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Sunset, Twickenham Green
Photo by Berkley Driscoll

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T&RT

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Editors: Berkley Driscoll, Teresa Read

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TickerTape - News in Brief

Richmond Opera is seeking a new Chair from February 2026

From Richmond Opera

The borough's own established and inclusive opera company, Richmond Opera, is looking for a new Chair to take up the role from February.

Richmond Opera is keen to connect with people in Richmond who share a love of the arts and who would enjoy helping to guide and support a thriving local charity with an inclusive ethos and an exciting programme of opera and concerts.

If you might be interested, you are warmly invited to get in touch for an informal conversation with the current Chair, John Rolt, at johnrolt@gmail.com.

Twickenham Green welcomes families to discover the joy of cargo bikes

From Richmond Council

On Friday 26 September, Twickenham Green hosted the borough's first Cargo and Cakes session, bringing together families, cycling enthusiasts and curious newcomers to explore the benefits of cargo bikes.

Organised by the Richmond Cargo Collective, Solve the School Run and Richmond Council, the event offered residents the opportunity to ask questions, test ride a range of bikes and enjoy free cake in a relaxed and welcoming environment.

Cargo bikes, capable of carrying up to three children and their belongings, can be a practical and sustainable alternative to the car for school runs and local journeys.

Events like Cargo and Cakes help to raise awareness of the options available and encourage more residents to consider cycling as a safe, healthy and environmentally friendly way to get around the borough.

[Find out more about the schemes we have in Richmond](#) to help create a convenient and safe environment for cycling as we strive to become the cargo bike capital of London.

Want to join the growing cargo bike movement? [Sign up to the Richmond Cargo Collection WhatsApp group](#).



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The Local Picture Postcard Page - Part 301

King Street Twickenham – All Change!

By Alan Winter

It seems that we are in the middle of mighty changes to the most central street in Twickenham at the moment.

King Street in Twickenham has historical roots tracing back to the medieval period, with the village expanding along this street and Church Street by the 11th century. The street's present layout was established by 1635.

Here are two postcards from the Edwardian period just before the first World War. The first shows the tram driving west on the left leaving York Street and about to enter King Street. York Street was built in the 1890's and opened in 1899 as the new Richmond to Twickenham Road which had previously been Church Street. The pointy building is Twickenham Town Hall and the Kings Head hotel was on the corner of King Street and Water Lane. This new junction had to be built to accommodate the new tram network. Previously goods and people had been carried by horses. A lot of 125 year old detail in this card.



The second postcard is of the view looking west along King Street. The house at the bottom is actually two houses, The house on the left had an address in Cross Deep and was where Dr Alfred Clark, surgeon and apothecary, and his family lived.

Next door on the right is rather different and had an address in Heath Road where it adjoined a carriage works. In 1870, it was the home of Charles Corben, coachbuilder.

The London & Provincial Bank took over Corben's house as their Twickenham branch in 1872. They remained there until 1903 when they had the grand, purpose-built bank built at 2 York Street, at the opposite end of King Street. The old house was left to deteriorate into ruination and was replaced by the Luxor Cinema as part of the new scheme for Twickenham in 1929.

There are three pubs in view. The Kings Head Hotel to the left and on the corner of Water Lane. On the right you have the Horse and Groom and the George is further down on the right. It has just been reopened under new owners and our third image this week is of the nice new shiny sign that now marks the pub's position. My thanks to Stanley for the description of the large houses at the west of the postcard and also for taking the photo of the new signage outside the George pub.

The pointy building on the left is Twickenham Town Hall and all that side got knocked down or pushed back to widen the road when motor vehicles took over. This card is before World War one and shows the usage on the road as a tram, a horse and cart delivering something and a pedestrian. About 20 years before cars began their serious inroads.

So, we have looked at the evolution of King Street through the first two postcards but what is happening now? Yet more significant changes to what has become Twickenham's main central street over nearly 400 years.

In the last year or so we have lost every single bank from King Street. The bank building that we have all known that dominated the eastern end of King Street is shortly to re-open as a school for Rock Music. I'm considering enrolling to learn the drums properly or maybe they won't take me on at my age!



The western side of Water Lane which is now all boarded up will be completely redeveloped under the long awaited scheme to open up King Street to the Thames a little more.

We have lost Superdrug and Poundland is moving out to be replaced by goodness knows what? Rumours of a larger M & S maybe?

Personally, I think that it is a perfect site for the local authority to take over and use as a 7 day a week market for some 50/60 small businesses to sell an enormous variety of dry goods, craft goods, food products and anything else you can think of. How about a stall selling old postcards? Put a mezzanine floor in for a café and toilets, employ a couple of commercial thinking people to run it profitably and there you have it. A new focus for the centre of town!

The WEST LONDON POSTCARD FAIR is coming up soon

next Saturday 11th October at the Baptist Church in Church Street Teddington TW11 8PF. Tens of thousands of postcards on sale covering every country in the world and every subject you can think of. Over 10 dealers and they also have various ephemera, stamps and coins on sale too. The fair opens at 10.00, closes at 4.00 and light refreshments are served all day. If you want to sell any postcards, please bring them along to show the dealers.

Many people spend all day browsing and I have boxes of local postcards covering Twickenham, Teddington, Kingston, Richmond, Barnes, Kew, The Hamptons and Whitton as well as the rest of London. From pennies to pounds. My stall is next to the stage. See you there!

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Liberal Democrats Rundown Reserves While Blaming The Government They Campaigned For

By James Knight

When Richmond's **Finance, Policy and Resources Committee** met on 25 September, residents were unable to watch online after "technical issues" prevented the meeting from being broadcast. That is a pity, because the committee papers presented that evening reveal a financial position far more precarious than most residents realise.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and first-quarter monitoring reports presented to councillors acknowledge that Richmond is heading towards a £45 million annual funding gap by 2028/29. However, the papers lack a credible plan to balance the budget. Instead, they reveal reserves being depleted rapidly, overspends being masked as "external pressures," and the administration under Cllr Gareth Roberts, the Liberal Democrat Leader of the Council, blaming central government for cuts it actively campaigned to secure.

Reserves raided against best practice

The documents show that the General Fund reserve currently stands at £10.7 million, virtually unchanged since 2017/18, but its adequacy has **declined from 8.3% of annual expenditure to just 5.4%**. More concerning is the outlook for the Financial Resilience Reserve (FRR), the borough's primary buffer against shocks. According to current forecasts, it will be entirely depleted by 2027/28.

Even more revealing is the rate of depletion. The first-quarter monitoring report shows that £7.7 million has already been withdrawn from reserves this year to cover large overspends in social care and housing. That is not a contingency fund used for emergencies; it is a reliance on one-off balances to sustain day-to-day services.

This contradicts CIPFA best practice. The professional body for local government finance states that, while reserves can legitimately be used to smooth shocks or fund transformation, "it is not normally prudent for reserves to be deployed to finance recurrent expenditure." However, that is precisely what Richmond is doing under Cllr Roberts' leadership.

The papers also highlight what officers now call a transformation project, aimed explicitly at making savings across every part of the council. The language is ambitious, emphasising modernising and streamlining services, removing duplication, and even exploring artificial intelligence as a means of cutting costs. However, it emphasises the scale of the financial pressure. Rather than being a long-term reform, the programme seems more like a crisis response, hastily assembled in the hope of offsetting rising pressures before reserves run out, leaving no option but to issue a Section 114 'bankruptcy' notice.

