

Twickenham & Richmond Tribune



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South Western Railway

Editors: Berkley Driscoll, Teresa Read

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TickerTape - News in Brief

It has been heartwarming to see the enormous number of tributes that have been sent in to the Tribune following the sad passing of Teresa Read.

I know Teresa would have been surprised, but grateful.

Thank you for the many donations that have been made to the Tribune in Teresa's memory.

Many have asked about details of Teresa's funeral, which I give below.

Committal

Thursday 30th October 2025, 3:20pm

Mortlake Crematorium, Kew Meadow Path, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4EN

You can find more information [HERE](#)



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The Tree Agency

The Local Picture Postcard Page - Part 302

Strawberry Hill Garage Ltd

By Alan Winter

This garage was situated at numbers 8-14 Hampton Road, Twickenham for at least 50 years between 1931 and the 1980's.

I am unsure as to when the picture of the garage was taken but the two photos taken on the corner of First Cross Road and Hampton Road were said to have been taken in 1969. You can see Twickenham Congregational Church a little way down First Cross Road. My thanks



to Twickenham Museum who have given permission for their use. They are part of the Grove archive.

The 1931 date shows Strawberry Hill Garage listed in Kellys Directory of Twickenham dated 1931 where it also states that the garage had cars for hire.

We can see a butchers shop at No. 2 Hampton Road on the corner of First Cross Road called Caress and Seymour. You can see the garage's Esso sign past the shops and before you get to the Prince Albert Pub

which has the white van parked outside.

Referring to the Kellys directory of 1931, we see that number 2 Hampton Road was a butchers shop even then with the name of "Chas Jefferies – Butchers" advertised. Next door at number 4 was a Ladies outfitters called "Florence" and Number 6 was a confectioner called "T. Wingfield". Strawberry Hill Garage was shown as 8-14 Hampton Road.

No shops remain on this corner today.



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Richmond Council in Hot Water Over Coffee Fine

By James Knight

It takes a certain kind of council to turn a cup of coffee into a national story. Yet this week, the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, under Liberal Democrat control since 2018, managed just that.

When **Burcu Yesilyurt**, a resident of Kew, tipped the final mouthful of her reusable cup down a street drain near Richmond station, she believed she was doing the considerate thing. Within moments, three enforcement officers appeared and issued her with a **£150 Fixed Penalty Notice** under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 – legislation drafted to deter industrial fly-tippers, not commuters with a few drops of coffee.

“It feels quite unfair,” Ms Yesilyurt told the BBC. *“I think the fine is extreme. It’s not proportionate.”*

Her experience has struck a nerve far beyond Richmond. To many residents, it symbolises a council that preaches public responsibility but practises petty control – quick to punish minor lapses, yet curiously reluctant to tackle more serious offences. It is easier, after all, to chase a commuter with a coffee cup than to confront the



fly-tipping, graffiti and street disorder that blight local life. Richmond’s enforcement seems sharpest where the public least needs it, and softest where it matters most.

A Pattern of Overreach

Richmond’s Liberal Democrat leadership initially insisted that the officers had “acted professionally and objectively”. As that response shows, the problem is not the officers’ conduct but the council’s detachment from ordinary life, a leadership so consumed by procedure that it has lost sight of proportion and fairness.

The fine was eventually cancelled, though only after a wave of public outrage and national press coverage. Yet the underlying policy remains untouched.

In April 2024, the borough’s Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sports Services Committee, chaired by Councillor Julia Neden-Watts, approved the tendering of a new third-

party enforcement contract. The arrangement allows the contractor to retain roughly two-thirds of the income from Fixed Penalty Notices, while the council collects the rest. Officially, the system is “cost-neutral”; in reality, it encourages a culture of enforcement that blurs the line between civic duty and revenue generation.

Councillors from both parties warned that outsourcing fines would lead to overreach and reputational damage. Their fears have proved well-founded.

Public Anger Grows

The Richmond Society, a non-partisan residents’ amenity group, said it was “disproportionate” to send three officers to fine a commuter without first issuing a warning. “We’re not aware of any public information advising people not to pour liquids into drains,” it added, a point that neatly captures the council’s bureaucratic tunnel vision.

That frustration was matched by the Richmond Borough Conservatives, who issued a blistering statement: “Richmond’s Lib Dem Council continues its assault on local residents. This is ridiculous and over-zealous rule enforcement – just like the fine imposed earlier this year on a Twickenham couple who left their rubbish out early before their honeymoon. Meanwhile, Richmond LibDems impose maximum Council Tax increases every year and double-digit increases in parking and other charges.” That earlier incident, too, ended in national ridicule and a hasty reversal. A pattern has emerged: fines issued in haste, public outrage, and the familiar retreat of a council that governs by spreadsheet rather than sense.

An Administration Out of Touch

Richmond now ranks tenth nationally for parking penalties and has proposed new powers against motorists who leave engines idling. Each measure may appear reasonable in isolation, but together they suggest an administration more interested in policing its residents than serving them. The borough’s reputation for quiet moderation is giving way to one of officiousness and overreach.

Councillor Neden-Watts defends the policy as part of a “commitment to keeping streets clean and protecting waterways”. Few would dispute the aim. But when a local authority cannot distinguish between a fly-tipper’s van and a commuter’s cup, something has gone awry.

Losing the Confidence of the Governed

To fine a resident for pouring coffee dregs into a drain is not just clumsy, it is symptomatic of a council that has lost its instinct for proportion. There is a line between public service and petty authoritarianism, and Richmond’s Liberal Democrats seem unable to see it.

Voters are often forgiving of honest mistakes; they are less patient with repeated foolishness. The Liberal Democrats came to power promising openness, fairness and a gentler kind of politics. Increasingly, they resemble what they once opposed; a party of rules without reason, policy without empathy, and leadership without judgment.

In a borough that values moderation, this episode will linger. Not because of the coffee, but because it confirms a wider truth: that Richmond’s Liberal Democrats have turned good intentions into bad government – one fine at a time.

Notice of Application to apply for a Premises Licence made under the Licensing Act 2003

Notice is hereby given that **KR COFFEE LTD** has made application to the London Borough Of Merton to apply for a Premises Licence in respect of **Hagen Richmond, 52 Hill St, Richmond TW9 1TW** to provide the following licensable activities:

To allow the sale of alcohol for consumption on and off the premises between the hours of 10:00 – 21:00, every day, Monday – Sunday.

Any person who wishes to make a representation in relation to this application must give notice in writing to:

Merton Licensing Authority, Regulatory Services Partnership (Serving Merton, Richmond and Wandsworth Councils) Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 5DX or by email to: licensing@merton.gov.uk

By 12th November 2025

The record of this application may be inspected Monday to Friday (except Bank Holidays) by prior appointment at the offices of The Licensing Authority, Regulatory Services Partnership (Serving Merton, Richmond and Wandsworth Councils) Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 5DX between the hours of 10.00am and 4.00pm. Information on all new and variation applications received by the Licensing Authority can be viewed on the Council's website www.merton.gov.uk

It is an offence, under section 158 of the Licensing Act 2003, to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in or in connection with an application, punishable upon conviction by an unlimited fine.

Join the Big Autumn Prune at Ham Pond

From Ham and Petersham Association & Amenities Group

Love Ham Pond? Join the Big Pond Prune on Saturday 1 November!

Meet at Ham Pond from 10am. Tools will be provided but please do bring your own if you are able to.

Everyone is welcome to join in. Please come along to help.

Find out more about the [Big Pond Prune](#).



Teresa Read

By Jeremy Hamilton-Miller

Teresa Read, news of whose death shocked us recently, had multi-faceted talents. Her achievements, in Twickenham and beyond, attest to this.

In 1997, reflecting her experience as a teacher, she founded Wtech Gateway, later to become worldinfoZone.com. This was one of the first 10,000 websites internationally, and is a valuable resource as a schools' guide to the world.



Sue and I first met Teresa at a demonstration against the plans for the redevelopment of the former Gifford House nursing home, in 2005. I subsequently joined with her as a committee member of the newly revived Richmond Environmental Information Centre (REIC); the drive and entrepreneurship of Teresa and Berkley resulted in REIC winning three separate Heritage Lottery Grants to explore respectively Memories of Twickenham Riverside, The Most Famous Icerink in the World, and LidosAlive, in which Sue and I played small parts. Each of these projects was satisfactorily completed, and resulted in publications and lectures to local groups.

Teresa and Berkley also started another company devoted to giving entertainment to the people of the Borough, namely Twickenham Alive. Under this guise they helped organise the Strawberry Hill Music and Fun day (with sponsorship from RFU) in 2014 and 2015, revived the Charlie Shore Children's Regatta in 2011, that was incorporated in the following two years into Riverside Festivals involving amongst other events music, water zorbing and markets. During the Regatta, Stand Up Paddle-boarding (SUP) was introduced to sports on the Thames, and the Eel Pie Island SUP was founded. Twickenham Alive also organised a Film Festival for students at St Marys College.

Teresa was a staunch supporter of the Save our Riverside group, that campaigned successfully between 2006 and 2010 against redevelopment of the old pool site.

Three pop-up ice rinks were put up at various sites in Twickenham in consecutive years by Twickenham Alive.

Unfortunately, there were occasions when officialdom and event regulations raised their ugly heads, limiting or even preventing the full scope of proposed events.

In 2017, permanent History Boards were prepared by REIC and Twickenham Alive depicting respectively Belgium refugees from WW1 in Twickenham, and Richmond Ice Rink. These were unveiled in the presence of the Mayor and HE The Belgian Ambassador. An additional Board has been put up in Kneller Gardens commemorating the former Mereway Bathing Place.

Despite all this activity and accompanying paperwork, Teresa, as ever with Berkley's help, set up the jewel in her crown, *The Twickenham and Richmond Tribune*, in 2016. This now provides a voice for all in the Borough to air their views on any subject. Such facility had been absent since the restructuring of the *Richmond and Twickenham Times*, which now covers a much wider area and crucially has abolished its Readers' Letter column.

Teresa was my friend, and Sue and I are grateful for the many happy hours we spent working on projects she had initiated. All her activities, briefly referred to above, were carried out for altruistic reasons. Many, I am sure, cost her expenditure from her personal funds. I often wondered why she continued, especially when there were obstructions in her way. I have concluded that it was purely her intention to try to keep local residents informed and entertained. We shall all miss her very much, and hope her contributions to the Borough will be acknowledged and appreciated more widely.

Dear Tribune,

The Dregs of Richmond.

Richmond's Lib Dem Council has just shown its caring side by fining a woman £150 for pouring a few drops of coffee down a drain. But for 'caring' read 'dictatorial bullying'.

