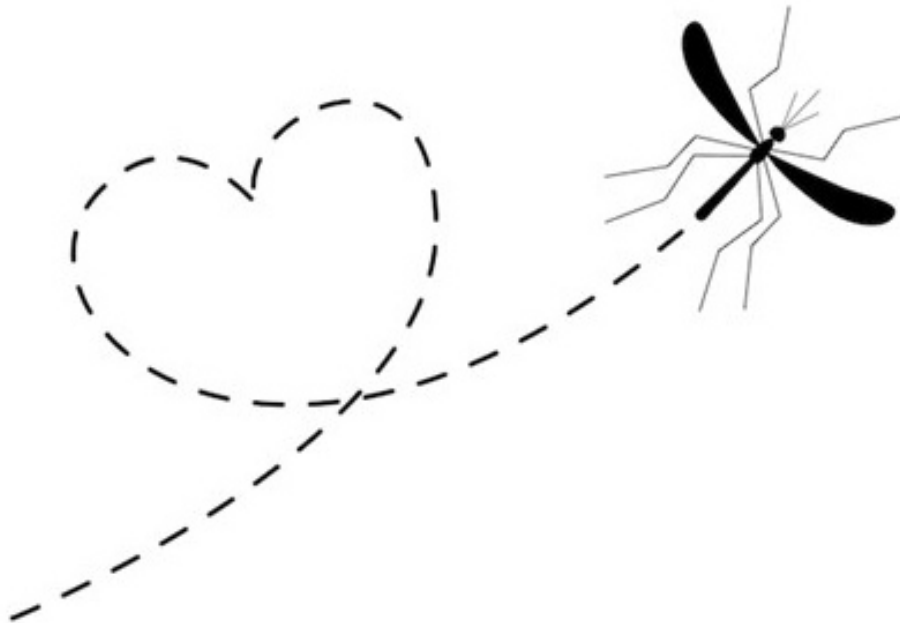
So what can one do to live alongside mosquitoes in the UK? Well for a start understand that they are more attracted to humans who are pregnant, or gym-goers too as these people have higher metabolic rates. They are also more attracted to those who drink alcohol and consume more salt, as well as to those who wear dark coloured clothing as it is appealing to mosquitoes. Remember, you can use citronella or peppermint essential oil in a diffuser with a tea-light candle to deter mosquitoes and all insects naturally and without killing them (it's good karma to be kind to all living creatures big and small). Peppermint oil actually stops all insects...place a few drops where they come and it stops ants, spiders and even mice...place white vinegar in bowls to stop rats, rodents, squirrels and foxes or use humane live capture traps to catch rodents alive and release far away in woodland areas. Using poisons for rodents is cruel and makes their veins tear internally over 4 days and also passes poison from their bodies to foxes and birds as they eat the poisoned dead bodies, similar to slug pellets. The poisoned slugs then have cruel deaths and pass on the poison to other animals that consume the dead bodies

after. Trail copper mesh (available online) around the bottom of four bamboo canes around your plants and it will stop slugs without harming them (for more kind ways to stop any insect please check my Instagram/Facebook: InsectLovers Unite or [InsectLoversUnite@gmail.com](mailto:InsectLoversUnite@gmail.com))

A little note on cats and birds and squirrels at this time of year...If you have a cat that is a good hunter placing a little bell around their collar so that birds and other animals can hear the cat coming and escape before being caught. Very important to remember is that if your cat catches a bird or mouse, please never release the bird or mouse, even if the animal look looks ok...The primary reason is the presence of the bacteria *Pasteurella Multocida* in a cats mouth that can lead to a fatal infection within 24 hours. Any bird caught by a cat should be taken to a wildlife rescue or veterinary professional for assessment and treatment (never release them without the antibiotic treatment as they will die a day or so later).

August will also see the last peak of the baby squirrel season. If you find one injured, please don't feed or give water, instead simply keep them in a small ventilated cardboard box indoors with a hot water bottle under half of the box (to give gentle heat yet allow the baby bird or squirrel to move off if they get too hot.) You can catch an injured bird using a box with holes, throw it over the bird and gently scoop in (like catching a spider in a cup) and contact a local wildlife centre for help. Vets are often unable to help and have to euthanize them, so wildlife centres are best.

Have a good-karma late summer!



**Remember...**

***“Sometimes the bark is much worse than the bite...”***

MY CREATURE-KINDNESS TIP OF THE WEEK...

STOP BEETLES, MITES, SILVER-FISH & ANTS...WITHOUT KILLING!...