The politics of Labour's grant cuts

The Liberal Democrats cannot claim they did not see this coming. Richmond is set to lose up to **90% of its central government grant** under Labour's revised funding formula, which redistributes funds away from affluent boroughs. But this was not a shock sprung on them: it was Labour policy from the outset.

Ahead of the general election, Lib Dem MPs and councillors across south-west London openly promoted tactical voting, urging people to “vote Labour where Labour can win.” The argument was that only a Labour government could dislodge the Conservatives. Having helped to secure that outcome, Cllr Roberts and his administration now find themselves protesting against the very consequences.

Turning the MTFS into an anti-Whitehall diatribe is not only misleading but also hypocritical. Richmond’s financial crisis is not being imposed upon it; rather, it results from local mismanagement combined with national politics that the Lib Dems themselves helped shape.

Prestige projects while costs remain hidden

Meanwhile, the council continues with large-scale capital projects. The most notable, the Twickenham Riverside redevelopment, has already increased to £67.2 million, with £37 million to be financed through borrowing. However, that figure is not final. The committee papers mention that revised costs are still being calculated by the project team and contractor, so the actual total remains unknown.

This matters because these long-term borrowing commitments reduce flexibility just as reserves are being depleted. Residents are justified in questioning whether it is wise to proceed with a prestige riverside development while frontline services face cuts, reserves diminish, and the borough’s financial future darkens.

Academic studies of local government failure identify three key warning signs: reliance on reserves for ongoing spending, escalating capital projects, and a lack of transparent prioritisation. Richmond now displays all three. The similarities with Croydon, Birmingham, and Northamptonshire, each compelled into Section 114 bankruptcy notices, are troubling.

Breaking with best practice

The Committee papers clarify the situation. Based on the Q1 projection, the required draw from reserves to balance 2025/26 rises to £7.7m, a sign that one-off balances are now propping up day-to-day spend. The Financial Resilience Reserve is expected to be exhausted within three years; and the Medium Term Financial Strategy provides no concrete plan beyond vague promises of “transformation.”

This conflicts with every strand of CIPFA guidance. Reserves are meant to cushion shocks, not hide structural overspends. Councillors should set priorities, model worst-case scenarios, and openly explain which services are at risk. Instead, under Cllr Roberts’s leadership, the administration has taken the easier route of blaming others, pointing to Whitehall while continuing with costly prestige schemes.

The irony is impossible to ignore. The Liberal Democrats campaigned to put Labour in power. They are now hollowing out the borough’s reserves while blaming Labour for the consequences. It cannot be overstated how much Richmond is being driven into dangerous waters. Without a fundamental change of course, the borough will face the same stark choices as others before it: service cuts, tax increases, or Section 114 ‘bankruptcy’. The difference is that this crisis will not have been accidental. It will have been self-inflicted and entirely predictable.

The Wit and Songs of Noel Coward

Born in Teddington, Noel Coward was an actor, writer, composer, director, producer, and in later life painter– and he excelled at them all. He said of himself 'I am an enormously talented man, and there is no point in denying it'.

Peter Gill reminds us of that talent and some of Noel's wonderful songs and wit in a 45 minute presentation with live music and visuals.



29 October at 7.30 pm

Constitutional Club

5 Stanley Road, Teddington, TW11 8TP

Details and ticket purchase at
www.teddingtonsociety.org/our-events



THE TEDDINGTON SOCIETY
For the Love of Teddington

Cllr Andrée Frieze to step down at next May's Council elections

Green Party councillor for Ham, Petersham and Richmond Riverside, Andrée Frieze, has decided not to stand for re-election in next year's local elections.

Andrée was first elected in 2018 in Ham, Petersham and Richmond Riverside and then again in 2022, when the Green Group became the only Opposition on the Council. Andrée became Opposition Leader in May 2023, having been Deputy Opposition Leader since May 2022, and she will continue both as a councillor and Leader until May 2026. She also sits on Transport, Planning, Regulatory and Wandsworth and Richmond Joint Staffing Committees. Previously, Andrée chaired the Audit, Standards and Statutory Accounts Committee and sat on the Education and Children's Services Committee.



During Andrée's eight years on the Green Group, Richmond Council was one of the first in the country to declare a Climate Emergency. As a consequence of Green actions, Richmond is an accredited Living Wage payer and has one of the strongest targets in the country for air pollution.

The Greens have also supported some of the most vulnerable people in our borough by pushing for changes in how the Council acts when collecting Council Tax arrears. As the Opposition, the Greens have boosted housing up the agenda, resulting in better support for private renters and the Liberal Democrat administration doing more to provide affordable housing for residents.

Andrée says: "It has been an absolute honour to serve my local community in Ham, Petersham and Richmond Riverside. I have helped residents with many issues, including housing, waste, potholes, anti-social behaviour and more. I have been part of the community campaign against the terrible Thames Water TDRA scheme, and I will continue to fight it to protect the river, homes and local people

"I am pleased that while I've been a councillor the regeneration of Ham Close has finally started, so that residents will benefit from new, more energy-efficient homes that meet modern standards for space and lifts for those with mobility issues. The regeneration also provides additional social rent homes as well as market sale homes, both of which are desperately needed across Richmond and London."

Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Chas Warlow, says: *"Andrée has been an inspirational leader of the Green Group and she will leave big shoes to fill. I know that Ham, Petersham and Richmond Riverside residents appreciate the unstinting work she has done for them to resolve a host of issues over the last eight years, and will be happy to see more Green councillors elected at next year's Council elections."*





WOMEN'S RUGBY WORLD CUP CHAMPIONS

**RED
ROSES**  **England
Rugby**

New film highlights safety during deer rutting season in Richmond and Bushy Parks

From late September to early November, male deer compete for females, displaying dramatic behaviours such as bellowing and locking antlers. While this is a natural and important part of the deer's life cycle, stags can weigh more than 25 stone and run at speeds of up to 30 miles per hour, making them highly dangerous if visitors get too close.

The [film](#) provides clear guidance on keeping a safe distance, understanding deer behaviour, and taking care with dogs, helping to ensure both visitors and wildlife remain safe.



Paul Richards, Park Manager at [Richmond Park](#), said:

"This film is first and foremost about safety. Every year, we see visitors getting far too close to the deer."

"The rut is a fascinating natural event, but please don't forget these are wild animals, pumped full of testosterone and can be unpredictable."

"This film underlines that message. We urge visitors to keep their distance so that they can observe the season safely."

Phil Edwards, Park Manager at [Bushy Park](#), added:

"Our advice is simple: keep at least 50 metres away from the deer - and even further if they are active. We strongly recommend that visitors keep their dogs on leads, as dogs can give chase and distressed deer may bolt, risking an uncontrolled stampede."

"Never place yourself between two rutting stags, as they can be unpredictable and dangerous. This new film is a reminder that by respecting the deer, we can keep visitors, pets and the animals themselves safe."

[Volunteer Rangers](#) will regularly roam Bushy Park and Richmond Park throughout the rutting season to offer advice and answer questions about deer behaviour.

The new [deer safety film](#) can be viewed [HERE](#)



Twickenham Teenager One Of M&S' Young Designer Competition Winners

Twickenham teenager, Andrea, has been named one of the winners of M&S' Young Designer competition, launched earlier this year in partnership with YoungMinds.



Over 8,000 entries were received from young people across the UK and Andrea's limited-edition 'We're all different' t-shirt design is available to buy on the M&S website [here](#) from today.

M&S launched its Young Designer Competition with charity partner YoungMinds back in February to find winning designs for its M&S and YoungMinds Hello Yellow Kidswear collection – all profits from the collection go to the charity.

