

Twickenham & Richmond Tribune



St Mary's Church, Twickenham
Photo by Berkley Driscoll

9th January 2026

T&RT

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TickerTape - News in Brief

South Western Railway

Some lines will be **closed** between **London Waterloo and Clapham Junction** all weekend due to maintenance work.

Saturday

- **London Waterloo to Shepperton** services will be **revised**. An **hourly** service will depart **London Waterloo** and will **not** call at **Vauxhall**. An **hourly** service will start from **Wimbledon**.
- **London Waterloo to Hampton Court** services will start from **Surbiton**.
- **London Waterloo to London Waterloo via Richmond and Wimbledon** services will only run between **Clapham Junction and Kingston via Richmond**.
- **London Waterloo to Reading** services will start from **Clapham Junction**.
- **London Waterloo to Windsor** services will start from **Clapham Junction**.

Sunday

- **London Waterloo to Shepperton** services will **not** call at **Vauxhall and Earlsfield**.
- **London Waterloo to Hampton Court** services will start from **Surbiton**.
- **London Waterloo to London Waterloo via Richmond and Wimbledon** services will only run between **Clapham Junction and Kingston via Richmond**.
- **London Waterloo to Reading** services will start from **Clapham Junction**.
- **London Waterloo to Windsor** services will start from **Clapham Junction**.
- The afternoon and evening **London Waterloo to Kingston via Hounslow** services will **not** run.



The Tree Agency

darryl parkin

The Treehouse
 25 King Edwards Grove
 Teddington, Middlesex TW11 9LY
 Telephone 020 8274 0107
 Mobile 07960 123580
 Fax 020 8274 0119
 info@thetreeagency.co.uk
 www.thetreeagency.co.uk



The Tree Agency

The Local Picture Postcard Page - Part 309

Teddington's Lost Pubs

By Alan Winter

Recent editions of the Tribune have featured the ongoing project by the **Rifleman Rescue Community** to keep the Rifleman pub in Twickenham's Fourth Cross Road open by changing it to a community owned and managed business.

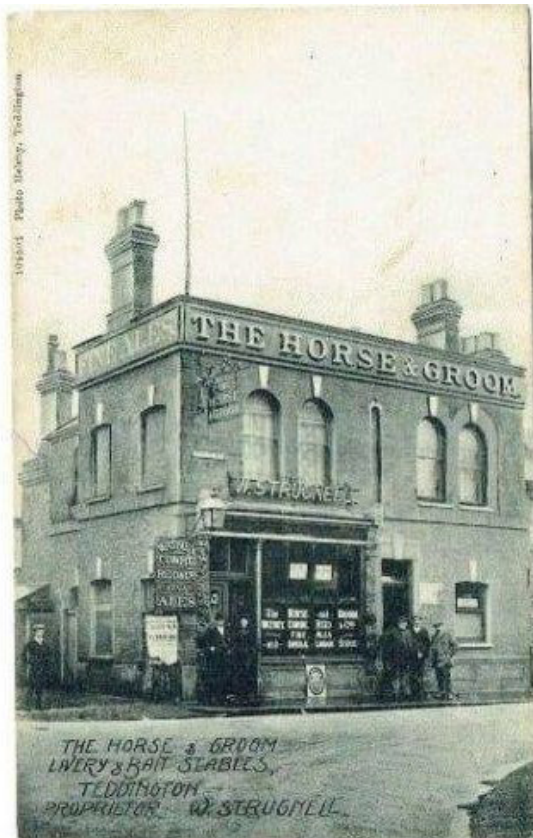
Failing this it will close and we will lose yet another Victorian pub from the townscape of West Twickenham. In recent years the area has lost The Red Lion (now Tesco's), The Kings Arms, The Dukes Head, The Cherry Tree and the Nelson all within a half mile or so of Twickenham Green.



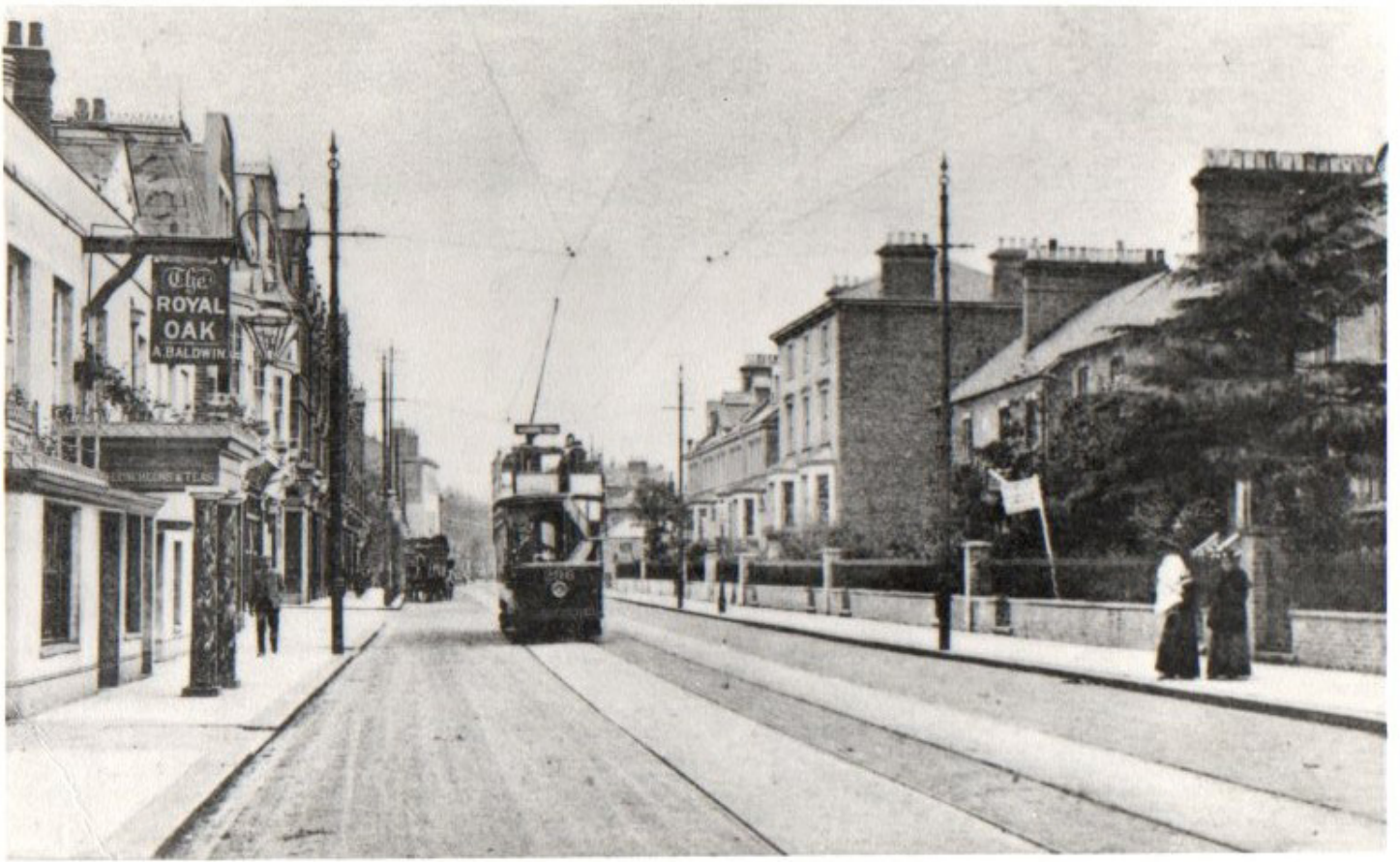
This week we can have a look at 4 pubs that have disappeared from Teddington in living memory that I have found featured on postcards.

The Willoughby Hotel on the corner of Argyle Road and Church Road, opened in 1869. Tragically The Willoughby was totally destroyed by a bomb in November 1940, and a number of people were killed including the licensee and his two children.

The Horse and Groom was a well known darts playing pub on the corner of Waldegrave Road facing Teddington High Street. Previously a beer house, the premises became known as the Horse and Groom by 1914, with the name possibly inspired by the small livery stables situated at the rear of the property. After operating for more than eight decades under this name, the Horse and Groom finally ceased trading in 1996 and has been a Pizza Express ever since.



The Royal Oak at 172, Teddington High Street was a historic pub, existing by 1730, with parts potentially dating to the 16th century, known for its significant history as a coaching inn before being redeveloped in the 1930's. The Royal Oak was the last pub in the High Street on the right as you walked towards the river. The property which fronted directly onto the street was rebuilt and set back on the site in 1936. It became part of the Cote restaurant chain some years ago.



Our final postcard this week features The Queen Dowager which was in North Lane. A 19th Century beer house that was developed into a pub in the early 1950's. It closed and was demolished in 2012. The pub was named after the widow of William IV.

If you would like to see how the Rifleman Rescue project is getting on, please feel free to join its Facebook page at [Rifleman Rescue Community](#).



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“People were hitting the deck”

By Micheal Jones

Residents describe icy pavements across Richmond

When temperatures fell below freezing last week, it was not snowfall but untreated ice that caused growing concern across Richmond. From early-morning commuters to parents on the school run, residents in different parts of the borough described pavements that they said remained dangerously slippery for days, particularly near stations, bus stops and other heavily used walking routes.

“Get on with it”

One of the earliest and most widely shared complaints came from Whitton. Writing online, Simon O’Farrell said: “Disgraceful lack of gritting around Whitton. Roads and pavements icy. People sliding around all over the place. It’s winter, it’s icy. We pay a fortune for council tax. Get on with it!” His comment was quickly echoed by others reporting similar conditions elsewhere in the borough.

