

Twickenham & Richmond Tribune



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TickerTape - News in Brief

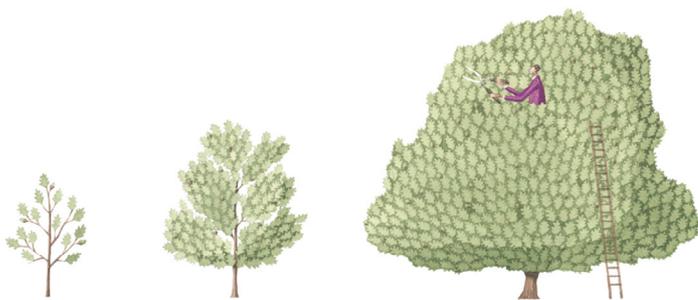
South Western Railway

Altered train services between London Waterloo and Clapham Junction Saturday 14 March
Due to maintenance work between **London Waterloo and Queenstown Road**, some services between **London Waterloo and Clapham Junction** will be **revised all day**.
Queenstown Road station will be **closed all day**. Please use other nearby stations.

- **London Waterloo to London Waterloo via Richmond and Kingston** services will be **revised** to depart **London Waterloo earlier**.
- **London Waterloo to Weybridge via Staines** services will be **revised** to depart **London Waterloo earlier**.
- **London Waterloo to Windsor** services will be **revised** to depart **London Waterloo earlier**.
- **London Waterloo to Reading** services will be **revised** to depart **London Waterloo earlier**.

Altered train services and buses replace trains in the Twickenham area Sunday 15 March
The lines in the **Twickenham** area will be **closed all day** due to maintenance work.
Queenstown Road station will be **closed all day**. Please use other nearby stations.

- **London Waterloo to Reading** services will be **revised** to depart **London Waterloo earlier**. These services will be diverted between **Putney and Feltham** and will call additionally at **Barnes and Hounslow**.
- **London Waterloo to Windsor** services will be **revised**. These services will be diverted between **Barnes and Feltham via Hounslow** and will make additional stops.
- **London Waterloo to Woking via Staines** services will be **revised**. These services will be diverted after **Addlestone** and will terminate at **Weybridge** due to other work in the **Woking** area.
- **London Waterloo to London Waterloo via Wimbledon and Kingston** services will be diverted after **Teddington** and will terminate at **Shepperton**.
- The afternoon and evening **London Waterloo to Kingston via Hounslow** services will **not** run.
- **Buses** will run between **Barnes and Hounslow via Richmond**.
- **Buses** will run between **Barnes and Teddington via Richmond**.



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darryl parkin

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The Tree Agency

The Local Picture Postcard Page - Part 317

Coles Brewery and Bridge

By Alan Winter

The bridge over the River Crane by the junction of Whitton Road and London Road near Twickenham Railway Station was named Cole's Bridge after the family who owned a brewery, Cole Park Road runs along the River Crane.



Our first postcard shows the bridge over the river crane, just north of the railway before the junction of the London and Whitton Road about 1900. The postcard publisher has named it Twickenham Bridge on the front but of course Twickenham Bridge was named in the 1930's when the new bridge over the A316 (Chertsey Road) was built over the river Thames linking Twickenham to Richmond.

The second postcard is now correctly named Coles Bridge and was posted in 1910.



Our 3rd postcard looks across the River Crane to the Coles Brewery. This is c 1904.



If you look closely when you are there you can still see this old signage on Coles Bridge
(Photograph not a postcard.)



Heatham House is on the north bank of the River Crane, at the junction of London Road and Whitton Road where Coles Bridge starts.

Heatham House was purchased by Middlesex County Council in 1944 for £8000 and since the 1950's has been a youth centre. It has a history linked from the 18th to the 20th century to the Cole family. The Cole brewery had stood just upstream of this site since the early 17th Century. Moses Glover's map of 1635 identifies the site of "Mr Thomas Coole, Brewer".

In 1892 the brewery site was leased to Brandon's Brewery in Putney. *Cole's Brewery* closed in 1906. Brandon's Putney Brewery Ltd was a significant historical brewer that operated tied houses in

Twickenham during the early 20th century, including the Three Kings on Heath Road and the Dukes Head in Colne Road. The Three Kings is still with us but the Dukes Head closed and was converted into flats about 20 years ago.

Brewery Lane still runs off London Road and down the side of the old Post Office sorting office site. If you stand on the Whitton Road side of Coles Bridge and look back toward Twickenham you will see that the latest building on the site is the Exchange which contains a 300 seat auditorium and is managed by St Marys University.

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Richmond is one of the worst London boroughs for over-policing of black Londoners via stop and search

From the Richmond and Twickenham Green Party

New research by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and King's College London shows that in Richmond Black people are up to 48 times more likely to be stopped and searched than White people, with the worst ward being East Sheen.

Report after report has confirmed what many Black Londoners have known for decades: stop and search is an inherently racist and discriminatory policing power. Black Londoners are 5.1 times more likely to be stopped and searched for drug offences than White Londoners, highlighting how cannabis criminalisation is inherently discriminatory by design.

Green Party candidate for Ham, Petersham & Richmond Riverside, Jaydan Okunola, says: *"Richmond is widely known as London's safest borough, a reputation that we citizens value and work hard to maintain. However, for a community to be truly safe, policing must be experienced as fair by everyone.*

"When two-thirds of stops and searches result in no further action, it suggests that 'vague' suspicion too often takes the place of intelligence-led evidence. While we recognise that the Black population in Richmond is around just 2 per cent, these statistics are a significant indicator of how our streets have been policed."

The Green Party does not regard the invasive and degrading use of stop and search as an inevitable aspect of policing, particularly given its disproportionate targeting of Black Londoners. The Met Police in Richmond needs to take on board the findings of this report and reconsider its use of stop and search. The safety of our neighbourhood should never come at the cost of community trust or the dignity of any individual.

On Friday 13 March, Opposition Leader Andrée Frieze wrote to Inspector Chris Jackson for Richmond, to ask what action the Met Police will take in response to reduce the excessive stopping and searching of Black people in the borough.



Jaydan Okunola



Andrée Frieze



Mother's Day: Thanking the RNLI Mums

Saving Lives at Sea

From Teddington RNLI

This Mother's Day, RNLI lifeboat stations are celebrating the dedicated mums who volunteer their time to help save lives at sea and on rivers.



The RNLI relies on thousands of volunteers and many of them are mothers balancing family life with being ready to respond when the pager sounds. At Teddington RNLI, they play a vital role, serving in a variety of roles including lifeboat crew, shore crew, fundraisers, and water safety volunteers. This Mother's Day, volunteer mums could be called away at any time to answer the call for help.

Matt Allchurch, Lifeboat Operations Manager said, *'All of our volunteers are incredible. Whether they are answering the pager to launch the lifeboat, supporting operations on shore, part of the crew onboard or helping raise vital funds, they are a huge part of our lifesaving team. This Mother's Day we want to recognise and thank them for everything they do.'*

For many RNLI volunteers, being 'a mum on call' means juggling family life with the commitment to be ready to help others in danger in the water at any hour of the day or night.

Claire Price joined as a lifeboat crew member four years ago. One of her sons said, *'I am so proud of my mum giving up her time to help someone in trouble on the River Thames, it is also great to see her and the other crew on the lifeboat.'*

Claire is one of the 97% of the RNLI's 8,000 frontline plus crew who are volunteers. Selflessly giving up their time, they respond to thousands of calls annually around the coast and inland waters of the UK and Ireland.



Lifeboats

When the Public Becomes the Opposition

By James Knight



Anyone who has spent time observing council meetings knows that the formal resolutions rarely tell the full story. Decisions are usually shaped long before councillors enter the chamber, through committee papers, officer briefings and party group discussions. By the time the debate arrives on the agenda, the outcome is often little more than a matter of arithmetic.

The public question session is different. It is one of the few parts of a council meeting where the administration faces questions that have not been filtered through its internal processes. Residents, campaigners and local observers are able to raise issues that might otherwise pass without challenge in a chamber where the political balance has become unusually narrow.

Last week's full council meeting, which was primarily convened to approve Richmond's annual budget, offered a clear illustration of this dynamic. For a short time, the script belonged to someone else.

“The targets have been set very low”

Housing formed the substance of one of the most pointed exchanges. Pam Marum, Twickenham Labour's local housing champion, raised concerns about the borough's housing delivery and the scale of genuinely affordable homes being produced.

Marum noted that the council's own plans spoke of delivering around 500 affordable homes over the coming five years and asked councillors how that ambition could realistically address the scale of local need, with more than 2,500 households on the waiting list and hundreds of families living in temporary accommodation.

Another resident, John Edmonds, put the matter more bluntly. “It is perfectly clear from the published figures that the targets have been set very low,” he told the meeting, adding that actual delivery had fallen well below even those modest expectations.

The question touches a sensitive point for the borough. Richmond has failed the Government's Housing Delivery Test, meaning that recent housing construction has fallen significantly below the level expected by national planning policy. When this happens, an important provision of the planning system comes into effect: the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The phrase may sound technical, but its implications are not. Where the presumption applies, planning applications are generally expected to be approved unless the adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, or specific protections such as Green Belt or heritage policies intervene. In practice, when a council fails to deliver enough housing, its ability to refuse development becomes significantly constrained, reducing much of the discretion it would normally exercise in shaping development in its area.

Richmond's leadership often speaks about balancing growth with the preservation of the borough's character. Yet failing the Housing Delivery Test illustrates how difficult that balance can become. Attempts to tightly manage development can ultimately reduce a council's control over where it occurs.

“Does the council believe it is meeting its legal duty?”

A second exchange focused on accessibility and the practical realities of public services. Jeremy Keats, editor of the *Whitton Village* local news page and a regular participant in the borough's civic debates, questioned the absence of disabled parking spaces in some council operated car parks.

“By not providing disabled bays in this car park, does the council believe it is meeting its legal duty to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ under the Equality Act 2010?” he asked councillors.

The question carried wider implications. Richmond frequently presents itself as a borough committed to inclusion and accessibility, themes that feature prominently in council strategies and public communications. Yet accessibility is ultimately measured not through policy documents but through the practical arrangements that enable residents to participate fully in everyday life.

For disabled residents, infrastructure such as accessible parking is not an abstract commitment but part of the conditions that allow independence and mobility within the borough.