To her credit, and unlike many inconsiderate and ill-mannered people, she committed the heinous crime of pouring it away rather than take it on a bus and risk spilling it on other passengers. National news and TV reported that she was spotted by three of Richmond Council's enforcement officers and fined £150.

But, after a public outcry, Richmond Council has now cancelled the fine, saying: *'Fixed Penalty Notices clearly outline that there is an appeal process available to anyone who wishes to challenge them. It is likely that, had this case progressed through that route, the notice would have been rescinded. On this occasion, the Council has therefore decided to cancel the FPN.'*

It's a pity their enforcers didn't have the common sense to realise that before they fined her.

Of course, there was no apology by the Council for the stress they caused to a perfectly decent member of the public.

And no mention of the fact that Richmond and Twickenham are absolutely awash with coffee shops whose staff and customers probably pour thousands of cups of coffee down the drains every week, as do the residents. Not to mention the billions of litres of sewage dumped into the Thames by water companies.

I have lost count of the occasions when, as a police officer, I gave 'words of advice' to people who committed minor offences, an approach far more effective and educational than fining them. Maybe the Council needs the money to cover the cost of the increased personal allowances which they so generously awarded themselves some time ago?

Richmond Council would be more use to residents by instructing its enforcement officers to stop people constantly riding bikes illegally on our footways with impunity. Only this week in Kingston a man was crashed into by one of these riders, suffering serious brain injuries. Of course, the perpetrator and his Forest hire bike had no insurance.

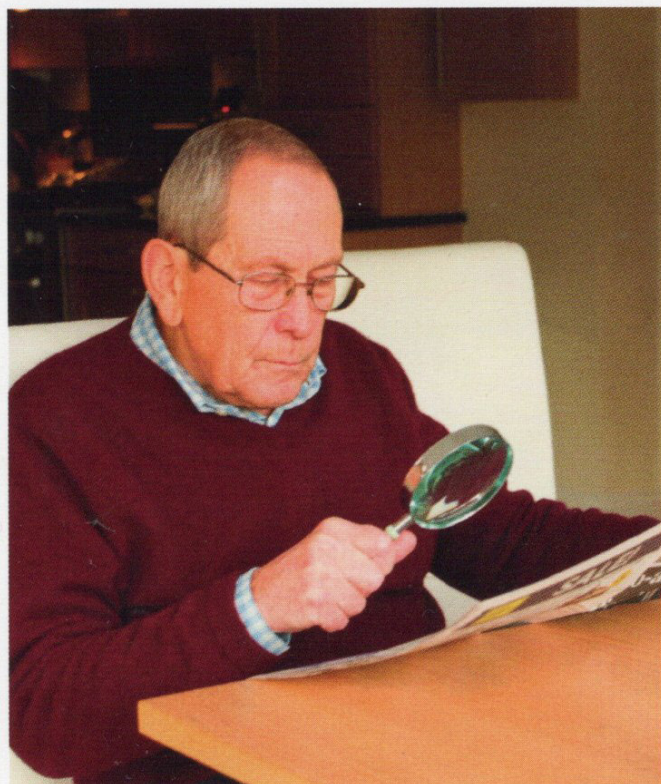
Shouldn't our Councils check these facts before contracting such companies – or is it all about how much money they will add to their coffers? Isn't it enough that our boroughs are littered with Lime bikes? If they were really caring, they would force Forest to compensate the poor man, or dig deep in to their pockets and do it themselves.

Welcome to Richmond – where coffee crime takes priority over public safety.

Michael Jay
Hampton



Richmond Talking News



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Hue and Cry Over Spilt Coffee, Bin Threats and Cycle Hub

From Richmond & Twickenham Green Party

Richmond has been in the news a lot this week - but unfortunately for all the wrong reasons. The first story to hit the news was about the heavy-handed action of enforcement officers pursuing a woman over some spilt coffee, on the grounds (no pun intended) that all our street drainage goes into local waterways, potentially polluting it.

Sadly, the story fits a pattern of recent high-handed decision-making by the Liberal Democrats. It's not that the policy or decision is necessarily wrong - after all, the last thing we should be doing is polluting our waterways - it's just that the public hasn't seen the evidence of the problem, the public has not been informed about the Council's policy, the public then gets punished. The whole saga backfires on this administration badly - but also tarnishes the Council's reputation as a whole, which affects every councillor. Thankfully, the Council has rescinded the fine - but what has it learned from the episode? Green Party councillor for South Twickenham Richard Bennett remarked drily: *"What other liquids are you not allowed to pour down the drain in Richmond? Yes, to champagne but no to prosecco? Yes to Earl Grey tea, no to builders?"*

The next story to land badly was the reaction to the new Cycle Hub at Richmond Station. It was a bad reaction from cyclists and cycle groups. Most of the cycle parking spaces are on an upstairs level, which means you have to wheel your bike up a fairly long flight of stairs, which in itself is problematic for many potential users. *"I have to say it's not what I expected,"* said Deputy Leader of the Opposition Chas Warlow, *"although I do appreciate that Richmond Council had very limited control over the design. It's a crying shame that cycling groups were not consulted properly by South Western Railway. Richmond residents, who have inherited this facility with its inherent flaws, are the people most affected."*

The final story to get airtime this week was the news that Richmond's bin collectors will go on strike if Serco (the contractor to which the Council outsources its waste and recycling collection) does not make an improved pay offer by today (Friday 24th October). This seems to have been an unexpected development for the Council - yet the same thing happened in 2022, when bin workers went on strike - only for the contractor to cave in after just one day.

Leader of the Opposition Andree Frieze commented: *"It's been a bad news week for the Liberal Democrat administration in Richmond. Residents would be justified in asking the question: what is the Council learning from these issues?"*



In memory - PC Kulwant Sidhu

From Metropolitan Police

Today we gathered in Twickenham to honour the memory of PC Kulwant Sidhu, who tragically lost his life on duty on 24th October 1999.

PC Sidhu served with courage, integrity, and unwavering dedication to public safety. His sacrifice is a solemn reminder of the risks faced by officers every day in the line of duty.



The annual remembrance ceremony is a moment for reflection, gratitude, and unity—bringing together colleagues, family, and community members to pay tribute to a life devoted to service.

We will never forget PC Sidhu. His legacy lives on in the hearts of those who knew him and in the continued commitment of officers across the MPS.



**METROPOLITAN
POLICE**

Munira Wilson's £1,190 Rugby Freebie Tests the Limits of Public Trust

By James Knight

It is a measure of how swiftly Westminster's moral compass has drifted that what would once have ended a career now barely raises an eyebrow. Yet the public's patience wears thinner with each declaration, and the latest entry on Twickenham MP Munira Wilson's register of interests does nothing to restore faith in political restraint.

The Women's Rugby World Cup Final, hosted at Twickenham Stadium, the beating heart of the constituency, was meant to be a celebration of sport and national pride. Instead, it has become a symbol of something smaller: the culture of entitlement that sees MPs accepting freebies, which continues to blur the boundaries of judgment in public life.



Wilson, the Liberal Democrat education spokesperson, accepted hospitality worth £1,190 from Allwyn Entertainment Ltd, the new National Lottery operator owned by Czech billionaire Karel Komárek, for herself and a guest at the final. The company's identity matters: Komárek's firm is expanding aggressively in Britain's gambling sector, even as Parliament wrestles with long-delayed reforms to protect consumers.

Munira Wilson MP ©House of Commons

"It Shouldn't Happen, Full Stop"

Former Conservative leader Sir Iain Duncan Smith, who has long campaigned for stricter gambling regulation, could not have been clearer that expensive hospitality and gifts "shouldn't happen, full stop." As he told *The Times* on 1 October 2025: "It makes the public think there's one rule for them, another for everyone else. We shouldn't be accepting expensive gifts because it calls into question the independence of MPs and ministers."

That principle, once obvious, is now often unclear. Labour has already become entangled in a £1 million gambling donation scandal, while BBC and National investigations reveal that even the Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, has accepted £13,000 worth of free football tickets this year alone. Against this background, Wilson's decision seems tone-deaf at best.

Some Local MPs Show Restraint — Twickenham's Does Not

This is not her first encounter with questionable hospitality. Earlier this year, Wilson faced criticism for accepting a complimentary membership of the National Liberal Club, a private Westminster institution where, according to the *Daily Mail*, more than two dozen Liberal Democrat MPs were quietly given free memberships worth over £1,500 each. To most constituents, that is far from a trivial sum, and symbolically, it reinforces the sense of a political class detached from the everyday realities of those they represent.

The contrast within south-west London's parliamentary benches is revealing. Sarah Olney, Wilson's Liberal Democrat colleague in Richmond Park, has stated she has received no such gifts or hospitality, according to her latest parliamentary register. Similarly, Ruth Cadbury, the Labour MP for Brentford and Isleworth, only reports modest local hospitality from Brentford Football Club, a contrast to luxury corporate boxes funded by foreign billionaires.

While other local MPs turned down corporate freebies, Twickenham's MP said yes. Residents deserve to know when their MP accepts corporate gifts, not because the sums are vast, but because the principle is. Transparency is the bedrock of trust, and that trust cannot survive on disclosure alone.

The Issue Is Not Legality but Judgment

The issue is not legality but judgment. Since Sir Keir Starmer promised to end the "freebie culture" in politics after his own embarrassment over gifts, MPs across the spectrum have been warned. For a front-bench Liberal Democrat, a party that prides itself on moral independence and corporate scepticism, to accept nearly £1,200 in hospitality from the gambling industry's newest heavyweight is not only sloppy but also damaging.

Twickenham's voters have every right to expect better. The symbolism of a local MP accepting luxury hospitality while others quietly refuse it is impossible to ignore. As Duncan Smith said, this is about something more profound than a ticket to a match. It is about trust, that delicate bond between Parliament and the people it serves. And once again, it has been sacrificed for a seat in the VIP enclosure.

Richmond Faces Refuse Strike If Serco Workers Don't Get Pay Rise, Warns GMB

Company given deadline of Friday as workers left waiting months for fair pay offer.

GMB, the union for Serco workers in Richmond, has warned that members will begin a formal industrial action ballot if the company fails to bring forward a revised pay offer by this Friday [24 October].

Despite repeated discussions and an indication that a revised offer would be made, Serco has yet to present anything concrete to staff, despite talks beginning in April of this year.

Workers have already taken part in a consultative ballot on the company's last proposal, which showed a significant majority in favour of industrial action if pay talks continued to stall.

Craig Prickett, GMB Regional Organiser, said:

"Our members have been incredibly patient with their employer. They keep the borough running every day, and they deserve a wage that reflects their hard work and the rising cost of living."

"We have tried to resolve this through negotiation, but Serco's delay – now into months rather than weeks - is simply unacceptable. If no offer is received by this Friday, we will have no option but to begin a formal ballot for industrial action."