In Ham, residents described pavements that they said had become effectively impassable. Carl Myhill wrote: “Ham Gate Avenue is a sheet of ice today. Pavement not much better.” He added that conditions had persisted throughout the day, leaving pedestrians little choice but to avoid walking altogether.



Bus stops and stations

In Twickenham, several residents focused on areas around public transport, particularly bus stops and station approaches. One resident said: “People were hitting the deck near the bus stops this morning. It was lethal.” Others described scenes of commuters clinging to walls for support during the morning rush.

Karen Williams said: “Very icy pavements especially outside Whitton Station. I had to hold the bridge wall with both hands to get safely into Whitton Station.” Another resident described witnessing a fall shortly before peak time, writing: “I saw one lady slip and fall going to the train station just before 8am. Everyone was holding onto the wall.”

School routes

Parents across the borough raised particular concerns about pavements used by children and teenagers travelling to and from school. In Heathfield, Tina Holyoake said: “My daughter witnessed someone literally slipping into the road off the pavement.” Tracie Ann said: “My daughter slipped twice outside Twick School near the bus stop yesterday. It’s horrendous out there.”

Some parents said the conditions had led them to alter routines entirely. Tracie Ann added: “I’ve kept my youngest off school today. I’m not risking a trip to A&E.” Others expressed concern about the knock-on effects for already stretched health services. Amanda Wilcox said: “Breaks and injuries could be avoided if pavements were safer.”

“It’s just not safe”

For residents with mobility needs, the icy pavements had more serious consequences. Jade Sharp said: “I’ve not been out hardly at all this week to walk my guide dog. It’s just not safe.” She said the lack of treatment meant she felt unable to carry out everyday journeys that would normally be routine.

Across the borough

Further west in Hampton, residents also reported slippery pavements that they said appeared untreated throughout the cold spell. Jennie Wyrill wrote: “Nothing in Hampton. Useless council. So dangerous out there.” Others described similar conditions on residential streets and near local shops.

A shared experience

While individual comments varied in tone, the underlying experience was consistent. Residents were not describing isolated patches of ice, but repeated encounters with untreated pavements in places used daily. One resident summed up the mood by writing: “It’s not about expecting perfection. It’s about not feeling like you’re taking your life in your hands just to walk to the station.”

The council has said it prioritises main routes during cold weather and that it is not possible to make every road and pavement safe in all conditions. But for many residents navigating the borough on foot, the experience of the past week suggested a gap between policy and what they encountered on the ground.

Dear Sir,

Teddington swimming pool

I agree with many of Michael Jones's comments regarding booking a swim at Teddington pool. Like many I found the new app difficult to download, so many other apps are so much easier.

So taking my courage in my hand I asked a receptionist at the pool, could someone help me. A delightful young female receptionist downloaded it for me. It even took her some time.

I don't object to booking ahead, but often the days/times I want, they're no spaces left. Staff there have always been so friendly & helpful. A few years ago I fell getting out of pool, my fault & staff helped me & were caring.

But I miss the spontaneity of going for a swim & so do friends who won't entertain booking ahead & find using internet difficult & would be too embarrassed to ask for help.

Thanks
Emer Millar

Sandys Fishmongers announcement

From Sandys Fishmongers

Dear loyal customers and friends

This is a very difficult post to write as we know that everyone has been coming to terms with the sudden loss of Stuart, Jill's son and Helen's brother. Over the last weeks we have been working on finding solutions to save the company.

Unfortunately, we have reached the inevitable conclusion that, without Stuart, the business cannot and should not continue. It is with heavy hearts that we have reached this outcome and are announcing that Sandys will not be reopening.

We would like to thank you all for your support and messages of kindness over the last month. They have brought so much comfort to the family. Thank you also for your continued loyal custom over the years.

There will be a memorial service to celebrate Stuart's life at St Mary's Church on Monday 26th January at midday and afterwards at the Stoop. Everyone is welcome to join us.

With many thanks again

Jill Sandys & Helen Kennedy



Can You Draw?

By Doug Goodman.

Arts Richmond has announced details of its 2026 Diana Armfield prize for drawing from observation. Professionals and amateurs are invited to submit entries by February 14th. The Diana Armfield prize is in memory of her husband Bernard Dunstan RA and all entries will be exhibited at The Patch in Twickenham in March.

Entrants must be over 16 and should deliver their work to ETNA Arts Richmond, 13 Rosslyn Rd., Twickenham. TW1 2AR between February 13 and 25 between 09.30 and 12.30. A panel of judges will select the best submissions and Diana Armfield, RA NEAC will choose the winner.

ARTS RICHMOND PRESENTS

The DIANA ARMFIELD RA NEAC PRIZE FOR DRAWING FROM OBSERVATION





Closing date Saturday 14th February 2026
Details of how to enter at [ArtsRichmond.org.uk](https://artsrichmond.org.uk)
Exhibition to be held at:
The Patch Twickenham, TW1 3LJ
2nd – 6th March 2026

 artsrichmond.org.uk  [@artsrichmonduk](https://www.instagram.com/artsrichmonduk)  [@ArtsRichmond_UK](https://twitter.com/ArtsRichmond_UK)

Details <https://artsrichmond.org.uk>

History - W.Tamlin

Tribune reader Terry Dillon would like to know if anyone has any information about the company W.Tamlin, Twickenham and the lamps it manufactured.

Terry writes: *"Do you know anything about the W.Tamlin company that manufactured oil lamps? I would like to find out more about this lamp."*



If you have any information, please contact us at info@twickenhamtribune.com

Classical concert raising funds to bring care home residents companionship

From Embracing Age

Back by popular demand, the Embracing Age classical music concert returns! Join Embracing Age at St Stephen's Church on Friday 6 February for an uplifting evening of solo and ensemble classical music, that will raise vital funds so more older people can feel valued and connected.

Entry is free but advance booking is essential to manage capacity at this historically sell-out event. The concert starts at 8pm with doors opening at 7.30pm. A bar and light refreshments will be available throughout.

Donations will be taken on the evening to raise vital funds for the Twickenham-based charity's work befriending local care home residents.

Do encourage your family, friends and colleagues to sign up too.
[Book your free tickets online](#) or call Sarah Waller on 020 3778 0035.

Restoring Richmond Station

From The Richmond Society

Join us on 20th January for our first event of the year. We're excited to welcome architect Benedict O'Looney for an illustrated talk exploring the recent restoration of Richmond Station to its former Art Deco glory.

Benedict will take us behind the scenes of this restoration work, which was a collaborative project between South Western Railway, the Railway Heritage Trust, Network Rail and Richmond Council

Benedict is also Chairman of Southwark's Conservation Areas Advisory Group, a member of the Victorian Society's Southern Building Committee and a past president of the London Sketch Club.



- 20 January, 7:30pm (doors open at 7pm)
- Duke Street Church, Richmond
- Free for Richmond Society members (in person or online) | £7 for non-members (in person only)

Details and booking [HERE](#)

Nominate a local hero: Richmond Community Heroes Awards now open

From Richmond Council

Local heroes are making a real difference across Richmond upon Thames every day – and now residents can help celebrate them.

Richmond Council has opened nominations for the 2025-26 Community Heroes Awards, inviting residents to shine a spotlight on the inspirational individuals, groups and businesses who volunteer their time to support others and strengthen the local community.

From saving surplus food to fight hunger, to protecting green spaces and uplifting the most vulnerable, some of the borough's most inspiring grassroots initiatives were [celebrated at last year's awards](#) – and now it's time to nominate this year's local heroes.

Councillor Nancy Baldwin, Spokesperson for Communities, Equalities and the Voluntary Sector, said the annual awards, now in their eighth year, recognise people who go above and beyond for Richmond – *“often quietly, without recognition, and always with generosity and commitment”*.

Every winner is nominated by residents, ensuring the awards truly reflect the communities they serve.

“Richmond upon Thames isn't just a beautiful place to live – it's a borough defined by the people who make it special,” added Councillor Baldwin.

“Every day, local people are transforming lives of others through kindness, creativity, and community spirit.

“Whether it's a neighbour, a volunteer, a community group or a local business, we all know someone who makes a difference. These awards are our chance to say thank you – and to make sure those efforts don't go unnoticed.”

Award categories are:

- Business Contribution in the Community
- Community Group of the Year
- Community Project of the Year
- Community Spirit Award
- Environmental Award
- Outstanding Volunteer
- Trustee of the Year
- Young Person Achievement
- Lifetime Achievement



Nominations are open to anyone carrying out voluntary work in the borough and can be submitted in multiple categories.

Deadline: 11.59pm Sunday 8 February 2026

How to apply: nomination can be made [quickly and easily online](#)

A full list of categories, criteria and examples of previous winners can be found on the [Community Heroes web page](#).

Shortlisted nominees will be invited to the flagship Community Heroes Awards ceremony in late March 2026, where winners will be announced.

For more information, or to nominate via paper form, contact events@richmond.gov.uk or call 020 8871 8390.

Freedom Pass future questioned as Local Liberal Democrats warn of 'ticking timebomb'

By James Knight

Senior Liberal Democrats have begun publicly reframing the Freedom Pass as a financial risk, prompting concern in Richmond that a long-standing concession may no longer be regarded as settled



The Freedom Pass has long been one of London's quiet civic bargains. For older and disabled residents, it offers more than free travel. It provides independence, routine, and connection. That is why its sudden reclassification as a financial problem has unsettled many in Richmond.

London Councils has confirmed that the Freedom Pass is under formal review, driven by rising costs of around £372 million a year, with further increases projected. Options being

examined include raising the qualifying age, restricting free travel to buses only, or introducing means testing. Nothing has been decided. But the tone of the debate has shifted.

