

Twickenham & Richmond Tribune



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TickerTape - News in Brief

South Western Railway

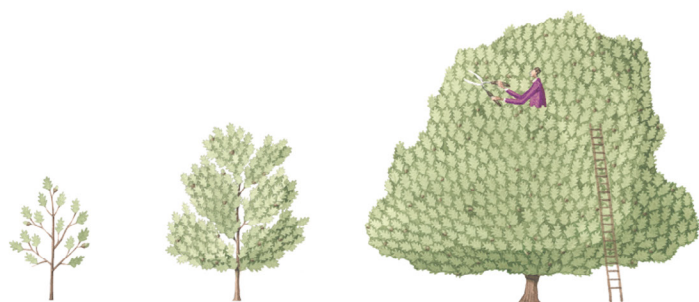
Some lines will be closed between London Waterloo and Clapham Junction Saturday 3 January
 There will be **line closures** between **London Waterloo and Clapham Junction all day**.

- **London Waterloo to Reading** services will start from **Clapham Junction**.
- **London Waterloo to Windsor** services will start from **Clapham Junction**.
- **London Waterloo to London Waterloo via Richmond and Kingston** services will start from **Clapham Junction**.

Altered train services and buses replace trains in the Barnes area Sunday 4 January
 The lines between **Clapham Junction and Barnes** will be **closed all day** due to maintenance work.

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

- **London Waterloo to Reading** services will be **revised** to depart **London Waterloo earlier** and will be diverted between **Clapham Junction and Twickenham**. These services will call additionally at **Wimbledon, Kingston and Strawberry Hill**.
- **London Waterloo to Windsor** services will be **revised**.
 An **hourly** service will be diverted between **Clapham Junction and Twickenham via Kingston** calling at all stations.
 An **hourly** service will start from **Barnes** calling at all stations.
- **London Waterloo to London Waterloo via Richmond and Wimbledon** services will be **revised** and will only run between **Barnes and Kingston**.
- The afternoon and evening **London Waterloo to Kingston via Hounslow** services will **not** run.
- **Buses** will run between **Clapham Junction and Barnes**.
- In the **morning and early afternoon**, a **revised** service will run between **Barnes and Twickenham**.
 In the **afternoon and evening**, a **revised** service will run between **Barnes and Barnes via Hounslow**.
- **London Waterloo to Hampton Court** services will be **revised** to run **hourly**.



The Tree Agency

darryl parkin

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The Tree Agency

Local Postcard Column - Part 308

Kneller Hall

By Alan Winter

Rather than use postcards showing the hall itself, I thought I would dig out three of the cards that show other areas of the hall's estate. Postcards of the main building were always the most popular but these three show some parts of the estate that were less frequently featured on postcards.

These postcards show the married quarters, The drive and gatehouse and the Bridge spanning the river crane.



We can look at a brief history of the hall which now spans nearly 500 years.

Kneller Hall in Twickenham has a rich history, evolving from a court painter's residence (Sir Godfrey Kneller) into a teacher training college, and most notably, serving as the home of the Royal Military School of Music (RMSM) from 1857 for over 160 years, training generations of military musicians until the MOD sold it, leading to its new life as Radnor House senior school. The site, featuring a Grade II listed building, was chosen by the Duke of Cambridge to professionalize military music, becoming the spiritual home for Army musicians until the school moved in 2021.

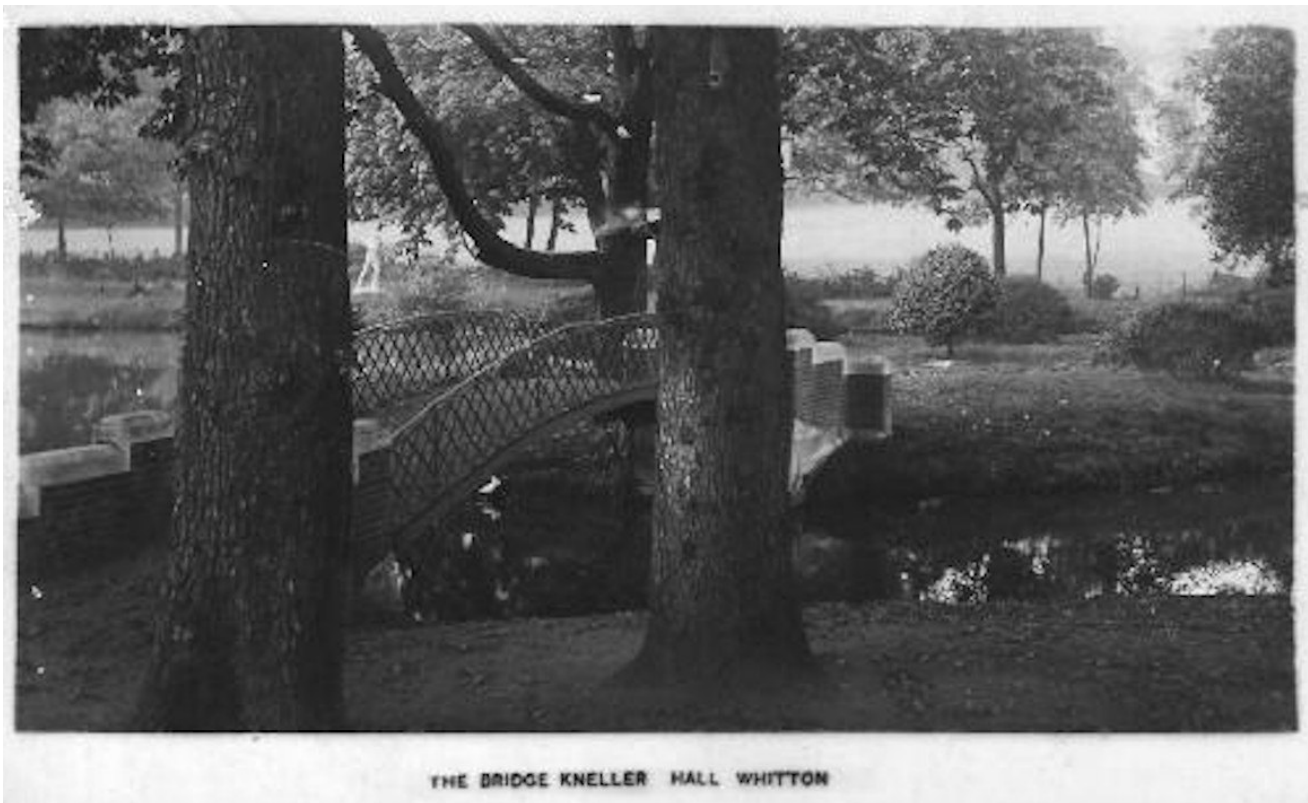
- **Early Origins (17th-19th Century):** Built on land once owned by painter Sir Godfrey Kneller, the property was later used as a teacher training college from 1850-1856 before the War Department acquired it.
- **Royal Military School of Music (1857-2021):** The War Department established the RMSM in 1857, making it the central institution for training military musicians, a role it held for over 160 years. It gained Royal status in 1887.
- **Cultural Significance:** Kneller Hall became the heart of British military music, known for its annual concerts, museum, and unique instruments, hosting events like Trooping the Colour.