Sprinkle peppermint oil or rosemary powder where they come...Olbas oil does the trick too! They will stop coming without you having to harm them...light citronella candles or burn peppermint oil in aromatherapy tealight diffusers to stop them coming...you will get blessings in your life or have good karma for choosing a kind way too! This remedy also works to deter virtually any insect without harming them...like it & share it! For ANY specific tip to stop any “pest” or insect KINDLY (for good karma/blessings), email me: [thedeepatel@gmail.com](mailto:thedeepatel@gmail.com) or join my Instagram/Facebook: Insect Lovers Unite



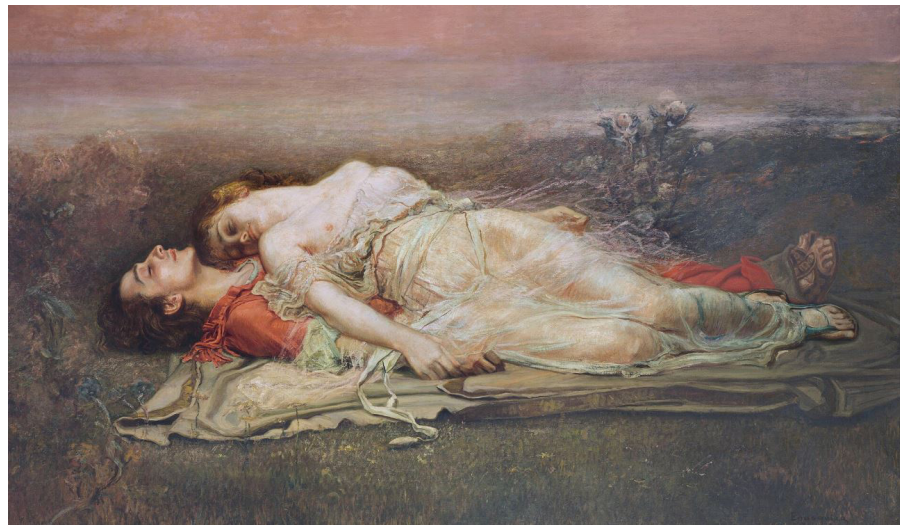
# Tristan und Isolde

by Richard Wagner

ShatterBrain and Regents Opera at the Arcola Theatre

This could only be at the Grimeborn Opera Festival, *Tristan und Isolde*, that great peak of the operatic repertoire, performed by a quintet of piano and strings, having to cope with Wagner's extortionate demands for a full orchestra. Enigmatically described "banders", add the occasional woodwind, plus hunting horns and pipe for the shepherd. Nevertheless, conductor Michael Thrift's arrangement sounds rather good, like a fine Fauré. It's refreshing to re-experience the sheer weirdness of the harmonies broken down to their essence.

The opera's incarnation was in the *Wesendonck Lieder* and the intimacy of lieder is seen here, since we couldn't be closer to the singers, with the orchestra confined behind. Still, four sailors do not constitute a Wagnerian chorus, and perhaps it was a little too leisurely when the music surged towards a climax. But for all that, the singing is immensely impressive, and its more bel canto approach pays dividends and makes dramatic as well as musical sense.



We can see Isolde changing from anger to exhalation once she has drunk the potion, the joy that she and Tristan find in one another, the rapture on Isolde's face during the Liebestod, and the sheer panic of Lauren Easton's Brangane, doing a last minute and unplanned substitution of the love potion for the death potion.

Brian Smith Walters has impressive stamina and musical insight. His Tristan's hushed appeal to Isolde to follow him is superb. More sweetness of tone wouldn't come amiss, but any opera house would be glad to have him in a Heldentenor role. Becca Marriott is an agile Isolde with an appealing smoky colour to her voice that doesn't sour or curdle. She has plenty of power but keeps it in control. It is difficult for opera singers to hold back, and Simon Wilding as Marke puts too much pressure on his voice, but Oliver Gibbs sets an excellent example of how to sing in a small space, and he never overdoes his "blokey bloke" Kurwenal.

Director Guido Martin-Brandis draws involved and convincing performances from his cast. In an opera that has three suicide attempts, most productions are desire-averse and emphasise that the couple are half in love with easeful death, but his pair of lovers are certainly more sexually expressive. Martin-Brandis makes the point that it requires a huge set of mental gymnastics to pursue love and sex at any cost, even unto death.

Read Patrick Shorrock's review at [www.markaspen.com/2025/08/16/tristan-isolde-grime](http://www.markaspen.com/2025/08/16/tristan-isolde-grime)

Image by Roger de Egusquiza (Public Domain)

## *The Elixir of Love*

by Gaetano Donizetti, libretto by Felice Roman  
Wild Arts at Opera Holland Park

Donizetti's evergreen opera might seem like a soft option, but realising its charms to the full takes a lot of hard work, talent, and good judgement. A performance as delightful as this one doesn't come out of nowhere.