Ehmann's candour, and its consequences

At the centre of that shift is Alexander Ehmann, a Richmond councillor, chair of Richmond's Transport and Air Quality Committee, and a member of London Councils Transport Committee.

Ehmann has been unusually forthright. He has described the Freedom Pass as a "ticking time bomb for London local authorities", warning that costs could reach half a billion pounds within a few years. He has linked this directly to Richmond's finances, noting that the council faces savings of more than £30 million a year under current funding settlements.

His case is that boroughs are being asked to fund a London wide statutory benefit without adequate support from central government or the Mayor. That argument is not frivolous. Boroughs do pay the bill, and rising fares, combined with demographic change, are putting real pressure on local budgets. Yet candour, while admirable, also signals direction.

From cherished benefit to financial burden

Concern sharpened when residents challenged remarks made by Kingston Liberal Democrat councillor Ian Manders, who described the Freedom Pass as an "expensive burden". Rather than distancing himself, Ehmann defended the characterisation, arguing that something can be a burden without implying it should be removed. Once a benefit is accepted as a burden rather than a public good, the argument is no longer about whether it should change, but only about how.



What has unsettled some residents is not just the review itself, but also the consistency of the message emerging from Liberal Democrat-led councils across south-west London, where language about sustainability and burden appears to be hardening rather than softening.

That distinction may be technically correct, but politically it is revealing. It suggests that senior Liberal Democrats are increasingly comfortable framing the Freedom Pass not as a settled social good, but as a cost that must continually justify its scope. Reassurances are offered, but they are conditional. Protection

depends on funding reform elsewhere. For many residents, this feels uncomfortably familiar.

A familiar political logic

The language echoes the logic of the coalition years, when austerity was presented not as a political choice but as an unavoidable necessity. Services were not attacked outright. They were reviewed, reframed, and quietly narrowed in the name of sustainability. Liberal Democrats were part of that coalition. Some residents now ask whether a similar mindset is re-emerging locally: reluctant retrenchment, carefully explained and justified as fiscal realism rather than ideology. Ehmann rejects that reading, insisting that no decisions have been taken and that any changes would be made collectively across London. That is true. But politics is shaped as much by framing as by final votes.

A borough pulled in two directions

For Richmond, the tension is particularly acute. The borough faces above-average Freedom Pass cost increases because of its reliance on national rail, yet its leadership is also pursuing policies to reduce car ownership and encourage public transport use. For many older residents, the Freedom Pass makes that shift possible. Undermine it, and the logic of wider transport policy weakens.

There is also a growing debate about intergenerational fairness. Some residents have asked whether universal free travel for under-18s should remain unrestricted or be limited to school journeys. Others argue that free youth travel enables parents to leave cars at home and supports environmental goals. The fact that such questions are now being aired suggests a broader recalibration is under way.

A structural problem, not just a budget line

Behind all this lies a deeper issue. London's governance is highly fragmented, with 32 borough councils, the City of London, and around 1,820 councillors between them. Boroughs are legally required to fund London wide schemes such as the Freedom Pass, yet have limited control over fares, service levels, or long-term funding. Friction of this kind is almost inevitable.

For now, residents are told that nothing has been decided. That remains true. But reviews often prepare the ground long before conclusions are announced. In Richmond, where transport policy already shapes daily life, the Freedom Pass debate has become a test of trust. For many Richmond residents, the question is no longer whether the Freedom Pass is valued in principle, but whether those in charge still see it as a right to be defended, or as a cost to be managed down.

Free career support for Richmond residents

From Room for Work

Whether you're looking to re-enter the workplace or seeking a career change, local charity Room for Work offers free career support delivered in Richmond Town Centre.

Step into a welcoming environment, surrounded by motivated peers and guided by experienced professionals. Benefit from personalised mentoring and ongoing career coaching, designed to rebuild your confidence and equip you with the tools you need to re-enter the workforce.

The 12-session programme is for skilled workers aged 40+ with previous work experience that could range from administrative to managerial and professional roles.

To attend, participants will need:

- A laptop or tablet
- Access to the web
- A good working knowledge of English
- Basic computer skills



Richmond Town Centre classes are held on Tuesdays from 10am to 12.30pm, at Duke Street, Quadrant Road TW9 1DH. The programme starts on 13 January 2026 and runs until 1 April 2026.

This course is funded by the Richmond Foundation.

Secure your place and take real steps toward your career goals.

[Register now](#)

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Full service resumes between London Waterloo and Clapham Junction after upgrades to South Western Railway network

On 5th January, South Western Railway services resumed between London Waterloo and Clapham Junction following 11 days of engineering work on one of the busiest stretches of railway in the country

More than 350 engineers have worked around the clock since Christmas Day to deliver a series of upgrades in the Queenstown Road area including:

- Renewing approximately 1,000 metres of track, including the electrified third rail
- Replacing switches and crossings, allowing the trains to change tracks
- Completing signalling and power upgrades
- Installing new ballast and sleepers to strengthen track foundations
- Altering platforms at Queenstown Road station to fit the new track layout



The work was carried out over the Christmas period, when customer numbers fall significantly, making it the least disruptive time to complete these vital upgrades. Completing the work at this time avoided the need for eight separate weekend closures.

Speaking on behalf of South Western Railway and Network Rail Wessex, George Murrell, Route Renewals Director, said: "I'd like to thank passengers for their patience and understanding while we carried out these essential upgrades at London Waterloo. The improvements will make one of the busiest stretches of railway in the country more resilient and customers can expect fewer faults and delays, together with smoother and more reliable journeys."

There will be two partial closures between London Waterloo and Clapham Junction over the weekends of 10 - 11 January and 31 January - 1 February to allow for further maintenance works to take place in the area. Customers are advised to use SWR's journey planner at southwesternrailway.com/plan-my-journey

South Western
 **Railway**

When the Ice Came, Richmond's Winter Plan Showed Its Age

By Michael Jones

Icy pavements exposed more than a cold snap. They revealed a winter resilience plan still designed around cars, not the active-travel borough Richmond now claims to be.

When pavements across Whitton, Twickenham and Ham turned into skating rinks earlier this week, residents did not need a policy document to tell them something had gone wrong. They could feel it underfoot.

Commuters clutched walls near stations, school children slowed to a cautious shuffle, guide dog users stayed indoors, and more than one resident spoke of “hitting the deck” on untreated ice. What began as local frustration quickly travelled. Complaints spilled across social media, were picked up by London-wide outlets, and soon appeared in national press coverage. Richmond, a borough that likes to think of itself as a model of good governance, found itself quoted as an example of public anger.

Yet the uncomfortable truth is this. The council did not obviously fail to follow its Winter Service Plan. The problem is that the Plan no longer fits how people are expected to move around the borough.

A winter model built for cars, not people

At its core, Richmond's winter resilience approach remains resolutely car-centric. Success is measured in miles of road treated and tonnes of salt deployed. Priority routes are defined almost entirely by vehicular movement. Pavements, by contrast, are treated as secondary assets: difficult to pre-salt, manually treated only after prolonged snowfall, and largely excluded during icy conditions without snow.

This reflects a legacy assumption that roads matter first and footways second. It is a framework that made sense when winter risk was judged mainly by whether vehicles could move. But Richmond is no longer governed as a car-first borough.

Over the past two decades, council policy has explicitly encouraged walking, cycling and public transport, while in some areas actively discouraging car use. That shift increases pedestrian exposure during winter conditions. The Winter Service Plan, however, has not been amended to reflect this.



Where policy and reality collide

The consequences were predictable. During a prolonged freeze without heavy snowfall, untreated pavements became the primary source of danger. Stations, bus stops, crossings and shaded footways emerged as hazard hotspots. Outside Whitton Station, where hundreds of commuters pass through each morning, residents described pavements that remained icy well into the day. These are not obscure locations. They are precisely the places where people walk because policy encourages them to do so.

The council's public defence, delivered by Cllr Alexander Ehmann, Chair of the Transport Committee, was factually sound but politically brittle. Filmed at the depot in front of gritter lorries, he emphasised road mileage, salt tonnage and the limits of what any council can reasonably do. He was right. No authority can grit everything. But residents were not asking for everything. They were asking why pavements outside stations and bus stops were left untreated for days in sub-zero temperatures, and why mitigation appeared to arrive only after social media outrage.

The limits of “self-help” winter resilience

Richmond's reliance on resident self-help is revealing. The borough does not maintain a network of grit bins. Instead, residents are invited in late autumn to collect 25-kilogram bags of rock salt from the depot. In theory, hundreds did so this year.

In practice, this is a weak form of mitigation. It depends on foreknowledge, physical ability, storage space and a willingness to deploy salt months later. It does nothing for the commuter slipping at 7am, the parent navigating a school run, or the elderly resident facing a shaded footpath.

National guidance is clear that risk-based approaches require mitigation for risks that are knowingly left unmanaged. Excluding large parts of the network and hoping residents will compensate is not the same as managing residual risk.

Transparency without clarity

Transparency is another weak point. The council publishes a list of gritted roads, but not a map. It publishes no list of footways eligible for treatment after snowfall. Therefore, pedestrians cannot plan a safe route with confidence.

More troubling still, the council's own gritting webpage states that it cannot respond to enquiries about gritting. In a risk model that relies on identifying localised hazards such as black ice, discouraging feedback is not a neutral act.

Risk-based management needs feedback to be effective; discouraging feedback significantly increases risk to the public.

Reaction, not resilience

One of the most awkward questions raised by this episode is whether footway gritting in Whitton occurred because it was triggered by the Winter Service Plan, or because political pressure forced an override. The timing, coinciding with intense public complaint, makes that question unavoidable.