Competition entrants were asked 'What would you say to a friend who needs you? How would you brighten their day?'

Two rounds of judging took place, with the final round judges, M&S' Kidswear Director Alex Dimitriu, Abigail Ampofo, the Interim CEO of YoungMinds, Alfie Watts, the winner of BBC's Race Across the World and M&S Ambassador and Oli McVeigh, Pearson's Teacher of the Year, selecting four winning designs to be brought to life.

Andrea, who is 15 years old, was inspired by how everybody's mental health is different and recently travelled to M&S' print factory to see the finished design in person.

She said of winning the competition: "I really enjoy drawing in my spare time so wanted to give the competition a go. With my multicoloured cats, I wanted to show that you might not be able to tell someone is struggling from the outside and how even if as humans or cats we are all different

or feeling different, we are all still the same and everyone deserves to be treated kindly. For Hello Yellow Day, I have made a pair of smiley face earrings to wear on the day and I hope everyone gets involved too."

Hello Yellow Day takes place on Friday 10th October and is about communities coming together to show young people they're not alone when it comes to their mental health.

An estimated 1 in 4 young people aged 16-24 now experience a common mental health condition and new M&S and YoungMinds research suggests young people that are struggling are most likely to turn to their parents/carers (38%), followed by their friends (26%) for help.

Schools can sign up to take part in Hello Yellow day [here](#), or customers can show your support by wearing yellow or donating to the charity in M&S stores, or selecting YoungMinds as their chosen Sparks charity via the M&S app.

Munira Wilson, MP for Twickenham: *"I am delighted that Andrea has won this competition, and hope she is as proud of her achievement as we all are. I'm grateful to Andrea for her part in raising awareness about children and young people's mental health, which is such an important issue."*

Jo Daniels, Head of Community at M&S, added: *"Huge congratulations to Andrea for being one of our Young Designer winners. We've been blown away by the number of entries and also the quality and positivity of the designs. We cannot wait to see customers' reaction to this year's Hello Yellow collection and it's brilliant to support YoungMinds' free and confidential parents helpline as well as all they do to show young people they're not alone."*

Since launching their partnership in 2023, M&S and YoungMinds have raised £4.4 million, helping the charity reach even more young people and the adults who support them.

Lisa Zaranyika, Director of Community, Culture and Services at YoungMinds, said: *"It's wonderful to see Andrea's design brought to life. Through our partnership with M&S, we're reaching more parents and young people and supporting them to have conversations about mental health."*

YoungMinds' Hello Yellow day is all about showing no young person should be alone with their mental health and we hope as many people as possible join us by wearing yellow on the 10th October."

M&S | YOUNGMINDS
Together, we've got this

Next week at Richmond Council

On Tuesday evening, the **Full Council** will meet at 7pm in the council chamber at York House, Twickenham. The agenda includes 1) public questions, 2) members' questions, 3) adoption of the new local plan, 4) the medium-term financial strategy, 5) Motions on SEND shortfalls, closure of police front counters, and one criticising the Prime Minister for his 'harmful, negative rhetoric on immigration.' For more details, click [HERE](#)

For guidance on how to participate at different types of council meetings, such as speaking or asking written or verbal questions, please click [HERE](#)

A fond farewell to Ellera Hall... but not long to wait for its replacement!

From Ellera Community Association

The September showers certainly didn't spoil a most wonderful afternoon at Ellera Hall, where over 90 guests gathered to celebrate and say goodbye to the old building before the move to the new Ellera Centre just yards away.

The Hall was beautifully decorated for the occasion with photographs from the archives covering the history of the building from the very earliest days of the Ellera Community Association charity - 70 years of support, fun and entertainment and many happy memories!

Guests were treated to a splendid afternoon tea and toasted the old hall with a glass of Buck's Fizz while the fabulous Harvey Baker Band got everyone's toes tapping and hips swinging with a string of hits from over the decades.

The Mayor of Richmond, Councillor Penny Frost, reminded everyone how Ellera Hall had become the home of a thriving social club for adults, especially older adults, living in and around Teddington. But, as she pointed out, this final farewell was not an occasion for sadness or long faces.



Soon, the new Ellera Centre, just around the corner in North Lane, is to become the new home of the social club as well as the venue for a host of classes, activities and performances that will appeal to a very broad cross section of the entire local community. It promises to be a very lively place indeed.

This event would not have been possible without a generous grant from the Mayor of London's Community Weekend.

Watch this space for more details on opening events!

Walnuts – Worth Being Nutty About

I don't know about you, but I'm increasingly buying bags of walnut halves - for general munching, and for including in salads and other recipes. One of my favourite dips is Muhammara, a deliciously 'walnuty' Middle-Eastern concoction that is relatively easy to make, now often available ready-made in supermarkets, and of course restaurants. According to **California Walnuts**, they offer multiple nutritional benefits, including being a rich source of omega-3, alpha-linolenic acid, protein and fibre. Add to that the fact that they are packed with antioxidants and have a heart healthy seal of approval from Heart UK. Just one handful (approximately 30g) provides you with 4.4g of plant-based protein... pretty punchy for such a small nut!



California Walnuts are known for their mild sweetness and light colour. To keep them fresh longer, always keep them cool. If you buy walnuts in sealed packaging, you can store the walnuts in their original packaging. However, once you open the bag, transfer the walnuts to an airtight container and place in the fridge or freezer to maximise the fresh taste and quality.

Fresh walnuts smell mildly nutty and taste sweet. Heat causes the fats in walnuts to change structure and flavour, meaning if you leave them in the cupboard you won't be able to enjoy them at their best. You can maintain the fresh taste of California Walnuts by keeping them cool, cooling helps seal in the freshness. If using within six months, place them in the refrigerator. For longer storage, place them in a freezer. They thaw quickly and can be used almost immediately.

When storing walnuts in your refrigerator, store them away from foods with strong odours (e.g. fish, cabbage, onions). Walnuts can absorb the flavours of other foods.

Here are some high protein recipes from California Walnuts:

SALMON WITH CHIPOTLE QUINOA

Prep: 10 minutes Cook: 20-25 minutes Serves 4 High Protein

- 180g quinoa
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 4 salmon fillets
- 1 red pepper, sliced
- 75g California Walnuts, roughly chopped
- 400g can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 tbsp chipotle paste
- ½ x 25g pack parsley, chopped
- 150g cottage cheese



1. Cook the quinoa in boiling water for 20 minutes until tender, drain well.
2. Meanwhile, heat 1 tbsp oil in a large frying pan and fry the salmon for 10-12 minutes, turning occasionally until cooked through, then set aside. Add the remaining oil to the pan and fry the pepper, walnuts and black beans for 4-5 minutes, add the chipotle paste and cook for a further 1-2 minutes then season and stir in the cooked quinoa and parsley, adding a splash of water if required. Divide the quinoa between 4 bowls and top with the salmon and cottage cheese.

Cooks tip: Great served hot or cold as a salad with the salmon flaked through.

LATIN AMERICAN STYLE GRAINS WITH EGGS

Prep: 10 minutes Cook: 10 minutes Serves 4 High Protein

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 200g cherry tomatoes, halved
- 75g California Walnuts, roughly chopped
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 400g can red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 250g pouch mixed grains
- 4 large eggs
- 2 ripe avocados, diced
- Zest and juice 1 lime
- ½ x 25g pack coriander, chopped
- 4 high protein flour tortillas and soured cream to serve

1. Heat 1 tbsp oil in a large frying pan and fry the tomatoes, walnuts and cumin for 2-3 minutes. Stir in the kidney beans and grains and fry for a further 2-3 minutes.
2. Heat the remaining oil in a separate frying pan and fry the eggs for 2-3 minutes, according to taste.
3. Stir the avocado, lime zest and juice and coriander into the tomato mixture, season and serve topped with a fried egg.