- **Transition & Sale (2021 onwards):** The Ministry of Defence sold the estate, with the RMSM moving to Portsmouth and the historic building being acquired by Dukes Education for Radnor House senior school.



Architectural & Site Features:

- **Grade II Listed:** The main building and boundary walls are protected historic structures.
- **Key Structures:** Includes the main hall, chapel, guardroom, band practice hall, and grounds with historic lawns and a modern bandstand.



In essence, Kneller Hall transitioned from a private estate to a major military music institution and now continues its educational legacy in a new form, all while retaining its historical importance on the Twickenham and Whitton Borders.

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Dear Tribune Readers,

Rifleman Pub Update

We would like to give you an update on the project to keep the Rifleman pub in Fourth Cross Road, Twickenham open as both a Victorian back street pub and a local community hub. Our thanks to the many of you who have responded to our recent survey. A survey analysis is available to see on our Facebook Pages at [Rifleman Rescue Community](#).

And so a very warm welcome to our new members in both the Facebook community and the email group! We're delighted to see our numbers growing, with over 280 in the Facebook group and more than 220 on email.

Why are we here?

Recently, we learned that Twickenham Fine Ales (TFA) Brewery, which runs the Rifleman pub in Fourth Cross Road, Twickenham, intends to step away to focus on brewing. As concerned locals, we began exploring what it would take to run the pub as a community venture. TFA has shared valuable information with us, including accounts, lease details, and the premises licence, enabling us to develop an outline model for a community pub.



This includes legal frameworks, guiding principles, a working capital model, a draft business case, and a communications plan - all of which need further validation.

Public Meeting & Survey

We went public with our plans at a meeting held at the pub on 15 December, attended by around 200 people. The support for a community-run pub was clear and inspiring. We also ran a survey, now closed, which received 229 responses. The data analysis is attached below.

What did we learn?

1. The Rifleman is seen as extremely important, with most respondents rating it 5/5 for community value.
2. People intend to use the pub regularly if it survives, with many planning weekly or fortnightly visits, and a dedicated core coming 2-3 times per week or even daily!
3. There's strong support for keeping the pub traditional and wet-led, with simple, good

quality snacks and light food—not a full restaurant conversion.

4. The community is ready to contribute time, skills, and money. Many are willing to buy community shares, volunteer, join a steering group, help with fundraising, and offer professional expertise.

Emerging Vision

- We're seeing a clear vision for the Rifleman:
- A traditional, well-kept, wet-led pub
- Good beer and a wider range of drinks (including alcohol-free and decent wine)
- Simple but reliable food (snacks, toasties, sandwiches, pies, etc.)
- Events and activities (more live music, quiz nights, darts, themed evenings)
- Improved appearance and layout (inside and garden)
- Better management presence and communication (ie, more use of social media, local outreach, visible landlord/manager)

We believe that allied to its already strong community atmosphere these things give the pub a unique selling point (usp) that we can build on and that sets it aside from local competition.

Next Steps

Since the meeting, we've met again with the freeholder and made our views clear about what needs to happen before taking on the lease or considering buying the freehold. The next step is a condition survey of the building, which will help us determine funding needs, share pricing, grants and loans, and the legal framework. We're also seeking advice from industry and community business experts, including Plunkett Foundation and other community pubs in London.

We hope to have the condition survey completed in early January and remain aligned with TFA and the freeholder in our aim to take on running the pub from April—though we know this is a tight timeframe.

Summary

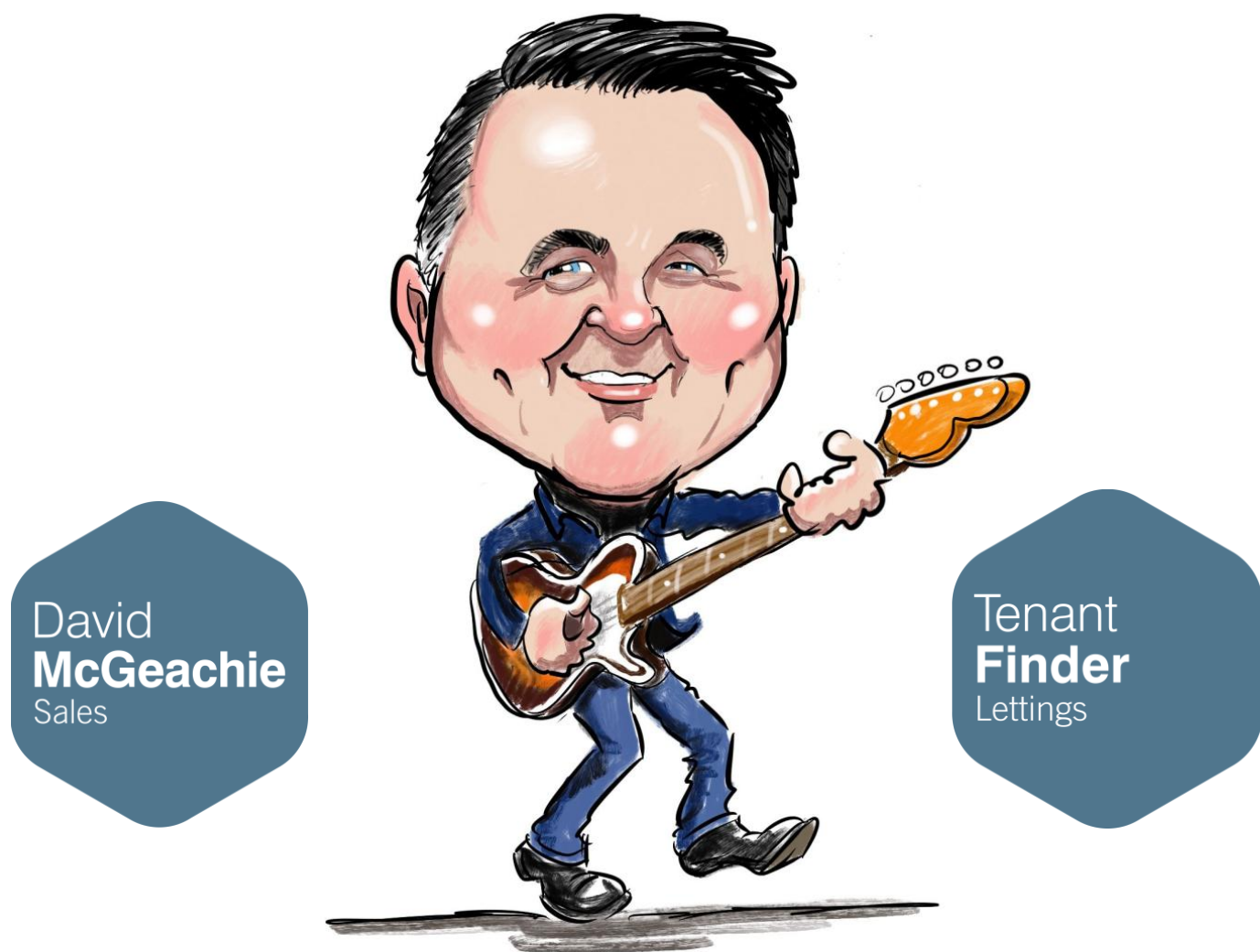
We're thrilled by the response to our call to arms, but there are still hurdles ahead. In short, the survey shows that people want the Rifleman to remain a traditional, welcoming, well-run community pub with simple food, better drinks, regular events, improved space, stronger management, and a vibrant connection to the local community—and they're willing to help make it happen!