A risk-based system should operate predictably and consistently. When action appears reactive and uneven, confidence erodes. Areas with louder voices or greater online visibility risk receiving attention, while quieter streets remain untreated.

The false economy of doing nothing

There is also a financial argument the council has yet to engage with properly. The national Code of Practice, *Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure*, published by the UK Roads Liaison Group and underpinned by Department for Transport evidence, repeatedly stresses that preventative highway intervention delivers far greater value than reactive response.

That evidence base consistently points to very high benefit–cost ratios for early, proportionate intervention, commonly cited in the region of £6 to £10 of wider economic value for every £1 spent,

once avoided injuries, NHS treatment costs, insurance claims and wider disruption are taken into account.

Doing nothing on pavements is therefore not cost-free. It does not eliminate expense. It merely displaces it, from highways budgets to hospital wards, social care costs, and compensation payments.

A test of whether active travel is real

None of this amounts to an accusation of neglect. Richmond's officers and contractors worked hard to keep the road network moving during difficult conditions. But this episode exposes a deeper structural issue. The borough's winter resilience arrangements have not been fully rethought for an active-travel era.

That matters because policy choices have consequences. If you encourage people to walk, you inherit responsibility for the surface they walk on. If you prioritise active travel, you cannot treat pavements as secondary assets. A system that protects vehicles while leaving pedestrians to navigate ice undermines both safety and credibility.

The lesson, then, is not that Richmond should grit everywhere. It is that it should grit differently. Pedestrian desire lines need to be treated as core infrastructure, not optional extras. Mitigation must be visible, accessible and timely where mechanised gritting cannot reach. Information about what will and will not be treated must be clear. Feedback must be welcomed, not discouraged, when reality diverges from the model.

Ice has a way of revealing underlying cracks. The question now is whether Richmond treats this winter not as an aberration to be managed away, but as a prompt to bring its winter resilience policy into line with the borough it says it wants to be.

‘Winter Warmer’ Online Talks

From The Royal Parks

Join us for our series of **free** ‘Winter Warmer’ **online talks** which take place from January - March.

These sessions are designed to bring a sense of community, discovery and learning to brighten up the long winter evenings.

For a series of five sessions we will be joined by guests from across [The Royal Parks charity](#) to explore a variety of topics from beautiful botany, to the impacts of climate change and the value of outdoor play for children in the UK’s largest city.

Whether you join us for one of the sessions or all of them, get ready to discover London’s beloved green spaces from the comfort of your own home!

Queering Ecology: Challenging Norms in Nature

15 January, 6:30pm - 7:30pm

This talk will share the true spectrum of diversity in the natural world and how we shape our understanding of it. From gender-fluid woodlice to sex-changing plants, this talk uncovers the wildly fluid world of life found in parks today.

Connor the Ecologist is an entomologist and educator on a mission to make people notice and appreciate the smaller details in nature. Over 2500 people have joined his Queer Ecology tours to date.

[Register Now](#)



Parks of the Future

29 January, 6:30pm - 7:30pm

As our climate changes, what will the Royal Parks look and feel like in 20-30 years’ time? Join Darren Share MBE, Director of Parks at The Royal Parks, as he considers the environmental changes we’re already seeing, the work we’re doing in response and how we’re going to prepare the parks for a very different future. What will this mean for visitors to the parks and how can you support these precious spaces?

During this thought-provoking talk you’ll have the opportunity to send in your questions which will be put to Darren at the end.

Over the last 40 years, Darren has worked with communities to deliver positive benefits of parks in an urban environment. He joined The Royal Parks as a Director in January 2024 and is also a Trustee for the Royal Horticultural Society and a national ‘Britain in Bloom’ judge.

[Register Now](#)



Playing Out

12 February, 6:30pm - 7:30pm

What are your memories of playing outside growing up? In our ever-changing city, it's more challenging than ever for children to feel a sense of freedom outdoors.

Join The Royal Parks' Community Engagement Officer Hadeel Elshak as she explores the history behind this, the role of play in today's society, and the contribution that The Royal Parks can make to offer visiting families inspiring play opportunities.



You'll also get a behind-the-scenes view on the exciting work underway to [renovate one of the country's busiest playgrounds](#), the Diana Memorial Playground in Kensington Gardens. This talk will offer you new ways of thinking about play and the possibilities for London's young people in the future.

[Register Now](#)

Wonderful Weeds

25 February, 6:30pm - 7:30pm

Discover the beautiful botany and fascinating ecology of some of our most overlooked wild species, the 'weeds'. Our relationship to these wild plants has changed throughout history. What place do weeds have in our urban parks, and what lessons can we learn from them?



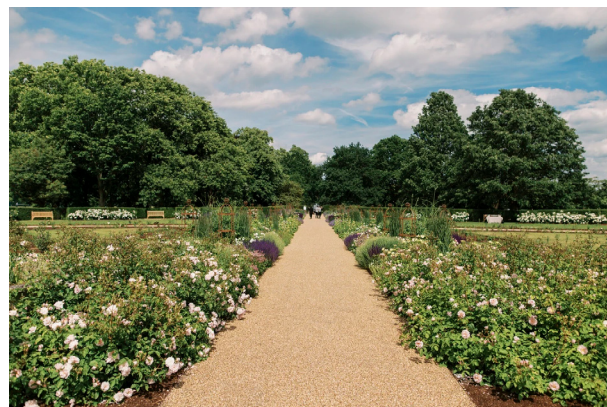
Gemma Hindi is a Help Nature Thrive Engagement Officer with The Royal Parks, and has a particular interest in weeds and fungi. The Help Nature Thrive project is possible thanks to players of People's Postcode Lottery.

[Register Now](#)

Re-designing the Greenwich Park Rose Garden

11 March, 6:30pm - 7:30pm

If you've visited [Greenwich Park](#) in the past few years you might have noticed significant changes afoot. In this session, Park Manager Clare Lanes will focus on the fascinating work done by Head Gardener Tom Brown and the park management team to redesign the beautiful rose garden.



She'll explore why the work was necessary; the sustainability and ecological benefits of a new mixed planting approach; and tell the story of the team's experiments and challenges encountered across 3 years of development.

If you have an interest in gardening or would just like a behind-the-scenes view on how such beautiful settings are created, this is a talk not to be missed.

[Register Now](#)



“Stop picking on pensioners”: what residents are saying about the Freedom Pass

By James Knight

As politicians debate the future of the Freedom Pass, residents across Richmond and beyond are already arguing over who pays, who benefits, and what fairness now means.



If the official review of the Freedom Pass has been framed as technical and exploratory, the reaction among residents has been far more visceral. Across Richmond, Kingston and neighbouring areas, people responding to recent coverage have expressed anger, suspicion and unease, often in stark and personal terms.

“Hitting the pensioners once more”

The strongest reaction comes from older residents who feel they are being unfairly targeted. Ann Sciberras wrote simply: *“Hitting the pensioners once more. Shame on you.”* Another commenter, listed as Anonymous participant 336, went further, saying: *“Senior citizens hit again, easy targets, might as well deport us to Devils Island to finish us off.”*

For many, the issue is not abstract policy but daily life. Mark Kurzeja warned of wider consequences, writing: *“Ok so I won’t travel and will save a fortune on the money I spend in London going to films, exhibitions pubs and restaurants.”*

Others linked the Freedom Pass directly to health and wellbeing. Anne Mei said: *“I used to travel with quite a number of older people on the bus in the morning who go out regularly for physical activities and social contacts. I dread to think if the pass is taken from them, how their physical and mental health might get impacted.”*

Anger directed at Liberal Democrats

Some comments explicitly blamed Liberal Democrat councils for the situation. Pat Rigby, posting from Teddington Park, wrote bluntly: *“Richmond Council? Done deal then.”* Julia Kurzeja

was more explicit in her criticism, saying: *“Councils waste money on woke and green s***. Free travel really benefits older people, getting them out of the house, seeing friends etc. Shame on this idea!”*

Others questioned the sincerity of Liberal Democrat reassurances. Chris L., from St Margarets, remarked: *“Let me guess. Cllr. Ehmann isn’t 60 yet.”*

Doubts about the cost figures

A recurring theme was scepticism about the numbers being quoted. Robert Jenkins, from Ham, asked: *“Why should the costs rise by 12% in a single year? This is nonsense.”* He added: *“This is all a big con by Mayor Khan to get more money from the councils.”*

Martine Dejeans, from Ham Common, echoed this confusion, writing: *“I do not understand that cost. The same trains and buses run regardless of the number of older people on board who pay with a travel pass.”*

Cee W, from Fulwell, challenged the figures directly, saying: *“The London Forum statistics state that Freedom Pass usage is actually down since the pandemic and accounted for only 3.5% of all journeys taken on the underground in 2024.”*

Calls to look at under 18s travel instead

Not all contributors opposed change outright. Some argued that if savings were needed, attention should turn to youth concessions. Brendan Gibbs wrote: *“It’s not the freedom pass that needs reviewing it’s the 365 day unrestricted free travel for under 18’s.”* He suggested instead that children should travel free *“to and from school between the hours of 6-9 and again from 3-6.”*

Musiclover Dave agreed, commenting: *“Why do teenagers go free? They should be walking and keeping fit on way home to their screens.”* Others pushed back strongly against this idea. Bob V., from Twickenham Riverside, argued that free travel is part of a wider environmental benefit, writing: *“Every time someone chooses to use public transport rather than drive a car everyone benefits.”*

Suggestions for compromise

Between outright opposition and calls for cuts lay a group arguing for reform rather than removal. Deborah Lomas wrote: *“Not all pensioners are poor. The travel pass is brilliant and I would not object to paying a nominal sum to be able to continue to use it.”*

Jamie Calder suggested means testing, saying: *“Someone with 2 or 3k a month pension and a mortgage free house doesn’t need to get state funded public transport.”* Others proposed modest charges. Lindsey D., from Richmond Park, commented: *“Align it to the 60+ card and charge an annual fee.”*

A debate that is far from settled

What emerges from these comments is not a single view, but a shared sense of unease. Whether angry, sceptical or pragmatic, residents are responding to the same signal: that a benefit once assumed to be secure is now being openly questioned.