Cooks tip: Place the grain mixture in the wraps and fold it up to make quick burritos.

The California Walnuts website is packed with recipes, but also feel free to experiment yourself by adding some chopped walnuts to all manner of dishes.

I make a delicious beetroot and walnut dip that is so easy: just blitz roasted beetroot with walnuts, olive oil and a dollop of dill mustard and add salt, pepper etc to taste. But [here](#) on the California Walnuts website is a recipe that you might like to try if you're less confident in the kitchen.

And there are loads more on there to inspire you, plus news of an interesting new study indicating that walnuts can help you sleep - see link [here](#)



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Picture Perfect

By Doug Goodman

A feast for the eyes awaits visitors to the Landmark Centre at this year's exhibition of stunning photographs. A huge variety of images from The Royal Photographic Society, The Richmond and Twickenham Photographic Society and nearly 100 pictures displayed by Arts Richmond of work submitted by local residents, can be admired at the centre. Opened by Deputy Mayor, Cllr Clare Vollum, the preview was attended by members of the societies, photographers and those interested in photography. The theme of the exhibition is 'Richmond life around the borough.'

The Richmond and Twickenham Photographic Society has existed since 1890 to encourage interest in photography. This year Arts Richmond has curated a splendid show on our area which will undoubtedly encourage us to get out and about with a camera. The exhibition is at The Landmark Centre in Ferry Road Teddington until tomorrow, Sunday October 5th.



Cllr Clare Vollum opens the exhibition



Munira Wilson MP at the exhibition



Residents' Pictures on Show



Local Views



Flowers by Penny Westmorland



Fragile Beauty Andrew Griffiths. Aspects of Kew Gardens, Laura Rollin



Dungeness by Ann Smith ARPS

Information: Richmond and Twickenham Photographic Society, www.rtps.org.uk.

Landmark Centre. www.landmarkartscentre.org Arts Richmond. www.artsrichmond.org.uk

What is smooth, brown and pleasing to stroke? (no rude answers please...)

By Deep Patel

~ Through the Eyes of a Twickenham Shopkeeper ~

How many of you reading my headline this week had a naughty answer (go on, admit it...). So the answer isn't what you may have thought... have you guessed it yet?

Here are some clues... they are nice to touch, we all secretly like them... I love them especially when they are new... the smooth feeling of them in my hands is wonderful... ok this may be making me sound a bit like some kind of pervert... not a good look for a shopkeeper... you will be pleased to know that I am indeed talking about none other than the good old, timeless and beautiful conker... They fall to the ground in their little green spiky jackets and wait for someone to unclothe them and enjoy their beauty (gosh once again, this is sounding more like some type of erotic fiction rather than my usual weekend article, what on earth is wrong with me?!).

The things we used to do with conkers as kids, drill holes in them and thread through a little string and then have "conker fights" at school in the playground...it was great fun, some would even roast their conkers the night before to make them even harder in the hope that when bashed on the string with the opponent, their own conker would smash the opponent's conker into tiny conker pieces... it was a great way of playing a "free game" gifted to us by mother nature herself. Then a little thing called "health and safety" came about and whoosh as if by magic, the game of "conkers" disappeared... never to return to our playgrounds again... it was sad but I understand... children were sustaining serious injuries and in some cases blindness... that had to obviously stop. Today they are mainly left on the ground where they fall to later either sprout as a tree to then be yanked out and killed, or swept up and thrown in the bin. The poor conker, so proud of the many months it took to ripen to finally fall and reveal its magnificent shiny, smooth body (easy now stay focused) only to be kicked onto the road to be run over by the 281 bus outside my shop and crushed to a flat yellow conker-pancake...what a waste right? When I see them littered all around Twickenham Green every year and I always think, if only the council had chosen to plant apple, pear, cherry and plum trees instead all around Twickenham Green rather than the conker trees, wouldn't we all be so much more healthier and it would definitely make eating five fruits a day so much easier... not to mention the pots of fresh jam and fresh apple crumbles we could all be tucking into courtesy of mother nature... just think... a massive free-for-all fruit fest, organically and locally grown in Twickenham for the benefit of Twickenham folk... I cannot believe it... what an incredible missed opportunity... I blame the council now for being the reason I don't eat enough fruit...

Back to conkers, the shiny polished surface is simply magnificent and if you look carefully, you can see beautiful swirly designs in them, each conker is absolutely unique in this respect, a little bit like fingerprints... it's quite amazing... Apparently

horses used to be pulling carts around Twickenham Green many years ago, perhaps that's why so many "Horse-chestnut trees" were planted there to provide a feast for the horses? I still think the council missed a trick there and they should have planted pears, plums, cherries and apples instead... Twickenham would have definitely been a lot healthier as a result... but as it stands... let us just enjoy the silky smooth, swirly unique designs and cool feel of them in our hands as we circle them around our palm and marvel at how beautiful nature really is... happy conker season Twickenham!



Remember...

"If life gives you conkers...enjoy them anyway..."

MY CREATURE-KINDNESS TIP

STOP MICE KINDLY...(GOOD KARMA):

Use humane LIVE CAPTURE mouse & rat traps (available online or at Meet & Deep News) and release them back into our parkland areas. Use electronic plug in deterrents with good reviews around your house to stop them coming (the smell of white vinegar not only stops rodents and foxes, it 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"

Instant Opera at TownHouse

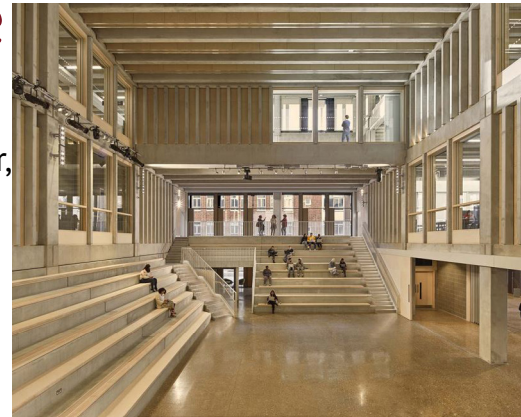
Kingston University, 11th and 12th October

Preview: Opera critic Helen Astrid discusses the forthcoming production of Puccini's *Turandot* with Instant Opera's Artistic Director, Nicholas George

HA: What draws you to Puccini's enigmatic asst opera, *Turandot*?

NG: Instant Opera productions have increased in scale and we now tackle grand operas convincingly. We wanted to mark Puccini's centenary year, so what better way to end it than with his final epic masterwork. There is something for everyone in *Turandot*, even if they only know Calaf's *Nessun Dorma* aria through football! Seeing it in dramatic context, new opera-goers will come to love the opera.

HA: Your *Turandot*, first seen in March, now returns in an exciting new venue in Kingston University's award winning TownHouse, the premiere production here. How have you used its architecture in the staging?



NG: The Courtyard amphitheatre in TownHouse is effectively an indoor arena, with perfect sightlines and clear resonant acoustics, a futuristic new space well suited to my concept of post-apocalyptic dystopia. The restaging presents new technical challenges, including sightlines to an audience in-the-round and above the stage.

HA: This production brings a sci-fi lens to *Turandot*, a fascinating blend of opera and speculative fiction set in 2184. What inspired that choice?