"GMB is calling on Serco to come back to the table and make a fair offer that recognises the vital contribution of its workforce."



Local couple zip-wire across Allianz Stadium for Crossroads Care

From Crossroads Care Richmond and Kingston

Huge congratulations to Margaret Allen and her husband, Rob, who successfully completed their zip wire challenge at Allianz Stadium in support of Crossroads Care Richmond and Kingston last week!

Flying 150 metres across the iconic rugby pitch would be nerve-wracking for anyone, but for Margaret, who has a fear of heights, this was a massive personal challenge.



Margaret has been volunteering with Crossroads Care for several months now and has seen first-hand the impact that the charity has on unpaid carers – families supporting loved ones with dementia, disabilities, and complex needs. That's why she decided to do something completely out of her comfort zone to help the many carers that Crossroads supports.

She said: 'I was absolutely terrified, and was shaking when I finished, but I wanted to do this for Crossroads, a local charity that provides vital home and community respite to unpaid carers.'

'Every penny that you have given will help carers to have a much-needed break, so thank you to everyone who has donated – we really do appreciate it.'

'And for all you doubting Thomases out there, I actually flew across Twickenham Stadium twice and I really enjoyed it second time around!'

Julie Da Costa, Crossroads Care CEO, said: *'We're so proud of you, Margaret, and beyond grateful to you for being so brave. Our gratitude also to everyone who has so kindly donated to this zip-wiring challenge.'*

[Donate to Margaret and Rob on JustGiving.](#)

Politics on the Pavement:

How a Parents' Safety Campaign Became a Party-Political Stunt

By James Knight, Comment and Analysis

What began as a heartfelt community campaign for road safety at St Margaret's Roundabout has been repackaged into something altogether more political.

In January 2024, a frightening near-miss outside St Stephen's C of E Primary School prompted local parents to act. A mother and her three children were nearly struck by a car while using the crossing on the A316, one of Twickenham's busiest arterial roads.

The incident led to a petition launched by parent Laura Kerry, calling for safer crossings, better signage and stronger barriers. More than 2,500 residents signed that petition, many of them parents who use the crossing every day. It was a genuine grassroots effort, born of real fear and frustration, and it drew long-overdue attention to a junction notorious for speeding traffic and poor pedestrian timing.

TfL has since acknowledged the safety issues, introducing limited signal changes and a reduced 30mph speed limit, but many residents say these are piecemeal fixes that do little to address the core problem, an intimidating roundabout serving as both a school route and a commuter artery.

A Protest with Political Footprints

Fast-forward to October 2025, and the same issue returned, this time as a "families' protest", widely covered by *Teddington Nub News* and written by Charlotte Lillywhite, the *Local Democracy Reporter* for the area. The article described a "family-led protest" outside the roundabout, with children chanting "keep us safe" and politicians pledging support.

But what the report did not make clear was that the event had been organised and promoted by the Liberal Democrat Party, which runs Richmond Council. A post on their Facebook page, dated 29 September, openly invited residents to join via a party-managed WhatsApp group, with MP Munira Wilson, Council Leader Gareth Roberts and Councillor Katie Mansfield all involved.

There is nothing wrong with councillors supporting local causes, indeed, it is part of their duty. But there is a clear difference between supporting a community campaign and co-opting it. By taking control of what was originally a parent-led petition and rebranding it as a political protest, the Liberal Democrats have blurred the line between public service and party publicity. Parents asked for a safer crossing – not a stage for politics. While the Liberal Democrats have said their councillors were supporting, not leading, the protest, party publicity materials and social media posts suggest otherwise.

It's also worth remembering that the A316 is not under Richmond Council's control. It is managed by Transport for London, which answers to Labour Mayor Sadiq Khan. So the Liberal Democrat-run council staged a protest against a Labour-run transport authority; a political pantomime played out under the banner of child safety. To the casual observer, it looked like

community activism; to those familiar with local politics, it looked rather more like carefully staged choreography.

When Politics Crosses the Line

This is not an isolated case. Residents across the borough have raised similar concerns about delays to long-promised safety and transport schemes, even on roads fully controlled by the Council.

The campaign by parents at Turing House School in Whitton for a cycle lane on Hospital Bridge Road is a telling example. That road is managed by Richmond Council, and parents have spent years urging the Council to deliver a safe cycling route so pupils can reach this out-of-area school without having to rely on cars or buses.

More than five years after the idea was first supported, the scheme remains stuck in review, with no visible progress on the ground. For a council that calls on Transport for London to move faster, Richmond has often been slow to act on its own commitments, especially when it comes to straightforward local improvements that could reduce congestion and improve safety for young people.

Nearby, parents have also criticised Cllr Alexander Ehmann for his decision not to install a zebra crossing across Warren Road to allow children to reach Murray Park safely, yet that too has been left in limbo. Across the borough, a familiar pattern emerges: safety upgrades promised with urgency but delivered at a snail's pace.

The Role of the Local Democracy Reporting Service

It also matters who tells these stories. The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS), funded by the BBC but operated through local media partners, exists to provide impartial coverage of councils and public institutions.

The purpose of the scheme is clear: to fill the vacuum left by shrinking local newsrooms and to ensure democratic scrutiny. That makes accuracy and neutrality all the more essential. But, when a Local Democracy Reporter describes a clearly party-organised protest as a “family-led” event, it risks giving readers an incomplete picture, however unintentionally, and weakens confidence in the very system designed to safeguard local transparency.

Parents Deserve Better than Party Spin

No one doubts the sincerity of the parents who fear for their children's safety. They deserve real credit for forcing the issue onto the agenda – and they deserve better than to see their efforts absorbed into a party's publicity machine. Turning a genuine community campaign into a political photo-op does a disservice to those who first raised the alarm and risks eroding confidence in both politicians and the press

Parents want crossings, not photo-calls – and leadership that delivers, rather than stages, safety. Politics on the pavement can serve a purpose, but when party spin overtakes sincerity, it risks leaving genuine community voices lost in the traffic.



You, Us, Me

An evening of meditative songs,
piano solos and readings from the
18th Century to the present day.

JONATHAN WILLIAMS: *Tenor*

KATE LEDGER: *Piano*

KEITH WAIT: *Reader*

St Mary's Church
SATURDAY
1 NOVEMBER
6.30pm

Refreshments from 6pm

This concert is free to
attend with a retiring
collection in aid of the
Bells Restoration Project

Inside Richmond's Policy and Performance Board: Polite, Polished, and Powerless

By James Knight

Richmond Council's **Policy and Performance Review Board** met on Tuesday evening to review a string of reports on environmental management, digital transformation and public services. The meeting was calm, courteous and competently chaired by Councillor Richard Warren, who guided the discussion with good humour and restraint. Officers were confident in their presentations, councillors polite in their questions, and every item proceeded with clockwork efficiency.

Yet what emerged from the evening was a portrait of a council fluent in praise but slower in the practice of delivery. There was no shortage of paperwork or strategy, but the test of whether these schemes are making a discernible difference to local life remained unanswered.

When AI Writes The Reports

The most revealing moment came during discussion of the Council's growing use of artificial intelligence. Sam Olson, the senior officer presenting the report, told councillors that part of her paper had itself been written with the help of an AI programme. "I would say no, but I did use it for a bit of help," she said when asked directly who had written the document. "It was a mixture of the two of us."

The remark was delivered lightly, almost as an aside, but its implications are profound. A formal policy paper, presented to elected members to guide decision-making, had been written in part by an algorithm. The officer explained that artificial intelligence had been used to "condense the report" and "put it into plain English." Her candour was disarming,



yet the admission fell awkwardly in a meeting dedicated to oversight and accountability. It will also strike an uneasy chord with many residents, especially those familiar with academic conventions, for whom undeclared assistance of this kind would be regarded as a serious breach of academic integrity; an act that undermines both authorship and trust.

The issue is not plagiarism in the narrow sense, but a widening gap between what is written and who is responsible for it. Councillors reading such reports will naturally assume they are assessing an officer's professional judgement, shaped by training, experience and duty of care. In reality, they may be engaging with the product of machine learning; text that mimics reason but cannot be questioned, challenged or held fully to account. Rather than easing the burden of bureaucracy, the use of AI in policy writing may therefore demand an even higher level of scrutiny, for what appears clear on paper may conceal an absence of human judgement behind

the words. It is a subject that the Liberal Democrat administration, eager to be seen as forward-looking, has been reluctant to address.

The Council has since expanded its use of artificial intelligence across several departments, including social care, customer services and administration. Officers described a range of potential benefits, from reducing clerical work to prioritising emails and summarising complex documents. The logic is efficiency; the risk is a quiet return to worklessness on a scale unseen since the 1930s. Residents may find that when their bins are not emptied, they can end up going around in circles with a chatbot whilst trying to report it. Efficiency may be the watchword, but when no one is accountable for the errors of an algorithm, efficiency begins to look like evasion.

Officers offered repeated assurances that new systems operate within secure data domains and that no confidential information leaves the Council's control. Yet the tone was curiously unreflective. There was no discussion of procurement oversight, cost transparency or ethical audit. One councillor raised the issue of accuracy and data bias, but the response again returned to procedure rather than principle.

For a borough that prides itself on its standards of governance, the admission that reports are now being co-written by artificial intelligence ought to prompt deeper reflection. Technology can assist, but it cannot be accountable. A machine may summarise, but it cannot explain why a recommendation was made or whose judgement lay behind it. In a culture already inclined towards polished presentation, the danger is that officers begin to produce prose that is faultless in tone and empty in accountability.

The Quiet Decay of Civic Basics

The evening's other major item was the long-running Community Toilet Scheme, a programme that pays cafés and shops to open their toilets to the public. It is now one of the few visible remnants of a once-comprehensive network of public conveniences.

Officer Saada Elmi told members: "I've been working with our communications team and the council to essentially promote the scheme to residents and the public." She explained that a new fold-out map and online campaign had been produced to raise awareness. "It took a lot of time to make it so I'm really proud of it," she said.

Her effort was acknowledged, but progress has been slow. Only seven new venues have joined the scheme since spring, while several have left because of management changes or closures. There are still significant gaps in coverage across Whitton, Teddington and Mortlake. Caroline Wren suggested that businesses should be allowed to choose whether to appear on Google Maps. Officers supported the idea, noting that smaller cafés sometimes feared being overwhelmed by public use.

A proposal to increase payments to participating businesses by two hundred pounds a year divided opinion. Councillor Katie Mansfield warned that "offering a twenty five per cent increase in something like this might feel a bit difficult in terms of comparison to what we're doing elsewhere," while Councillor Suzette Nicholson argued that "it is quite important to actually increase the payment if that means we're going to provide toilets to residents."