As John Jones, from Surbiton River Roads, put it plainly: *“Stop picking on pensioners.”*

For now, the Freedom Pass remains unchanged. But among those who rely on it, the debate has already begun, and trust, once unsettled, may prove harder to restore than any line in a budget.

Next week at Richmond Council

On Tuesday, 13th January, the **Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sport Committee** will consider the main items, including a new events policy for parks and the mid-year performance report. The meeting will commence at 7 pm at York House, Twickenham. Please click [HERE](#) for more details.

On Wednesday, 14th January, the **Adult Social Services, Health and Housing Committee** will meet to discuss 1) annual report from the South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust, 2) The Richmond adult carers' and young carers' charter 2026, 3) proposed reorganisation of day centres, including the closure of a centre in Whitton, 3) mid-year performance report, 4) Joint health overview and scrutiny committee update. The meeting will commence at 7 pm at York House, Twickenham. Please click [HERE](#) for more details.

On Thursday, 15th January, the **Finance, Policy and Resources Committee** will meet to discuss 1) annual contracts report, 2) cost of living support update, 3) mid-year performance report, 4) London Councils annual subscription. The meeting will start at 7 pm at York House, Twickenham. For more details, please click [HERE](#).

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

Local charity offers extra support through the winter months

From Kew Neighbourhood Association

As winter settles in, many local residents can find the shorter days and colder weather harder to manage, particularly those who live alone or have difficulty getting out and about.

Kew Neighbourhood Association (KNA) is a long-established local charity offering free, practical and emotional support to people in the Kew area. This includes companionship, help with shopping, and transport to appointments, all provided by local volunteers.

Winter can be a challenging time, and some people may find it harder to ask for help. Friendly contact and practical support can make a real difference to wellbeing and help people stay connected to their community.

The charity is keen to hear from anyone who may be interested in volunteering, whether on a regular basis or occasionally. Volunteers play a vital role in supporting neighbours and helping people remain independent.

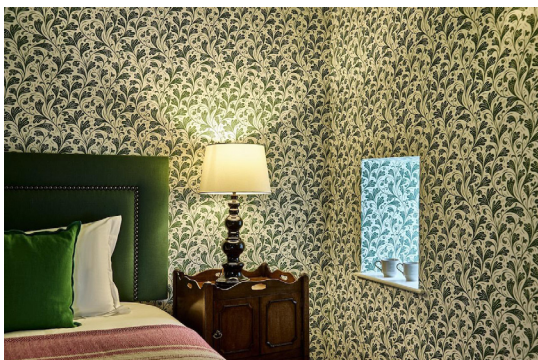
If you would like to find out more about volunteering, or feel you may benefit from support, contact Kew Neighbourhood Association by phone on 020 8948 8054 or email at info@kna.org.uk.

Find out more about [Kew Neighbourhood Association](#).



A Black Horse You Can Bank On

Having been a fan of **Historic Sussex Hotels** for many years, I was fascinated to see that the group had recently purchased a country pub - **The Black Horse** - near Bailiffscourt, Climping, (its spectacular hotel and spa). Fancying a night away pre Christmas, we checked in to The Black Horse on a cold and miserable evening. However, the welcome at the bar from Chloe was very warm, who showed us to our room on the first floor, via a private staircase just for residents. The decor is lovely; dark bold colours and beautiful wallpaper designed by Fiona Howard, a neighbour of the group, who's also based in Climping.



Our bedroom was furnished with an eclectic collection of antiques - ones that have obviously been used, and loved, over the years. The ensuite bathroom was massive, with a roll top bath, as well as a walk in shower. The pub has seven bedrooms in total.

The pub itself is furnished with an attractive mis-match of furniture: one that in many places would look wrong, but here it just adds to the warm and relaxed atmosphere. There is a large open bar area to the front of the building and at the rear a modern, but very tastefully and sympathetically built, extension that houses the main dining room. To the side of the bar is an attractive, cosy, private dining room that seats up to ten.



After a relaxing pre-prandial of a G&T and Guinness 00, we decided to eat in the bar area rather than the restaurant, as the bar was so comfy and cheerful with a woodburning stove and groups of locals (many with dogs in tow) enjoying drinks and dinner.

The menu for lunch and dinner is well composed and sensibly compact, with a choice of six starters and six mains. My husband spotted a starter of Yorkshire pudding, filled with braised beef and horseradish cream so opted for that immediately. It was a perfectly sized portion of incredibly light batter served piping hot. He described it as 'a perfect Sunday lunch in a starter'.



The Heritage beetroot, whipped feta and roasted walnut salad with sesame and maple dressing was perfect for me: beautifully presented; earthy flavours. It was a very tasty and light starter - beetroot and walnuts are always such a good pairing and the feta added a saltiness that offset the other ingredients perfectly. Some warm, homemade focaccia with oil and balsamic vinegar accompanied our starters.



The Climping beach fish pie, grilled cheddar mash, buttered prawns and seasonal vegetables had swiftly been 'bagged' by my husband as he'd heard that it was a signature dish. He's normally the one to choose a pie, but it was my turn this time - homemade steak and ale, chips and seasonal veg.

The fish pie was a Sussex interpretation of the Cornish stargazy - an array of battered whitebait poking their heads above a sea of cheesy potato waves and prawns atop a creamy, fishy sauce. My pie (a 'proper' one with a pastry base as well as top) was served as a very generous serving of crispy pastry packed with a rich beefy interior. The beef was incredibly tender and just melted in the mouth. The portions were very generous and with the exception of a couple of the perfectly cooked fat chips, and the seasonal veg that accompanied it, I found myself only managing the delicious contents of the pie and just a few mouthfuls of the lovely pastry.

Not surprisingly, I didn't have any room for anything else, but my husband was persuaded to try apple & blackberry crumble knickerbocker with custard, vanilla ice cream and vanilla cream. Wow! It certainly looked spectacular and lived up to expectations, being declared 'absolutely delicious'.



A well composed wine list has a number of wines by the glass from just £6.50, including the delicious locally produced Hindleap Seyval Blanc sparkling, from the Bluebell Estate, at £9.50. House wines are from £25 a bottle, with most of the wines competitively priced at under £40 a bottle.

After an excellent night's sleep in the very comfortable bed we strolled downstairs for breakfast. Tina was the duty breakfast server and offered us the choice of eating in the dining room or the bar. The bar, with its cosy memories of the night before, was perfect for us. The Blackhorse full English was my husband's choice, while I chose avocado and poached eggs. There is also a Blackhorse full veggie option, plus waffles or baps filled with an assortment of bacon, sausage and eggs.



A plate packed with Cumberland sausage, smoked back bacon, a clever little kebab of grilled tomatoes and mushrooms, baked beans, scrambled eggs and fried bread (his choices from a range of options) was certainly an excellent start to the day.

My avocado and poached eggs was a tasty and much lighter start to my day, but neither of us needed anything to eat till much, much, later in the day after such a good repast.



If you fancy a night or two in beautiful countryside with multiple seaside or woodland walks on your doorstep, I can't recommend a trip to Climping and a visit to the Black Horse highly enough. For further information check out the website www.hshotels.co.uk/theblackhorseclimping

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Luxury Peaks Offers - Spoil Yourself!!

By Bruce Lyons

Indulge yourself and look forward to a great holiday at an affordable price!! I picked these out as one I would enjoy myself.

Luxury Offers on Botswana Safari Camps with Natural Selection of Cape Town.

Their exceptional offer is book 6 nights in any two of the four camps and get two nights free. You have to book by 31st January and, of course there must be availability

The Camps are Tawana; Moremi Game Reserve - Tludli, Kwai Private Reserve - North Island; Northern Okavango Delta - Jacks Camp, Makgadikgadi Pans.



Luxury Wildlife at 30% reduction, what's not to like? Perfect for that special occasion.

Wendy Wu is offering over their 40 tours on 5 continents free flights and solo offers for single travellers. I always stress that Wendy plans trips for those that like to see a lot, experience the country in as an authentic style as possible and uses, as far as possible local style accommodations and has really superb guides. Many of their tours include "must see" sites on many peoples bucket lists. Offers are sensitive to book by dates please check that when enquiring.

There is a galaxy of offers on sale just now, but this last one may just be the ticket for you.



European Waterways, The Luxury Barge Company with vessels in Scotland, France, Holland and Italy is offering 20% off or no single cabin supplement for a limited time. Superb holidays for adults and families alike

Looking forward to seeing you
Bruce

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Jolly Ron...

By Deep Patel

~Life through the eyes of a Twickenham shopkeeper~

One thing that comes with being a shopkeeper is that quite often you see your regular customers more than you see your own family. What comes with that is the fact that you grow close to your customers...what seemed to be a relationship set up for the purpose of a simple daily transaction to enable the purchase of a newspaper and the odd bottle of milk on a daily basis, blossoms into a bond of a life-long friendship and you don't even realize it happening but it's beautiful...having it this way basically means everyone that comes through my shop doors becomes family. There are not many jobs that allow for this to take place, and it makes me proud to be a shopkeeper in Twickenham.