NG: *Turandot* is a grotesque fairy tale with archetypal characters, some heroic, or malignant, or misguided; others representing innocence, purity and justice. They are neither fixed in place nor time. Ghastly things are going on now, around us, all the time. We don't seem to have learnt from our fables, fictions and cautionary tales, but keep repeating them. Our take on *Turandot* is not so much sci-fi tale, but a warning from the future.

HA: The setting of *Turandot* is a fantastical, stylised version of ancient China. In today's cultural climate, how has this been approached in the staging?

NG: We celebrate our multinational cast and the sheer talent we attract. In the title role are a Cardiff Singer of the World finalist and an international soprano from Melbourne. Our Calafs are tenors from India and Moldova. Others in the company represent China, Japan, Argentina, Italy, Norway, Lithuania and Ukraine. (If you want to know where it is set, the clue is *Eastern Hemisphere, Central Zone, Sector 52/08 – 93/54.*)

HA: What will audiences take away from *Turandot*?

NG: Enjoy the experience. Let the magnificent music wash over you. It's in a mini indoor Arena di Verona, so enjoy the spectacle.

Read Helen Astrid's interview at www.markaspen.com/2025/09/27/turandot-preview

Photography courtesy of Instant Opera

Tickets available now at www.trybooking.com/uk/EWUF

Constellations

by Nick Payne

Putney Theatre Company at the Putney Arts Theatre

Constellations, Nick Payne's two hander, originally produced at the Royal Court Theatre in 2012, tells of a romance between a cosmologist and a beekeeper, but it is a romance that takes place in many parallel forms and differing directions, and it is intense and funny and vibrant. In essence, it examines the question of the agency of predetermination versus free will.

In Rob Wallis's intelligently directed production, all its moods and its aching tenderness are flawlessly covered. A thoughtful piece on the possibility of multiple realities against the backdrop of a genuine love story, it is a multiverse giving myriad choices, all set within a very believable relationship. The thought-provoking set and lighting design, created by Rich Evans, is simple but effective. The haunting sound, devised by Barney Hart Dyke, grips and mesmerises. Lit with hushed blue lighting, the theatre becomes a space that could say everything, and it does.



In an intense seventy-five minutes of twists and turns, the interaction between the two actors is concentrated and absorbing. George Nettleton plays Roland, who takes Marianne's approaches full-on creating a multitude of outcomes. Nettleton has great versatility as he veers being vulnerable and being violent. Playing Marianne, Clare McKerverey has a balanced measure of nervous energy to counter Nettleton's seemingly grounded exterior. McKerverey matches Nettleton's skills through every alternative and replayed scene. With their natural stage presence, both actors are highly watchable as each dimension unravels.

On every parallel we are taken to, there emerges a sad ending, but it is a worthwhile journey. Nevertheless, some confrontations and scenes are longer than others, such that some are a welcome repeat, some aren't. There is a truly touching sign-language moment, and overall it is a gripping and sensual love story that is skilfully defined by the two actors.

We should all look forward to seeing more of his Rob Wallis's searching and scintillating directing work in the future, for this is a very impressive and remarkable piece of theatre.

Read Heather Moulson's review at www.markaspen.com/2025/09/28/constellns-ptc

Photography courtesy of PTC

Tosca

by Giacomo Puccini, libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa
 The Royal Ballet and Opera at Covent Garden until 7th October

Olivier Mears' *Tosca* was given stellar media treatment by the decision of the Royal Opera to cast Anna Netrebko as the opening leading lady, a controversial choice, as she is in close proximity to President Putin, whom she congratulated on the takeover of the Dombas. Is she a Unity Mitford, or a Co-Co Channel, or an innocent bystander? Russia already mounts a clandestine war against us, so where she stands does matter. However, if she were to openly retract, she would need to stay away from upper storey windows and avoid touching door handles. Life does imitate her art.



Neapolitan forces, represented by the evil, sexually predatory Scarpia, have overthrown the Napoleonic Republic. Cavaradossi, the painter, is an ardent Republican. However Tosca, his girlfriend, is a politically naive actress. War, art, love, religion and politics meet. All four main characters have violent deaths and there is no final triumph. Angelotti hangs himself (shot in this production, on stage), Scarpia murdered by Tosca, Cavaradossi shot by execution and Tosca suicide by falling. Melodrama at its best, and human nature at its worst.



Tosca is time and location specific: 17th June 1800, in Rome. Producers who meddle with this do so at their peril. In this modern dress *Tosca* nothing is sacred; the plot is tortured too. Cavaradossi's painting, crucial to the plot, is unseen. Angelotti, locked in the crypt, walks off into the wings. The ornate Farnese Palace is a fascist marble office; think Albert Speer. Saint Angelo's battlements become a white-tiled abattoir, where Angelotti is dramatically shot before the execution scene, blood flying onto the walls. It's all *Reservoir Dogs*.

Jakob Hrůša produces a different orchestral sound to Pappano, less melodic and mellow. Ailyn Pérez, standing in as Tosca, makes a remarkable achievement, walking into this production without preparation at a moment's notice. She has true artistry, and is on excellent form. Freddie De Tommasio, lacking tone and power at first, redeems himself later. Gerald Findley, as the creepy Scarpia, looks the part, but initially lacks the full depth of this role.

The extra violence of a bloody execution of Angelotti is unmerited. *Groves Dictionary of Music* states *Tosca* is "a prolonged orgy of lust and crime, made endurable by the beauty of the music", so with this production. Add in gratuitous violence to complete the fragmented picture, for a mildly shocking, bloody event, accompanied by excellently sung beautiful music.

Read Michael Rowlands's review at www.markaspen.com/2025/09/26/tosca-roh

Photography by Marc Brenner

The Elixir of Love

by Gaetano Donizetti, libretto by Felice Romani

English Touring Opera at The Hackney Empire, and on tour until 22nd November

We know we are in for a fun show when Nemorino appears wearing a cod piece. No, not *that* sort of codpiece, but a big-head fish costume, advertising his struggling seaside fish-and-chip stall. Fish and chips is perhaps a good metaphor for the lovelorn Nemorino, warm, wholesome, underrated (and well battered by the bullying Belcore). Tenor Tamsanqa Tylor Lamani makes an endearingly wistful Nemorino, desperately in love with Adina, who is so unattainable.



This pre-loved English seaside town is accurately captured in [April Dalton](#)'s nostalgic set. Its promenade and pier speak of old friends cast aside as now *infra-dig*. But here is the art-deco theatre with faded billboards for an old Wagner production. It is *Tristan and Isolde* that sets everything smouldering; an impromptu reading by the bookish Adina outside the run-down theatre. In this down-at-heel place, where even the lifeguard is on crutches, everyone stops to listen. The idea of a love potion ignites hope in Nemorino's unsophisticated mind.



Then the swaggering sergeant Belcore is announced by a military drum-roll. Boastful, blustering and bold he is the antithesis of Nemorino. Timothy Nelson seems to have cornered the market in Belcores this year (at [Layer Marney](#) and [Holland Park](#) to name a few) making this part his own with his rich baritone, which has both richness and edge.

Dr Dulcamara, the quack doctor is the most roguish of lovable rogues. Emir Wyn Jones relishes this role, his flamboyant persona and stentorian bass-baritone making Dulcamara the

centre of attraction, as he touts his extravagant claims for a single panacea for toothache, impotence, dandruff and smelly socks.

[Natasha Page](#) brings a freshness to the role of Adina. This Adina is a demure, studious, nice girl-next-door. She is flustered by the obsessive attentions of Nemorino ... and by her own feelings. We are treated to her lightly-decorated, soaring soprano, and she knows how to hold onto a note for dramatic effect.