Officers agreed to review the proposal and return with a range of options. The new map, it later emerged, had already required correction: *Twickenham Cemetery* was placed within Twickenham ward rather than *Whitton and Heathfield*.

Public patience on this issue has worn thin. No permanent new public toilets have been built since the pandemic. The Liberal Democrat leadership has defended the scheme as an example of partnership working, but residents increasingly see it as an admission of retreat, a sign that the Council has outsourced a basic civic duty to the goodwill of small businesses.

Biodiversity and the Art of Self-Congratulation

The report on verge management produced a similar mix of earnest effort and political gloss. Charlotte Harris from *Habitats and Heritage* praised the Council's collaboration with local volunteers. They said the new mowing regime was showing a real positive effect on biodiversity. Officers described the verges as part of the borough's green corridors, linking parks and open spaces.



The presentation was thoughtful, but councillors stopped short of asking whether the results justify the public expense. In several areas, especially in the more working class areas of Hampton and Whitton the verges remain littered, undermining the policy's credibility with some. Residents have supported the principle of rewilding, yet many feel that the Council has allowed ecological rhetoric to replace ordinary upkeep. The Liberal Democrat administration has been quick to claim

moral credit for its environmental policies, but the results on the ground remain uneven and unsupervised.

The councillors also missed the elephant in the room. How regularly the grass is cut may be important, but the larger issue is why so many of the borough's verges are now covered in tarmac. A patch of asphalt may be easier to maintain, but it does nothing for biodiversity or civic pride. Perhaps it is time for the Council to be bolder – to get the jackhammer out, break them up and replant – so that the green is truly put back into Richmond.

Scrutiny Without Confrontation

The meeting itself was a study in procedural order. Chairman Richard Warren kept the discussion focused and inclusive, but the tone of the evening was one of review rather than inquiry. Councillors asked clarifying questions but few sought to test the assumptions behind the reports. Officers spoke of progress, but performance data were scarce and no external benchmarks were cited.

Scrutiny in Richmond has become courteous to the point of inertia. The Liberal Democrats, now well established in power, govern through consensus rather than challenge. The result is an administration that appears open but is rarely subject to high-quality in depth scrutiny. Reports are received, minutes approved, and recommendations noted, but the difficult questions; about cost, delay and accountability are too often shut down.

Great Scott – Great Value!

Set lunches can be great value, but sometimes one can feel that you're being fobbed off with slightly inferior fare that doesn't bear much resemblance to dishes on the a la carte menu... that's definitely not the case with **Scott's Richmond**. It currently offers



a weekday set lunch menu at £30 for two courses or £36 for three and having

checked it out recently, I can safely say that you are in for a treat. It has one of the most stunning interiors and lovely views of the river. What's more, the tables are comfortably set apart so you have an element of conversational privacy that is quite rare nowadays. The background music is understated, the right tone for the restaurant and at the perfect level: it's there, but it's not intrusive.



I started with a lovely glass of Nyetimber Rosé. It had notes of strawberry and cherry with a subtle hint of sweet spice and was the perfect way to study the menu. There is a choice of three dishes for each course and I chose the Puglian Burrata. It was deliciously unctuous, served on a bed of pesto, with fresh basil leaves and baby plum tomatoes and tiny rings of pickled sweet onion. My husband chose Grilled Cornish mackerel with mojo rojo (a red pepper sauce), and tomatillo salsa. He declared it to be beautifully fresh, delicately spiced and with a really tasty skin too.



Of course, having seen that wild mushroom risotto was on the menu as a main course, my husband needed no persuasion as he's a real risotto fan. He said it was rich and creamy and it

was polished off very fast indeed (probably in case I asked to taste some). I opted for pan-fried fillet of Chalkstream trout with pickled cucumber, trout roe and chive butter sauce. I was asked whether I'd like the trout served pink or well done - I chose pink and I'm so glad I did. My trout was seriously delicious, cooked to perfection and the sauce was the perfect finishing touch to the dish.

Pierre, the general manager, urged us to try the Kimchi fried Brussels sprouts, with edamame and sesame seeds, as a side dish. It sounded so unusual that we couldn't resist trying it...and we were so glad we took his advice. He said that even sprout haters (which we are definitely not) are won over by it, and I can see why. The kimchi sauce paired so well with the slightly charred sprouts and I'm inspired to try making something similar myself very soon. I chose a gem heart salad with champagne and herb vinaigrette that complimented my trout perfectly without overpowering the delicate sauce. It was beautifully presented with sprigs of herbs and reminiscent of a Caesar salad - crispy garlic croutons and creamy dressing with a few more slices of the delicious pickled sweet onion.



I enjoyed a refreshing glass of Assyrtiko - a Greek white wine that Pierre suggested would pair well with the trout. It's worth mentioning that Scott's has an extensive selection of wines by the glass, starting from just £10. My husband chose to enjoy plenty of sparkling water with his meal, but he could have enjoyed a non-alcoholic cocktail or alcohol free sparkling wine.

For dessert, my husband opted for apple crumble tart with vanilla ice cream. Another rather clever and beautifully presented dish that was packed with chunks of apple. I was tempted by the Ticklemore goat's cheese roasted honey and thyme fig and it was the only slight let down of the whole meal as the cheese was rather too chilled to be able to 'open up' the flavour, but it was served with a warmed fig and a selection of nice biscuits.



The other lovely thing about Scott's is that you don't feel hurried in any way. The whole vibe is relaxed, yet very classy with a mix of people enjoying quick business lunches, families with tiny babies and the ubiquitous 'ladies who lunch'. Service is excellent, and highly professional, too.

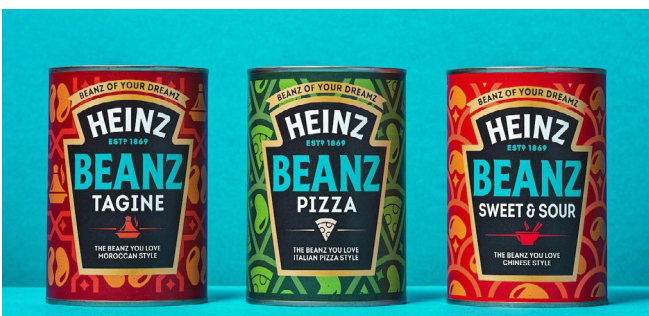
Pierre told us that the Christmas decorations will be in place soon and based on previous years, they promise to be rather spectacular. The special set lunch for the Christmas period is £36 for two courses (£42 for three) and will be available from November 10.

October Food And Drink News

I've recently tried some really clever ways to produce spectacularly good dishes by simply adding a ready-made sphere of spices to your dish. They are appropriately called **Flavour Bombs**, as that is exactly what they are! Not just a spice blend, they're a complete cooking solution, packed with carefully selected herbs, spices, onions, garlic, tomatoes and aromatics that make a sauce, curry, broth or consomé. There's no need for loads of ingredients or hours of prep. Just add a Flavour Bomb to water and



meat or veggies; no chopping, blitzing, or soaking required. Flavours include: Mexican Birria, Vietnamese Pho, West African Jollof, Guyanese Coconut Curry, Jamaican Curry Goat and Cajun seafood Boil. They are all ambient and each tube contains two Flavour Bombs, (each feeds 2-3). Just add a Flavour Bomb to water and your choice of meat or veggies, no chopping, blitzing, or soaking required. From around £7.50 a pack from Delli or Amazon.



Talking of flavour, **Heinz** has recently spiced up its classic baked beans and launched three new flavours of beans. **Pizza Beanz, Tagine Beanz and Sweet & Sour Beanz**. These have joined the existing Beanz Flavours range, including BBQ, Chilli, and Cheesy Beanz, and are available at £1.40 a can from Ocado.

A great hot lunch idea - this time from **unearthed®**: a ready-made **Croque Monsieur** (Ready to cook toasted sandwich with béchamel sauce, sliced ham and Emmental cheese). There's also a **Croque Fromage** (with béchamel sauce, Emmental cheese and raclette cheese) that's ideal for vegetarians. Each is 140g and can be popped into the airfryer or oven for a delicious snack. £3.00 from Sainsbury's



Have you tried **Lutenitsa**? It's really delicious, similar to ajvar - a roasted red pepper, aubergine and tomato dip - but this is a Bulgarian staple, enjoyed for generations. It has the most amazing depth: rich & smoky and a natural sweetness. It's made in Bulgaria, using the best local produce: roasted red peppers and aubergine, tomato paste (100% Bulgarian tomatoes), sunflower oil, salt, cumin, black pepper. No added sugar or preservatives. It's also vegan, gluten-free and with none of the main 14 allergens. I really enjoy it as a dip, on bread with crumbled feta, with grilled meats, added to any "picky bits" or cheese boards. It's available online from £4.99 rilabalkangoods.com

BOSH!, one of the UK's most influential plant-based food brands, has introduced eight prepared meals and pizzas to Tesco stores, a major milestone for Henry Firth and Ian Theasby, the best-selling cookbook authors and co-founders of BOSH!. BOSH! has 3.5 million social media followers and this range is inspired by recipes from its massively popular channels, is plant-based, packed with protein and packed with flavour. The launch range includes: N'duja Sourdough Pizza; Margherita Sourdough Pizza; Creamy No-Duja Pasta; Goan Chickpea Curry; Creamy Mac & Greens; Teriyaki Mushroom Noodles; Hearty Vegetable Lasagne and Ultimate Bean Chilli. From £3.95 to £4.75 each pack serves one.



Now the days are getting colder and the evening drawing in, red wines are starting to come into their own. I've recently enjoyed a really delicious red from **Tesco Finest - Montagne Saint-Émilion**. The best classic grapes from Bordeaux have been harvested from Montagne Saint Emilion vineyards on the right bank of Bordeaux's Gironde's estuary. This smooth, full bodied red wine has been carefully crafted to obtain the typical blackcurrant, cedar wood and savoury spice flavours of Montagne Saint Emilion. With local grapes picked on the Right Bank of Bordeaux, it's produced by Yvon Mau and is an Appellation Montagne-Saint-Émilion Contrôlée Grand Vin de Bordeaux. It's £11 a bottle but on special offer for Clubcard holders - 25% off on purchases of six bottles...it's worth stocking up for Christmas.

Regular readers will know that I'm a loyal supporter of our English sparkling wines, and I was delighted to discover recently that one can purchase wines produced by **Plumpton College**, the Centre of Excellence in Wine Education for the United Kingdom. There are three different dry sparklings available and I'd urge you to consider one or two - either as Christmas gifts, or just to spoil yourself. **Plumpton**

Estate Brut Rosé NV is an award-winning sparkling rosé made using the traditional method of blending Pinot Meunier, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, on lees in the bottle for at least two years. Its eye-catching pink hue is the result of an added splash of Pinot Noir, enhancing the visual appeal and contributing to its refined red berry character.