The young cast all have attractive voices and they all act with enthusiasm as an ensemble. Guido Martin-Brandis set the production by the seaside in the 1950s. Pedants may complain that this sits uneasily with Joseph Morris' very free translation amusingly stuffed with more contemporary references. And purists may not like the musical arrangement made by conductor Orlando Jopling and Hamish Brown, which takes a few harmless liberties with the score, including the use of an accordion in the duet for Dulcamara and Adina and a fun musical quotation of the love potion motif from Wagner's *Tristan*. Anyone else is likely to be thoroughly delighted, as it's perfectly clear that they do what they do out of love for this opera.



Sophie Lincoln's designs are both atmospheric and minimal, deckchairs, bunting, and fairy lights, but provide absolutely all that is needed. The costumes are very stylish, 50s Italian in look, including Adina's scarlet hot pants with a stylish long skirt; and candy stripes and white coat for Dulcamara. Only poor Nemorino is blandly dressed.

Instead of a chorus, we have Giannetta, in a sparkling performance from Bethan Terry, with three other singers, peopled the story with real individuals.

Galina Averina doesn't have the sadistic edge or complacency of some Adinas and is all the better for it, as well as providing some lovely singing. Xavier Hetherington has splendidly gorgeous honeyed tones, effectively showing Nemorino's growing confidence and hope.

Appropriate for the seaside setting, Timothy Nelson's Belcore is a naval captain rather than the usual soldier, which is redolent of that other operatic cad, Lt Pinkerton. He sings attractively and I'd love to hear him in Verdi. Alex Jones displays a light touch as Dulcamara, while fully delivering on the comedy. The fact Dulcamara is a complete conman may leave a slightly nasty taste, especially when he gets away with it to mass applause. But in the end, the cast don white coats to join his sales force, acknowledging our complicity.

Read Patrick Shorrock's review at [www.markaspen.com/2025/08/17/elixir-love-wa-ohp](http://www.markaspen.com/2025/08/17/elixir-love-wa-ohp)

Photography by Becca Hunt





# Kettner Concerts In Twickenham

**“Beyond the Siege”**

**Shostakovich: Symphony no. 7 “Leningrad”  
(the rare piano-4-hands version)**

**Friday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2025  
6.00 pm**

*“I have only tried to give an emotional expression of the war”*

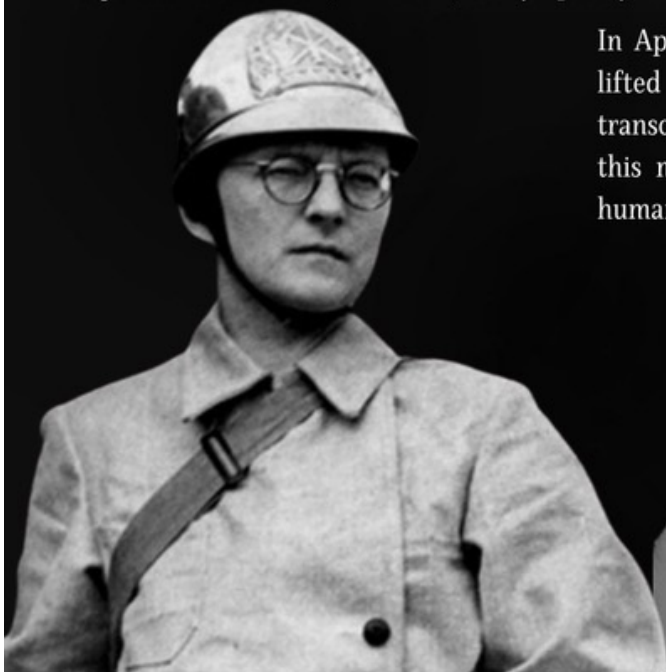
**Dmitri Shostakovich**

Experience one of history's most powerful musical statements, a deep reflection on survival and recovery in the face of oppression. This rare piano four-hands adaptation of Shostakovich's legendary Symphony No. 7 "Leningrad" was commissioned by the composer himself. Born from the crucible of the 872-day Siege of Leningrad, this extraordinary work emerged as a beacon of defiance against tyranny, and the Nazi encirclement of the city. Composed by Shostakovich while serving as both head of piano at the Conservatoire and volunteer firefighter during the brutal siege that claimed 800,000 lives, the symphony became a rallying cry for resistance.

In April 1942, amid starvation and desperation, the work's premiere lifted the spirits of a city under siege—a historic moment that transcended music to become a symbol of human endurance. Join us for this moving tribute to courage, resilience, and the triumph of the human spirit through music.

**Jed Distler, piano**

**Cristian Sandrin, piano**



**St Mary's Church Twickenham  
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**Tickets: £15 General Admissions  
£10 Concessions (Under 18s,  
Students)**

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# St Mary's University

## From Dublin to digital – how the 19th century founder of the Sisters of Charity speaks to our own age of AI

Maggie Doherty reflects on delivering the biannual Venerable Mary Aikenhead Oration in Australia this year

*Blog originally published in The Tablet on 18th August 2025*

A chance encounter in Rome last summer led to an invitation for Maggie Doherty to deliver the biannual Venerable Mary Aikenhead Oration in Australia this year



Playing around with ideas for the Oration, I thought that now was an opportune moment to explore how her vision might guide us in the era of artificial intelligence, particularly in the ministries of healthcare, education and social outreach, pioneered by her five sisters who arrived in Australia in the early 19th century.