Conductor Alice Farnham bring a vivacity to the score, taking her energetic orchestra into the jaunty action. What director Martin Constantine has so consummately achieved is a great sense of fun, without losing the pathos, but bringing out the humour that has made *The Elixir of Love* a perennial favourite.

Read Mark Aspen's review at www.markaspen.com/2025/09/29/elixir-love-eto

Photography by Richard Hubert Smith

Exciting New Season

at the Mary Wallace Theatre, Twickenham

The Autumn/Winter season at your local theatre offers a varied and exciting selection of classic and modern plays. Shakespeare's *THE WINTER'S TALE* in October, followed in December by that much-loved comedy-thriller *THE GHOST TRAIN*.

In January 2026, *GOOD* by CP Taylor, examining the moral conflict between good and evil during the Nazi rise to power in the 1930s.

With Christopher Marlowe's *DR FAUSTUS* and Shakespeare's *MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR* to follow in Spring and Summer our vibrant and eclectic theatre on Twickenham's Embankment offers a warm welcome to all, with further play and poetry readings, social events, lectures and discussions, and the opportunity to join one of our many and varied production teams, keeping theatre alive and kicking in Twickenham and Richmond.

For further information and booking visit -

www.richmondshakespeare.org.uk

RSS
RICHMOND SHAKESPEARE SOCIETY

JOIN US

A vibrant, dynamic and welcoming amateur theatre company in the heart of Twickenham (south-west London), the RSS specialises in bringing the timeless works of Shakespeare to life, along with captivating performances from various genres. Whether you're a performer, a behind-the-scenes maestro, or a theatre lover, there are multiple opportunities to be involved. We believe in the power of inclusivity, fostering a warm and supportive environment.

richmondshakespeare.org.uk
THE MARY WALLACE THEATRE
THE EMBANKMENT, TWICKENHAM TW1 3DU

Ghost story set in an abandoned cinema visits Twickenham

Thunder Road Theatre brings their critically acclaimed stage chiller *Shock Horror: A Ghost Story* to Twickenham just in time for Halloween, with performances at **The Exchange** on Wednesday 29 – Thursday 30 October at 8pm.

First created in 2022, *Shock Horror* has earned a reputation as ‘*Stranger Things* meets *The Woman in Black*,’ captivating audiences across the UK with its blend of live theatre, cinematic visuals, and spine-tingling atmosphere.

A nightmare is about to break free...

Herbert grew up in the Metropol. The eerie old cinema was his playground and prison – a place where endless late-night horror films were his only window to the world.

Forbidden from leaving by his disturbed parents, Herbert hid in its shadows and gorged on its movies. But what lurked in the Metropol’s darkness? And how did he manage to escape?

Now Herbert’s back at the abandoned cinema, searching for answers to long-buried questions. But for him, and for you, the real horror has only just begun...

Inspired by classic theatre ghost stories and cinema’s greatest frights, Shock Horror is a chilling journey into a haunted past. Combining live performance and big-screen action, it’s full of shivers, shrieks and shocking revelations.

The cast includes **Alex Moran** (*War Horse*, National

Theatre; *Quality Street* UK Tour, Northern Broadsides) as Herbert, who is joined by on-screen actors **Chloe Carter** (*Emmerdale*, ITV; *Doctors*, BBC) as Norma, **Joseph Carter** as Jack (*Hollyoaks*, Channel 4; *Yizkor*, New Vic Theatre; *100 Years On*, Everyman Theatre) and **Chris Blackwood** as Father Karras (*Miss Julie*, Gulbenkian Arts Centre; *The Little Mermaid*, Kings Theatre).

Shock Horror is written and directed by playwright and filmmaker, Ryan Simons (*Eastenders*, BBC; *Emmerdale*, ITV).

Ryan said: “At the heart of *Shock Horror* lies the touching story of a haunted child, that leaves the audience wondering whether the true horror of the play is nature or nurture. Beneath the scares, it’s a story about isolation, and the stories we tell ourselves to survive.”

For more information and tour updates, follow Thunder Road Theatre on social media or visit: www.thunderroadtheatre.org

To book tickets, visit: <https://www.exchangetwickenham.co.uk/show/shock-horror/> or call the box office on 020 8240 2399.





HAMPTON CHORAL SOCIETY

Saturday 15 November 2025, 6.30pm

Solemn Vespers de Confessore
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Requiem in D Minor
Gabriel Fauré

Musical Director Emma Warren
with professional soloists & musicians

All Saints Church, 14-16 Market Place
Kingston Upon Thames, KT1 1JP

Tickets: £15 (Adults), £7 (Under 16's) Box Office: 020 8941 5394

On the door: contactless, card, cheque, cash

www.hamptonchoral.org.uk

Charity Number 261788

Local charity OneRichmond launch

Development Board with 8 founding members

OneRichmond's new Development Board is made up of inspiring local leaders who are keen to create positive change in their community.

OneRichmond is a place-based giving charity that encourages Richmond residents to support their local community by championing local causes. They are working to tackle social isolation in the borough, and are calling upon passionate local business owners, professionals, and philanthropists to make this happen. The charity was set up by the Richmond Foundation, Hampton Fund, and City Bridge Foundation to engage local people and address increasing levels of need in our borough.

The new Development Board met for the first time on Thursday, setting an ambitious fundraising target of £250,000, which will be used to support local grassroots charities. They will now be working with OneRichmond to deliver on this target and support our shared vision of a Richmond community for all.

"I am a very proud and grateful Richmond resident and embrace the opportunity to do something to support and help fellow residents," says Ritu Muhandru, one of the Board's founding members. Throughout the coming year, the Development Board will partake in key events, develop exciting new fundraising initiatives, and work with local charities to provide much needed support to vulnerable people and neglected causes within the borough. One of these key events will be a 'Dragon's Den' style fundraiser in Spring 2026, giving charities the opportunity to pitch in front of key funders and demonstrate the importance of their work.



OneRichmond are currently inviting local individuals to join their mission towards a fairer and more resilient Richmond. To learn more or get involved, please visit OneRichmond.org.uk, or follow OneRichmond on Instagram, Facebook, or LinkedIn.

onerichmond

St Mary's University

St Mary's Alumnae Crowned Rugby World Cup Champions



St Mary's University, London alumnae Ellie Kildunne, Jess Breach, Abi Burton and Rosie Galligan have won the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 with England's Red Roses.

Having played an outstanding tournament, the final on Saturday saw England's Red Roses win 33 to Canada's 13 points at Twickenham Stadium. Ellie Kildunne scored England's first try of the game just eight minutes in.

St Mary's Vice-Chancellor Professor Anthony McClaran said, *"This is a brilliant achievement from our four alumnae, and the whole of the England Team. I know the whole of the St Mary's community is proud of their success and has been watching their journey to the final. We look forward to seeing what's next for them all for their clubs and the Red Roses."*

Head of Sport St Mary's Andrew Reid-Smith said, *"We are incredibly proud of Ellie, Jess, Rosie and Abi for their phenomenal achievements on the world stage. To see our alumnae play such key roles in England's World Cup victory is inspiring for everyone at St Mary's and a testament to their talent, dedication and hard work."*

In the semi-finals, Ellie scored two superb tries to help secure England's 35-17 win against France. This marked Ellie's return to the field, having sat the quarter-finals out due to a concussion.