Old disputes and long memories

The public session also saw an appearance from Avril Coelho, a former Liberal Democrat councillor who later stood as an independent candidate in Hampton North.

Coelho used her question to highlight the council's failure to secure government funding for specialist disabled facilities. “Why has LBRUT Council twice failed to ‘opt in’ to receive a share of the £30 million investment allocated by central Government to implement a Changing Places public toilet in the borough?” she asked, arguing that existing provision through the Community Toilet Scheme remained “inadequate and inaccessible to many disabled residents.”

Her appearance in the public gallery was a reminder that local politics has a long memory. After leaving the Liberal Democrats she brought a legal claim against the party in which

she alleged that it had failed to make reasonable adjustments for her disabilities and had victimised her following internal complaints about discrimination. In public statements at the time she also said the disciplinary action taken against her prevented her from standing in the Liberal Democrat selection contest to choose a successor to Sir Vince Cable as the party's parliamentary candidate for Twickenham.

Her appearance in the public gallery served as a reminder that local politics has a long memory. Yesterday's allies sometimes return as today's critics.

A chamber with a limited opposition

The wider context for these exchanges is Richmond's present political landscape. Following the passing of the borough's last Conservative councillor, Geoffrey Samuel, in 2023, the council chamber now consists entirely of Liberal Democrat and Green members.

Formally the Greens occupy the role of opposition. Yet the political distance between the two groups is often narrower than the traditional government and opposition divide seen in many councils. Electoral cooperation between the parties in parts of the borough has also blurred those boundaries, creating a chamber in which scrutiny does not always arrive from across the council benches.

This does not mean disagreements never occur. The Greens frequently position themselves as a more radical voice on environmental and social policy. Yet the structural reality of the chamber inevitably shapes the tone of debate.

Where political competition within a chamber is limited, scrutiny has a habit of shifting beyond the formal structures of party politics.

The quiet importance of civic scrutiny

Public question sessions rarely dominate the headlines after council meetings. The answers are often cautious, sometimes procedural, and occasionally inconclusive. Yet the exchanges themselves perform an important democratic function.

Residents, journalists and community campaigners bring perspectives that may not always surface within the formal rhythms of council debate. Their questions can illuminate gaps between policy and practice and occasionally reveal tensions that the structured agenda might otherwise obscure.

For a short period at the beginning of each meeting, the floor belongs to the public.

And in Richmond, that moment increasingly carries a responsibility that once rested more firmly with the council benches. When the political arithmetic of the chamber produces only limited opposition, the harder questions increasingly arrive not from the council benches, but from the public gallery.

Image ©Twickenham & Richmond Tribune

Next week at Richmond Council

On Monday afternoon, 16th March, the **Quality Accounts Committee** will meet to discuss the draft accounts of Kingston and Richmond NHS Foundation Trust for 2025/26. The meeting will commence at 3 pm and will be held at York House. Please click [HERE](#) for more details.

On Monday evening, 16th March, the **Transport and Air Quality Committee** will meet to discuss (1) a petition to ban lorries over 7.5 tonnes from The Terrace and Barnes High Street, (2) a ward concern to expand the Whitton South CPZ, (3) award of the e-bike service that could see Lime replaced with Forest, (4) Transport Strategy 2040 to reduce private vehicle use in the borough, (5) Hampton Court Road Cycle and Pedestrian changes. The meeting will commence at 7 pm and will be held at York House. Please click [HERE](#) for more details.

On Wednesday, 18th March, the **Planning Committee** will meet to discuss an application to build 9 units at Clifford House, 424 Upper Richmond Road West. The meeting will commence and will be held at York House. Please click [HERE](#) for more details.

On Thursday, 19th March, the **North West London Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee** will meet to discuss (1) the planned temporary move of specialist children's heart, lung and critical care inpatient services to the St Thomas' site to prevent service collapse, (2) cancer prevention and early diagnosis across North West London, (3) closure of the 5-bed specialist learning disability inpatient unit. The meeting will commence at 10 am and will be held at Brent Civic Centre, Wembley. Please click [HERE](#) for more details.

On Thursday, 19th March, the **Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)** will meet to discuss (1) curriculum and assessment review (2) new guidance on relationships, sex and health education (RSHE), (3) collaboration with Richmond Faith and Belief Forum (RFBF) on engaging young people, through the lens of religious education, to tackle climate change, (4) update on the process to nominate the chair of SACRE, (5) National Association of Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education and other updates. The meeting will commence at 6.30 pm am and will be held at York House, Twickenham. Please click [HERE](#) for more details.

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

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A new shell seat for Strawberry Hill House & Garden

From Strawberry Hill House

Strawberry Hill House & Garden has launched an exciting appeal to recreate the shell seat, one of the most visually arresting and evocative features of Horace Walpole's eighteenth-century garden.

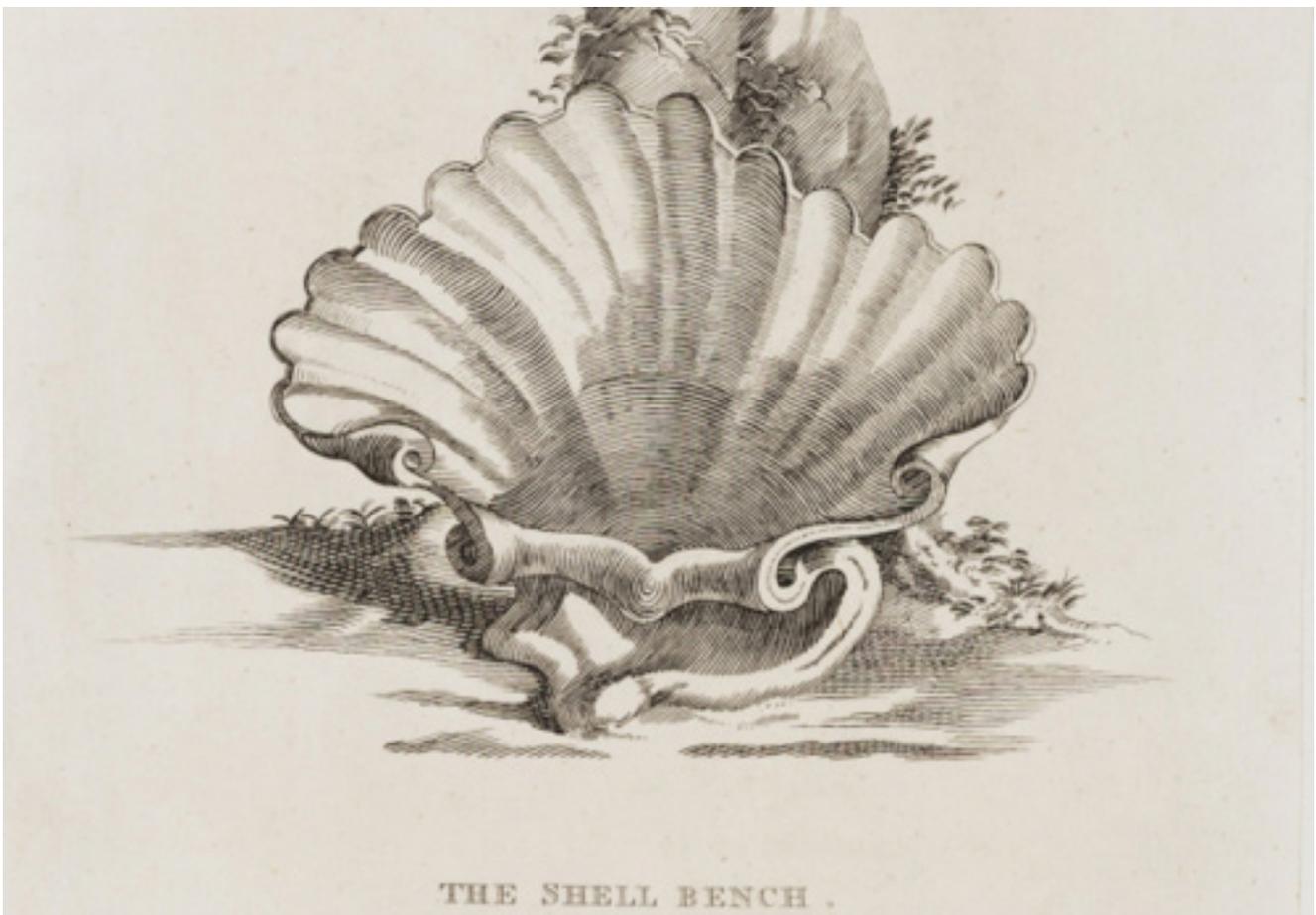
Designed as a place for rest, conversation and delight, the Shell seat formed part of Walpole's celebrated 'land of beauties', a landscape shaped by imagination, sociability and theatrical effect.

They are looking forward to working with Factum Arte, internationally renowned specialists in digital heritage documentation and historically informed reconstruction.

For this ambitious project, Factum will employ cutting-edge 3D digital mapping technology to design and create a faithful, more durable, weather-resistant replica, based on the original eighteenth-century drawings, which will ensure that the seat endures for future generations.

A replica of the Shell seat (using layered, laminated green oak) was installed during the 2007-10 restoration, and has now deteriorated beyond repair after fifteen years exposed to the elements.

Strawberry Hill House are working hard to raise the funds to recreate this beautiful, architectural design feature in their free community garden for all to enjoy.



If you would like more information about the appeal or would like to make a donation, please visit the [Strawberry Hill House website](http://www.strawberryhillhouse.org.uk) or contact Charlotte Savery on charlotte.savery@strawberryhillhouse.org.uk.

Richmond Sets Budget While Leaving the Hard Decisions for Later

By Micheal Jones



Local authority budgets rarely produce drama, yet they reveal more about the instincts of a political administration than almost any other moment in civic life. Behind the formal language of reports and financial tables lies a simple question: when resources tighten, who decides what must change. Richmond Council's budget meeting this month illustrated that dilemma with unusual clarity. Councillors accepted that the borough faces savings rising to roughly £30 million a year within three years. A scale of retrenchment that officers privately acknowledge is the largest adjustment the council has faced in a generation.

The immediate consequence for residents is more visible. **Council tax will rise by almost five per cent** this April, the maximum increase permitted without triggering a local referendum. The increase passed with little drama in the chamber, but it sets the backdrop for what follows: a council raising taxes while simultaneously preparing to reduce spending on a significant scale.