Thank you for your support and enthusiasm. We'll keep you updated as things progress.

Best regards,

The Rifleman Rescue Team

HAVE A ROCKIN' NEW YEAR!



Happy 2026 from all at **David McGeachie Property**
inc. '**Tenant Finder**' Lettings as we celebrate 20 years in business.

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Bushy Park playground closure

From The Royal Parks



Please be aware that due to the freezing conditions being experienced that the Bushy Park playground is currently closed and will be closed each morning on both **Saturday (3rd) and Sunday (4th)**.

We're sorry for any inconvenience that this may cause.



Join the borough-wide Community Conversation – help shape Richmond together

From Richmond Council

The annual borough-wide Community Conversation brings residents and councillors from across Richmond upon Thames together to discuss priorities, opportunities, and the future of the borough.

Set for Monday 26 January 2026 at Duke Street Church, Richmond, the event offers a welcoming forum to ask questions, share ideas, and hear directly from councillors about borough-wide plans.

Event details

How to join the borough-wide Community Conversation on 26 January:

- Hybrid event: attend in person or join via live online stream, with the opportunity to submit questions digitally
- Venue: Duke Street Church, Quadrant Rd, Richmond, TW9 1DH
- 6.30 to 7pm: Arrivals, information stalls, and meet your councillors (in person)
- 7 to 9pm: Live Q&A for in-person and online attendees

Attendance is free, but registration is essential. Online participants will receive joining instructions by email in advance.

[Register now](#)

Teddington Cemetery Allotments - another Liberal Democrat debacle

From Richmond & Twickenham Green Party

Richmond Council's Planning Committee has approved its own application to remove the well-used and much-loved allotments on Shacklegate Lane – the last allotments in Teddington - in order to provide more burial space in Teddington Cemetery.

The reasons? The cemetery is running out of spaceallegedly. Council staff and Lib Dem Councillors say it's much easier to take back all the allotment land and have lots of space for digging new graves than the alternative courses of action. This is one of Richmond's few open cemeteries: it provides burial space both for people who live locally and people living out-of-borough.

As for previous promises made to allotment holders in 2018 that only half the plots would be taken? Council is breaking those promises, saying that the cost of reclaiming half of the allotment space rather than all of it in one go is too high.....allegedly.

None of these reasons are satisfactory. All over the country (indeed, Europe) cemeteries are running out of space and their management are having to adopt new approaches. The previous Liberal Democrat administration in 2018 made a decision to initiate some of these new approaches for burials, such as re-use of older cemetery plots (successfully used in many London cemeteries in London including the famous Highgate). Disappointingly, progress appears not to have been made since 2018 in Teddington.

Local Green Party councillor Caroline Wren has been supporting residents who are deeply upset about this whole affair and the poor way it has been handled. She says: *"It seems as if this Council allowed itself to run out of burial space and then had to make a rushed decision. How can this have happened, when reports were produced in 2017-2018 that pointed to the ways we could avoid this? Residents feel completely let down and ignored."*

A pattern has emerged of this Liberal Democrat administration taking unpopular decisions hurriedly and without consideration for local people's wishes. In this case, the decision to take away the entire allotment space was made back in the summer, and putting it through Planning Committee was merely a rubber stamp exercise. Green Party Councillor Richard Bennett was the sole Opposition representative on the Planning Committee and argues strongly that the process was completely wrong: *"This decision should have first gone to the Environment Committee, where the principle of whether the Cemetery should be taking away these allotments could have been properly discussed. The Planning Committee could only consider this case on its merits under planning law, not the arguments for or against this course of action. It's largely irrelevant that the allotments land was originally designated as burial land – there are plenty of examples of Council choosing to make different use of burial land, so why wouldn't we continue to use it for growing food?"*

At the Planning Committee meeting, Councillor Wren argued that there are several viable alternatives to reclaiming the allotments that could provide burial capacity, if only the Council would adopt the practices used by many other London boroughs. *"The Council is prioritising the dead over the living – this land should be growing food, not covered in cold headstones. If this decision has been motivated by making money, or through their own lack of action for 7 years as appears to be the case, then it's an absolute disgrace"* said Cllr Wren.



RICHMOND & TWICKENHAM

How the Fun Police Came for Richmond's Swimming Pools

By Michael Jones

If you want a small but telling snapshot of how local government now works, try going for a swim in Richmond.

What was once a simple, spontaneous activity has become an oddly bureaucratic experience. Advance booking is mandatory. Sessions are capped at 55 minutes, including changing time. You must decide in advance not only when you want to swim, but where and how. For many residents, that is enough to put them off entirely.



The complaints are not subtle. One resident asked why it is “easier to book a flight across the world than to book a pool up the road”. Another described the experience as “over-regimented, no fun”. A third said the online booking system “terrifies me into making me think I have a limited time for what should be a relaxing pastime”.

This is not the language of political activists. It is the language of people quietly disengaging.

The pattern is clear in recent Google reviews of Pools on the Park. Some praise staff and facilities. Many do not. A significant number complain that leisure and family swimming have been squeezed out in favour of lap swimming, that sessions feel rushed, and that the overall atmosphere has become joyless. One long-time user summed it up bluntly: “This used to be a local gem. Since Covid everything changed to timed 55-minute sessions. Very limited hours. Everything feels controlled.”

For confident lane swimmers who plan their week in advance, the system works perfectly. For everyone else, it quietly closes the door.

That sense of control is what rankles. Residents are not objecting to safety, or even to capacity limits. They are objecting to a system that filters people out before they even arrive.

The council's defence

Councillor Michael Wilson responded to the criticism by insisting that “no one is preventing anyone from accessing facilities”. Booking, he argued, simply avoids the disappointment of being turned away at peak times. He added, pointedly: “Amazing you are interested in these views now.” Former councillor Laurence Mann took a similar line, dismissing one resident’s experience as a “peculiar anecdotal example” and insisting that “booking is the norm for most things.”

Both responses miss the point. A public swimming pool is not a private appointment service like a barber or a theatre seat. For decades it operated successfully on a walk-in basis, absorbing spontaneity and accepting the occasional queue as the price of openness. The new system avoids rare peak-time frustration by imposing permanent friction on everyone else. The result is not fewer disappointed people. There are fewer people, full stop.