So many people walk through my shop door every single day, different people of every type, that's one of the things I love about my job. Every now and again someone walks through who when they leave, they leave their footsteps in my heart. It's those individuals that I catch myself thinking about when I am in the shop alone sitting behind my counter.

Ever since I was a child, there was one such man who I would always see coming into my shop and although he would be buying different things each time, one thing that he always carried with him was a big smile. The sort of smiles you don't really see much of these days, one of those smiles that shouts out "don't take life too seriously and just be happy"...his name was Ron...

As a shopkeeper, can you guess the one sentence I fear hearing the most from my customers? It's not "what time do you close" or "can you let me have some beer and pay tomorrow", and it's not even the sentence "Sainsbury's is cheaper on their chocolate digestives than you are" (they actually are not, we are cheaper)...but the one line I fear hearing most as a shop keeper is actually when a customer comes into my shop, walks up to the counter, looks me in the eye with a serious look and says those three words "do you remember..." and then says someone's name...I absolutely HATE those three words whenever they are used in that context and that setting because I usually know what is going to follow after. Someone telling me that person has sadly passed away. One such experience recently was regarding a long-term friend and customer of Meet and Deep Newsagents named Ron.

Ron was in his nineties, but I was completely unaware of this as he looked so young and well. He had a lovely large country-style garden, and I am almost certain somewhere amongst the flowers and shrubs, there must have been some kind of fountain of youth that Ron had discovered as gosh he looked good for his age. He seemed to always be doing something...you could say he had ants in his pants, but he of course would probably answer saying something like "yeah I have, do you want them?"

Sometimes in life, we all have a sh*t day at work, we've all been there right? Even a shop keeper in Twickenham can have one of those days...for me whenever I have one of those days, an angel seems to walk through my door at just the right time...Ron was definitely one of them. I have actually lost count at the amount of times Ron has pulled me out of negative thoughts...whenever he came through my shop door, all I had to do is see the expression on his face, no words needed, he didn't have to say a word, just the look on his face was enough to pull me away from reality and draw me into a happier place where nothing actually mattered except being happy. During a hospital visit with my father to Kingston hospital last year, I suddenly heard a lot of laughter coming from the end of a long corridor there...as I got nearer I could make out a figure with young nurses either side who couldn't seem to stop laughing...as I got even closer I noticed the figure in between all of the laughing young nurses was Ron!!! Of course it would be, I said hello to Ron and he waved back laughing, as they walked away with Ron walking in between them, I heard the nurses say to Ron "you know everyone and everyone

seems to like you"...they were spot on!

It's not often you meet someone from Ron's generation who you can really have a laugh with, if you tried to make a joke about him, he would answer you making an even bigger joke about you, he was one of a kind, if you imagined a scene with Jesus walking and everyone he passes would be healed through the divine light surrounding him, well wherever Ron would walk, everyone he passed on either side would be left in fits of laughter. Knowing Ron for over twenty years as a customer and good friend, we came to know that he didn't always have the easiest life, but his attitude of "don't worry be happy" and the way he used humour to make connections with random strangers and everyone he met to cheer them up and build bridges between others is something I will deeply miss, but it won't be the end...I won't be only sad...I will try to draw inspiration from Ron and take his fun-loving, laughing and humorous way of life as a reminder to never take things too seriously as maybe that truly is the secret to a long and happy life...living into your nineties is definitely proof enough for me! Until we meet again, stay blessed dear Ron, the doors of Meet and Deep Newsagents will always be open to you and I'm certain your spirit will be around everyone someone in my shop makes a joke and every time someone laughs...in this way Ron, you will live on with us all forever.

Ron, I just want to say a big thank you for being you and for teaching me how to be me...stay blessed now with your dear wife Maggie, always and forever...peace, love...and of course laughter.



Remember...

"Laugh and the whole world will laugh with you..."

MY CREATURE-KINDNESS TIP OF THE WEEK...

STOP SPIDERS KINDLY (GOOD KARMA):

Mix 10ml of essential peppermint oil with a cup of water. Pour into a gardener's spray bottle and spray into corners of rooms and around window edges to stop spiders without harming them. This will work for all insects of sprayed regularly!

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

The Rivals

by Richard Brinsley Sheridan

Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond until 24th January

Updating *The Rivals* to reset it in the 1920s, with flapper dresses, feathered hats, pin striped suits and blazers and Charleston dancing, is a triumphant success, radiating joy and laughter. Director Tom Littler's purpose is to make the play as accessible, funny and enjoyable as it was to those who it first saw it 250 years ago this month.

The original has been cut to filter out those of Mrs. Malaprop's malapropisms that are obscure today. A fast cascade trips off Patricia Hodge's tongue, exquisitely and delightfully delivered, as she bemoans friends who "cast nasturtiums on my speech". Hodge's facial expressions alter by the nanosecond as she revels in their delivery.



The plot: Jack Absolute is rich, poor Sergeant Beverley is fake, Lydia doesn't know they're the same person and Sir Anthony would be furious if he knew. Our audience is told this multiple times – in a slightly laboured way. Their ensuing camaraderie and joyful attentiveness justifies the upending of the "show don't tell" rule of dialogue.

Kit Young delivers a convincing Jack, charming, funny – and he can dance! We will him on and care

that the rogue should win Lydia, as he playfully rebels against his father's authority. Robert Bathurst's Sir Anthony, obsessed with status and respectability, is volcanic, performative and slightly desperate, not just loud. His rage is tempered by his saying outrageous things, including a witty slew about keeping women from being too educated. It's impossible not to enjoy ... even as a woman.

James Sheldon as Faulty Faulkland plays the audience along, telling them to desist from watching Jack get out of the bath, then feigning shock. O' Trigger (Colm Gormley), the Irish aristocrat is updated to a gum-chewing, pin-striped suited American, a great foil for Mrs. Malaprop.



The designers work magic. The ladies' outfits have ebullient elegance in fine silks, matching hats and feathers. The men wear their stereotypes well: nothing feels like a "costume". The simple sets are elegant and effective, from greasy spoon, living room or church, to a dance venue. The frequent fast set changes, done with foot-tapping music, low lighting and sleight of hand amongst the dance choreography (by Leah Harris) are very clever and joyful to watch.

The Rivals is an uplifting wonderful production, a marvellous start 2026.

Read Susan Furnell's review at www.markaspen.com/2026/01/04/rivals-ot.

Photography by Ellie Kurttz



Turandot

by Giacomo Puccini, libretto by Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni

Instant Opera at the Courtyard Amphitheatre at the TownHouse, Kingston

During 2025, the most noteworthy of local opera was Instant Opera's [revival of Turandot](#). This both had an imaginative interpretation and took place as the inaugural event in a brand-new venue.

The Courtyard Amphitheatre is an exciting performance space in Kingston University's [TownHouse](#), designed by Grafton Architects, which has won many prestigious architectural awards. This remarkable tiered arena offered a large performance space for the chorus and soloists, and the 38-piece orchestra. Its sightlines are excellent, enabling large screen projected images of the moon and devastated cities (and surtitles translating the Italian).

Instant Opera's artistic director and producer, Nicholas George [explained his concept](#) of a post-apocalyptic dystopian society set in 2184 (a cruel state not dissimilar to the original Gozzi Chinese setting).

Under conductor Kelvin Lim, the sound of the reduced orchestration and the chorus, with several outstanding singers, and a delightful children's choir, was impressive.



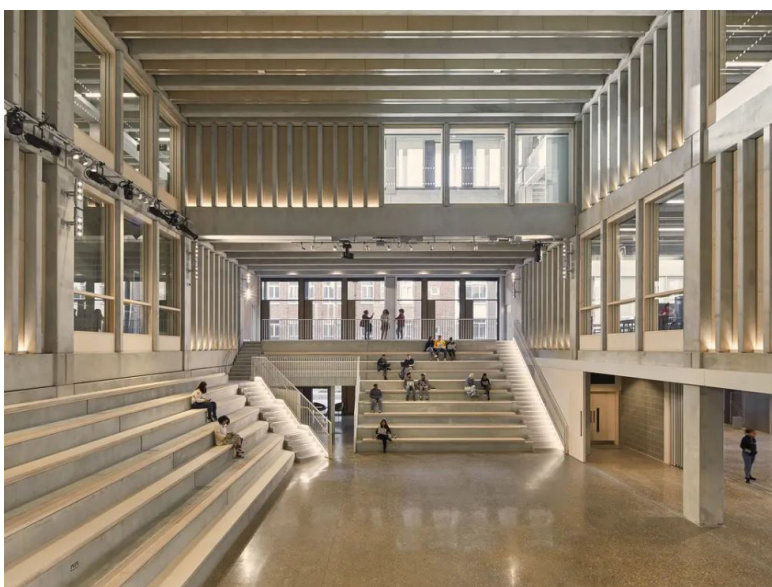
The unknown Prince, Calaf, reunited with his father Timur (firm bass Ian Henderson, also responsible for restaging in the new venue), was sung by Instant Opera favourite, Indian tenor



Anando Mukerjee. His ample, bronzed tenor has now developed into a dramatic spinto, ideal for this role. In his first aria, addressed to a weeping Liu, he was able to soften his voice to a tender love song. Although one felt, however, the anticipation of his aria, *Nessun dorma* in the last act, when Mukerjee gave a ringing climax.

As the chorus called for the blood of another victim of the

man-hating Turandot, sung by British Asian soprano Meeta Raval, showed herself dressed in fetching black leather. In this demanding music Raval displayed a focused, steady voice with a touch of steel, which rode the orchestra and delivered the top notes brilliantly. Turandot was presented less of a harridan than usual, and more a feminist, conscious of her ancestor's abuse. In the three riddles which Calaf must solve to win her, or die, she even showed signs of warming to the prince, as he seems to falter on the last answer. Calaf decides to offer her a way out, when she pleads for mercy, if only she can learn his name he announces this with a triumphant top C!