My journey towards the other end of the world started well when the lady sat beside me from Dubai to Sydney happened to be from Dublin and an expert in AI – a sign from Mary perchance. We spoke at length about how AI was transforming industries in Australia, whether that be in mining, where autonomous trucks, trains and drills are controlled by a centre based in Perth, or how AI is changing the face of pest control from 24/7 remote monitoring of traps to drones

targeting pesticides in remote areas.

To underscore this connection between past and present, I created an avatar of Mary Aikenhead to open the oration. It raised a few laughs.

Mary Aikenhead (1787-1858), from Cork, founded the Religious Sisters of Charity. She is on the path to sainthood – her heroic virtues

were proclaimed by decree in 2015, meaning she could have the title, Venerable.

What would this 19th-century innovator make of the technology which enables computers and machines to think and act in ways that mirror human intelligence?

She could not have predicted that telemedicine, wearable technology and virtual wards would be realities used to provide care. She and her Sisters would, however, perhaps recognise the driving purpose of these developments: to enable everyone to access the care and education they deserve, regardless of where they were born or their individual circumstances in life.

Based on her life and mission, I argued that Mary Aikenhead would offer several compass points to navigate this new era. She was very rooted in practicality, not getting caught up with the latest trend. She would ask, what can we do and would want to understand where AI helped but also where it would get in the way and hinder charitable works. She would ensure that technology served human dignity, asking: does this technology treat people as ends in themselves, or merely as means?



The Sisters of Charity didn't just pray for the poor, important though that was; they learned medical skills, they learned to teach, and they learned whatever was needed to provide the right support. Most significantly, they took a fourth vow beyond the traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They vowed to serve the poor and crucially, she didn't simply accept the limitations of her time but worked creatively within and sometimes against them to fulfil her mission of service.

Her fourth vow would be a guiding principle in her AI approach. She would evaluate these tools based on how this makes the lives of the most excluded and marginalised better and more human. For Mary Aikenhead, it is important to be available for anyone in need at the point of need, regardless of faith background. She would judge an innovation's merit by the extent to which it transformed the lives of the marginalised.

Mary Aikenhead would see AI and technology as wonderful gifts of providence, but she would be practical about it. She would not be seduced by it to the point of losing the simple, direct human connection. She would be very concerned about authenticity and would not be easily swayed by fake news or opinions that were becoming politicised.

She would likely have at least one raised eyebrow permanently at AI, scratching her head on variants of humanising and dehumanising influence. She would issue a strong corrective to some of the more sci-fi radical bits of AI by saying actually there has to be a personal touch, and there has to be a human touch, and there has to be a relationship behind it.

Drawing on my recent research with 68 respondents into public attitudes towards digital health in end-of-life and bereavement care which found that 75 per cent of

respondents were open to using digital technologies, I shared that respondents stressed that human beings need personal touch and care which cannot be replaced by AI. This would have deeply resonated with Mary Aikenhead. She would have appreciated how digital tools could extend her reach, much like her own leadership from her sickbed for 20 years, but would insist that technology must enhance, never replace, human relationships at the heart of healing, education and spiritual care.

Pope Leo XIV has said that AI is one of the main issues facing humanity today. Offering the treasury of her social teaching in response to another industrial revolution, Mary Aikenhead's wisdom resonates within this new era.

Her legacy offers us a compass, not a handbook for navigating AI. From Dublin to digital, Mary Aikenhead's vision remains our guide: to see in every innovation an opportunity to serve those most in need and to bring Christ's love to all, especially those who live on the margins.

*Maggie Doherty, Director of the Centre for the Art of Living and Dying Well at St Mary's University and a trustee of St Joseph's Hospice in Hackney, recently delivered the Mary Aikenhead Oration in Australia, following teaching and lecture engagements at Notre Dame University, Sydney. Mary Aikenhead Ministries carries on the work of the Sisters of Charity, focusing on health, aged care, education and social services.*

*With special thanks to Carolyne Barber and Sr Maria Coates from St Joseph's hospice in Hackney who helped Maggie get to know more about Venerable Mary Aikenhead and Professors, Julia Riley and Jim McManus who shared their expertise in digital technologies in healthcare.*

Photo credit:  
Camera Creations



St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London

# Students Shine with Strong GCSE and Level 2 Results Across College Group

Students at Harrow, Richmond, and Uxbridge Colleges (HRUC) are celebrating a strong set of GCSE and Level 2 vocational results, with many learners making impressive progress from a wide range of starting points. Across the college group, thousands of our amazing students sat GCSEs in a variety of subjects, with results matching last year's strong position and with high grades achieved in many areas.