Yet the debate also revealed something more subtle. The Liberal Democrat administration secured approval for the overall financial strategy while leaving the detailed decisions explaining how those savings will be delivered for later in the year. The council has therefore agreed the scale of the problem before explaining precisely how it intends to solve it. For residents trying to understand what the budget means in practice, that distinction matters. They are being asked to accept the necessity of substantial savings without yet being told where the axe will fall: whether in libraries, adult social care, bin collections or some other part of the council's already stretched services.

At the previous full council meeting, Councillor Andrée Frieze pressed the council's Finance Lead, Cllr Millard, on what would happen if the proposed transformation programme failed to deliver the expected savings. In response, Cllr Millard acknowledged that the council might ultimately need to approach the government to seek permission for a council tax increase above the five per cent threshold that normally requires a referendum.

A Strategy Before the Plan

During the debate councillors acknowledged the scale of the challenge facing the borough's finances. Richmond must deliver savings rising to around £30 million annually by the third year of its financial plan. For a borough of Richmond's size this represents a significant correction, one that inevitably prompted questions about how such reductions could be achieved without noticeable consequences for services.

Responding to those concerns, Cllr Millard explained that the figure reflects the administration's assessment of what the organisation will ultimately be capable of delivering. "£30 million annual savings by year three is based on what we believe is achievable," Cllr Millard said. The wording was revealing in its candour. The figure represents an expectation rather than a detailed programme

already agreed in full.

Cllr Millard confirmed that the work of identifying the precise savings remains underway across council departments and that detailed proposals will only emerge later in the year. "Detailed business plans will be produced by the summer," he said, adding that those plans will set out how the reductions will be achieved. In effect the council has settled the financial destination while the route to reach it remains under construction.

Liberal Democrat councillors insisted that the administration retains its energy after eight years in office. The debate itself, however, was dominated by the language of retrenchment rather than renewal.

Reserves and the Appearance of Stability

Another strand of the discussion concerned the borough's reserves, an area where the headline figures can be misleading. On paper Richmond appears to hold substantial reserves, a fact sometimes cited as evidence that the borough remains financially robust.

Yet the reality beneath the balance sheet is more complicated. Much of those reserves have been used for internal borrowing within the council's capital programme. While the sums still appear on the books, they are not sitting as readily available cash in the bank. The council has effectively lent money to itself to finance projects, meaning that the reserves cannot easily be redeployed without unwinding those commitments.

This technical distinction matters because reserves are often presented as a financial safety net. If much of the money is already committed internally, the council's room for manoeuvre is narrower than the headline figures suggest. "There is too much drawing on reserves. It's not sustainable to use reserves to fund ongoing revenue positions," Cllr Millard told councillors. Reserves can cushion financial shocks for a time. They cannot permanently resolve structural pressures.

The Politics of Timing

That sequence inevitably invites questions about timing. Richmond faces local elections in May, while the promised business plans explaining how the savings will be delivered are expected to appear later in the summer. The administration argues that this timetable reflects the realities of public administration. Large organisations require time to analyse services and prepare credible proposals for change. From a managerial perspective, the explanation is entirely plausible.

Politics, however, rarely concerns itself solely with administrative logic. Residents are being asked to accept the scale of the financial adjustment before its consequences are fully visible. By the time the council explains exactly how the savings will be delivered, the electoral moment will have passed. Cllr Gareth Roberts, the Leader of the Council, acknowledged the political sensitivity of the decision during the debate. "No administration wants to put council tax up on the eve of an election," he told councillors.

Blame, Westminster and the Politics of Expectation

For many years Richmond's Liberal Democrat leadership has explained the borough's financial pressures by pointing firmly towards Westminster. During successive budget debates councillors argued that the principal cause of local strain lay in the funding settlements imposed by the Conservative government. The argument became something of a standing explanation in Richmond politics. If the borough's finances were under pressure, the responsibility, residents were told, rested largely with decisions taken in Whitehall rather than in York House.

That position carried an implicit political promise. Liberal Democrat councillors regularly suggested that a change of government would produce a more sympathetic settlement for local authorities. During national elections and local debates alike, the implication was clear. A Labour government, many argued, would treat councils more generously and relieve the financial pressures Richmond and other boroughs had faced during the previous decade.

The difficulty now confronting the administration is that the political landscape has changed. The country is governed by the very party whose arrival many Liberal Democrats had portrayed as a corrective to the policies of the previous decade. Yet recent discussions within Richmond Council have acknowledged that the latest local government funding settlement has proved deeply disappointing. In financial terms it leaves the borough facing what councillors themselves describe as the most significant savings programme in a generation.

That outcome has not prevented councillors from continuing to point towards Westminster as the principal explanation for the borough's predicament. Yet the argument now carries a different resonance. Having spent years insisting that the problem lay with a Conservative government, and that a Labour administration would prove more supportive, the council now finds itself criticising the policies of the government many of its own members had hoped to see in office.

The result is a political narrative that risks sounding less like explanation and more like displacement. If every financial difficulty ultimately leads back to Westminster, regardless of who governs there, residents may reasonably begin to ask whether the real debate lies elsewhere. The question increasingly confronting Richmond is not simply how much money government provides, but how carefully the council chooses to spend what it has.

Policy Signals and Future Charges

Alongside the budget discussion, councillors also signalled several policy directions that may shape the borough's finances in the years ahead. Cllr Alexander Ehmann, the Liberal Democrat councillor responsible for transport policy, told the chamber that the council intends to introduce parking and Controlled Parking Zone charges linked to the weight of vehicles. The measure, he said, is intended to discourage the use of heavier vehicles such as SUVs.

Supporters present the proposal as an environmental measure aligned with wider climate policies. Critics have already begun to describe it rather differently. For many households that rely on larger vehicles, particularly families with children, the policy risks being perceived less as climate policy than as a **family car tax** delivered through the parking system.

Waste collection also surfaced in the discussion of possible future changes. Both Green councillors and a Liberal Democrat councillor suggested that Richmond should consider moving from weekly refuse collections to a fortnightly schedule. Supporters argue that such systems encourage recycling and reduce disposal costs. Opponents counter that fortnightly collections are often the most visible sign residents notice when councils begin cutting back services.

The Decisions Still Ahead

By the end of the evening Richmond had approved the financial framework that will guide the borough's spending over the coming years. Council tax has been raised close to the legal limit, reserves will cushion immediate pressures and the scale of the savings required has been openly acknowledged.

Yet the most consequential decisions remain ahead. The administration has defined the size of the challenge but has not yet revealed how it intends to meet it. Residents are therefore being asked to accept a near five per cent tax increase today, while the consequences of the £30 million savings programme will only become clear after the borough has gone to the polls.

Richmond's councillors have therefore approved a budget that raises taxes, acknowledges the need for significant savings, and postpones the most difficult decisions until later in the year. Whether voters are content to grant that trust in advance is likely to become one of the quieter questions shaping the borough's elections this spring, for the council has defined the scale of the challenge while leaving the precise answers for later.

Click [HERE](#) to view the meeting papers and view the webcast

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Will Richmond Replace Lime Bikes and Narrow Transport Choice?

By James Knight

When Richmond's Transport and Air Quality Committee meets on Monday 16 March to decide the future of dockless e bikes in the borough, councillors will technically be voting on a procurement exercise. In reality the decision raises a broader question about Richmond's transport priorities and whether the council's rhetoric about sustainable mobility is being matched by the choices it now makes.

Officers have recommended awarding the next three-year contract for dockless e-bikes to Forest as the borough's sole provider, replacing the existing arrangement under which Lime bikes have become a familiar sight across Richmond's streets. The proposal sits within the transport portfolio overseen by Councillor Alexander Ehmann, the Liberal Democrat lead member responsible for Richmond's transport strategy. Although the recommendation formally comes from officers, the political direction of the borough's transport policy ultimately rests with the administration he represents.



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A service many residents now rely on

Since Lime bikes first appeared locally several years ago they have become, for many residents, a simple and practical part of everyday travel. The ability to pick up a bike in one street and leave it in another has proved particularly useful in neighbourhoods where public transport routes are indirect or where the closure of Hammersmith Bridge to normal traffic has altered commuting patterns.

For some journeys the change has been significant. Helen Edwards, one of the three Conservative candidates for Barnes Ward in the forthcoming local elections, recently described her own experience in a public post about the service, asking residents whether Lime bikes had been "a game-changer" for travelling across Hammersmith Bridge to reach the Underground. She explained that her own journey time had fallen dramatically, writing that "my own journey has narrowed from 20–30 minutes to seven minutes. I used to take the car to the bridge and then walk over. Now I barely use my car at all." She warned that the current decision could affect many people who have come to rely on the service, adding that "London's favourite e-bikes could disappear from Richmond, reducing cycling and making it harder to travel to the rest of London."

The financial calculation

The financial dimension of the procurement has also attracted attention. The Standard newspaper reported that the rival bid from Forest included payments to the council worth more than £3 million over the life of the three-year contract, substantially higher than the offer from Lime. If accurate, that difference would represent a significant financial incentive for the borough. While councils are under obvious pressure to secure revenue wherever they can, the figures have inevitably prompted questions about whether the procurement process has prioritised financial return over continuity for users who have already integrated the bikes into their daily routines.

Choice and convenience

Some cycling campaigners argue that the more fundamental issue is choice. Tim Lennon, a local cycling advocate, said the appeal of dockless bikes lies precisely in how easily they allow people to move around the city. In his words, "the whole goal of dockless bikes is to make it really easy for people to make a journey, almost without having to think about it," and removing one provider in favour of another risks "adding friction to people's lives that doesn't need to be there."

For regular commuters, the concern is less theoretical. Ian Stephens, who uses Lime bikes to travel from Kew to Canary Wharf, said simply that “it’s a bad idea that the council doesn’t provide choice and competition.”

Frustrations and a generational divide

At the same time, the growth of dockless bikes has not been without its irritations. Some residents complain that bikes are occasionally left across pavements or in awkward positions that obstruct pedestrians. There have also been instances in which bikes appear to have been tampered with or hacked, then abandoned in unsuitable places, adding to the sense of disorder that can accompany any rapidly expanding shared transport scheme.