The awkward truth: the council already knows

What makes the council's defensiveness harder to sustain is that these issues are not new, nor are they confined to social media. A *Richmond and Twickenham Times* report recorded councillors acknowledging that the borough's swimming pools were struggling to attract residents and that some users found the experience "unfriendly". Residents had even been refunded after complaints about treatment at Pools on the Park.

More strikingly, Lib Dem councillor John Coombs criticised how difficult it was for a school to use Teddington Pool, saying it chose to go to Hounslow instead because it was "much more easy and friendlier." Another councillor, Chris Varley, said he regularly received emails describing Pools on the Park as an "unfriendly experience" and argued it should be made "friendlier".

This matters because the same report also highlighted a financial problem. Leisure bookings and memberships were below pre-Covid levels, contributing to overspends in environment and community services. In other words, the council knows two things: people are finding the pools harder to use, and fewer people are using them.

A managerial mindset

None of this requires conspiracy theories to explain. It reflects a familiar public-sector mindset: optimise the system, standardise behaviour, reduce uncertainty, and assume people will adapt. But public services do not work like software. When leisure feels like compliance, people quietly opt out. Families do not plan afternoons a week in advance. Visitors do not expect to navigate an app to swim the next day. Older residents are intimidated by rigid booking structures. Faced with friction, people simply do something else.

That is exactly what residents are describing.

The irony is that Richmond talks endlessly about wellbeing, physical activity and preventative health. Yet it has allowed one of its most valuable leisure assets to feel bureaucratic and unwelcoming. A swimming pool should be lively, flexible and slightly chaotic. It should tolerate spontaneity. At the moment, too often, it feels as though Richmond Council has appointed itself the borough's unofficial Fun Police.

The question now is whether councillors are willing to listen to what residents are already telling them, or whether they will continue to insist that the system works, even as people stop using it. Because if the public message is "book, comply, rush, leave", the council should not be surprised when more and more residents decide that the easiest option is not swimming at all.



Unlock new career opportunities this new year

From Richmond Work Match

To kickstart the new year, our Work Match team and charity [Room for Work](#) are providing a free programme in Hampton Wick for local jobseekers and career changers.

Starting from 2 February 2026, residents over 40 years old are invited to join free career development sessions designed to reconnect your strengths with today's job market and prepare you for what's next.

Learn how to find 'hidden jobs', write an effective CV, master competency-based interviews and use LinkedIn to promote yourself. Build confidence in presenting your skills, activate your network, explore self-employment options and much more.



Delivered in a friendly environment, the 12-session programme will also feature tailored one-to-one mentoring and follow-up coaching support provided by experts.

Course details:

- **Date:** 2 February to 17 March 2026 (every Monday and Tuesday)
- **Time:** 10.30am to 1pm
- **Location:** The Warehouse, St John's Hampton Wick, Church Grove, KT1 4AL

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Bushy Park Deer Cull

From The Royal Parks

Please note that an additional deer cull will take place in [Bushy Park](#) from **Monday 12 January 2026, for approximately six weeks.**



During this time, the vehicle gates to the park will be locked at 7pm and the pedestrian gates at 10:30pm Sunday to Thursday. All gates will be unlocked from 8am Monday to Friday. Vehicle and pedestrian gates are open as normal on Saturday and Sunday.

This cull is taking place because of staff illness which meant that the usual, planned 2025 November cull was not completed.

As a member of the [The British Deer Society - Official](#), [The Royal Parks](#) takes deer welfare very seriously and all aspects of their welfare are monitored regularly. In addition, both the society and the Deer Initiative of England and Wales fully endorse humane culling.

The Royal Parks is an expert manager of enclosed deer herds, which are under veterinary supervision. Deer populations are actively managed to keep herds at a sustainable size and to prevent overcrowding.

Without population control, food would become scarce and more animals would ultimately suffer. There would also be other welfare issues such as low body fat, malnutrition, high incidence of death from exposure to cold in winter and a build-up of parasites and diseases in deer.



Lord True Calls for Reform UK Representation in the House of Lords

By James Knight



Image © House of Lords

A senior Conservative peer has called on the Prime Minister to grant Reform UK representation in the House of Lords, arguing that parties elected to the House of Commons should not be excluded from the upper chamber without good constitutional reason.

Lord True, the Conservative leader in the House of Lords, said that ensuring representation for parties with MPs was a matter of principle rather than party politics. “My view is that if Reform wins seats in the House of Commons, they should have seats here,” he told The Telegraph. “The beauty of this House is its complete freedom. So any peer here wants to put down an amendment, that amendment must be heard.”

Lord True, a former leader of Richmond upon Thames Council, has long argued that constitutional reform should strengthen scrutiny rather than concentrate power. He added that allowing parties represented in the Commons to “take a detailed part in examination and to put forward that party’s point of view” was, in his words, “a sensible constitutional principle”.

Reform UK currently has five MPs but no peers, despite other parties with fewer MPs having long been represented in the Lords. Lord True noted that the absence of Reform voices limited scrutiny rather than improving it, particularly at a time when the chamber was already facing questions about its size, age profile and legitimacy.

Reform without representation

Lord True's intervention came as the Labour government continues to pursue reform of the House of Lords, including the removal of hereditary peers. At the same time, the Prime Minister has made a large number of new Labour appointments to the chamber, while Reform UK has been excluded entirely.

There is no constitutional obligation on a prime minister to grant peerages to opposition parties. However, it has been common practice for governments to invite nominations from other parties in order to maintain a degree of balance in the upper house.

Lord True himself pointed to precedent, saying that while serving under Conservative prime ministers he had argued for the appointment of additional Labour peers. "Every party needs a refresh in the chamber," he said, "particularly a chamber where the average age is 70. You must have new people coming in".

An unlikely note of agreement

Responding to Lord True's remarks, Nigel Farage accused the government of allowing what he described as a democratic imbalance to persist between the elected and unelected chambers. Farage framed the issue in explicitly democratic terms. "The idea that the party that has led the opinion polls for months has zero representation in the House of Lords doesn't say much about the state of our democracy," he said. Farage confirmed that he had written to Keir Starmer earlier in the year requesting limited representation, but had received no reply.

He then turned to Lord True's intervention, striking a notably different tone. "Thank you to Lord True for being bigger than just looking at party politics," Farage said, praising the Conservative peer for arguing that Reform UK "needs representation and it needs to happen very, very soon."

A test of constitutional consistency

The significance of the exchange lies less in Farage's approval than in the basis of Lord True's argument. He did not defend Reform UK's platform, nor suggest political alignment. Instead, he framed the issue as one of consistency and institutional credibility.

For Conservative figures such as Lord True, the argument is not about indulging populism, but about ensuring that voters who have drifted away from the main parties are drawn back into the constitutional mainstream rather than left outside it. Left unresolved, that tension risks turning Lords reform into a source of new grievance rather than renewed legitimacy.