At Richmond upon Thames College (RuTC), for example, over 71% of students who sat GCSEs achieved a grade 9–4 – a brilliant achievement that demonstrates the hard work and commitment of learners and staff alike.



Full-time GCSE programmes run over 9 months from September to June and are designed for students who are either re-sitting their GCSEs or taking them for the first time. Learners typically study four or five subjects and many go on to progress onto Level 3 programmes such as A Levels and BTECs. Alongside these, many students also take GCSE English or Maths while studying a vocational qualification, helping them strengthen their academic foundation for the future.

Congratulations also to our super BTEC and UAL Level 2 vocational students who have achieved such high results, and thanks to the efforts of our industry-specialist staff and the determination of learners. These courses provide students with the practical skills and knowledge they need to succeed, whether that's moving into employment or progressing to Level 3 qualifications and onto university and apprenticeships.

## Star performances

We are especially proud of students who have improved their grades since joining us from school, and those gaining essential GCSEs for the first time, some of whom are 16-18s who are new to the country or missed GCSEs because of illness or other reasons. Others have progressed from ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses, and many have used these qualifications as a stepping stone to higher-level study. Examples of star performers this year show just how much progress students make during their time with us, moving onto Level 3 courses, apprenticeships, and even preparing for their future careers.

Dylan McTaggart, HRUC Group Principal and Deputy CEO said:

*"Congratulations to all our students on their results. We offer a wide choice of GCSE and Level 2 programmes, whether re-sitting GCSEs or a vocational pathway. Our students come with different experiences and ambitions, and it's inspiring to see the progress they make. Whatever their starting point, we are here to support them in achieving their goals and taking confident steps towards their future careers."*

Look out for more student success stories on our website and across our social media channels.

[Visit our enrolment page for dates and times](#)





# Richmond acrobats win bronze at The World Games 2025

Richmond Gymnastics Association

Richmond Gymnastics Association (RGA) is celebrating an extraordinary podium finish after its Senior Men's Acrobatic Group, Louis Alexander, Freddie Turner, Rex Booth and Samuel Ditchburn, claimed the bronze medal for Great Britain at The World Games 2025.

In a competition featuring the world's sports and disciplines that are not in the programme of the Olympic Games, The World Games is the international showcase that positions the world's best athletes including acrobatic gymnasts. RGA's group delivered three high-difficulty routines which drew cheers and flattering commentary for its skill and choreography inside the packed Dong'an Lake Sports Park Gymnasium.

The bronze medal marks the second time that a Richmond Gymnastics acrobatic partnership has reached The World Games podium, with the first in 2017 and the latest triumph in 2025; a perfect way to celebrate the club's 65th anniversary year.

Salme Naylor, the club's Director of Coaching said, *"This is a truly historic moment for Richmond Gymnastics. To achieve a World Games medal in our anniversary year is the perfect celebration of decades of dedication, passion and community spirit. We couldn't be prouder!"*

*"We came here to show the best of British acrobatics, and we're leaving with a medal we'll never forget,"* said Louis Alexander.

Freddie Turner reflected on the team's approach: *"We just wanted to go out there and deliver the best routines we possibly could. We focused on one move at a time and it all came together when it mattered most."*

Teammate Rex Booth commented, *"It's a dream come true, honestly. It was a hard road, but we just kept going."*

Samuel Ditchburn added, *"The journey here has been incredible. We're happy!"*

Head of Acrobatics at Richmond Gymnastics, Melanie Sanders, praised the group's focus and determination, *"They competed with heart, skill and composure against the best in the world. To bring home bronze is a huge achievement and I know they've inspired a new generation of young gymnasts back home."*

British Gymnastics also celebrated the result, *"Acrobatic men's group gymnasts Louis Alexander, Freddie Turner, Rex Booth and Samuel Ditchburn displayed their trademark show-stopping performance in their combined routine to seal bronze, wowing the crowds with their flair and expert skills."*

Find out more about the [Richmond Gymnastics Association](#).

Watch the highlights posted on the club's official social media channels:

[Instagram](#) [YouTube](#) [X](#)



# Red Roses open Women's Rugby World Cup with dominant win over USA

From England Rugby

The Red Roses started their 2025 Women's Rugby World Cup campaign with an impressive win over the USA in front of 42,723 supporters at Sunderland's Stadium of Light.

Tries from Sadia Kabeya, Hannah Botterman, Maud Muir, Ellie Kildunne (2), Abby Dow, Amy Cokayne, Jess Breach (2), Lark Atkin-Davies (2) as well as 12 points from Zoe Harrison and two from Emma Sing saw the Red Roses open their campaign with a bonus-point win.