Both Ellie and Jess have shone throughout the World Cup campaign, contributing to multiple tries across the Red Roses' games. Jess passed her 50-try mark with a hatrick against Samoa during the knock-out stage of the tournament, making her one of England's top try scorers. Ellie, who is the World Rugby Player of the Year, was player of the match in the opening game of the tournament.

England's final group game against Australia marked Jess' 50th appearance for the Red Roses, in which she also scored a try.

All four of the former St Mary's students have previously played for their country, with Ellie, Jess and Rosie making their World Cup debuts in 2021 and Abi and Ellie starring in the Olympic sevens squad at Paris 2024. Abi made her Olympic debut at the Tokyo 2020 Games.



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

St Mary's University

St Mary's Student Wins Prestigious Cricket Awards with Kent

St Mary's University sport scholar, Isabella James has been named both *Bowler of the Year* and *Women's Club Player of the Year* by Kent County Cricket Club - one of the most successful women's sides in England and Wales.

imagined I would achieve something like this in my very first year. To be recognised for these awards is incredible, and to see my name on the trophy alongside such outstanding cricketers is amazing. It's truly a privilege to receive this recognition."



Isabella, who only [made her debut for Kent in April](#), claimed 22 wickets at an average of 25.54 in her first season. Her achievements put her alongside past winners including England captains Charlotte Edwards and Tammy Beaumont.

The awards come as the Cricket World Cup gets underway, placing added spotlight on women's cricket and Kent's role in developing elite talent. Kent has produced several England internationals, among them Lydia Greenway, Tash Farrant, Tammy Beaumont and Alice Davidson-Richards.

Isabella said *"To win these awards is a huge honour and something I'll never forget. Having only made my debut for Kent this season, I never*

Andrew Reid-Smith, Head of Sport at St Mary's University, said: *"We are so proud of Izzy and her achievements. It takes a lot of work and skill to be recognised as Player of the Year, and I already know from Izzy's drive that she'll be planning how to build on her excellent season. Huge congratulations to her!"*

Isabella is the latest in a line of St Mary's athletes to earn national recognition. The University has an international reputation for sporting excellence, supported by world-class facilities including a performance education centre and conditioning suite.



**St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London**

Rugby World Cup Winners Red Roses Return to Roots for RugbyFest Weekend

Fresh from their Women's Rugby World Cup final win, the Red Roses will be stepping off the international stage and into grassroots clubs across England as part of RugbyFest (3–6 October 2025), a nationwide celebration of rugby designed to inspire the next generation.

Over the course of the weekend, hundreds of rugby clubs will open their doors, hosting taster sessions, family fun days, and mini festivals. With the squad visiting clubs up and down the country to meet young players and share their own stories, the events promise to bring the magic of the World Cup back to communities across the country. RugbyFest will be a celebration of rugby in England after the conclusion of the record breaking Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 and a home-turf victory. The weekend is designed to encourage new players, supporters and volunteers to get involved in the sport. Central to this effort is FindRugby.com, where young fans, parents and future players can find out about local opportunities to get involved with the sport.

Steve Grainger, Executive Director of Rugby Development at England Rugby said: *"2025 has been a huge year for women's rugby in England, with record-breaking attendances and a tremendous uplift in women and girls' participation, and we want to continue to build on the momentum of the Red Roses winning the Women's Rugby World Cup."*

"RugbyFest is a fantastic opportunity for communities to come together to celebrate rugby all over the country, and for our Red Roses to give back to the fans and communities who have got behind them and supported them over the years."

"This celebration weekend also taps into our Rugby World Cup 'For The Girls' campaign and speaks to the Red Roses ability to inspire a new generation of players into rugby, something that the team are all so passionate about doing."

RugbyFest is part of the RFU's World Cup legacy programme, Impact '25, and supported by the National Lottery. The Impact '25 programme sees over £14.55m of Government funding committed to the sport in England and the home unions up to the end of March 2026, creating more opportunities for women and girls to get involved in rugby. Impact '25 is being delivered by the RFU in partnership with UK Government, Sport England and UK Sport. In addition to their support of RugbyFest, The National Lottery is providing £11m of funding to support the RFU to grow women and girls rugby through to 2027.

Andria Vidler, Chief Executive of Allwyn operator of The National Lottery, said: "Through playing The National Lottery the public have been backing women's rugby and the Red Roses for over 20 years – made possible by the £6b they have raised for grassroots sport. Therefore, we are delighted to also be able to support RugbyFest and create another opportunity for people across the country to discover a love for rugby."

The team's recent success has inspired a new generation at grassroots level, with young girls across the country donning red cowboy hats and picking up a rugby ball, following in the footsteps of their heroes, and now, they have the chance to meet them. As role models and World Champions, their presence at local clubs provides young girls with the chance to learn from their heroes, and kickstart their own journeys in rugby.

With hundreds of events already registered, it is set to be one of the biggest grassroots activations in the sport's history. Young people looking to get involved can visit [FindRugby.com](https://www.findrugby.com) to discover RugbyFest events near them, and potentially take the first step towards pulling on an England shirt.



Match Preview: Brentford v Manchester City

Written by Brentford Football Club

Analysis, team news, match officials and more. Here's everything you need to know before Brentford's Premier League game against Manchester City at Gtech Community Stadium on Sunday (4.30pm kick-off GMT), which will be broadcast live on *Sky Sports*

Brentford welcome Manchester City to Gtech Community Stadium on Sunday (4.30pm kick-off GMT), live on Sky Sports.

Igor Thiago's brace helped the Bees to a 3-1 victory over Manchester United last time out in the Premier League, while Pep Guardiola's side beat Burnley 5-1.

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's threat from dead-ball situations Brentford v Manchester City a formidable weapon

Brentford found the antidote to Manchester City's hypnotic passing game during the latter's treble season - but the Bees may require a different approach to hurt City and their 'Class of 25' this Sunday.

The Bees doubled the Sky Blues during the Mancunian club's record-breaking 2022/23 campaign, which saw them lift the Premier League, the FA Cup and the Champions League.

Those victories saw Brentford topple Pep Guardiola's side at the height of its powers courtesy of a high-intensity, direct brand of football which bypassed City's world-class midfield and unsettled their backline.

After a tumultuous and trophyless campaign last season, however, the City of today are a different beast: their iconic manager intent on reshaping his squad and his tactics.



Unbeaten on home turf this season, Brentford enter this weekend's clash buoyed by victory over City's crosstown rivals Manchester United - and Keith Andrews will relish the chance to pit his wits against Guardiola for the first time.

The tactics employed by the Bees head coach are likely to differ from those which brought his predecessor Thomas Frank success, however, given City's ongoing transition to a more direct style of play.

To emphasise that last point, City's average possession share has dropped to 55 per cent this season (from 62 per cent last term).

Their sky-high pass completion rates of yesteryear have dipped and their numbers also reflect an increased appetite for, and efficiency in, aerial duels.

This strategic shift was perhaps most evident in City's recent 1-1 draw at Arsenal, a game in which they recorded just 32.8 per cent possession – the lowest in a top-flight match for a team managed by Guardiola.

Whatever the tactical trends, though, City remain one of the most feared teams in Europe and they enter this Sunday's clash at the Gtech as the Premier League's most prolific scorers with 14 goals and counting.

Goal machine Erling Haaland has bagged eight of City's league strikes (57 per cent) this term - and his recent form is frightening. In his past dozen games for club and country, the 25-year-old has contributed 18 goals and four assists - with Tottenham the only team to prevent the Norwegian from scoring in that time.