As debate over Lords reform intensifies, Lord True's remarks underline a central difficulty. Removing one form of representation while selectively excluding parties supported by millions of voters risks weakening the authority of the very chamber reform is meant to strengthen. If the House of Lords is to remain a serious revising body, changes to who sits in the chamber cannot be separated from how fairly it reflects the Commons. Otherwise, reform risks drifting away from constitutional principle and towards quiet exclusion by convention.

Richmond vs London Scottish

From Richmond Rugby

This one is going to be FIREWORKS

When the fixtures dropped, everyone circled this date. Two clubs. One ground. A fierce shared rivalry in the heart of Richmond.

Richmond vs London Scottish - Kick-off 3pm

Saturday 3rd January 2025

Bar opens at 11:30am, lunch served at 12:30pm.

Details tickets [HERE](#)

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Make Time for Tea In 2026

With the New Year resulting in hangovers for many and heralding 'Dry January', real-world research data released by the UK Tea & Infusions Association (UKTIA; www.tea.co.uk/^[1]) suggests many Brits are considering more sensible drink choices - especially with regard to their social beverage of choice.

"When it came to the festive season and New Year this year, the UKTIA real-world data suggest that many could be turning to tea instead of their regular tipple," says Dr Sharon Hall, Chief Executive of the UK Tea and Infusions Association, adding, "As many as seven out of 10 (70%) Brits surveyed said they often (28%) or sometimes (42%) chose tea instead of an alcoholic drink."



The great thing about tea is that it can be enjoyed throughout the whole day, which isn't the case with alcoholic drinks. *"The morning is often when we really need a boost to help us get going. Almost two-thirds (64%) of UKTIA survey respondents admitted that they relied on a cup of tea to tackle the day ahead,"* comments Dr Sharon Hall. *"A cup of tea can be the ideal way to kick off a busy day – especially on a cold and frosty morning – as suggested by the two-fifths (38%) of survey respondents who said they drank tea to keep warm."*

The top three answers for the time of day when people like to drink their tea included: 1) breakfast (over four in 10 – 45%), 2) in the afternoon (44%), and 3) mid-morning (40%). Others said they drank their cuppa on waking (a third – 33%), in the evening (32%), with lunch (over a quarter – 29%), with dinner (nearly a fifth – 18%), and at bedtime (one in 10 – 10%).

Regular black tea (with or without milk) was the most popular (40%) when survey respondents were asked which hot drink they would choose if they could only choose one and give up the rest. Around half (22%) chose coffee, 15% chose hot chocolate and 13% green tea. *"Among the herbal infusions mentioned in the real-world research, one stands out for its festive character,"* says Dr Hall, adding, *"Over four in 10 (43%) said they enjoy a warming cup of ginger tea."*

Over four in 10 (44%) said they made tea at home to take out with them, with many making tea to drink on long car journeys (34%) – something many of us have done during the festive break, when visiting friends and family.



Tea also has benefits for those who spent the festive break abroad, with three-fifths (60%) of UKTIA survey respondents identifying that drinking tea reminds them of home when they're overseas. When the party's over, tea steps in again with support, as over half (52%) of Brits turn to tea to help them relax, according to the real-world research data, while three-fifths (62%) said having a cup of tea gave them some thinking time.

^[1] Perspectus Global. Online survey of 1000 consumers, Winter 2025.

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New Year New Tricks Welcome 2026

By Bruce Lyons.

Over 20 years ago I spent the best part of a couple of years setting up an incoming tourism venture.

With the focus on our amazing Borough. I had all the right connections, and a handful of professionals with all right credentials. Blue Guides, service suppliers for diverse transportation needs, contacts in the vast and exclusive attractions, Hotel suppliers and River services. At every turn we were rebuffed, till this day I am not sure why. I had meetings with LBRUT, the BIDS, there were two then now the area has three.

To me, it seemed a natural in a borough so rich in History and Culture with our proximity to Central London and our Natural Resources in the Arcadian Thames and the Royal Richmond Park.



In the last 3 years without promoting ourselves as a DMC, Destination Marketing Company we have actually annually grossed up to £250,000 + on incoming tourism.

So, for 2026, we are using social media to reach a larger international audience through the 10,000+ DMCs overseas.

There is a wealth of unique attractions on our doorstep, like Hampton Court, Ham House, Marble Hill House, Strawberry Hill House, Turners House, Kew Gardens, The Alliance Stadium, The Poppy Factory to mention just a few; there are qualified guides that have a story to tell

It is a little-known fact that our Borough wide hotels are nearly 50% less expensive than their competitors in Central London and we are blessed with one of the best transport systems to be found in the UK, which makes easy access to the City just 30 minutes away.

Basically, it is a WIN WIN situation in a time when increased visitor numbers in our attractions and hotels would not go amiss.

And the same applies to our hospitality sector. Yes, everybody is full when we have international Rugby, and we do well when there are unique events on in the borough but there are many weeks this doesn't apply.

If there are readers that would like to be in touch with similar views - send us an email, we would be delighted to collaborate with similarly minded people

Why not share our borough with people from overseas, we are not out to make Richmond the next Barcelona or Venice

Best Wishes for 2026 to all our friends in the Borough
Bruce @ Crusader Travel



Careful how you talk...

By Deep Patel

~ Life through the eyes of a Twickenham shopkeeper ~



As we start a new year, customers have been talking to me about how they somehow want to do things “better” in 2026...nearly all of my customers that I spoke to on this topic felt that despite wanting to do things better this year round, something was “holding them back”. This was intriguing, so I decided I had to find out more in order to try and understand exactly what they meant.

When I asked my customers what they felt was holding them back, none of them had anything or anyone in particular to attribute this to, however they all felt something was holding them back from living their best life. This intrigued me even more, so much so that I decided to leave the refilling of the biscuits aisle in my shop and focus on talking to more of my customers to find out more about this feeling of being held back that they felt was stopping them from doing things better this year and stopping them from achieving their purpose or full potential in life.

What came out of these conversations was that over time, all of us seem to be unkind to ourselves. We often make ourselves feel like “we are not enough” somehow. Not enough of a worker, not enough of a good father, not enough of a good mother, not enough of a good son, not enough of a good daughter, not enough of a good friend...not enough of a good person. This was happening to so many of my customers I found out (and if I’m honest, to me too). I gather that we likely set ourselves high standards (that are probably unachievable in most cases?) and then after continually failing to fulfil them, we convince ourselves over time that they we are somehow “not enough”.

According to this, nothing is actually really holding us back from doing things better in 2026. It is just us ourselves creating this imaginary jail and imprisoning ourselves within it, and some of us even lock the door of that prison and then throw away the key (we’ve all been there, I know I have certainly). It was once said that “words are energy and they cast spells, that’s why it’s called spelling”. He also said, “Change the way you

“speak about yourself, and you can change your life” (both Bruce Lee). This is exactly what I had found was the main problem with why so many people felt that they wanted to be better this year in some way however they felt that something was holding them back. The way that they talked about themselves to themselves had clearly imprisoned them in their own home-made jail (that to with their very own hands).