Writing online, Sally Pollard asked bluntly, “what about stopping them riding on pavements,” while another resident, Brendan Gibbs, complained that “doesn’t matter how many bays you have for them they still get dumped on the path or road.”

Underlying these frustrations is a quieter generational divide in how the bikes are perceived. Many younger residents have embraced e-bikes enthusiastically, viewing them as a convenient and fun way to move around the borough without relying on cars or buses. For that generation they are part of a broader shift towards flexible urban mobility.

Older residents, who are less likely to use the bikes themselves, often encounter them mainly when they appear as obstacles on pavements or symbols of disorder. The result is a difference in perspective: for some the bikes represent freedom and convenience, for others they are a nuisance that the council has failed to control properly.

A question for the Liberal Democrats

This raises an interesting political question for the Liberal Democrat administration. E-bikes have become part of the everyday transport habits of many younger residents, particularly those who value flexible, technology enabled ways of moving around the city.

Decisions about how these schemes operate may therefore shape how that generation views the council’s approach to modern urban transport. Some may wonder whether the borough’s leadership is keeping pace with these changing habits or whether it risks appearing cautious, even faintly paternalistic, in regulating something that younger residents see as a practical and enjoyable part of city life. For Councillor Ehmann, whose portfolio covers transport, the challenge will be to show that the council is enabling new forms of mobility rather than appearing to place unnecessary limits on them.

The wider active travel debate

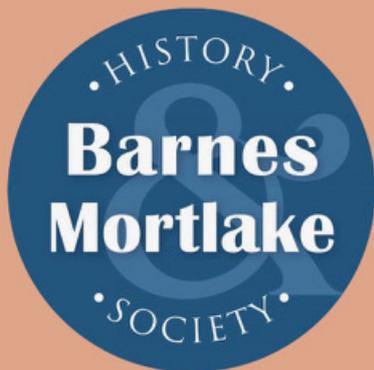
The debate also feeds into a wider conversation about Richmond’s record on active travel. The Liberal Democrat administration frequently emphasises its support for cycling and sustainable transport in strategy documents and public statements. Yet critics argue that the borough’s delivery of cycling infrastructure has sometimes lagged behind the ambition of its rhetoric, with cycle lane proposals progressing more slowly than the rhetoric surrounding them might suggest.

Against that background, the e-bike decision risks appearing less like a neutral procurement exercise and more like a moment that reveals the limits of the council’s approach to sustainable mobility.

The political stakes

All of this unfolds only weeks before local elections scheduled for May. Under normal circumstances the choice of an e-bike operator might pass largely unnoticed. Yet local politics often turns on decisions that affect every day routines rather than grand strategic plans.

For residents who now depend on e-bikes to reach stations, cross the Thames or complete short journeys that once required a car, the outcome will feel immediate and personal. If the perception takes hold that convenience for residents has been sacrificed in favour of maximising revenue for the council, it is the Liberal Democrat administration that may ultimately have to answer for that judgment at the ballot box.



Sheen House & the Barnes Home Guard Club A lecture by Richard White

Thursday 19th March 2026 at 8pm
at All Saints Church East Sheen SW14 8AT

This lecture will
be preceded by
the AGM



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From Barnes Common Limited

Join the Big Annual Litter Pick in Barnes and take part in the Great British Spring Clean on Sunday 22 March.

Bring your own litter picker and gloves, or pick up from bases at:

- Rocks Lane car park
- The Pavilion at Vine Road Park
- The little bridge over Beverley Brook on Barnes Green (pick up only).

Dress appropriately for the weather, it will go ahead, rain or shine!



Please [register for this event](#) so they know how many people to expect.

Give your items a second life at next weekend's Twickenham Repair Café

From Twickenham Repair Café

The next Twickenham Repair Café will be open on Saturday 21 March, for the repair of household items.

The café do not charge for repairs, but ask for a donation based on what you think our time and expertise is worth. There's no need to book ahead, just drop in.

While you wait, you can enjoy the café inside the Repair Café, serving tea, coffee and a selection of homemade cakes.

Event details:

- **Date:** Saturday 21 March
- **Time:** 10.30am to 12.30pm
- **Location:** St Margaret's Church Hall, Twickenham, TW1 1RL

The café takes place on the third Saturday of every month.

Find out more about the [Twickenham Repair Café](#).



A Taste of Sri Lanka - Via Putney

When I read that a Putney restaurant - **Colombo Kitchen** - had been named **Sri Lankan Restaurant of the Year** at the [Nation's Curry Awards 2026](#) I realised that Sri Lankan was one Asian cuisine that I'd never tried. Selected from a shortlist of eight Sri Lankan restaurants from across the UK, the award celebrates excellence across the country's curry, recognising culinary talent and business achievement in restaurants, takeaways and service operations. In the absence of any planned trip to Sri Lanka, we decided to visit Colombo Kitchen's Putney site (the restaurant has another one in Worcester Park) - and boy, am I glad we did.

A short walk from Putney station, the restaurant did in fact look rather dark - and possibly closed - on arrival. Please don't be put off by this, as once inside, you can see that it is split level, with the lower dining level adjoining a courtyard. It's a cafe style vibe, with tables well spaced out and comfy velvet covered chairs. Even the paper napkins were extra thick and top quality.



The menu has been designed by chef proprietor **Sylvia Perera**, who grew up in the coastal area of Negombo. She trained as a chef in Australia, brought up her four children, and then yielded to pressure from friends and family to open a restaurant. Now multi award winning, Sylvia is justifiably proud of the fact that she only founded the restaurant in her mid fifties, showcasing recipes that have been cherished in her family for generations.

Kanisha, the bar manager, was looking after us and as we were total Sri Lankan food novices, he took us through the menu options and gave us some recommendations. My husband started with a zero alcohol beer, but I was tempted by the refreshing Colombo gin and tonic.

A new addition to the menu is a crispy curry puff, and we started with a portion of our choice of chicken puffs that were piping hot and rather like a more exotic mini Cornish pasty - and very tasty. I'd heard that hoppers were a key feature on the menu, and the restaurant has a live hopper and kottu bar, so we chose a milk hopper, which was served with a selection of sambals. The hopper was a large, very light pastry 'shell' filled with a warm, thick, richly coconut sauce. It was served with three chutneys: onion, a coconut and spicy chilli. The spice level was cleverly balanced - the spices didn't hit straight away, but the level gradually crept up in the mouth. The hopper shell was incredibly light and delicate and the perfect conduit for the sambals.





Next we had the **Negombo Black Pork Curry**, a traditional curry made with Negombo dark roast curry powder and pandan leaves. It was very different from any other curry I'd tasted - it was dry-ish, and the meat had absorbed the rich flavours of the sauce. While quite spicy, it wasn't overpowering. The **Negombo King Prawn Curry** - a chef's special - was a great partner dish: lots of prawns, half shelled for easy eating and in a beautifully delicate coconut sauce. A portion of **Pineapple, Cucumber and Tomato Salad** and a portion of **Stir-**



Fry Beans (mildly spiced crunchy fresh beans tossed with onions) as accompaniments were ideal to balance these two main courses. The salad offset the spices really well and the beans were sweet, savoury and deliciously crunchy.

Kanisha strongly suggested we try the **Vegetarian Fried Rice**. Now, I'm not a great fan of fried rice, but this took the whole idea of fried rice to a different stratosphere. It had the tiniest grains of rice we've ever encountered (broken Basmati or broken samba we were told) with chives, carrot and shredded lettuce. Reader, it really was sublime and nothing like any fried rice we'd had before.



Have you heard of **Watalapan**? No, neither had I, but I couldn't resist trying this set pudding, made from coconut milk and jaggery. It was served with vanilla ice cream and scattered with raw cashews. It was sweet, light, luscious and the perfect ending to a fabulous meal. My husband opted for the **Chocolate Biscuit Pudding** (Layers of lightly soaked Marie biscuit in between layers of chocolate mousse icing). He said it was delicious, but I'm convinced I had the better pudding.



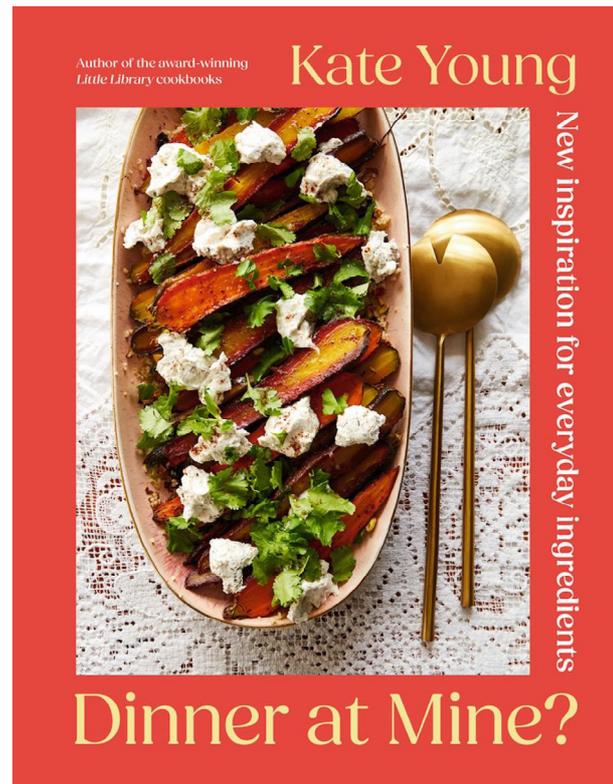
Wines are reasonably priced - I enjoyed a glass of Provencal rose (a whole bottle is £22) and there are plenty at around the £20 mark.



We thoroughly enjoyed our introduction to Sri Lankan food and I'd definitely recommend the trip to Putney or Worcester Park to check out Colombo Kitchen for yourself.

Dinner At Mine?

In perfect time for a Mother's Day or Easter gift, a newly published cookbook - **Dinner at Mine? New Inspiration for Everyday Ingredients** - presents creative ways to transform 15 fifteen everyday ingredients into dinner. There are six ideas for each ingredient, catering to the growing number of non-nuclear families and households: recipes for one, for two, for four, for six, for future you, and to take with you. **Dinner at Mine?** is award-winning food writer **Kate Young's** invitation to the table. Inside, you'll find creative ways to transform fifteen familiar ingredients: a couple of courgettes, a block of butter, a whole chicken, a loaf of sourdough, a punnet of tomatoes, and more. Kate shows how to take these everyday ingredients and turn them into dishes you'll love, such as congee, almond chicken, and the perfect apple pie. There are six ideas for each ingredient, whatever your plans. Whoever's at your table, **Dinner at Mine?** is all about sharing delicious, versatile and memorable dishes with the people you love.