Plumpton Estate Brut Classic NV is a classic blend of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier made using the Traditional Method. The grapes are hand-picked and whole bunched pressed at the Plumpton winery. And finally the **Plumpton Estate Brut Reserve** is a unique blend of Reisling, Seyval Blanc, Pinot Blanc and Regner. The base wine is fermented in tank, then again in bottle, to capture the bubbles. Prices are from just over £25 a bottle from store. plumpton.ac.uk



Tickle Your Pickle with Shedletskys

Pickle and hot sauce specialists [Shedletskys](#), founded by husband and wife duo James Cooper and Natalie Preston, have just launched their debut cookbook ***Tickle Your Pickle with Shedletskys How to make (and eat) handmade pickles, ferments and brines***. It's a lovely hardback published by **Ryland, Peters & Small** at £16.99. We hear a great deal nowadays about how good for us fermented foods are, and this book has all the tools you need to start making your own at home. You can discover 65 recipes that put handmade pickles centre-stage, from classic deli-style dill-pickled cukes and Italian giardiniera to Korean kimchi and South American curtido. Here's a recipe to 'tickle your fancy' and tempt you to invest in the book.



Sweet/sour sumac pickled onions Makes 1 large jar

“One of Nat’s foundational food memories is her dad’s pickled onions. (Another is liberating a ‘particularly tasty looking and large Spanish onion’ from her parent’s kitchen and eating it in secret in her room over several days, but that’s another story.) This isn’t her dad’s recipe – which is an absolutely classic British interpretation of a pickled onion. Instead, we’ve given our onions a sweet and sour vibe and vaguely Middle Eastern spin through the use of some fruit molasses and a healthy hit of citrus-sharp sumac. The result is something that is as good peppering up a cheese sandwich as it is cutting through a filled pita.”

- 500 g red onions (about 6 onions)
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 350 ml red wine vinegar
- 100 ml balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons sour cherry or pomegranate molasses
- 2 garlic cloves, sliced
- 100 g brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon sumac
- 1/2 tablespoon black peppercorns

1. Peel and slice the red onions, retaining the bottom ends and outer skins of two of the onions (these help colour the brine and bring a pleasing vibrant pinkness to this pickle). Thinly slice the onions into half moons. Place these in a colander in the sink and toss with the salt. Leave to drain for about 10 minutes while you prepare the brine.
2. Place the red wine and balsamic vinegars, molasses, garlic, sugar, sumac and peppercorns into a saucepan and gently heat until the sugar has dissolved and the brine is just starting to simmer.
3. Turn off the heat, then add the drained onions. Allow them to soften in the residual heat of the brine, stirring occasionally.
4. Place the reserved onion ends and skins into a large sterilized jar, followed by the salted sliced onions from the brine. Pour in any additional brine, making sure the onions are completely submerged. Seal the jar and set aside to cool.

Because this pickle is partially cooked, it will be ready to eat in a couple of hours, but leaving it in the fridge for a couple of days makes it even tastier. Stored in the fridge, these pickles will be good to eat for at least a month and potentially longer.



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She went back...

By Deep Patel

~ Life Through the Eyes of a Twickenham Shopkeeper ~

For anyone who has been into my shop, it's hard to miss the posters I have plastered around the place telling the world about kinder alternatives to poisons and pesticides, things they can use from their own homes to stop these creatures without the cruelty of killing another life, all in the name of good-karma and to help make the world a better place for all of us...by saving one little life at a time (all lives matter after all). Sometimes, your one act of kindness can be so powerful, that it can even help change things in your own life, as I found out from one customer this week...

It was Thursday morning and I had just sat back down after completing a big restock the chocolate bars (autumn and winter are the peak seasons for chocolate sales, as it gets colder and darker...people tend to treat themselves more, well at least in Twickenham). The next person that came into my shop seemed like she was in a real hurry. She ran in and placed a packet of mints onto my counter and threw down a £1 coin saying "keep the change, I've got to run". Before I could say thank you, she disappeared out of my shop door and straight onto the 267 bus that had just pulled into the bus stop at that very moment. I felt quite unsettled myself, maybe it was her energy so I decided to play some soft chanting music in shop and lit up an incense stick to help re-energise the atmosphere again.

The day progressed as always, and I was gazing out of my shop window ten minutes later and I couldn't believe what I saw. The same lady getting off a bus across the road and hurry back past my shop as if to go back to her home. I began to wonder...that was a quick "important" meeting? I went to my shop door and watched as she disappeared into one of the side street where she is a resident. I thought something was odd. I was deep in thought and at that point the shop phone rang and it was our biscuit supplier trying to convince me that I needed to buy three cases of the new raspberry chocolate digestive biscuits (I got one case in the end). Then I got side tracked in the routine of daily shop-life (it's not as glamorous as one may think). Anyway the day was fast becoming the night, and I was making lists of items to order for the coming delivery before the 7:00pm deadline.

It was then I saw her again, the same lady who was rushing-off twice earlier, one way and then the other. She seemed a lot calmer and was waiting at the bus stop outside my shop. I smiled and waited for her to finish her phone call (which seemed like it was taking forever to be frank). Then I asked her where she was rushing to this morning and she laughed and pointed at my poster in the window. It was the poster I have that tells people to NEVER leave an injured flightless bird on the ground in an open box as it will simply get eaten by a fox or mauled by a cat, instead to bring it indoors in a closed box with holes for air and to keep it safe, or at least inside a locked shed or garage away from predators. So I asked the woman what my poster had to do with her rushing back home within ten minutes of her leaving in the first place. She told me she was rushing for a bus to go for a flying lesson (she was training at a flight school and it was her first day). I told her that was nice, but asked her how it relates to her rushing back home within ten minutes of leaving this morning? She laughed again and said that as she was leaving her home, she saw a pigeon struggling to fly. It was sat on her front lawn and was looking at her as if it was asking her for help. She told me she had ignored it as she was already late for her flight lesson but then as she was getting on the bus outside my shop, she saw the poster I had put up (here below)



She said she got on the bus and couldn't stop thinking about how she had left the flightless bird open and vulnerable...then whilst getting on the bus, she saw my poster and thought about the "good karma" part and decided to get off the bus the next stop and get back to the bird in an attempt to contain it into a box safely and keep it in her shed so the box would not be torn open by a cat or fox...so she did that and then contacted London Wildlife Protection (she had taken a photo of my poster with her phone a few days before "in case she would ever need it"). London Wildlife Protection aim to rehabilitate the bird to return it to nature; whereas many vets will simply euthanise too fast as they cannot hold wild birds in their surgeries for long. It was getting late and I had to get back to my shop work to-do list, so I thought to leave the woman at the bus stop outside my shop and carry on with my to-do job list, but before I did, I had to ask her how she felt having missed her flying lesson. I said to her "so you gave up your wings today to save the pigeons life". She replied to me "no, actually the pigeon saved my life by making me go back". I looked at her very puzzled and unsure completely intrigued by her statement. I asked her to explain how that could even be true. So she told me that after she went back to help the bird she missed her flight lesson only to find that the same afternoon the 2-seater training aircraft that she was going to be having her lesson on fell to the ground soon after take-off due to some type of fault and the other training pilot broke his arm as a result, but it could have been a lot worse of course. The woman went on to tell me that if it wasn't for my poster and the "good-karma" kindness to creature tips she had seen on my shop window, she may not have gone back for that bird and "left it to nature" but then she said she too may have been "left to nature" and become the one with a broken arm today, or potentially much worse too. She thanked me for teaching her the value of kindness to creatures through my poster and said that she never really believed in "good-karma", but today she said life taught her something different and made her believe. She thanked me and then her bus came and off she went for an evening out with her friends. I took a slow walk back to my shop counter and sat down on my stool thinking to myself...it's days like this that make me so proud of being a Twickenham shopkeeper and serving my customers in perhaps more ways than one...

Remember...

"You may feel like you are saving them...but maybe they are actually saving you?"

MY CREATURE-KINDNESS TIP - STOP MICE KINDLY FOR GOOD KARMA:

Choose humane LIVE CAPTURE mouse & rat traps (available online or at Meet & Deep News) and release them back in 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"

Vardy v Rooney: The Wagatha Christie Trial

by Liv Hennessy

Putney Theatre Company at the Putney Arts Theatre

I was, as my footie f(r)iends say, “over the moon” to go along to Putney Arts to see a production based on a court case that was relentlessly covered by the media at the time, a trial that itself became a piece of theatre. I was ready to put on my strip. But for which side?

Directed in great detail by Owen Thomas James, who also designed the effective soundtracks, this was a polished production reimagining a complex account of true events. Simon Crump’s carefully chosen simple design and the sensitive lighting by Martin Jessop set the scene.



Dina Fahmy, throwing herself into the role of Vardy, set the pace of the drama. In the presence of Coleen Rooney, Rebekah Vardy was put in the spotlight and cross-examined ruthlessly by two barristers David Sherborne and Hugh Tomlinson KC. Played by Russell Hughes and Roger Blitz respectively, each were seemingly overpowered and overwhelmed by Coleen’s verbal onslaught.



The easy arrogance of PR girl Caroline Watt was convincingly played by Kelsey Norris, in a slinky performance with expressive body language.

This drama was elevated and carried along by two soccer pundits, Jeff and Jem. In a humorous *Match of the Day* commentary, they reported proceedings accordingly. At one point, Jeff, played by Hubert MacGreevy, became a convincing Wayne Rooney in the witness stand.

Slightly self-conscious in her ‘WAG’ outfit, Hannah Turner excelled in the role of Coleen Rooney. (Roshaan Saulnier’s Jem was vibrant and ironically funny. The two worked skilfully with their onstage chemistry.) Despite Rooney’s captivating verbal performance in the spotlight, the second act slowed the pace before it led to the only conclusion it could. The verdict from Mrs Justice Steyn was a fitting end to Hennessy’s witty and relevant piece of writing. The judge, Mrs Justice Steyn, was played by a different guest star every performance so it’s a pity they all can’t be credited.



Vardy v Rooney: The Wagatha Christie Trial proved to be another noteworthy play by the Putney Theatre Company, which should surely promote its team up the league tables.