As I was refilling the soft-drinks fridge, I thought long and hard about this and reached a solution. Although you may have created this prison around you, and you may have locked yourself within it...you are still the only one who can open it, and all you need to achieve this is quite simply a realization that you are enough...and as long as you are trying, you are doing enough, and doing much more than those who are not trying at all. If you are not trying, all is not lost. Start to try this new year and unlock that prison door for once and for all to start living your best life, you know, the one that God/the universe intended for you, but that you have been ignoring and denying yourself of for longer than you care to remember and all because of fear, self-doubt, and that negative self-chatter in our minds that we are all guilty of from time to time.

Make 2026 the year this stops and the year that you start...start to be kinder to yourself...start to value your being...start to understand that you count too...start to set the correct goals that align with your passion and interest, start to smile more...start to live. No one else is going to do it for you? So why not make 2026 the year that you actually finally do things better? Whatever may have happened was meant to be a lesson, not a life-sentence...free yourself though being kind with the words that you speak to yourself...change the way you speak about yourself...and change your life...for good...forever...you owe it to you and to the universe...play your part...don't be afraid...sparkle...
Happy 2026 guys.

Remember...

“Be careful with the words you use when you talk about yourself because as you think...so shall you become...”

MY CREATURE-KINDNESS TIP OF THE WEEK...

STOP UNWANTED NOCTURNAL GARDEN VISITORS KINDLY (GOOD KARMA):

Place empty bowls filled with white vinegar around places where you don't want foxes to come...they will go without you having to harm them...use humane mouse & rat traps and release rodents back in our parkland areas. Use electronic plug-in deterrents with good reviews around your house to stop them coming in the first place.

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”**

Gawain and the Green Knight

by Gabriel Fogarty-Graveson and Felix Grainger
 Make It Beautiful at the Park Theatre, Finsbury

In an inventive move, the 14th Century chivalric poem has, with a comedic touch, been reimagined as set in the present-day offices of cybersecurity firm, Camelot Corporation.

The Arthurian legend tells of a Knight of the Round Table, Gawain, who challenges the mysterious, seemingly invincible, Green Knight who has dared any man to strike him with an axe, promising to return the blow in a year and a day.

The CEO has decided to give the company an Arthurian rebrand. She is now called Arthur, her deputy is Lancelot, and the dull IT guy, Gary, is to be known as Gawain. Being considered boring and miserable, long serving Gary (sorry, *Gawain*) is to be banished (i.e. made redundant). The unusual redeployment process involves a mystical Green Knight. He must begin an epic quest, embodying courage, chastity, honour, generosity, and nobility.



In the sub-plot, Gawain struggles to tell Guinevere how he feels, with their love developing over a bag of Quavers. Instead of a feast, there is the office Christmas party.

We are asked to imagine a mix of modern and mediaeval, but Simon Nicholas's excellent set features two walls of filing drawers, which also serve as steps and seats. A lift takes Gawain to different settings. Although evoking the sterile office atmosphere, there is nothing mediaeval about it.

Tannoy is used to link scenes – this is *Merlin*, an AI device that may be the real power behind the Camelot Corporation, presenting an all too possible prospect of technology taking over.

Creatively, *Gawain and the Green Knight* scores highly, but anyone unfamiliar with the poem might find difficulties. Nevertheless, there is talent on display here, with standout performances from Cara Steele (Arthur), Gabriel Fogarty-Graveson (Lancelot). Laura Pujos, playing Guinevere, showcases her beautiful voice with snippets of folk songs. Felix Grainger as Gawain feels lightweight. He has comedic lines and entertaining puns, but the role needed more gusto and impact.

There is a resolution of sorts as we discover that Gary was not boring ... just *bored*. Hmm, is this enough to base a whole script on? Despite an imaginative premise, some funny moments and brilliant characterisation by the cast, one feels short-changed. It's a missed opportunity.

Read Fi Mead-McNish's review at www.markaspen.com/2025/12/24/gawain

Photography courtesy of Make It Beautiful

ANNE BOLEYN

Auditions at the Mary Wallace Theatre, Twickenham

The Richmond Shakespeare Society invites you to a reading of Howard Brenton's ANNE BOLEYN on Monday, January 5th at the Mary Wallace Theatre. The reading, which all are encouraged to join in, will be followed a week later on January 12th, by Open Auditions for our April production. Both begin at 7.45 and non-members of the RSS are particularly welcome.



RSS
RICHMOND SHAKESPEARE SOCIETY



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

richmondshakespeare.org.uk

THE MARY WALLACE THEATRE
THE EMBANKMENT, TWICKENHAM TW1 3DU

X @ f y

The play encompasses a dangerous period at the Tudor court. Henry, dissatisfied with Queen Catherine's failure to produce a male heir, seeks to replace her with Anne, despite Rome's refusal to allow him a divorce. Undeterred, he breaks with the Catholic Church to marry Anne who, disastrously, also fails to produce male issue. Her destiny is sealed - a rigged trial, a guilty verdict, the executioner's sword. When, seven decades after her death, King James I discovers Anne's prayer book he is moved to evoke her ghost.

An astonishing, dramatic and deeply moving play, ANNE BOLEYN auditions on January 12th and plays at our theatre on Twickenham's Embankment in April. You can be part of this production.

Find further information about the Reading, the Auditions and the Production at www.richmondshakespeare.org.uk





Kettner Concerts in Twickenham



MILDA DAUNORAITE

a piano recital

THE FORERUNNERS

Beethoven

Bagatelles Opus 33

Schubert

"Wanderer" Fantasy

Poulenc

Improvisations

Ravel

Valses Nobles et Sentimentales

Messian

Regard de l'Esprit de Joie from Vingt

Regards sur l'Enfant Jésus



Saturday, 24 January 2026, 6.00 pm

Doors open at 5.30 and the concert will be followed by a complimentary drinks reception

Milda Daunoraite is blazing a trail following her acclaimed Wigmore Hall debut recital in 2025, critics praising her scintillating playing, sheer enjoyment and exhilaration of her 'joie de vivre'. The young Lithuanian pianist and final year student at the Royal Academy of Music is presenting a varied and engaging programme for Kettner Concerts in Twickenham.

St Mary's Church
Twickenham
Church Street TW1 3NJ



Tickets: £20
(£10 for students and under 18s)
kettnerconcerts.co.uk
Book tickets on Eventbrite.co.uk
or scan the qr code

St Mary's University

St Mary's alumna Ellie Kildunne awarded MBE in New Year Honours



Ellie, an England Women's Rugby international and Harlequins RFC fullback, was runner-up at the BBC Sports Personality of the Year awards in December 2025, following her role in leading the Red Roses to the 2025 Rugby World Cup title on home soil. In November, she was also awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Sport by St Mary's, recognising her impact on the women's game both on and off the pitch.