The USA kicked off and regained possession just inside the England half, but the pace of the Red Roses' defence pushed them back and forced a knock-on from Alev Kelter.

From the scrum England spread the ball wide before Harrison nudged it in behind before the USA cleared their lines. Although the Red Roses threatened, a knock on in the 22 put an end to their attack. However, the scrum yielded a penalty and, looking to set the tone, captain Zoe Aldcroft chose to kick for the corner.



A second penalty followed, and the Red Roses set up a powerful driving maul that saw Kabeya cross for the opening try of the tournament and Harrison added the extras with nine minutes on the clock. After the restart the USA enjoyed a period of possession, but England's defence held firm and again the scrum proved dominant, winning another penalty to clear the lines.

With just under 20 minutes played, Megan Jones found Dow in the USA 22 with a cross-field kick. Once the ball was recycled Botterman picked a perfect line and fended Lotte Sharp to score, with Harrison converting to make it 14-0.

Five minutes later the USA hit back through Erica Jarrell-Searcy, who found a gap before Hawkins converted to make it 14-7. Soon after the USA were reduced to 14 players as Kelter was given a yellow card for playing the scrum half.

A powerful tackle by Jones then led to a knock on and the Red Roses' scrum continued its dominance to win another penalty. Harrison found touch inside 10 metres out and the USA were penalised from the resulting maul.

The USA stopped the drive of the next maul, but England's pick-and-go game edged them closer to the line before Muir crashed over from close range, with Harrison converting again.

The Red Roses gathered the restart and immediately looked to use their numerical advantage, spreading the ball wide to Dow on the wing. Dow showed her pace and then found Kildunne on the



inside to finish an excellent try, securing the bonus-point, and Harrison continued her form from the tee. A powerful surge from Ilona Maher put the USA in the England 22, where they won a penalty and chose to kick for the corner.

With Kelter back on the pitch they attempted to pick-and-go for the line but were foiled by Abbie Ward and Breach who held the ball up, with England ending the half 28-7 ahead.

The Red Roses began the second half positively, as Jones was put through a gap and surged into the 22 before being brought down.



England patiently built towards the line with multiple phases, before Tatyana Heard fizzed the ball wide to Dow for her to dive over in the corner. Harrison's conversion went wide, but the Red Roses had a 26-point cushion with 44 minutes on the clock. Just a few minutes later, Jones charged down a box kick and Breach poked a clever kick through for Kildunne, who nudged ahead and regathered to score her second. Harrison's conversion went in off the post to make it 40-7.

Determined to add to their six tries, the Red Roses unleashed a sweeping attack from

their own half that resulted in Kildunne being tackled into touch in the USA 22.

From the lineout, the USA attempted to run it out, but Botterman won a penalty at the breakdown and her side kicked to the corner.

A clever lineout move then put Cokayne into space and she crashed over, with Harrison's conversion drifting wide to leave things at 45-7 with 30 minutes still to play. Five minutes later, Heard and Kabeya linked up well to burst into the 22 and once recycled the ball found its way to Breach on the wing to break the 50-point mark.

Soon after, the Red Roses again found themselves in the USA 22 and replacement Atkin-Davies powered over after some good phase-play. Harrison added the extras with her last contribution before being replaced by Emily Scarratt, who became the first England player to play at five Rugby World Cups.

Pressure came on from the USA but when the ball was stolen, the Red Roses ran from their own 22. Kildunne regathered her own grubber before passing to Breach who finished a sensational try to make it 62-7.

The forwards were to have the last say of the game, winning a penalty at the scrum before Atkin-Davies latched onto another maul to score. World Cup debutant Sing then added the extras to seal a 69-7 win.

The Red Roses now face Samoa in Pool A of the 2025 Women's Rugby World Cup, who they face on Saturday 30 August at 17:00 at Franklin's Gardens in Northampton.



# Match Preview: Brentford v Aston Villa

Written by Brentford Football Club

Keith Andrews takes charge of his first competitive Brentford game at Gtech Community Stadium on Saturday (3pm kick-off BST), with Aston Villa the visitors to TW8. The Bees were beaten 3-1 by Nottingham Forest on the opening weekend of the Premier League season, while Villa drew 0-0 with Newcastle United.

Analysis, team news, match officials and more. Here's everything you need to know before kick-off.

## Pre-match Analysis

Stephen Gillett, Playmaker Stats: Brentford must be wary of returning Watkins

Brentford welcome Ollie Watkins to Gtech Community Stadium for the fourth time since he left the Bees back in 2020.

In seven Premier League games for Aston Villa against the Bees, Watkins has seven goal involvements (six goals and an assist) and Brentford fans will hope

his purple patch against them comes to an abrupt end when both sides meet this Saturday in search of their first victories of the fledgling 2025/26 season.