Kate is an award-winning food writer, cook and novelist. Her Little Library Cookbooks feature food inspired by beloved works of literature. After a sunny Australian childhood, spent indoors reading books, she moved to London, which suited her much better. She now lives in a converted factory in the English countryside, and loves having people round for dinner. She's hosted supperclubs, catered weddings, cooked for private clients and worked behind the counter in her local bookshop. **Dinner at Mine?** was published this week by **Head of Zeus: Apollo** at £25 for a lovely hardback.

Here is a recipe from the book to whet your appetite:

Cabbage and Herb Pie *For six*

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 brown onions, finely diced
- 1 tsp caraway seeds
- 2 tsp fennel seeds
- 100g cavolo nero, woody stalks removed and leaves finely shredded
- 1 Savoy cabbage, woody stalks removed and leaves finely shredded
- 150g butter, melted, plus extra for greasing
- 250g packet filo pastry
- 30g chopped parsley
- 20g chopped mint
- 10g chopped dill

- 400g feta, crumbled
- 100g chopped walnuts
- 2 eggs
- 2 tbsp sesame seeds

Equipment

25cm springform cake tin or deep pie dish

“Cabbage, for all its great joys, does not have a reputation as a flashy ingredient. No matter how many restaurants add charred hispi to their menu, it remains a side, something to prop up the main event. Eternally a chorus line dancer – even when it’s the best dancer out there, with the highest kick and the widest grin (I let go of this metaphor’s hand and it’s run away from me, but you know what I mean).

This pie makes cabbage the star. The sort of star people come out for on a Saturday night. One they’ll be happy to see on your weekend table. There’s plenty here to support it, too: a long ensemble (the metaphor still runs ahead, I know) of fragrant herbs, salty cheese, crunchy walnuts, and the dreamy shattering crispness of pastry.”



Warm the olive oil in a frying pan (large enough for the cabbage) and add the onions. Cook over a low heat for about 10 minutes, until softened.

Add the spices to the onion, and cook for a minute or two, then add all the cavolo nero and cabbage. It’ll take up space, so turn it regularly in the first couple of minutes, until it starts to sweat down. Keep stirring regularly for about 20 minutes. Don’t stress if bits of the cabbage crisp and brown a little; just keep cooking until it’s all softened and any water has cooked off. Once the cabbage is cooked, take off the heat and set aside.

Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas 4, and grease the cake tin or pie dish well with butter. Working a sheet at a time, paint the filo with butter and layer the sheets up in the bottom of the dish. Ensure at least half the pastry is overhanging the edge of the dish, so you can use it to fold over the top of the pie once it’s filled.

Once you have layered up all the filo, finish off the filling. Stir the herbs, crumbled feta, chopped walnuts, and eggs through the cabbage, then spoon the mixture into the filo-lined dish. Working one sheet at a time, paint the overhanging filo sheets as you layer them over the top of the filling, scrunching the last couple to create texture on top. Pour the last of the melted butter over the pie, and sprinkle with sesame seeds.

Bake the pie for 1 hour, until a rich mahogany brown. Leave to rest for 5 minutes before serving in generous slices.

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TIME FOR CHANGE!!!!

By Bruce Lyons

It's amazing, how, in the blink of an eye it's all change in the workhouse!!!

These last two weeks not only have we had to rescue clients from disrupted journeys but spend huge amounts of time replanning journeys that haven't even started!!

Along with all these distractions I can see a growing desire this Summer to stay in Europe. Not quite the same as it was after the Pandemic where the first glimpse of light was staycations, Now it is more like Europecations; City Breaks, Alpine Holidays, The Nordic Countries and River Cruises. I, personally, am also of the view that it may be best to get the Summer booked as there could always be a new element in the budget equation "fuel surcharges", something we didn't see for quite a while, thank goodness.



So, I guess, you call this week a "quiet week" but believe me there was plenty to do, even if it was behind the scenes and as our clients keep telling us, they can find us; either in the office, "on line", by email, landline or mobile - we're not a call centre or a robot!!

I've got one client, makes "giant shredders", very popular in the Indian Ocean where it is against the law to "dump" your vegetable waste in the Ocean, so they make compost with Giant Shredders chopping up the waste and mixing it with other compostable material and growing VEG!!!

Just imagine his problem now he needs to get the Shredders to the site (by ship) at the same time as spare parts (by air) and all customed cleared and then the engineers to install and they all need to be in situ, as it were, at the same time - not easy with the current climate !!!

And, I am told for our future were going up a stage on Social!!! Instagram - Facebook and more (I'm told) Les Girls; Iryna and Courtney tell me - I'll manage - hope so! I thought they would do all that, fingers crossed

At least it's something to look forward to @ 91!!

Enjoy the weekend, Summer is on its way and next week it is going to be warm and sunnier!!
Bruce

Crusader Travel
58 Church St, Twickenham TW1 3NR
020 8744 0474



Do you “struggle?”

Life through the eyes of a Twickenham shopkeeper

By Deep Patel



Many of the conversations that I have over my shop counter on a daily basis revolve around the topic of “struggle”...It’s amazing how many people are “struggling” with something in life.

Why are so many of us struggling? What is it all about? It’s actually become so common that when I ask customers “how are you doing?” so many of them answer back “struggling on!” or “life is a struggle but we get there”. When I ask “how are you” (a question that us shop keepers ask the most) many customers even answer me with the word “surviving”. So what is it about struggles that keeps us struggling?

I decided to have this conversation with a cross-section of my customers over the past week. It seemed the majority of customers were “struggling” as they put their expectations of “life” way higher than the reality of “life”. Why do we do that to ourselves? What is it that makes us constantly expect too much of ourselves? I mean this could be just us in Twickenham and Richmond (?) but I suspect this is a wider issue somehow...

But is it all bad? I mean struggles...there is some views within some spiritual movements that actually go as far as to say suffering is actually a blessing...happiness is nice but we grow more when we suffer apparently. Hardships make us improve in so many ways it seems, have you ever heard the saying “it takes one to be one” (probably not as I just made that saying up now) but its true isn’t it?

I have seen this in my customers over the years...did you know, those customers that I meet in my shop that have suffered the most and had the most struggles in life are always the nicest and most compassionate or understanding individuals...it’s like in order to become a nice person in life, you have to have seen some struggles, almost actually as if the more struggles

they have been through, the nicer person they are...hence my saying “it takes one to be one”... you have to have “been there” sometimes in order to understand others who “are there”. From this perspective, maybe it was a good thing to struggle in life? To suffer? Could it be that those who struggle are doing society a favour in that they will generally become more empathetic individuals themselves and therefore better situated to understand others around them who are going through struggles and perhaps even help or facilitate them as a result? The more a diamond is cut, the more it sparkles...the more it sparkles...the more light it can reflect onto everything around it...the more light it reflects onto everything around it...the brighter life becomes...when life is filled with light and brightness...happiness always follows...

Having spoken to my customers on this topic, and observing those who had struggled a lot in life, I inferred that perhaps struggle is actually good in the bigger picture...and those who struggle are perhaps doing the community the biggest service in the long term? Perhaps they are the ones who can change this world...maybe therefore we actually need to celebrate our struggles and be grateful for our hardships and suffering rather than be annoyed with them?

I guess in short, next time you are struggling with something, maybe remember that maybe you are struggling today so that you can help someone who will need your support in the future? For now, let's not see our struggles as all bad, but instead just smile and carry on safe in the knowledge that we are doing the world a service, that we are making the world a better place and somewhere along the lines, the universe will thank us for our efforts...

Until next week, to all the readers here...stay blessed...

Remember...

“The more a diamond is cut...the more it sparkles...”

MY CREATURE-KINDNESS TIP OF THE WEEK...

STOP FOXES KINDLY (GOOD KARMA):

Place empty bowls filled with white vinegar around places where you don't want them to come...they will go without you having to harm them...use humane mouse & rat traps and release them back in our parkland areas. Use electronic plug in devices with good reviews around your house to stop them coming (the smell of white vinegar also stops ants kindly).

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

Sea Witch

by Kristopher Russell and Michael David Glover, music by Segun Fawole
Russell and Glover Theatrical at The Theatre Royal Drury Lane

There are moments in theatre when a production announces itself not with spectacle, nor with narrative revelation, but with something rarer: a sense of creative propulsion. *Sea Witch*, enjoying its West End premiere, belongs to that category. Whatever hesitations it invited, its musical and choreographic imagination was unmistakable, even if the vessel carrying it had not yet found its shape.

The musical's most persuasive achievement lay in the score, which supplied its dramatic vocabulary. Segun "Segue" Fawole's music and lyrics possessed a rhythmic confidence that was difficult to ignore: a synthesis of gospel exaltation, contemporary musical theatre lyricism, and pop architecture that felt neither derivative nor cautious. The music was the production's greatest triumph was its pulsating rhythmic vitality.



Integral to that success was Dean Lee's choreography. Intricately attuned to its musical environment, it shaped the performers' bodies into shifting patterns that evoked currents, tides, and undertow with unpredictable fluidity. Responding directly to the tonal shifts, the ensemble moved as a single organism, surging, dispersing, and reforming. Charlie Clowes and Lilonke Nyangwa brought physical assurance in movements that articulated the fluid vocabulary of the piece with impressive precision.

The principal cast provided considerable strength. [Natalie Paris](#), as Evie, supplied a compelling emotional centre. Her voice effortlessly balanced power with lyric sensitivity. Amy Di Bartolomeo's defiant portrayal of Annemette brought dramatic intensity. However, [Jay McGuinness](#), cast as Iker, was constrained by material that sat awkwardly within his vocal range, and Natalie Kassanga needed more bite, more swagger, and more unapologetic theatricality.

Visually, the production presented a curious imbalance. The women's costumes were strikingly conceived with imaginative visual artistry, whereas the men's costumes drifted closer to flamboyant pantomime. More perplexing was the austerity of the set design. Without significant scenic architecture or staging, the narrative struggled to establish a tangible sense of place. Consequently, it felt closer to a concert presentation than to a fully realised theatrical environment.