The trio of ministers, in paramilitary costume: Ping, sung by Australian baritone Jeffrey Black and Pang and Pong, by tenors Gary Rushton and Ernesto Vacarezza sustained interest in their nostalgic scene as everyone waited in suspense for the climactic riddle scene. Here we also met the emperor, clear voiced tenor Peder Holterman, as Turandot's elderly father who tries to dissuade Calaf from sacrificing his life. The baritone Mandarin Yuki Okuyama did justice to his two announcements and four dancers from the Kingston Ballet School added to the spectacle throughout.

Eva Gheorghiu, as Timur's faithful servant, Liu, sang with a lovely pure voice and ravishing soft high notes. The interrogation and suicide of Liu had a stark beauty. Her demonstration of love (unrequited) for Calaf helped break down any remaining doubts about Turandot's own feelings.

In this production the transformation was convincing and her final thrilling revelation that his name is love ended the opera (literally) on a high note, to round off a very enjoyable evening.



Read Richard Copeman's review at www.markaspen.com/2025/10/13/turandot

Photography by Jon Lo and courtesy of Kingston University © Ed Reeve



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

HAMPTON CHORAL SOCIETY

In association with Arts Richmond, festival of phenomenal female composers, presents:

Grand Mass in Eflat Major Amy Beach

Saturday 21 March 2026, 7.30pm

Musical Director Emma Warren
with professional soloists & musicians

St James's Church, St James's Road,
Hampton Hill, TW12 1DQ



Tickets: £15 (Adults), £7 (Under 16's) Box Office: 020 8941 5394
On the door: contactless, card, cheque, cash www.hamptonchoral.org.uk

Charity Number 261788

St Mary's University

St Mary's Alumna Abi Burton Appointed Chair of Premiership Women's Rugby Players Board



St Mary's University, London, is proud to celebrate another outstanding achievement by one of its alumnae, Abi Burton, a BA Sport & Exercise Science graduate, who has been appointed [Chair of the first-ever Women's Rugby Board, established by the Rugby Players Association.](#)

An England Women's international and back-row forward for Trailfinders Women, Abi will lead the board for the 2025/26 season, representing elite players across the women's game. The board has been created to deliver player-led representation and wellbeing support, reflecting the unique challenges and opportunities within women's professional rugby.

Abi's appointment follows a remarkable period in her career. In 2022, she showed inspirational strength and resilience in returning to elite sport after serious illness and an induced coma. Three years later, she played a key role [in England's Six Nations campaign and the 2025 Rugby World Cup](#), continuing to establish herself as a leader within the game.

In recognition of her contribution to English rugby, Abi – along with fellow Red Roses alumnae – was [awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Sport](#) from St Mary's University in November 2025.

Andrew Reid-Smith, Head of Sport at St Mary's, said: *"Abi's appointment as Chair of the Women's Rugby Board is a significant and well-deserved achievement. She is a great example of the leadership, resilience and professionalism we aim to develop at St Mary's, and we are proud to see her representing players across the women's game."*

Abi is part of a growing list of St Mary's alumni making significant contributions to sport at the highest level. Her appointment reflects the University's long-standing commitment to supporting athletes who excel not only on the field, but also as leaders shaping the future of their sport. The University wishes Abi every success in her new role.



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

Royal Ballet Principal Steven McRae Champions Inclusive Dance with Skylarks

From Skylarks

Steven McRae, Principal of The Royal Ballet and one of the most compelling figures in British dance, and author of ***Anything is Possible with Ballet*** has partnered with Skylarks, to deliver a series of inclusive ballet “mini” masterclasses for children and young people with additional needs - demonstrating that dance truly belongs to everyone.

Skylarks is an independent Twickenham-based charity supporting children and young people with additional needs, along with their siblings, parents, and carers, through both online and face-to-face services.

Operating locally and nationally, the charity provides safe, inclusive spaces for those aged 0–25 and delivers a wide range of free activities, key therapies, life skills and employability training, plus expert advice to reduce isolation and empower families.

The powerful ballet sessions, led with passion and sensitivity by McRae, provided an extraordinary, joy-filled opportunity for children and young people with additional needs to explore movement, creativity, and self-expression - proving that the power of dance transcends barriers, labels, and limitations.



Steven McRae and a Skylarks' friend

Held at Skylarks, the masterclasses were filled with excitement, laughter, and meaningful interaction. McRae's warmth and creativity connected with the children, making the experience both memorable and impactful.

Children aged 5 to 17 were welcomed into small, supported groups where they could engage fully and comfortably. Each session was guided by McRae and supported by the Skylarks staff team and specialist SEND performing arts coaches, ensuring that every participant - regardless of ability - felt empowered to take part.

"Seeing our children shine through dance was nothing short of wonderful," said Skylarks' Head of Fundraising, Deirdre Carswell. "Steven brought magic into the room, and the sense of inclusion, joy, and confidence he inspired will stay with our families for a long time."

The atmosphere was further elevated by contributions from Skylarks Ambassadors:

- Actor **Fiona Button** captured the sessions on film, documenting the energy and emotional impact of inclusive dance.
- Musician **Michael Howell** provided live piano accompaniment, enriching the sensory experience and bringing McRae's creative vision vividly to life.

McRae expressed how meaningful the experience was for him, sharing his belief that ballet belongs to everyone - and that its ability to communicate emotion and build confidence makes it a powerful tool for children with additional needs. He also confirmed his enthusiasm for continuing to work with Skylarks in the future, with both parties eager to explore more opportunities to deliver inclusive dance experiences to families.

Principal of The Royal Ballet, Steven McRae commented: *"It was such an honour spending time with the Skylarks dancers and thank you for the incredibly warm welcome!! I can't wait to return to Skylarks again soon to share many more dance moments together!! Thank you again to Magic Cat Publishing for supporting this wonderful event."*

Each child also received a signed copy of McRae's newly published book ***Anything is Possible with Ballet***, generously donated by **Magic Cat Publishing**, giving families a lasting souvenir of the experience.

Skylarks and McRae are now exploring future collaborations, continuing their shared commitment to widening access to well-crafted dance experiences and challenging who ballet is for.

Families who are eager to hear more about these exciting opportunities, and other support that Skylarks provide, are invited to register - free of charge, with Skylarks - online at:

<https://www.skylarks.charity/>



Brentford FC and Keith Andrews - Taking our breath away!

By Ron Brand, with Editorial assistance from Graham Martin

Fact: There are No Easy Games in the Premiership!

The most successful league on the Planet provides Zero easy opportunities for Coaches and Teams. The Premiership is an example of Capitalism at its pinnacle. There is no fairy Godmother handing out rewards. TV executives and Company Directors invest millions to associate themselves with the Premiership because it **Delivers Profits for their Organisations!**

Millions around the World watch every game, you are seeing the best footballers in the World! The salaries those players receive is based on the Returns made by the clubs for Success.

Brentford FC was formed in October 1889. They spent many years bouncing around in the lower leagues until Matthew Benham arrived.

Matthew Benham became the major shareholder in 2012.

Matthew's approach to Management is featured in a movie 'Moneyball' Staring Brad Pitt which was released in 2011.

Moneyball chronicles how a baseball team, Oakland took on an innovative approach, using analytics to access the Players they targeted. Brighton took on the same method and both chairmen being of a gambling background, they both found the way to compete in the Premiership without having the budgets of the big six. Interesting eh? Look at both those clubs now!.....

Thomas Frank took over in December 2016 as Assistant Head Coach and was promoted to Head Coach in October 2018. Promotion to the Premiership was achieved in 2021. 5 years later Brentford FC is an established Premiership team.

As is well documented in June 2025 Thomas Frank left Brentford FC for Tottenham. With four Top players leaving Brentford at the same time, things looked bleak for The BEES. Now a certain relegation candidate.

Or so it seemed?

Once again the BEES Magic made an entrance. From the existing Coaching staff up stepped Keith Andrews. Acting as Set Piece Coach, Andrews has been at Brentford FC since July 2024.

Taking the mountain that needed to be climbed in his stride, Keith Andrews has worked wonders!

Bees Magic part two arrived in the shape of Igor Thiago a 24 year old Brazilian who had been on the Books since February 2024, having joined the BEES from Belgium club Brugge. Thiago has been a revelation with a Hatrick and a total of 16 goals. Thiago sits just four goals behind Erling Haaland, the Premierships leading scorer.

The BEES are Rolling

After 21 games they are fifth, above Newcastle, Manchester United and Chelsea (in sixth, seventh and eighth), with a points total of 33 well on track to match the club record of 59 from 2022-23 under Thomas Frank – who finds himself six points and nine places beneath his former club.

It is remarkable that without missing a beat the Club, Players and Head Coach have stepped up to the plate and have just carried on in one of sports most competitive environments.

Hats off to all of them.

Match Preview:

Sheffield Wednesday v Brentford

Written by Brentford Football Club

Brentford face Championship side Sheffield Wednesday at Hillsborough Stadium in the third round of the FA Cup on Saturday afternoon (3pm kick-off GMT).

The Bees will be looking to arrest a run of three successive seasons where they have been knocked out at this stage, while the tie provides a break from the second-tier relegation battle for the Owls, who are currently on -7 points following two separate points deductions.

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*: Stalwart still the Owls' main man

The relentless fixture list over the Christmas and New Year period can stretch any squad - but Brentford's FA Cup third round opponents Sheffield Wednesday have been hit harder than most.