Read Heather Moulson’s review at www.markaspen.com/2025/10/19/vardy-rooney

Photography by Colin Rogal

Sixtieth Anniversary in Music

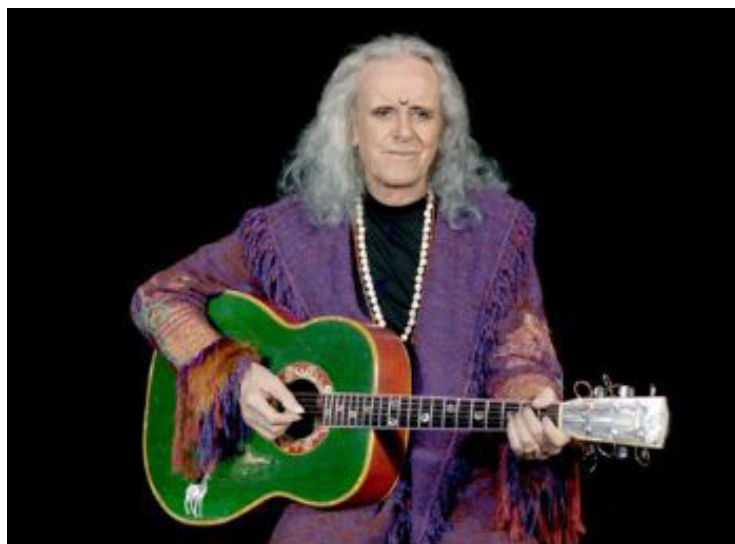
Donovan at Richmond Theatre

It's good to see a job through, isn't it? Having had the pleasure of [meeting and interviewing](#) Donovan, an influential musician who embarked on his career in the 1960s, it was good to be in the theatre to see his show, celebrating his sixty years in the business, now on a short European tour. It had a certain pleasing roundness to it

A pleasingly wide range of ages formed the enthusiastic and vocal sell-out audience to this celebration, some of whom had travelled considerable distance for the sole purpose. One chap I spoke to, originally from Arkansas, interrupted his own tour of European cities, and had flown in from Prague that morning having secured a ticket.

The stage was set for a solo artist, simply a stool to sit on, a mic and two monitors. Any additions would have been superfluous, as this is material intended to be delivered in a straightforward way. The lighting, however, was a little puzzling.

Simple colours, cycling with each song, and the use of a more natural hue for the stories worked, but the length of blackouts between the numbers was disconcerting. Sound, on the other hand, had the measure of it, with good balance between the vocals, harmonica playing and the guitar, which sounded majestic.



All the hits were there to sing along to, a practice which Donovan encouraged and appreciated, and which was enjoined with considerable gusto in places. However, it is always good to hear the original artist perform and the likes of *Colours*, *Jennifer Juniper*, *Catch the Wind* and, of course, *Hurdy Gurdy Man* itself, naturally went down a storm.

Donovan's playing, both on guitar and harmonica, was as fluent and natural as ever and these songs are clearly meaningful to both him and his audience, and that came across in spades.

Ever the raconteur, the musical content was interlaced with tales of adventures, mishaps and near misses over the years, all delivered with a sense of innocent wonderment and sometimes amazement at being associated with the stars of the day.

What an excellent way to spend an autumnal Sunday afternoon, a wonderfully nostalgic peep back into my own youthful memories, stimulated as they were by these familiar strains.

Read Vince Francis' review at www.markaspen.com/2025/10/14/donovan-60

Photography by Jaume Caldentey and Donovan Private Archive

Carmen

by Georges Bizet, libretto by Meilhac and Halevy

The English National Opera at the London Coliseum

The lady in the next seat had never been to an opera before. We chuckled over the warning that there was to be male nudity, “raw masculinity, vulnerability and death”. In the event, he was barely visible in the gloom ... smoking and sex were not too much of a problem either. Masculinity came with very fit soldiers and smugglers playing up their stage testosterone; enjoyable antics to enliven things.



Calixto Bieito's revival production concentrates on the psychological drama by doing away with scenery, replacing it with a black backdrop. It may be set in Franco's Spain, although references are sparse. In the interval the lady asked, “Why the children?” “Why so much smoking?” The action is around a cigarette factory, which was not evident, cigarette workers were all female and there were crèches for children. (Marlborough Primary School children's chorus sang and acted excellently.) The smugglers' camp was battered Mercedes cars where actors slammed doors, slapped bonnets, and passed around cigarettes and whisky and wild wild women.



Carmen is more than just jealousy, it's about attachment and loss. John Finon singing Don Jose was variable in power and delivery. Jose is a damaged man, too close to his mother. Carmen is an escape from responsibility, but he cannot cope with losing her. But Carmen is attracted to the sort of man who treats her badly. Sexually free, and strong-willed, Carmen's fate is predestined. (The lively tarot card scene stole the show.)

Conductor Celia Cafiero started with freneticism, then lapsed into a utilitarian pace, although ably supporting the singers. Ava Dodd's Micaela was the most believable character, as the connection between Carmen and Don Jose was visibly cold – maybe the intimacy coach has been over busy. Niamh O'Sullivan, singing Carmen, came across as less than fiery, but mainly confident in the lower registers. She looked the part of Carmen, but lacked spirit. As the superstar bullfighter Escamillo, Cory McGee was again more rounded in lower notes.

This production lacks a lot, but it's very enjoyable and entertaining. The lady next to me had an excellent evening, and was definitely hooked. That's how ENO used to build an audience. This *Carmen* would have definitely been enhanced by being sung in French. Surtitles have been a world wide success, making opera intelligible to everyone. With ENO's reorganisation, financial emasculation and relocation, it may be time for the sacred cow of English language performances to be slaughtered. Is this the Emperor's New Clothes?

Read Michael Rowlands' review at www.markaspen.com/2025/10/10/carmen-eno-25

Photography by Ellie Kurttz

Death on the Nile

by Agatha Christie, adapted by Ken Ludwig

Fiery Angel at Richmond Theatre, then on tour until 23rd May 2026

Entertaining and eventful, *Death on the Nile* is a real crowd pleaser. In this adaptation, a group of donors to the British Museum join an expedition to return a sarcophagus to its home in Egypt. It keeps the essential elements of Christie's story, yet remains a genuine mystery.

Lucy Bailey's nicely paced direction builds up the tension from a gentle love story to a murder, with lots of excitement in between. Grudges are revealed, guns are shot, relationships form, and fraud is suspected.



The stylish and ingenious set takes us seamlessly from rainy English station to Egypt via a party at the museum. Seen from the luxurious river cruise ship, gazing across the land from a breezy upper deck, gathering in the salon, or peeking inside the cabins, the atmospheric lighting creates the sultry tropical landscape which is the perfect setting for Christie's whodunnit.



Mark Hadfield portrays a recognisable precise Hercule Poirot, but makes him very much his own character, humorous, kind, but still clearly making the most of the little grey cells. Steering the plot, he slowly uncovers the tensions that exist between the characters, gently trying to guide them away from the inevitable. Glynis Barber's aspiring creative Salome Otterbourne, abandoning her pushy mother role as she latches onto Terence Wilton's cynical national treasure Septimus Troy, is really enjoyable. What wonderful names Christie chose for her characters!

Libby Alexander-Cooper and Esme Hough charm and loathe each other appropriately, as

Linnet and Jacqueline the apparent rivals for the love of Nye Occomore's Simon Doyle, providing some high emotion and an impressive fight scene. Camilla Anvar and Nicholas Prasad are charming as the ingénue lovers getting together in the midst of mayhem, and then there's the inevitable salon scene as Poirot gathers the remaining characters together to reveal the murderer and the motive.



And then there are the costumes, glorious dresses for the young rivals, - who could doubt that Linnet would successfully seduce her friend's fiancé in that outfit. Rosalie's understated clothes, glorious wafty creations and a splendid hat for Salome, Bob Barrett's convincing diplomat, enhanced with a sash at dinner, and everyone period perfect, *Death on the Nile* is a stylish delight.

Read Polly Davies' review at www.markaspen.com/2025/10/09/death-nile-rt

Photography by Manuel Harlan

SHAKESPEARE'S THE WINTER'S TALE

at the Mary Wallace Theatre

October 25th- November 1st

"A sad tale's best for winter..." lines spoken by a child in THE Winter's Tale. And it looks to be a sad tale indeed when King Leontes falsely accuses his wife, Hermione, of adultery and, as a consequence of his ungovernable jealousy, discord, banishment and death follow. Only, after many years and in another country, do re-birth, reconciliation and forgiveness turn the tale into a happier one.



Rarely performed but displaying all of Shakespeare's masterly themes of high drama, tragedy, romance, humour and bucolic idyll, and drawn together into a truly miraculous happy ending, this tale for a winter's evening will surely warm your hearts.



THE WINTER'S TALE plays at the Mary Wallace Theatre, on Twickenham's Embankment from October 25th till November 1st

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www.kettnerconcerts.co.uk

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St Mary's University

St Mary's Placed in London's Best Place to Live



St Mary's University, London, is located in the best place to live in London, [according to The Telegraph](#).

London Borough Richmond upon Thames, home to St Mary's Strawberry Hill Campus, topped the newspaper's ranking of all 32 London boroughs, praising its green spaces, community spirit, and quality of life.

The borough, which encompasses Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, and Teddington, is where St Mary's students' study, live, and socialise. The area scored top points across categories including *Good Vibes* and *Culture and Activities*, placing first and second – along with its abundance of parks and low crime rate.

St Mary's prides itself in offering a London Oasis to students, and according to *The Telegraph*, "so leafy is Richmond that you could think you are in the countryside." The borough's 130 parks, commons, and