Prof Anthony McClaran, Vice-Chancellor of St Mary's University, said: *"On behalf of everyone at St Mary's, I am delighted to congratulate Ellie on this well-deserved honour. Watching her career grow has been a source of pride and inspiration for our whole community, and we are proud to support and champion the wider influence of the Red Roses on women's rugby."*

Ellie embodies the values that define St Mary's – generosity of spirit, inclusivity, respect and

excellence – and we are thrilled by everything she has achieved."

Ellie was awarded her Honorary Doctorate alongside fellow St Mary's alumnae Jess Breach, Abi Burton and Rosie Galligan, all of whom played key roles in England's unbeaten Rugby World Cup and Six Nations campaigns this year. Together, they have become global ambassadors for women's sport and powerful role models for future generations.

Located a stone's throw from the home of rugby in Twickenham, St Mary's has a long and proud history of elite sports. In recent years, alumni have won Rugby World Cups, Six Nations titles and Olympic medals, with students and graduates representing their nations at the past three Olympic Games.



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

Red Roses Recognised On King's New Year Honours List

Six members of the Red Roses have been included on the King's New Year honours list for 2026.

Head Coach John Mitchell, captain Zoe Stratford (née Aldcroft) and double Rugby World Cup winner Marlie Packer will receive OBEs following England's first World Cup triumph in 11 years.

Vice captain Megan Jones, standout back row Sadia Kabeya and Sports Personality of the Year nominee Ellie Kildunne have been recognised with MBEs.

Gill Whitehead, 2025 Women's Rugby World Cup chair, has been honoured with an OBE for services to women's rugby, while World Cup managing director, Sarah Massey, will receive an MBE.

Mitchell said: *"I am incredibly honoured to receive this recognition, but I want to be clear that it reflects the work of the Red Roses World Cup-winning squad and the outstanding staff around them. That campaign was built on collective effort - starting from the leaders making it real with players who set the standards every day, coaches and performance staff who worked tirelessly behind the scenes, and a wider RFU support team whose contribution often goes unseen but is absolutely vital.*

It was a privilege to be part of such a committed, driven and united group. I am grateful to the players for their trust and professionalism, and to the staff for their expertise, honesty and relentless work ethic throughout the path to victory. I would also like to thank my family, especially my wife, Jules, as well as my friends for their support during an intense period that demanded a great deal from everyone involved. I accept this honour on behalf of the entire Red Roses World Cup squad and staff, and with sincere thanks to all who played a part."

In the past year, Stratford has excelled in her role as captain, leading the Red Roses to Guinness Women's Six Nations success – a seventh consecutive title and fourth Grand Slam in a row – as well as World Cup glory.

She added: *"Being named on the King's New Year honours, alongside some of my amazing teammates, is a special privilege. The recognition isn't mine alone. This year I have felt nothing but love and support from so many people and I am extremely grateful. My family's belief in me on this journey has been unrivalled, and I am also fortunate to have been surrounded by an unbelievable group of players and staff who have given everything to the Red Roses.*

The fans have made this year even more exceptional than I thought imaginable. Their constant energy and enthusiasm has been out of this world and will no doubt continue to contribute to the growth of the women's game. As Red Roses, our aim is always to inspire. We hope we will continue to do so in 2026 and make people all over the country incredibly proud."

RFU Chief Executive Bill Sweeney has praised members of the rugby community who have been recognised in the King's New Year Honours List and highlighted the profound impact of the Red Roses' World Cup victory.

He said: *"On behalf of everyone at the RFU, I would like to congratulate all those who have been honoured. Each played an integral role during a defining year for women's rugby in this country, and the recognition they have received is thoroughly deserved. These individual honours reflect the collective efforts of the entire squad and the wider support team.*

The Red Roses' influence on societal change on the women's game has been exponential. This outstanding group has set exemplary standards on and off the field, inspiring and connecting with people across the country. Their combined contribution has helped to shape a future in which women's rugby can thrive, from grassroots to elite level. As a memorable 2025 draws to a close, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone involved and look forward to what the New Year will bring."



Brentford v Tottenham Thomas Frank Returns!

By Ron Brand

Following a mixed December 25'; 2 Wins, 1 Draw, and 2 Losses. Head Coach Keith Andrews must prepare his team for a Return Home fixture with Thomas Frank and Spurs?

It turned out to be a measured contest with both teams not wanting to lose. Neither really committing to Win!

Few chances created on either side and a 0-0 result about fair.

Overall, it has been a reasonable first half season for Andrews and Brentford?

Losing 4 key players and a manager in Thomas Frank will unsettle any club.

As I have already made clear, I considered The Bees to be a Relegation Candidate at the beginning of this season.



The Bees, at the halfway, 18 Games in, now sit in 9th Position on 26 points.

Barring a major catastrophe they now look a safe Premiership Team for at least another season? In today's Premiership that is a Major Feat! We have all read about the millions some clubs have spent for success.

Keith Andrews and the new Backroom Team have achieved an outstanding Change over! Spending just a fraction of what the competition have invested. Can they go on and build on that Platform? The Second half of the Season will answer that question.

Looking at the way the team is performing and Meeting Keith Andrews and the way he conducts himself at the Press Conferences, I now believe they can?

I certainly hope so, West London and the Premier need a Brentford FC to show with the right people and some good decision making you can compete with the Money Bags.

But it sure ain't easy!

Match Preview: Everton v Brentford

Written by Brentford Football Club

Brentford will make their first visit to Hill Dickinson Stadium when they face Everton in the Premier League on Sunday (3pm kick-off GMT), live on *Sky Sports*.

The Bees head to Merseyside unbeaten in their last four league games, winning the last away trip 2-0 at Wolves. Everton won their most recent game away at Nottingham Forest, but narrowly lost their last home fixture to league leaders Arsenal.

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

Pre-match Analysis

Stephen Gillett, *Playmaker Stats*: Keane and Tarkowski anchor Everton's defensive resolve

Brentford will make their maiden appearance at Everton's new Hill Dickinson Stadium in their first away clash of 2026, and an interesting challenge lies ahead: how do you attack a team that simply loves defending?

Currently one place and a single point behind the eighth-placed Toffees in the Premier League, the Bees face an Everton side that has rediscovered its DNA during David Moyes' second stint at the club.

Industrious and organised, the Merseysiders have made a strong start to the 2025/26 campaign and have very much built from the back. Only Arsenal (12), Manchester City (17) and Sunderland (18) have conceded fewer goals than Everton this season.

At the heart of the Toffees' defensive efforts have been centre-backs James Tarkowski and Michael Keane, and a quick skim of the statistics illustrates how effective the pair are when it comes to protecting their own goal.

Both Tarkowski and Keane - in contention to start after missing the 2-0 win over Forest last time out - feature in the Premier League's top 10 across three different statistical categories this term, excelling in clearances made, shots blocked and aerial duels won.

Brentford's defenders are cut from similar cloth, with the likes of [Nathan Collins](#) and [Sepp van den Berg](#) also featuring towards the top end of such metrics this season. Everton (21.6) are, notably, the only team in the Premier League averaging more aerial duels won per 90 than Brentford (19.8).