Brentford have an on-form striker of their own, however, in Igor Thiago. The Brazilian notched twice against the Red Devils last weekend to take his tally to five goals in seven games across all competitions for the Bees this season - and Brentford's efficiency in attack sees them currently boast the top flight's best shot-on-target percentage (45 per cent).

Thiago's explosive first goal against United came on the break, as did Mathias Jensen's late clincher, and it is striking that the Bees - along with Manchester City - top the charts for goals from counter attacks this term, with three. Brentford's goals last weekend all came from open play, but their threat from dead-ball situations remains a formidable weapon.

City, however, are one of only two sides yet to concede from a set-piece this season - and, remarkably, the only team still waiting to score from one.

Scout Report

Dan Long, *Sky Sports*: City eager for success after trophyless season

For the time since the 2016/17 season - Pep Guardiola's first in England - Manchester City did not win a single piece of major silverware in 2024/25.

They finished 13 points behind Liverpool in the Premier League, suffered a fourth-round Carabao Cup exit at the hands of Tottenham and were beaten 6-3 on aggregate by Real Madrid in the Champions League knockout phase play-offs, having only scraped through the league phase by a single point.

Then came the FA Cup final defeat to Crystal Palace, marking the second season in a row they had finished as runners-up, and to finish it all off, they crashed out of the Club World Cup in the last 16 by way of a shock 4-3 defeat after extra-time to Al-Hilal.

Guardiola said securing qualification for the Champions League after finishing third was “*like a title*” in itself, but conceded: “*The distance to Liverpool is huge and we have to improve.*”

While the Club World Cup exit was disappointing, it provided a welcome break. City were out by 1 July, but eventual champions Chelsea were in the USA for another 12 days on top of that. Deep down, Guardiola will know the benefits of that.

City had spent around £180 million in the January transfer window, and they took advantage of the summer’s first 10-day transfer window before the Club World Cup to strengthen further, with the signings of Rayan Aït-Nouri, Marcus Bettinelli, Rayan Cherki and Tijjani Reijnders.

After they returned, they signed highly-rated Norwegian teenager Sverre Nypan and goalkeepers James Trafford and Gianluigi Donnarumma, following the end of Ederson’s eight-year spell at the Etihad.

In a short pre-season, they beat Preston and Palermo at the start of August, before opening the new Premier League campaign with a crushing 4-0 win over Wolves.

But they followed that up with defeats, first against Spurs, then Brighton. “*Step-by-step, we will make the click,*” said Guardiola after the first of those. “*Many things are new.*”

[Tyrone Marshall, senior football writer for Manchester Evening News, told us it feels like they have “taken a major step forward” since the September international break and it is hard to argue otherwise.](#)

City have scored nine goals in the last three league games, from which they have taken seven points, progressed to the fourth round of the Carabao Cup and beaten Napoli in their first Champions League game.

Erling Haaland looks in inspired form, too, with nine goals and one assist in seven games in all competitions following his late double against Burnley.

The win over Huddersfield in the Carabao Cup has set up a trip to Swansea at the end of the month which, on paper, should provide them with a good chance to go deep in a competition they won four times in a row between 2017/18 and 2020/21.

Whether they go on to end their trophy drought there remains to be seen, but you can be sure they will be positively ravenous for more.

In the Dugout

Pep Guardiola

Pep Guardiola was born an hour's drive from Barcelona and joined the club's La Masia academy in 1984, aged 13. He rose through the ranks and became a key part of Johan Cruyff's team



in the 1990s, before later playing under Bobby Robson and Louis van Gaal at the Nou Camp.

During 10 full seasons in the first team, the midfielder won 15 trophies, including six La Liga titles and the European Cup in 1991/92. He departed after 17 years in 2001 and played out the rest of his playing days with Roma and Brescia in Italy, Al-

Ahli in Qatar, and then in Mexico with Dorados, before calling it quits in 2006.

Before long, he was back in Spain as Barcelona B manager. Promotion in the first season, 2007/08, saw him selected to step up as Frank Rijkaard's successor and, over the next four seasons, he established himself as one of the great minds of football.

His tiki-taka style of play heralded an astonishing 14 trophies, six of which they won during a mind-blowing 2009.

The serial winner took a year's sabbatical before joining Bayern Munich in June 2013. In Germany, he delivered three straight Bundesliga titles, two German Cups, one European Super Cup and one Club World Cup - the third of a career that had spanned all of six years to that point.

By the end of his time in Bavaria, Guardiola already knew his next move, having signed a three-year contract in February 2016 to replace Manuel Pellegrini that summer.

In the nine years since, the 54-year-old has become Manchester City's most successful manager, with 18 trophies turning them into a footballing powerhouse.

He is now the longest-serving manager in the Premier League and second only to Harrogate's Simon Weaver as the longest-serving manager in the top four divisions.

Guardiola reached 500 games as City boss with a 2-0 win at Leicester on 29 December and, after the trip to west London, will be 50 games away from becoming the man to have managed the most City games in history, with only Les McDowall ahead of him on 592.



Chancellor In Southport

Historic Southport Pier To Be Restored

On Saturday 27th September the Chancellor was in Southport to announce the Government will restore the town's historic pier, with the expectation that restoration of the Merseyside landmark will begin early next year.

Restoring pride in communities is a vital part of the Government's Plan for Change to drive economic growth by attracting businesses, opportunity and jobs to every part of the country.

The up to £20 million investment, which is subject to completion of a full business case assessment, will support Sefton Council, owners of the Grade II listed pier, with its restoration. It will support local jobs, attract tourism and opportunity in Southport and the wider Liverpool City Region. Completion of the restoration and reopening to the public is expected to be within three years.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves said:

"Southport Pier is a beloved landmark. A national treasure that has been allowed to fall into disrepair, no longer. I'm proud that through our Plan for Change families across Merseyside should be able to enjoy this wonderful attraction again."

Business and Trade Secretary Peter Kyle said:

"I know how important this iconic pier is to Southport and Merseyside and getting it back up and running will have huge benefits. This is not just about restoring an historic landmark, but regenerating it to bring prosperity in a way that people can see and feel."

"My department will now work quickly with local partners to agree a business case to deliver on creating jobs and helping people feel pride in their community."

Steve Rotheram, Mayor of the Liverpool City Region said:

"Southport Pier holds a special place in the hearts of people across the Liverpool City region and beyond. Generations of families have walked along it, shared ice creams on it, and made memories that last a lifetime. Its closure has been felt deeply by the whole community, which is why today's announcement will mean so much to local people."

"I want to thank the Government for listening and committing the funding needed to restore this much-loved landmark to its former glory. Bringing the pier back to life will help protect local jobs, attract more visitors and give Southport a real boost. Working with Sefton Council, we'll make sure the pier once again stands proud as both a symbol of our heritage and a driver of future prosperity in our growing £6.25bn visitor economy."

Southport Pier, originally opened in 1860, is one of the oldest iron piers in the country and a significant tourist attraction for the North West. Its restoration will support the local tourism economy and preserve an important piece of Britain's Victorian engineering heritage.

The restoration project at the Pier is already at an advanced stage, which means funding can be deployed rapidly towards the work once the business case is approved.

The funding towards Southport Pier's restoration comes as part of the Growth Mission Fund, previously announced by the Chancellor at the Spending Review. The fund provides £240 million over four years to expedite local projects that contribute to economic growth. Projects that will be targeted will support local job creation, invest in economic regeneration, or maintain heritage assets—filling gaps where projects might otherwise struggle to secure funding through existing programmes.

Further projects to be funded as part of the Growth Mission Fund will be confirmed in due course.



HM Treasury

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