Should the visual world expand to meet the scale of the music and choreography, *Sea Witch* could develop into something groundbreaking. For now, however, the production stands as an intriguing paradox: a musical of immense sonic and choreographic vitality while its physical staging appears to be finding its sea legs.



Read Ravenna Vale's review at www.markaspen.com/2026/03/03/sea-witch

Photography by Danny Kaan

Doctor Faustus

at the Mary Wallace Theatre - March 14th-21st

From March 14th-21st the Richmond Shakespeare Society is presenting Christopher Marlowe's dark Elizabethan masterpiece DOCTOR FAUSTUS in a 1970s setting. The Doctor, a renowned scholar and necromancer, summons a demon who offers him infinite power and knowledge, in return for which Faustus must sell his soul to Lucifer and suffer in Hell for all eternity!



One of the most powerful and spectacular dramas of the Elizabethan era, Marlowe's classic cautionary tale about making a deal with the Devil is sure to send shivers down your spine, and to pose the inescapable question - would you?

The performance on Thursday, March 19th is captioned

Booking now at www.richmondshakespeare.org.uk
No membership required.

The Mary Wallace Theatre is on Twickenham's Embankment, close to the Barmy Arms.



St Mary's University

St Mary's University invites local pupils to explore science for British Science Week

Almost 300 school and college pupils from across London explored the world of science through hands-on demonstrations at St Mary's University, London as part of [British Science Week](#).

physiology testing, virtual reality technology, sports nutrition investigations, and artificial intelligence and robotics demonstrations.

[British Science Week](#) is a celebration of science, technology, designed to smash stereotypes with the aim of encouraging young people from all backgrounds to see themselves as scientists.

Academics from

across the university will be leading the demonstrations alongside current St Mary's students, giving visiting pupils the opportunity to speak directly with people studying and working in scientific fields.

[Dr Ammi King](#), Head of Allied Health and Life Sciences at St Mary's University, said: "Science plays a role in so many aspects of our lives – from understanding mental health and human behaviour to improving athletic performance and developing new technologies. British Science Week is a fantastic opportunity to show young people that science is not just one subject, but a wide range of exciting areas they could explore in the future."



**St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London**



The event took place at the University's Twickenham campus, where academics and St Mary's students delivered 16 interactive science demonstrations designed to showcase the wide range of careers and disciplines within science.

The demonstrations covered [psychology](#), [nutrition](#), [sport and exercise science](#), [computer science](#), [physiotherapy](#) and [strength and conditioning](#), giving pupils the opportunity to see how broad modern science is, and inspire young adults to consider a science pathway – particularly girls and students from black and minority ethnic backgrounds who are under-represented in the field.

Activities throughout the day included psychology demonstrations exploring visual illusions and the human senses, sports

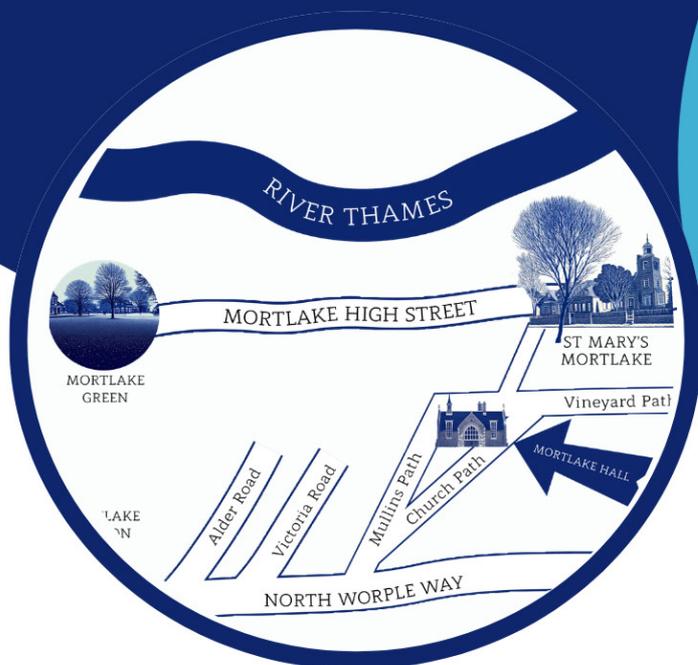
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10 small presses crowned regional and country winners for The British Book Awards 2026

Small Press of the Year, announced today

From East London to **Richmond** to Sheffield to Truro, ten small presses across the UK and Ireland were honoured today as regional and country winners for The British Book Awards 2026 Small Press of the Year.

Selected by the judges from 63 finalists announced last month, the award celebrates the independent presses committed to driving diversity within publishing, including establishing writers from working class backgrounds, celebrating Latin American writers and furthering accessibility for children's books.

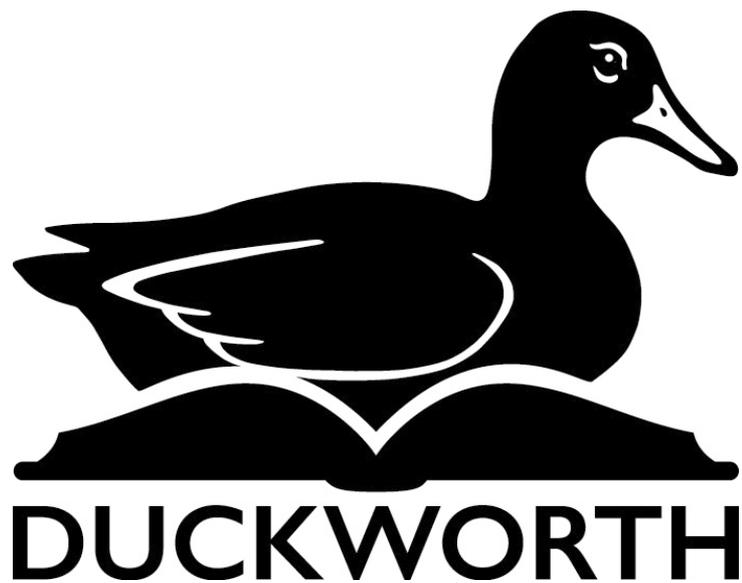
Philip Jones, editor of The Bookseller and chair of the judges for The British Book Awards, said:
"Small presses in the UK and Ireland continue to punch above their weight, growing sales, winning prizes, and building new routes to readers. What draws these publishers together is the dedication to their writers, the determination to find readers for them, and the delight in their successes. Battling increased costs and a bumpy economy, in the National Year of Reading, their work is more necessary the ever."

Andy Watts, Managing Director of TJ Books, said:

"Congratulations to the Small Press of the Year Regional and Country winners. As part of our renewed commitment to supporting smaller presses, we're delighted to celebrate the regional and country winners from across the UK and Ireland and to recognise the vital contribution independent publishers make to readers and to the wider industry."

In the South-East (**Richmond**), **Duckworth Books**, founded in 1898 and one of the UK's oldest independent imprints, adds the regional award to its long and distinguished history, with legendary former authors such as D. H. Lawrence and Henry James included alongside a vibrant roster of contemporary writers. It continues to outperform under its new ownership with a tripling of turnover since 2018, and 38% export growth in 2025.

Harpenden's **VERVE Books** continues its remarkable rise with another regional win for East England. Since launching in 2018, the dynamic independent press has built a tightly curated list of page-turning, diverse and original writing, championing bold new voices alongside prize-winning authors. Highlights include *Human, Animal* by Seth Insua, a BBC Radio 2 Book Club pick, and *The Wilderness* by Angela Flournoy, picked by Barack Obama as one of his favourite reads of 2025.



London sees two standout winners. **Bedford Square Publishers**, founded in 2022 in the historic Bloomsbury square, is recognised for its ambitious and nimble approach to publishing fiction and non-fiction. With a mission to discover irresistible stories and connect authors with readers across the globe, the team blends deep industry experience with creative use of new technology to reach devoted book lovers and reluctant readers alike. Fellow London winner **Flying Eye Books**, established in 2013 in East London, is celebrated for its award-winning children's list, defined by meticulous design and excellence in illustrated storytelling.

The continued rise of children's publishing is reflected in this year's regional winners. In the Island of Ireland, **Townhouse**, launched at the Bologna Children's Book Fair in 2022, has quickly built a reputation for innovative, high-quality books with a global outlook and agile, independent spirit. In the Midlands, Herefordshire-based **Otter-Barry Books**, founded in 2015 by Janetta Otter-Barry, champions culturally diverse illustrated titles and a vibrant poetry list featuring leading voices such as John Agard and Joseph Coelho, ensuring every child can see themselves reflected in the stories they read. Meanwhile in the South-West, Cornwall's **Hungry Tomato** is inspiring a new generation of readers with engaging, curiosity-driven non-fiction designed to spark a love of learning at home and in the classroom.

Sheffield-based **And Other Stories** takes the regional crown in the North of England. Since its founding in 2009, the award-winning publisher has championed bold literary fiction and non-fiction, publishing more than one hundred titles by internationally acclaimed writers including Deborah Levy, Yuri Herrera and Eva Baltasar. Marking its fifteenth anniversary, the press published *Heart Lamp* by Banu Mushtaq, translated by Deepa Bhashti and winner of the 2025 International Booker Prize. The collection of short stories captures the everyday lives of women and girls in Muslim communities in southern India.

Scotland's winner is Edinburgh-based **Charco Press**, founded by Samuel McDowell and Carolina Orloff. The press is dedicated to bringing the finest contemporary Latin American literature to English-language readers, publishing groundbreaking fiction in translation and introducing UK audiences to extraordinary voices that have too often been overlooked.

Meanwhile in Wales, **Broken Sleep Books** is recognised for its radical and community-driven approach to publishing. The working-class independent press champions poetry and prose from working-class writers, LGBTQ+ writers and writers of colour, with a particular focus on increasing access to the arts and dismantling barriers within the creative industries.

The overall regional and country winner of the Small Press of the Year award will be revealed during The British Book Awards ceremony at Grosvenor House on Monday 11th May 2026, and go on to compete to be named Independent Publisher of the Year.



Teddington scientist takes her research to Parliament

From Royal Society of Chemistry

Miss Jody Cheong, 29, a Higher Scientist at National Physical Laboratory (NPL), hailing from Hong Kong and now Teddington, is attending Parliament to present her chemistry research to a range of politicians and a panel of expert judges, as part of the Parliamentary & Scientific Committee's *STEM for BRITAIN* on Tuesday 17th March.