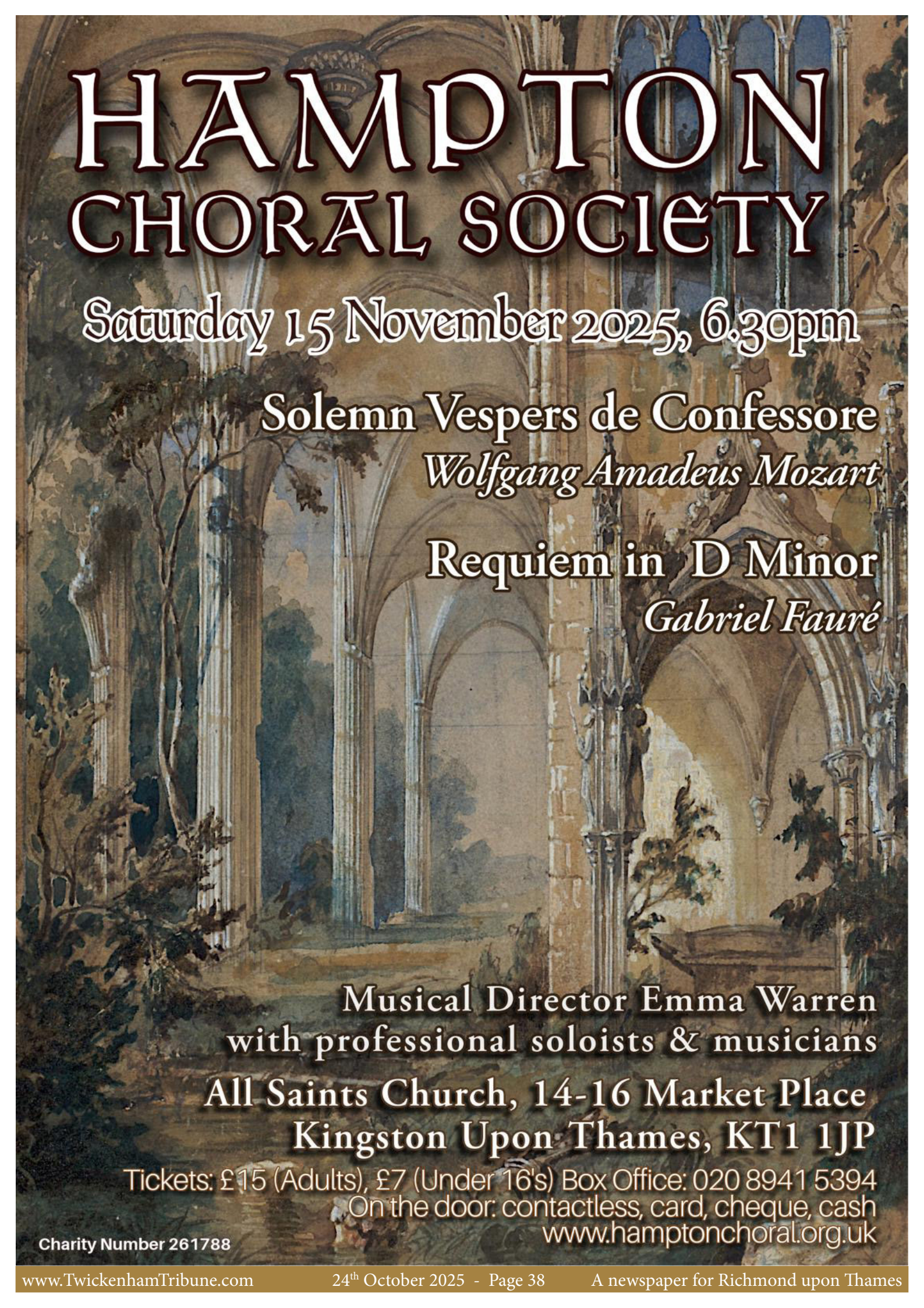
woodlands - including Richmond Park, Bushy Park, and Marble Hill Park - make it one of London's greenest areas.

The area offers riverside pubs, historic landmarks, and artistic heritage. The borough's picturesque scenery has inspired artists for centuries - its views famously painted by J.M.W. Turner - and more recently served as the filming location for the hit TV series *Ted Lasso*.

The Telegraph described Richmond as "fully deserving of the top spot as London's finest borough," noting its blend of green open space, cultural life, and welcoming atmosphere. It's a description that perfectly matches the St Mary's experience - where students enjoy the benefits of London living within a safe, leafy, close-knit community.



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England great Emily Scarratt announces retirement from rugby

England centurion and Red Roses legend Emily Scarratt has today announced her retirement from playing rugby at all levels.

Scarratt's extraordinary career has spanned more than 17 years at the top of the game, after making her England debut in 2008 against the USA – the team against whom she also played her last test.

Since then, she has earned 119 caps, won two Rugby World Cups, lifted 11 Six Nations titles, represented Great Britain at the 2016 Rio Olympics as captain, and claimed Commonwealth bronze with England Sevens.

In 2019, she was crowned World Rugby Women's Player of the Year.

She ends her career as the player who has scored the most points in Red Roses history (754) through 54 tries, 158 conversions and 56 penalties. She is third on the all-time England women's caps list and on the all time tries scored tally.

Just weeks ago, Scarratt became the first English player – male or female – to play in five Rugby World Cups, a fitting final chapter for one of the sport's all-time greats.

A world-class centre and inspirational leader, Scarratt's blend of skill, composure, and consistency made her one of the most respected and admired players in world rugby.

She began her playing career aged five at Leicester Forest and went on to play for Lichfield and Loughborough Lightning.

Off the field, she has become a familiar and influential voice through her media work with TNT Sports and her popular podcast The Good, The Scaz & The Rugby.

While stepping away from playing, Scarratt will remain part of the rugby family.

Having already begun her coaching journey with Loughborough Lightning in Premiership Women's Rugby, she will take on a specialist coaching and mentoring role with the RFU this season, supporting player development across the England pathways and helping nurture the next generation of talent.

Emily Scarratt said:

"It's been the greatest privilege to wear the England shirt and to represent my country for so many years. Rugby has given me everything; incredible teammates, memories, and experiences I'll carry with me forever.

"I still love the game, but the time feels right to step away. You don't always get the chance in sport

to make that decision for yourself, and I feel so lucky to do so on my own terms, proud of everything I've been part of.

"From my first cap in 2008 to walking out in front of more than 80,000 people at a World Cup final, the journey has been incredible. To have witnessed and played a part in the transformation of women's rugby from amateur to professional is something I'm immensely proud of.

"I want to say a huge thank you to my family; my Mum, my Dad and my brother Joe for their support right from the start – from playing at Leicester Forest all the way to the Allianz Stadium, you have been amazing.

"To all those who have supported me from my teachers, to my coaches and teammates at my first club through to Lichfield, Loughborough Lightning and England – thank you for everything. Thank you too to the amazing fans of women's rugby who have grown and grown in numbers and who have always been part of what makes playing for England so special.

"While it's the right moment to stop playing, I'm really excited to stay involved with the RFU and to help shape the future of the game. The women's game is in an amazing place, and I'm proud to still be part of its journey."

Head Coach John Mitchell said:

"Emily is a once-in-a-generation player. Her quality, her calmness under pressure, and her ability to lead by example set the standard for everyone around her.

"There was no better example of this than the role she played during the recent World Cup, where she added immense value off the field, despite not playing as much as she might have hoped for – that is just the kind of special person that she is.

"She's had a huge impact on the Red Roses and on women's rugby globally, and we're thrilled she'll continue to share that experience through a different role."

RFU CEO Bill Sweeney said:

"Emily's contribution to English rugby cannot be overstated – on and off the field she has been a model professional, a leader, and a role model for thousands of girls who have picked up the ball because of her.

"We're delighted that she'll remain part of the England Rugby family in the season ahead and continue to help shape its future."



Gallagher and Premiership Women's Rugby announce multi-year partnership

- Gallagher has signed a multi-year deal that sees the insurance broking and risk management company become a Principal Partner for three years until the end of the 2027-28 season
- Through this partnership, Gallagher will support the growth of women's rugby by providing leadership, coaching and community development opportunities on and off the pitch



Gallagher, the insurance broking and risk management company, has today announced a three-year deal to become the Official Insurance Partner of Premiership Women's Rugby (PWR), strengthening its long-standing commitment to supporting rugby at every level, from grassroots to the professional game.

Building on its eight-year relationship with PREM Rugby, and its partnerships with the Women's Rugby World Cup, and New Zealand Rugby, including the Black Ferns, this new alliance marks another significant step in Gallagher's ambition to empower the next generation of rugby talent.

As a proud partner of PWR, Gallagher will support the growth of women's rugby both on and off the pitch by creating leadership, coaching and community development opportunities that mirror the company's own principles and culture. Rugby's core values – integrity, passion, respect, and teamwork – align perfectly with Gallagher's, and continue to guide how the company supports clients, colleagues, and communities every day.

As the women's game continues to surge following a record-breaking World Cup, Gallagher's partnership with PWR provides a powerful platform to create pathways for women and girls in sport. Gallagher has already launched successful initiatives in this space including the High Performance Academy, which is a global development and leadership programme, run by World Rugby and Gallagher, that focuses on increasing the number of female coaches and leaders in high-performance rugby roles.

Plus earlier in the year the firm launched the Gallagher Touchline Academy, a free rugby teaching programme, created in partnership with Premiership Rugby clubs, designed to upskill 2,000 teachers by 2028 to shape the next generation of rugby players.

Sarah Griffiths, Director of Marketing & Communications at Gallagher said:

"The growth of women's rugby is one of the most exciting stories in sport and we are delighted to support PWR as it continues to inspire players and fans across the country."

This is a partnership that reflects our belief in equality, empowerment and teamwork – values that sit at the heart of both Gallagher and the game. Just as we help our clients face their future with confidence, we are looking forward to supporting the growth of the women's game and building on the incredible legacy created by the Red Roses this summer."

Genevieve Shore, Executive Chair of Premiership Women's Rugby, commented:

"I am thrilled to welcome Gallagher into the PWR family at such a pivotal time for the growth of women's rugby. Gallagher has proven over many years that it is a steadfast supporter of rugby and has played a huge part in the game's success over recent years."

I am certain that bringing that energy to PWR will give us the perfect platform to capitalise on the success of the World Cup and continue to grow the women's game and inspire future generations to pick up a rugby ball."

Sarah Hunter, England's most capped player, former Loughborough Lightning and a Gallagher Ambassador, added:

"It's brilliant for women's rugby to welcome Gallagher as a Principal Partner of PWR. The firm's support couldn't come at a more exciting time as the game goes from strength to strength following the success of the Red Roses this summer."

Evidenced by its partnership portfolio, Gallagher truly wants to be part of the journey and shares a common passion for empowering women and girls in rugby on and off the pitch. By partnering with PWR, Gallagher can keep inspiring the next generation to dream big and believe that anything is possible."



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McGuigan to Join England Coaching Team

England Rugby has today confirmed that Byron McGuigan will join Steve Borthwick's coaching team for the upcoming 2025 Quilter Nations Series.

McGuigan, currently defence coach at Sale Sharks, will support the England setup in a combined role, joining the national team during the international windows of the 2025/26 season while continuing his club duties with Sale.

In his England role, McGuigan will work closely with assistant coach Andrew Strawbridge on the collision area, helping to develop players' contact skills. He will also focus on the back three, sharing his experience as a former international winger to help enhance their skills and tactical understanding.

"Byron is a knowledgeable and driven coach with a real passion for improving players," said Borthwick.

"He has an excellent understanding of the game, both as an international player and now as a coach. I'm looking forward to the impact he'll make during the autumn."

McGuigan made over 100 appearances for Sale Sharks during his playing career and earned 10 caps for Scotland. He was appointed defence coach at Sale in November 2024 and earlier this year was part of England's successful summer tour of Argentina and the USA.

"It was a huge privilege to be involved during the summer, and I'm excited to be back to contribute to the team," said McGuigan.

"I'm very grateful to Sale for supporting me in taking on this opportunity alongside my club role. It's a fantastic chance to continue developing as a coach while contributing to both teams."