Currently in administration, the Owls saw 16 members of their first-team squad depart over the summer, leaving head coach Henrik Pedersen to juggle a threadbare group across the festive schedule. The former Bolton striker has been forced to lean heavily on youth, naming just five players over the age of 23 in the matchday squad for Wednesday's 3-0 defeat to QPR last weekend.

At the midway point of a challenging 2025/26 campaign, Wednesday sit bottom of the Championship on -7 points, having been hit with a total of 18 points' worth of deductions due to off-field financial issues.

With just one league win to their name all season, the Owls have found themselves swimming against the tide - but they remain competitive under Pedersen, and the three-time FA Cup winners will target an upset against Keith Andrews' in-form Bees at Hillsborough.

Compounded by their stretched resources, Wednesday have struggled at both ends of the pitch this term. They are the Championship's lowest scorers with 18 goals - only seven of which have come on home soil - and have also conceded more goals (51) than any other side in the division.

It is worth noting that half of Wednesday's goals this season have arrived within the opening 30 minutes of matches, although that early threat has been offset by the league-high 15 goals they have



conceded during the same period.

Saturday's hosts have faced an average of 15.6 shots per game from Championship opposition so far this season, and Pedersen will be keen to see his side tighten up against a Brentford team adept at carving out high-probability shooting opportunities.

Under Andrews, Brentford continue to favour quality over quantity in the final third. Their xG per shot of 0.18 is currently the highest across UEFA's top five leagues, while the Bees have also taken their efforts from closer (15 yards on average) than any of their Premier League peers this season. Brentford also attempt fewer shots from outside the box (2.3 per game) than any other top-flight side.

After the [Bees' 3-0 midweek win over Sunderland](#), Playmaker's analysis focused on [Vitaly Janelt](#), who enters this weekend's cup clash with four assists in his last five appearances - but Sheffield Wednesday can point to a creative influence of their own.

Now in his 11th season at Hillsborough, 36-year-old Barry Bannan has consistently ranked among the EFL's most inventive midfielders. True to form, the Scotland international sits fifth in the Championship for key passes this season, with 49.

Fifth in the Premier League and unbeaten so far in 2026, Brentford travel to Hillsborough as clear favourites.

The FA Cup is famously no respecter of league form, however, and Andrews' squad will not underestimate their lower-ranked hosts.

Scout report

Dan Long, *Sky Sports*: The silver lining for Wednesday

This season has been one like no other for Sheffield Wednesday - and not for a single good reason whatsoever.

The full, miserable tale is one that will no doubt be immortalised in the pages of a book one day.

At any other club, the campaign after the one where they finished 12th, only 10 points off the play-offs, would have been one of growth. But for Wednesday, the summer and the opening two months of the season were dominated by EFL charges, unpaid wages, countless transfer bans and protests against owner Dejphon Chansiri as a result.

Danny Röhl - widely praised for the job he had done at Hillsborough in testing circumstances - left by mutual consent less than a fortnight before the first game of the season, following key players Josh Windass and Michael Smith out of the door.

There was also the threat of a winding up order in mid-October and, within days, a boycott for the home game against Middlesbrough was staged, with just 7,081 spectators in attendance.

Then came a resolution of sorts - on 24 October, the club went into administration. In a statement, the Sheffield Wednesday Supporters Trust called it "one of the most bittersweet days in our club's proud 158-year history." Chansiri was gone, but a 12-point deduction was imposed as a result.

Wednesday's threadbare squad, made up of a handful of experienced pros, academy prospects prematurely thrust into the limelight and club legends Barry Bannan and Liam Palmer - who have

made almost 1,000 appearances for the club between them - were already bottom after one win from 11 at that point, but the deduction cut them adrift, 15 points from safety.

Another six-point deduction was handed down on 1 December, which extended the gap to 21st to an essentially unassailable 27 points.

Under Henrik Pedersen, the Owls are doing their level best to limit the damage, but it is barely making a dent. They have taken just five points from the last 14, though two came from draws against promotion-chasing Watford and Hull. They remain on -7 points at present, with the gap now 32 points with 21 league games left to play.

Barring a miracle - the like we have never seen before - Sheffield Wednesday will be playing League One football next season.

The silver lining is that, all being well, they will have a new owner in place by then and the task of getting the Owls back on the right track will be under way. Less than six months ago, that was but a pipe dream.

In the Dugout

Henrik Pedersen



Henrik Pedersen started out in youth coaching in his native Denmark, before he made his name as a coach during a six-year spell at Red Bull. During his time there, he coached the now-defunct Red Bull Ghana, as well as Red Bull Salzburg's youth teams and, according to his bio on Sheffield Wednesday's official website, "held a central role in forming a footballing philosophy for the entire Red Bull group."

In July 2014, he took on his first senior management role with HB Køge in the Danish second tier. His side finished seventh in 2014/15, but he left by mutual consent just before Christmas 2015, after 18 months in charge.

Pedersen spent time as assistant to Jens Keller at Union Berlin between 2016 and 2017, then took on the job at Eintracht Braunschweig, but lasted just over four months there.

Eight months later, he joined Strømsgodset in Norway and stayed until April 2021, before he returned to Denmark with Vendsyssel. There, he led the club to eighth and fifth-placed finishes in the second tier, before leaving to become assistant to Danny Röhl at Sheffield Wednesday on 20 October 2023.

He helped the club survive relegation from the Championship by three points in 2023/24, then to within 10 points of the play-offs in 2024/25. Two days after Röhl departed by mutual consent on 29 July 2025, Pedersen was appointed as his successor.



Starmer must listen to PMQs and cabinet pressure on business rates for pubs: CAMRA

CAMRA wants a rethink on business rates hikes for pubs now and not later, as issue raised at PMQs and cabinet revolt reported.

One of the UK's most successful consumer groups, CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale, is calling on the Prime Minister to urgently announce a rethink on business rates hikes for pubs in England due to come into force on 1 April 2026.

It comes after a cabinet revolt on the issue was reported yesterday, and the issue was a key theme of today's Prime Minister's Questions. Responding to a question from Labour MP Rachel Maskell, Keir Starmer said the Government was looking at what "further support and action" could be provided to struggling beer and pub businesses.

CAMRA – which represents over 140,000 consumers and has been campaigning for pubs, pints and people since 1971 – said pubgoers were demanding action from the Government and the Valuation Office Agency to avoid thousands of extra pub closures in 2026.

CAMRA Chairman Ash Corbett-Collins said:

"Instead of months of uncertainty and the prospect of thousands of otherwise viable pubs having to close their doors for good, the Prime Minister and Chancellor should give in to pressure, accept the inevitable and announce a rethink now.

"Whether through cock-up or conspiracy the Government's promise of permanently lower business rates for pubs hasn't happened. Instead, publicans are facing higher bills from April, which they simply can't afford.

"Pubs are a force for good in communities across the country, bringing people together and helping to tackle loneliness. But they can only survive if ministers think again about these business rates increases and come up with a plan that will save our locals."

Government U-turn on pub business rates must deliver permanently lower bills

Responding to reports that the Government is set to change course and provide extra support with business rates bills for pubs in England, Ash Corbett-Collins, CAMRA Chairman said:

"Doing nothing and letting pubs go to the wall was never going to be tolerated by pub goers, publicans or MPs. The Government must urgently end the uncertainty and announce the extra help and permanently lower bills our locals were promised and need to survive and thrive."

Mental Health Pioneer Seeks Volunteers to Help Create Free App for the NHS

From Life Intelligence

A pioneering mental health online profiling system, developed by renowned psychotherapist Mark Newey, from Saffron Walden, Essex, is seeking volunteers for a transformative trial that will support the development of a mental health app for the NHS. Following 25 years of clinical success with nearly 3,000 clients, Newey aims to make this revolutionary support system accessible to all NHS patients for free.

The Life Intelligence Profiling System represents a radical shift in mental health understanding. With two-thirds of GP mental health visits not resulting in therapy referrals and referred patients facing a minimum of 2-3 month waiting times, this innovation could bridge a critical gap in mental healthcare delivery.

"The human brain processes two million bits of information every second, yet our conscious mind handles only 5-9 bits. This means over 91% of how we create our reality on a moment-by-moment basis is unconscious," explains Mark Newey, whose own journey from corporate breakdown to mental health pioneer drives his mission. *"But we know nothing of our Unconscious and therefore how we create our reality, which is why people can easily stay stuck and end up in burnout. The LQ Profiling System reveals to the user exactly how their mind works, providing crucial self-awareness that forms the essential foundation for any meaningful change."*



The system uses ten distinct filters, each with its own comprehensive assessment quiz, to create a detailed map of how the user's mind works. They complete engaging questionnaires across areas such as stress response, thinking styles, values, neurodiversity, relationships and childhood programming, receiving personalised profiles for each filter. This simple but sophisticated process creates a complete mental blueprint, helping people understand their unconscious patterns, develop a clear sense of identity and find ways forward in life.

The trial seeks volunteers who:

- Have struggled with stress, burnout, overwhelm, anxiety and/or depression at some point (most of us!)
- Want to understand how their mind really works and improve their mental health
- Are interested in contributing to a revolutionary mental health innovation for the NHS

Selected participants will receive:

- Free access to the complete LQ Profiling System (normally £100)
- Ten detailed personal profiles revealing their unique mental patterns including a personalised Identity Profile and Life and Work Plans for the future
- The opportunity to contribute to improving future NHS mental health support
- A short form asking for feedback on completion of the trial.

For more information or to volunteer, please visit www.lifeintelligence.uk/free-trial

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Published by:

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

Registered in England & Wales

Reg No 10549345

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

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