Given their hosts' physical prowess and defensive tenacity, Brentford head coach [Keith Andrews](#) will no doubt be keen to target Everton's vulnerabilities rather than their strengths.



In this regard, Andrews could look to set traps for Moyes' men in possession. Only five teams have lost possession more often this season than Everton (165), who also rank second in the top flight for unsuccessful touches, with 329. It is also worth noting that only Tottenham (23) have committed more errors leading to an opponent's shot than Everton (20).

Despite their defensive solidity, only Wolves (11) and Forest (18) have scored fewer Premier League goals than Everton (20) this season, and Brentford may look to invite their hosts to over-commit in attack. After the blistering raid that led to [Kevin Schade's second goal in the 4-1 win over Bournemouth after Christmas](#), the Bees have scored six goals on the break this term - their ability to transition forward quickly a potent weapon in their armoury.

Both sides are likely to be organised, resilient and capable of dealing well with conventional threats. How they fare outside their respective comfort zones could therefore prove crucial.

Scout Report

Dan Long, Sky Sports: Moyes' return offers Everton stability and belief

On 11 January - the day David Moyes returned to Goodison Park after 12 years away - Everton were 16th in the Premier League, one point above the relegation zone and with a goal difference only marginally superior to Wolves and Ipswich, the two teams immediately below them.

But his homecoming roused something from deep within the squad. There was no way he was going to let the club slip any further into the relegation battle. With a new stadium just months away, retaining top-flight status was completely and utterly imperative.

They lost his first game 1-0 at home to Everton. Worryingly, that was the ninth time in 11 games the Toffees had failed to score. But that preceded a run of nine unbeaten, which included the 1-1 draw at Brentford on 26 February.

By the time of the March international break, Moyes' side were 15th, but now with safety as good as secured, with the gap to Ipswich in 18th having grown to 17 points, which was - to all intents and purposes - an unassailable advantage. By the season's conclusion, the gap was 23 points, with Everton finishing with three straight wins for the first time in 36 years to secure a 13th-place finish - their highest since 2020/21.

They signed off at Goodison Park - their home since 1892 - with a 2-0 win over Southampton in the penultimate game of the season, courtesy of an Iliman Ndiaye double. On the final day, Charly Alcaraz's goal sealed a 1-0 victory away at Newcastle.

Speaking to the BBC after that result, Moyes said: "The biggest thing I'd have to say is, with the mentality, what we've got inside the dressing room, what we've got inside the football club is something special.

"Let's hope we can keep it going; let's hope we can build on it for next season, because the form since I've come in has been amazing."

In two of the four seasons prior to 2025/26, Everton had flirted with relegation despite encouraging starts. In 2021/22, they won four of the first six, but survived by just four points and, in 2022/23, they took 10 points from the first nine, but survived by just two points.

They won four of the first seven at the start of this season - which included a 2-0 win against Brighton,

the first Premier League match at their new Hill Dickinson Stadium - but there has been no sudden slip into trouble this season.

For now, many will still be content with the consistency brought by Moyes' return to Merseyside and the long-awaited feeling of stability and security that had been absent in turbulent recent years.

In the Dugout

David Moyes

Like the majority of his managerial colleagues in the Premier League, David Moyes had a long and successful playing career before turning his hand to coaching.

He started at Celtic as a professional in 1980 - where he won the Scottish Premiership in 1981/82 - and went on to play for Cambridge United, Bristol City, Shrewsbury, Dunfermline Athletic, Hamilton and Preston. He was part of the North End squad that won the Third Division in 1995/96, and he retired at the age of 35, having played his last game in February 1998.

By this point, he had been appointed Preston manager, a role for which he was well-equipped, having started taking his coaching badges in his early 20s. Just over four years later, in March 2002, he was approached by Everton and soon swapped Division Two for the Premiership.

During his nine-year spell on Merseyside, Moyes brought a 16-year-old Wayne Rooney into the first team and into the eyes of the world and, from 2006/07 and 2012/13, steered the Toffees to seven straight top-eight finishes, as well as reaching the 2008/09 FA Cup final, which they lost 2-1 to Chelsea.

In the summer of 2013, he was given the unenviable task of replacing Sir Alex Ferguson and Manchester United, but he lasted less than a year of the six-year deal he signed and was sacked in April 2014.

A year in La Liga with Real Sociedad followed, where he won only 12 of his 42 games in charge, before he returned to England with Sunderland. It was just eight victories from 43 matches there, with his spell ending in the Black Cats' relegation after a decade in the top flight.

Moyes was handed a six-month deal to take over at West Ham in November 2017 and tasked with securing survival after the sacking of Slaven Bilić, which he did. However, his contract was not extended in the summer, and he departed the London Stadium after 31 games and a 29 per cent win ratio.

The Scot returned to east London in December 2019 and was in charge of the Hammers until the end of the 2023/24 season, when his contract was not renewed. He oversaw the historic Europa Conference League win in 2022/23 and left with the highest win percentage of the club's permanent managers, with 44.59 across 231 games in his second spell.

Moyes returned to management after a short spell away from the game, returning to Everton on a two-and-a-half-year contract on 11 January 2025. The 62-year-old has managed 735 Premier League games, behind only Sir Alex Ferguson (810) and Arsène Wenger (828).



Black cabs backed with fairer tax system

From HM Treasury

Today (Friday 2 January) online mini cab firms have been barred from illegitimately using a niche scheme to avoid tax.

As announced at the Budget by the Chancellor, private hire vehicle operators in London will no longer be able to use the Tour Operators Margin Scheme - a niche tax scheme designed for tour operators and holiday coach trips – to significantly reduce the VAT they pay on fares.



This means that black cabs will no longer have to compete with online mini cab firms who are misusing this scheme to pay less VAT.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, said:

"We're putting the brakes on the illegitimate use of a niche tax scheme to protect everyday cabbies. We'll use the £700m a year this raises to deliver the country's priorities - cutting the cost of living, cutting waiting lists and cutting debt and borrowing."

Steve McNamara, General Secretary of the Licensed Taxi Drivers Association, said:

"The Government's decision to apply VAT to all private hire journeys is a landmark step for fairness and integrity in our industry. For too long, drivers and small operators paying the full 20% VAT have had to compete with online mini cab firms benefiting from a niche tax scheme."

"We welcome this move and commend the Government for taking decisive action."

The Tour Operators Margin Scheme is a specialist VAT rule designed for genuine travel and holiday businesses, allowing them to pay VAT only on the profit they make on package trips, not the full fare, typically reducing the effective VAT rate to 4%.

First announced by the Chancellor at Budget 2025, today's measure will prevent the small number of big companies accessing the Tour Operators Margin Scheme, as they have been doing.

By supporting fairer competition, the government is protecting around £700 million in revenue, helping deliver the public's priorities - cutting waiting lists, cutting debt and borrowing, and cutting the cost of living.

Smaller operators outside London, where passengers book directly with drivers, and all black cabs will not be affected by this reform to the Tour Operator's Margin Scheme.



HM Treasury

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