England begin their 2025 Quilter Nations Series campaign on Saturday 1 November, when they host Australia at Allianz Stadium, Twickenham (kick-off 3.10pm), followed by matches against Fiji, New Zealand, and Argentina.



Dasilva signs new Brentford contract

Written by Brentford Football Club

Josh Dasilva signs new Brentford deal; the midfielder's contract expired over the summer but, having remained at the club to complete his rehab from injury, he has extended his stay with the Bees; head coach Keith Andrews: *"We want to get him back on the grass because, if we get him back to the level he was at, he's going to be a major asset for us"*



Josh Dasilva has signed a new contract with Brentford until the end of the season, with a club option of an extra year.

Dasilva's contract expired this summer, but the midfielder has remained at the club to complete his rehab after suffering a significant knee ligament injury in February 2024, and has now extended his stay in west London.

Brentford head coach Keith Andrews said: *"I've been keen to get this done and had discussions with Phil Giles around it, stressing the importance of Josh to the group. He's someone that I've involved a lot around the next chapter of where we're going with the club and the steps we need to make."*

"Josh is someone who really understands Brentford Football Club and he's a really intelligent young man who cares about the club - I don't think we should forget that. But, ultimately, we want to get him back on the grass because, if we get him back to the level he was at, he's going to be a major asset for us."

After 12 years at Arsenal's Academy, Dasilva joined Brentford as a 19-year-old, signing a four-year contract in August 2018.

The 2019/20 campaign was a breakout season for the midfielder. He was an important cog in the Bees midfield, playing all but four games in the Championship, and contributed 10 goals towards the club's run to the Championship play-off final, before defeat to Fulham at Wembley Stadium.

He was missing from the team for the best part of a year from March 2021 with a hip injury but, freshly recovered and with a full pre-season under his belt, Dasilva featured in 36 of Brentford's 38 Premier League games in 2022/23.

Dasilva's injury problems continued with a hamstring problem in his first game of 2023/24, which kept him out for four months, then, after just four further appearances back, he suffered an ACL rupture in training in February 2024.

The 27-year-old has been recovering at the club since then and will remain with the Bees for an eighth season.



London celebrates success of Community Based Electrical Recycling Projects

Lancaster West Neighbourhood Team, Lewisham, Richmond Upon Thames, Southwark and Wandsworth increased local recycling, resulting in:

- 98 new small electrical recycling collection points installed across five areas of London, making it easier for nearly 550,000 households to recycle
- Thousands of small electricals collected, weighing 130 tonnes at recycling points, with many items repaired for re-use or recycled



Five London based projects, funded from the Material Focus Electrical Recycling Fund, have successfully run individual community based small electrical recycling projects throughout 2024 and into 2025 with outstanding results. 540,000 households across the five London boroughs were able to make use of new local sites for recycling small electricals.

Across the five projects, thousands of small electrical items were collected, weighing over 130 TONNES of material and were either repaired for re-use or recycled. The projects were allocated over £254,000 funding by Material Focus the not for profit behind the Recycle Electricals campaign. The funding paid for the introduction of kerbside collections to new bring banks and drop off points at schools, libraries and community centres.

These initiatives have helped residents across the boroughs more easily recycle their unwanted small electrical items such as toasters, kettles, hairdryers and mobile phones:

- **Community TechAid in partnership with Veolia Southwark** Installed 12 collection points in libraries and the Household Waste Reuse Centre, plus refurbished and redistributed repairable tech to local people in need, Overall 1133 tech items were collected and recycled and a significant number re-homed
- **Lancaster West Neighbourhood Team**, a local housing team that is part of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, installed six new recycling points, hosted twelve repair events and workshops collecting 4.73 tonnes of electricals that were recycled, whilst engaging with locals at community events

- **Lewisham Borough Council** installed 27 new on street recycling bring banks and saw an 800% increase in electrical recycling collections with 43.2 tonnes of electricals recycled
- **Richmond Upon Thames** set out to encourage more re-use and recycling within the borough by creating 20 local outdoor bring banks at preexisting public recycling sites and via domestic waste collection vehicles
- **Wandsworth Council** collected over 32 tonnes of e-waste across brand new local recycling points, including 20 on street bring banks and 11 additional banks based in libraries across the borough, and via domestic waste collection vehicles

The Recycle Your Electricals campaign's hypnotic pink mascot, HypnoCat, featured prominently in posters, flyers and social media throughout the projects, reinforcing the message that anything with a plug, battery or cable can and should be recycled.

These five London projects are part of over 70 UK projects funded by Material Focus, the not for profit leading the Recycle Your Electricals campaign. Together, they are helping 12.5 million UK residents gain access to new ways to recycle their electricals.

Residents can find their nearest collection point at <https://www.recycleyourelectricals.org.uk/electrical-recycling-near-me/>.

The aim of the nationwide Electricals Recycling Fund is to significantly reduce e-waste and its environmental impact by making it easier for consumers to recycle their electricals. The projects that have been funded by Material Focus include a variety of recycling methods, from kerbside collections to more drop-off points in schools, community centres, and bring banks. Overall, there will be over 400 new collections points plus kerbside collections for 3 million residents.

Research from Recycle Your Electricals revealed;

- 80% of consumers believe recycling is a good thing
- UK homes hold a staggering 880 million unused electricals, at least 30 items per household
- Over 100,000 tonnes of electricals are binned every year
- 39% of people still throw away electricals rather than reuse or recycle them

"These London based projects have proven that small electrical recycling is important to local residents." Said Scott Butler, Executive Director of Material Focus.

"We are delighted with how engaged and supportive the communities have been and how the investment from the Electrical Recycling Fund has enabled such a huge number of items to be recycled. With e-waste being the fastest growing waste stream, we hope to continue to see a rise in the amount of electricals recycled across London and the UK."



South Western Railway offers free travel to Armed Forces personnel and veterans for London Poppy Day and Remembrance Sunday

South Western Railway (SWR) is offering free travel to serving military personnel and veterans for Remembrance Sunday events.

This includes travel to London Waterloo for the National Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph on either Saturday 8 or Sunday 9 November, returning on Sunday 9 November.

The Submariners' Remembrance Service on Saturday 1 November is also included in the offer, with travel to London Waterloo allowed on either Saturday 1 or Sunday 2 November, returning on Sunday 2 November.



The offer of free travel, which is funded by the Department for Transport, is available to anyone who is travelling in uniform or able to show an appropriate form of identification and is applicable throughout Great Britain.

SWR is also happy to support volunteers collecting for the Royal British Legion's Poppy Appeal, with free travel to and from the capital to attend London Poppy Day events on Thursday 30 October.

Anyone with a Royal British Legion collector's ID can travel for free on SWR services to London Waterloo on Wednesday 29 or Thursday 30 October, returning on Friday 31 October.

Customers planning to travel on these days should check their journey before they travel on the SWR website [here](#).

Peter Williams, Customer and Commercial Director for South Western Railway, said:

"Remembrance Day carries special significance at SWR as many of our colleagues have a background with the Armed Forces, and as this year's Railway 200 celebrations have shown, the railway played a significant part in both world wars.

"That's why we are proud to continue our offer of free travel, to both active personnel and Armed Forces veterans, who are attending Remembrance Day and London Poppy Day events."

SWR has signed the Armed Forces Covenant, holds the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award, and has an active Armed Forces Network of colleagues who have served.

**South Western
Railway**

Britain's best-kept secret: Why Autumn has become the nation's favourite season to travel

From Great Western Railway

New research reveals early autumn now outranks summer as the preferred time for leisure breaks, with 'empty-nesters' leading a quiet travel revolution.

Forget peak summer jostling and winter weather worries - Britain has fallen in love with autumn travel, and the numbers prove it is no passing trend.

The research from Great Western Railway (GWR) reveals that early autumn (September-October) has overtaken every other season as the nation's preferred time for leisure travel, chosen by 39% of travellers compared to just 14% who prefer peak summer months.

The data paints a picture of a nation rediscovering the joys of off-peak exploration, with practical motivations driving growing demand for autumn breaks.



The value revolution

The research identifies two primary drivers reshaping Britain's travel habits: economics and experience. Half of all respondents (50%) cite "lower prices and better value" as their top motivation for autumn travel, while 46% are drawn by "quieter destinations and fewer crowds."

This shift represents more than seasonal preference - it's a fundamental reimagining of when premium travel experiences are available. Where summer once commanded peak pricing for crowded destinations, autumn now offers superior value for a more relaxed, authentic experience.

Empty-nesters lead the charge

The data reveals a particularly compelling story among 'empty nesters' - parents whose children have left home. This demographic emerges as autumn travel's most enthusiastic advocates, with 63% likely to book an autumn leisure break compared to 51% of the general population.

For this group, autumn represents liberation from school holiday constraints and family schedules. The research shows they're primarily motivated by "easier and less stressful travel" (54%) and the realisation that there's "more to discover locally than I realised" (37%). Their preferred autumn activity? "Unwind and relax" topped their responses at 34%, suggesting a demographic ready to prioritise personal restoration after years of family-focused planning.

Weather has become an unexpected ally

Climate patterns are reshaping travel decisions in surprising ways. The survey found that 57% of respondents confirm warmer autumn weather has made them more likely to consider UK short breaks and day trips - a trend that rises to 65% among those experiencing post-summer blues. Not to mention the amazing autumn colours.

This weather dividend extends the practical travel season, making outdoor activities and sightseeing more appealing well into October. Combined with reduced accommodation costs and tourist crowds, it creates what many describe as optimal travel conditions.

The University connection

The data also reveals a distinct travel pattern among [parents of university-aged children](#). For this group, 41% cite “visiting children at university” as a primary autumn motivation, with 45% hoping to visit every three months and 36% planning monthly trips.



The spontaneity factor

Perhaps most striking is Britain’s appetite for impromptu autumn adventures. The research shows 59% of respondents have previously taken a spontaneous day trip by train in autumn and would do so again, while another 22% express interest in trying one for the first time.

This spontaneity is enabled by practical considerations: easier booking, flexible travel options, and the reduced need for advance planning that characterises peak season travel.

GWR Head of Customer Research Jeremy Clarke says:

“As the crowds ebb away in the lull between summer and Christmas, many people have found a new affection for autumn travel. The amazing colours we’ve seen over the past few years, even if just seen from the train window, the opportunity to be spontaneous with great value rail tickets, make sit the perfect time to get out there!”

The research indicates autumn travel’s popularity stems from practical advantages rather than romantic notions of seasonal beauty. Lower costs, fewer crowds, easier logistics, and increasingly favourable weather create compelling conditions for leisure travel.

For millions of Britons, autumn is no longer about winding down from summer - it’s about gearing up for the year’s next adventure.



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