Watkins plundered 26 goals for the Bees as they fell at the final hurdle in the 2019/20 season, the Exeter City academy graduate leaving west London on the back of an agonising 2-1 defeat to Fulham in the Championship play-off final.

However, the Bees and Watkins have both gone from strength to strength since their shared Wembley heartbreak.

In fact, the forward's prolific form for Aston Villa is illustrated by the fact that only Liverpool's Mohamed Salah (112) and Man City's Erling Haaland (87) have scored more top-flight goals than the 29-year-old (75) since he made his Premier League debut in September 2021.

It was Watkins' low drive that separated the two sides, as the Villans recorded a 1-0 win in west London in March, and Brentford head coach Keith Andrews will be aware of the all-round threat posed at the sharp end of the pitch by the Bees' old boy.





Given his own expertise in the area, the Midlands' reputation as one of the savviest set-piece teams in the top tier will not have escaped Andrews' attention.

Under the watchful eye of their dead-ball specialist Austin MacPhee, the Villans ranked second in the Premier League for set-pieces scored (16) last season, and were also third for fewest goals conceded (seven) from corners, free-kicks and throw-ins.

Quarter-finalists in last season's Champions League, Villa have made huge strides since Unai Emery took the reins in 2022, and the Villans' home form has been exceptional.

Last season, Villa lost only a single game on their patch (their opening game of the 2024/25 campaign to Arsenal) and Villa Park is currently among the most formidable fortresses in Europe.



A goalless draw against Newcastle in their Premier League opener stretched Villa's unbeaten league run at home to 19 games. Yet for all their dominance at home, Emery will want his side's away form to now click - after Villa lost more top-flight games (nine) than they won (eight) last term.

If Villa are to pick up points this Saturday, they will in all likelihood have to attack with more pace and penetration than they did in their stalemate with the Magpies last weekend.

Currently bottom of the xG charts after Gameweek One of the Premier League season, Villa took only three shots and created just 0.35 xG against Eddie Howe's men - although Ezri Konsa's second-half dismissal clearly altered the complexion of the game.

Given the lack of spark in their draw against Newcastle, Villa fans will be keen to see new signing Evann Guessand involved at some point.

The powerful and pacy forward ranked 12th in Ligue 1 for successful dribbles last season, averaging 1.7 per 90 minutes, and 20 league goal involvements (12 goals and eight assists) in total for Nice suggest the 24-year-old is ready to make an immediate impact for the Villans - much like Morgan Rogers has made since signing from Middlesbrough back in early 2024.

If Brentford can handle the familiar menace of Watkins and the fresh spark of Guessand, they'll believe Saturday can mark a turning point after their opening day defeat to Nottingham Forest.

## Scout Report

Dan Long, *Sky Sports*: There is every reason to believe Aston Villa's upward trajectory will continue

For the third season in succession, Aston Villa secured a top-seven finish in 2024/25.

Granted, the year before will live longer in the memory, given they finished fourth for the first time since 1995/96 and secured a place in the Champions League for the very first time.

That was special, but this illustrated consistency and an ability to manage the added load European competition brings.

As well as runs to the FA Cup semi-final and Champions League quarter-final, Villa recorded their third-highest points tally (66), third-highest number of goals scored (58) and third-highest number of wins (19). No mean feat, considering this is a club that has missed just three Premier League seasons in history.

Villa did miss out on a return to the Champions League on the very final day of last term, though. Morgan Rogers' opener against Manchester United was controversially ruled out for offside and later, Amad Diallo and Christian Eriksen scored to seal a 2-0 win for Ruben Amorim's side.

Only goal difference denied them fifth place, which was taken by Newcastle United. Regardless, Unai Emery said afterwards his side "did not deserve more than the result we have."

Though there was plenty of movement in the transfer window last summer, there is a strong squad in place at Villa Park, and one that is capable of challenging at the top end of the table again this term.

Academy products Kaine Kesler-Hayden and Filip Marschall were sold earlier this summer, before Jacob Ramsey joined Newcastle. Philippe Coutinho, Kortney Hause and Robin Olsen were among those released.

The standout signing, meanwhile, has been that of striker Evann Guessand from Nice. If Ollie Watkins does make a long-rumoured exit this summer, the Ivory Coast international is a more than able replacement. If he does not, an interesting battle for the no.9 shirt will ensue.

The summer transfer window does not shut for a little while yet so players could still come and go, but there is no denying Villa possess enviable depth in their squad.

And so it will come as no surprise Emery's men are priced as short as 5/4 to finish in the top six, 4/1 to finish in the top four, and are 11/1 to finish in the top two.

They may well have a chance to go deep in the Europa League, too. English clubs have won four of the last nine European trophies available since the start of 2022/23, which will give Villa a source of inspiration.



The disappointment of narrowly missing out on the Champions League could yet serve as extra fuel, sharpening their focus for another tilt at the top four while embracing the opportunity to lift a rare piece of silverware.