Jody's poster on research about studying metal composition in non-exhaust emissions will be judged against dozens of other scientists' research in the only national competition of its kind.

Jody was shortlisted from hundreds of applicants to appear in Parliament.

On presenting her research in Parliament, Jody said, *"I'm excited about sharing my research with the people who help shape national policy. It's a rare chance to bring the science of non-exhaust emissions into the spotlight and show why it matters for public health and the environment. I am looking forward to spark meaningful conversation, inspire interest in this area, and gain fresh insight into how my work can make a real impact beyond the lab."*



Sam Carling MP, Chair of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee APPG, said: *"This annual competition is an important date in the parliamentary calendar because it gives MPs an opportunity to speak to a wide range of the country's best young researchers."*

"These early career engineers, mathematicians and scientists are the architects of our future and STEM for BRITAIN is politicians' best opportunity to meet them and understand their work."

Jody's research has been entered into the chemistry session of the competition, which will end in a gold, silver and bronze prize-giving ceremony.

Judged by leading academics, each winner will receive a cash prize with a medal for the gold recipient.

The Parliamentary and Scientific Committee runs the event in collaboration with the Royal Academy of Engineering, the Royal Society of Chemistry, the Institute of Physics, the Royal Society of Biology, The Physiological Society, The Nutrition Society and the Academy for the Mathematical Sciences, with sponsorship from Clay Mathematics Institute, United Kingdom Research and Innovation, Warwick Manufacturing Group, Elsevier, AWE, the Society of Chemical Industry, Institute of Biomedical Science, the Heilbronn Institute for Mathematical Research, the Biochemical Society and the Isaac Newton Institute for Mathematical Sciences.



Richmond Businesses Unite to Offer Free Easter Trail for Families This Spring

From Be Richmond

Families in Richmond can look forward to a completely free Easter adventure this school holiday, as local businesses come together to launch The Great Richmond Easter Trail from 28 March to 12 April.



Organised by **Be Richmond**, the town-wide trail invites children and their families to explore Richmond town centre in search of hidden Easter characters displayed in shop windows.

Participants collect letters along the way to reveal a secret word, unlocking a free chocolate treat and entry into an exclusive prize draw.

The initiative has been designed to support families during the Easter break by providing an engaging, no-cost activity, while also encouraging visitors to discover and support Richmond's vibrant high street.

Eleanor Miller, Marketing and Communications Manager at Be Richmond said: *"We're delighted to bring The Great Richmond Easter Trail back for families this spring. We know the school holidays can be an expensive time, so creating a completely free activity that encourages families to explore the town together is incredibly important to us.*

It's also a wonderful way to showcase the fantastic businesses we have here in Richmond and bring the community together."

The trail finishes at Richmond Hill Hotel, where successful explorers can reveal the secret word at 144 On The Hill to receive their chocolate reward. Families can also extend the adventure with a visit to Petersham Nurseries, where a free pack of spring seeds can be claimed with a trail voucher.

One lucky participant will win two tickets to a Spring Wine Tasting & Canapés experience at Petersham Nurseries along with a Jellycat bunny.

Trail maps can be downloaded online or collected from the Visit Richmond Kiosk at Richmond Station. The prize draw closes on Sunday 12 April at 23:59.

For full details, visit <https://berichmond.london/the-great-richmond-easter-trail>

Squire's Colleagues at Twickenham and Shepperton Made a Difference!

From Squire's Garden Centres

As Squire's Garden Centres marks a proud 90 years as a family business, the company has once again shone a spotlight on the people at the very heart of its success - its colleagues - at the annual 'Make a Difference' (M.A.D.) Awards.

Hosted by Colin Squire, Chairman Emeritus, and his daughter Sarah Squire, Chairman of Squire's Garden Centres, the special awards celebration brought together colleagues from across the 17-centre, family-owned business to recognise truly outstanding contributions.

Squire's Shepperton's Carrie & Ellie and Squire's Twickenham's Lesley Ann, Barry, Kate, Alasdair & Michael - all Made a Difference!



Above: back row, from left: Luke Beaston (Squire's Milford), Barry Webb (Squire's Twickenham), Sam Dickson, (Managing Director, Squire's Garden Centres), Michael Johnson Cook (Squire's Twickenham), Kate Haines (Squire's Twickenham) and Carrie Davies (Squire's Shepperton).

Front row, from left: Ellie Felloni (Squire's Woking), Gemma Quainton (Squire's Long Ditton), Colin Squire OBE (Chairman Emeritus, Squire's Garden Centres), Sarah Squire (Chairman, Squire's Garden Centres), Lesley-Anne Reynolds (Squire's Twickenham) and Bradley Matthews (HR, Group Office).

For nine decades, Squire's has built its reputation not only on horticultural excellence, but on genuine care - care for customers, for communities and for one another. The values that shaped the business all those years ago continue to guide it today: kindness, respect, teamwork and a willingness to go the extra mile. The M.A.D. Awards are a recognition of those enduring principles seen in action today.

Each year, nominations are submitted by colleagues and customers, highlighting exceptional moments where individuals or teams have made a meaningful impact. From responding calmly and compassionately in emergency situations, to offering thoughtful support to customers during difficult times, to stepping in to help colleagues when it mattered most.

The celebration lunch saw award recipients thanked for embodying the spirit of Squire's. Members of the business' Senior Leadership Team served colleagues during the event, acknowledging their effort and commitment which is so valued.

Sarah Squire – Chairman, Squire's Garden Centres, comments: *“As we celebrate 90 years of Squire's, we are reminded that our success has always been rooted in our people. The care, professionalism and warmth shown by our colleagues -day in, day out - are what make Squire's so special.*

“The M.A.D. Awards give us the opportunity to recognise those moments of exceptional kindness and commitment that reflect the very best of who we are. My father and I feel enormously proud and privileged to work alongside such remarkable teams.”

Over the past nine decades, much has evolved within the business, but one thing has remained constant - a deep appreciation for the people who bring the Squire's experience to life.

Among the inspiring examples of colleagues who have gone above and beyond, examples include:

- **Going the extra mile on deliveries** – a shop-based colleague stepped in to ensure customers received their orders on time, when drivers were unexpectedly unavailable, taking extra steps to exceed expectations and prevent disappointment.
- **Supporting in emergencies** – a colleague quickly assisted an elderly gentleman who had slipped on an icy path in the road, providing first aid until the ambulance arrived.
- **Bringing joy to the community** – a colleague visited a children's hospice to fix a beloved fish tank, helping brighten the day for the young patients who enjoy it during their stay.
- **Helping customers recover treasured items** – a colleague assisted a customer in locating his late wife's lost wedding ring, turning a distressing moment into a deeply moving experience.

MONTH	NAME(S)	SQUIRE'S CENTRE
January	Lesley Ann Reynolds	Twickenham GC
February	Gemma Quainton	Long Ditton GC
March	Bradley Matthews	Human Resources, Group Office
April	Teresa Trodd	Badshot Lea GC
May	Barry Webb	Twickenham GC
June	Luke Beaston	Milford GC
July	Carrie Davies	Shepperton GC
August	Fulvio Bertani	Woking Restaurant
September	Kate Haines	Twickenham GC
October	Ellie Felloni	Woking GC
November	Ellie Robinson	Shepperton Restaurant
December	Colin Tuck	Badshot Lea GC
December	Alasdair Mackenzie & Michael Johnson-Book	Twickenham GC

UK set for a summer of butterflies!

From Butterfly Conservation

The UK is set for a spectacular summer of butterflies - and everyone is invited to take part!

Leading wildlife charity, Butterfly Conservation, is calling on the public to prepare for a bumper summer of butterflies. This year, alongside its hugely popular Big Butterfly Count, the charity is launching something brand new - a vote to discover Britain's Favourite Butterfly!



Famous for its annual Big Butterfly Count, in which tens of thousands of people spend 15 minutes counting butterflies, Butterfly Conservation is adding an exciting new milestone to the 2026 summer season as it sets out to discover which of the UK's butterfly species takes the top spot in the nation's hearts.

The call to action follows [scientific evidence](#) that proves counting butterflies boosts how connected people feel to nature and how motivated they are to protect it. Now the charity is encouraging people to vote for their favourite species, then head outside during Big Butterfly Count and see what they can spot this summer.

Kate Merry, Head of Engagement at Butterfly Conservation, said: *“Over the last 16 years, more than 1.35 million Counts have been done by hundreds of thousands of people across the UK, spotting almost 13.8 million butterflies and helping us with our vital science and conservation activities.*

“This year, we can't wait to celebrate a bumper summer of butterflies by holding the first-ever vote to discover Britain's Favourite Butterfly, before welcoming back the 17th annual Big Butterfly Count. Will the nation's favourite species go on to reign supreme in the Count? Save the dates in your diaries to take part and help us find out!”

Britain's Favourite Butterfly - Friday 15 May - Sunday 7 June

Britain's Favourite Butterfly marks the first-time UK residents will be invited to champion their most-loved species.

Will the colourful Peacock take the crown? Or how about the understated Small White? Maybe it will be annual visitor the Painted Lady, or hedgerow fan the Gatekeeper.

The highly coveted title is up for grabs. The nation will decide...

Big Butterfly Count - Friday 17 July - Sunday 9 August

The 17th annual Big Butterfly Count is back and better than ever. Following hot on the heels of the first-ever vote to find Britain's Favourite Butterfly, keen citizen scientists are encouraged to get out for the Count and see what they can spot.

Will the nation's favourite species reign supreme in this year's Count? Or will it have to share the summer top spot with another?

The vote to find Britain's Favourite Butterfly will take place from Friday 15 May - Sunday 7 June, followed by Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count from Friday 17 July - Sunday 9 August. Find out more at www.butterfly-conservation.org



**Butterfly
Conservation**

Saving butterflies, moths and our environment

Twickenham Felines Get the Royal Treatment: The Cat Butler Molesey Officially Launches in TW1 and TW2

From The Cat Butler Molesey

Twickenham residents have a new reason to purr! The Cat Butler Molesey is officially expanding its premium, 5-star cat sitting services into Twickenham and St Margarets, offering a stress-free alternative to traditional catteries.