There is every reason to believe Villa's upward trajectory will continue - and another special season may be just around the corner.

## **In the Dugout**

Unai Emery

Having taken charge of more than 1,000 matches over the last 21 years, Unai Emery is one of the most experienced managers currently working in the Premier League.

After a career as a midfielder, mostly playing in the second tier of Spanish football, the Spaniard had a pretty quick transition into management, having suffered a serious knee injury in his early 30s.

He helped the now-defunct Lorca Deportiva to promotion in 2004/05 and got Almería into La Liga for the first time in 2006/07, before an incredible eighth-place finish the following campaign.

In 2008, his exploits saw him move on to Valencia, whom he guided to three straight third-place finishes from 2010 to 2012, before a forgettable six-month spell in Russia with Spartak Moscow.

He returned to Spain in January 2013 and guided Sevilla to three-successive Europa League titles.

Two years and seven trophies with Paris Saint-Germain followed, with Emery then trusted by the Arsenal board to become the successor to Arsène Wenger, which was, to an extent, a poisoned chalice.

The Europa League king guided the Gunners to the final in 2019, where they were beaten by Chelsea in Baku, Azerbaijan, but he was unable to help them finish higher than fifth for the first time in four seasons.

He was dismissed after 18 months in November 2019 and appointed by Villarreal in July 2020, with - you've guessed it - a fourth Europa League triumph following 10 months later, by way of a penalty shoot-out win over Manchester United in Gdańsk, Poland.

Emery turned down an approach by Newcastle United in November 2021, but came back to England to replace Steven Gerrard at Villa Park in October 2022.

The 53-year-old - who is under contract until the summer of 2029 - is Villa's longest-serving manager since Martin O'Neill, who left after four years in August 2010.



# Brentford sign Dango Ouattara for club-record fee

Written by Brentford Football Club

Brentford sign Dango Ouattara from fellow Premier League side Bournemouth for a club-record fee; the forward scored nine goals and registered nine assists in the top flight after joining the Cherries in 2023; watch Ouattara's first interview as a Bees player below

Brentford have completed the signing of Dango Ouattara from fellow Premier League side Bournemouth for a club-record fee.

The forward has signed a five-year contract, with a club option of an additional year.

The 23-year-old recorded 18 goal contributions in 81 top-flight games for the Cherries, having joined in January 2023.



[Keith Andrews](#), Brentford head coach, said: "We're really happy to get Dango in. He's someone that we were aware and surprised could be available and, once we knew that signing him might be a possibility, we really focused on trying to get him in."

"We liked his [Premier League](#) experience, even at his young age, and he just hasn't found the rhythm yet because of a lack of consistent game time."

"He also suits the way we want to play - he has something that we were lacking in the forward line, and he will complement what we already have in the building."



*“The fans will love him; he’s the type of player that they will get off their seat for.”*

[Phil Giles](#), Brentford director of football, added: *“[Having sold Bryan Mbeumo](#), we have been looking to add an attacking player to the squad, and we think Dango is the perfect addition.*

*“It’s been well documented that there has been more change over this summer than in recent years at the club; however, I’m very confident that, in each case where a player has left us, we have managed to bring in an extremely strong replacement, and Dango is the latest example of that.*

*“We also have players such as [Aaron Hickey](#), [Rico Henry](#) and [Igor Thiago](#) who are fit and ready, and also players such as [Frank Onyeka](#) who have benefitted from a loan last season, so I think the squad is looking very strong.*

*“I’m really excited to see Dango on the pitch and bringing his unique skillset to the team.”*

Born in the capital city of Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou, Ouattara began his career in the academy system of Majestic.

In the Burkinabé Premier League, he scored five goals in 11 games as a teenager, which sparked interest from European clubs.

Ouattara joined French side Lorient in the summer of 2020, spending his first season in the reserve team in National 2.

In his breakthrough season for the first team, the forward made 25 appearances in Ligue 1, scoring his first goal in April 2022 against Metz.

His form earned him a spot in the Burkina Faso side for the 2021 Africa Cup of Nations, scoring the winning goal against Tunisia in the quarter-final. That is one of 10 goals he has scored in 30 caps for his country.

Ouattara continued his good form into the 2022/23 campaign, and he became a key man for Lorient as they pushed for European qualification.

He scored six goals in 18 games for the Les Merlus that term, also adding six assists, before joining Bournemouth in January 2023.

In his three seasons on the south coast, he scored 11 goals and provided nine assists in 88 matches in all competitions, which included a hat-trick against Nottingham Forest last season.



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### Published by:

Twickenham & Richmond Tribune (in association with World InfoZone Limited)

Registered in England & Wales

Reg No 10549345

The Twickenham Tribune is registered with the ICO under the Data Protection Act, Reg No ZA224725

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