For many cat owners, the most difficult part of planning a holiday or a honeymoon is the “cattery guilt.” 🐱 Cats are famously territorial creatures who thrive on routine, familiar smells, and their favourite nap spots. The car journey to a cattery and the change in environment can often lead to stress for even the most relaxed feline. 🐾

That is where **Sharon Bonner** and her team at **The Cat Butler Molesey** come in. After a hugely successful two years serving the local area, Sharon is bringing her “perfume for purrs” philosophy to the doorsteps of Twickenham. 🐱💎

A True Home-from-Home Experience 🏠🐾

The Cat Butler is not just a feeding service. It is a comprehensive, professional care package designed to keep cats happy in their own kingdom. 🏰 Whether you are heading to the stadium for the rugby or jetting off on a long-awaited honeymoon, your cat stays exactly where they want to be: at home. 🐱

What sets The Cat Butler apart?

- ✔️ **Professional Standards:** All Butlers are fully vetted, insured, and trained in pet first aid. 🐾
- ✔️ **Personalised Care:** From gourmet meal service to dedicated playtime and specialized chin rubs, every visit is tailored to your cat’s unique personality. 🐾
- ✔️ **Total Transparency:** Owners receive daily photo and video updates, ensuring they never miss a single purr while they are away. 📱📷
- ✔️ **Home Security:** As an added bonus, the Butlers provide a “lived-in” look for your home by clearing mail, watering plants, and rotating lights at no extra cost. 🗑️🌹

Serving the Whole Community 📍🐾

With this latest launch, The Cat Butler Molesey now covers a wide stretch of greater London and Surrey, including **Twickenham, Kingston, Hampton, Sunbury, Teddington, Thames Ditton, Surbiton, Esher, and Walton on Thames.** 🐱

“I want my clients to feel confident and without anxiety when they leave their fur babies in my hands,” says owner Sharon Bonner. “We understand that your cat is a member of the family, and we treat them with the royal respect they deserve!” 🐾💖

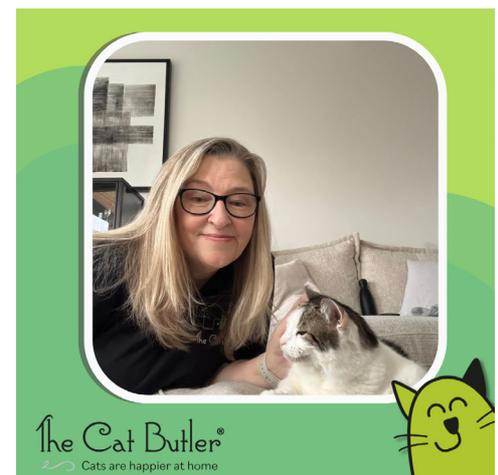
Book Your Butler Today 🐱

As the May bank holidays and summer season approach, the Cat Butler’s calendar is filling up fast. If you want to ensure your cat enjoys a 5 star staycation while you enjoy your break, get in touch with the team today! 🐾💎

🌐 **Website:** www.thecatbutler.co.uk

✉️ **Email:** molesey@thecatbutler.co.uk

☎️ **Phone:** 0203 5762910



England Team To Play France

England men's head coach Steve Borthwick has named his team to play France at Stade de France on Saturday 14 March (kick-off 8.10pm GMT, live on **ITV1**).

Maro Itoje will captain a side with just one change to the starting XV that faced Italy in Rome last weekend, with Ollie Chessum coming in at blindside flanker.

Saturday's game, which marks the 120-year anniversary of England and France's historic rivalry, also sees Sam Underhill and Marcus Smith set to win their 50th caps for England from the bench. Underhill made his debut against Argentina in 2017, while Smith first represented England in 2021 against the United States.

"It's a huge challenge under the lights in Paris against a very strong France side," said Borthwick.

"England versus France is one of the great rivalries in international rugby and we're looking forward to the occasion."

On Underhill and Smith's milestones, Borthwick commented:

"Reaching 50 caps is a special achievement and a reflection of the consistency both Sam and Marcus have shown in an England shirt. They have both worked extremely hard for this milestone and it's a credit to them and the people who have supported them along the way."

FRANCE v ENGLAND

Saturday 14 March 2026

Stade de France

Kick-off: 8.10pm GMT

- 15. Elliot Daly (Saracens, 75 caps)
- 14. Tom Roebuck (Sale Sharks, 11 caps)
- 13. Tommy Freeman (Northampton Saints, 26 caps)
- 12. Seb Atkinson (Gloucester Rugby, 3 caps)
- 11. Cadan Murley (Harlequins, 5 caps)
- 10. Fin Smith (Northampton Saints, 15 caps)
- 9. Ben Spencer (Bath Rugby, 17 caps)

Replacements:

- 16. Luke Cowan-Dickie (Sale Sharks, 57 caps)
- 17. Bevan Rodd (Sale Sharks, 14 caps)
- 18. Trevor Davison (Northampton Saints, 7 caps)
- 19. Chandler Cunningham-South (Harlequins, 21 caps)

- 1. Ellis Genge (Bristol Bears, 79 caps) – vice-captain
- 2. Jamie George (Saracens, 109 caps) – vice-captain
- 3. Joe Heyes (Leicester Tigers, 21 caps)
- 4. Maro Itoje (Saracens, 101 caps) – captain
- 5. Alex Coles (Northampton Saints, 18 caps)
- 6. Ollie Chessum (Leicester Tigers, 34 caps)
- 7. Guy Pepper (Bath Rugby, 11 caps)
- 8. Ben Earl (Saracens, 50 caps)

- 20. Sam Underhill (Bath Rugby, 49 caps)
- 21. Henry Pollock (Northampton Saints, 9 caps)
- 22. Jack van Poortvliet (Leicester Tigers, 23 caps)
- 23. Marcus Smith (Harlequins, 49 caps)



Brentford v Wolves

By Ron Brand

A lost Penalty Shoot-out decided Brentford's Seasons priorities!

An even match against West Ham was decided from the Spot and removes the need for Head Coach Keith Andrews to have to either go for everything or Rest Players in selective Competitions?

It is possible for a Top 8th finish in the Premiership can bring a European Spot, currently sitting in 7th place this is a realistic ambition for the BEES. This is possible if a FA Cup Winner finishes higher or a team that won a European Competition in the previous year finishes above the BEES in the table.

The Culture and Management decisions at Brentford fc going back over many Seasons has achieved this extraordinary situation. The Closed Season activity at BRENTFORD FC MEANS THEY SHOULD BE IN A RELEGATION FIGHT **not pushing for the chance to bring the most exciting teams in Europe to the Gtech next Season.**

Brentford fc are one of a few Clubs to have played at every level of the Football League. 4th, 3rd, 2nd, Championship' and Premier. Adding a European Competition to the list is the final piece in an impressive Record.

So onward and upward, next we meet Wolves at the Gtech! Looking at league position and Points tally a foregone conclusion? Except we know that is not how things happen in the best football league on the Planet. Every player in the Premiership is an outstanding talent, the best football has to offer. All capable on their day of producing the unexpected? Wolves defeated Liverpool earlier this month!



Let us look at the Brentford fc culture and Management decision making?

Head Coach Keith Andrews was already at Brentford. No need to search outside for a Replacement for the previous Head Coach. Keith understood the culture and decision making structure. Things continued without skipping a beat! That is not what usually happens? Losing a Head Coach is disruptive and Expensive! Look at Spurs?

Now add to that the emergence of Striker Igor Thiago, 18 goals in the Premiership and Second only to Haaland at Man City. How can that happen?

Having sold off the two top goal scorers to Man Utd and Newcastle Utd for £millions.

Thiago suddenly appears! No Striker Hunt! No massive FEE!
Thiago just hits the road Running!

Someone is making some impressive decisions at THE BEES?

Match Preview:

Brentford v Wolverhampton Wanderers

Written by Brentford Football Club

Brentford take on Wolverhampton Wanderers at Gtech Community Stadium in the Premier League on Monday (8pm kick-off GMT), live on *Sky Sports*.

The Bees have lost just one of their last six league games, whilst Rob Edwards' side has also found some recent good form, winning back-to-back top-flight matches against Aston Villa and Liverpool.

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*: Wolves could nullify Brentford's set-piece threat

The Premier League table doesn't lie - but Brentford's next opponents Wolves show that it can occasionally be deceptive.

Rob Edwards' side visit Gtech Community Stadium for a televised dose of *Monday Night Football*, sitting three points adrift at the bottom of the division, 12 points shy of safety.

The Midlanders may be staring down the barrel of relegation, but Edwards has lifted the mood at Molineux since succeeding Vitor Pereira last November, and back-to-back league wins over Liverpool and Aston Villa have shown they can beat anyone on their day.

The former Wolves defender has stitched Wanderers' shattered morale back together after a harrowing 11-game losing streak at the end of 2025, and the Black Country club appear to have turned a corner in recent months.

In fact, a Premier League table based solely on results since the turn of the year would see Wolves in 10th position - four points off a Brentford side who would hypothetically sit sixth.

Edwards has injected belief into a side that had accumulated just two points from 11 games when he took over, while also restoring tactical discipline and energy.

Despite their league position, Wanderers rank highly across a range of statistics that highlight their tenacity, shooting accuracy and defensive organisation at set-pieces.



Ranking second in the Premier League for tackles won per game this term (19.4), Wolves have been scrapping for their lives without the ball under Edwards, who has traded pressing intensity for greater defensive solidity.

Although Monday's visitors average the joint-fewest shots per game (9.1) in the Premier League this season, they have the fourth-highest shot-on-target percentage in the division. Brentford (38.5 per cent) notably still top this statistic, but Wolves (35.7 per cent) are not far behind in terms of their shooting accuracy.

The two sides also match up well when it comes to nullifying opponents from corners, set-pieces and throw-ins. They may have conceded more Premier League goals than any other side from open play (40), but Wolves - alongside Brentford and Brighton - lead the division for the fewest goals conceded from set-pieces (five).

Suspended for the recent FA Cup defeat to Liverpool, André is expected to slot back in as Wolves' midfield anchor on Monday - and the former Copa Libertadores winner is a key man for the visitors.

Among central midfielders to play 1500+ Premier League minutes in 2025/26, only Chelsea's Moisés Caicedo (92 per cent) has a better pass completion rate than André (91 per cent), who also ranks in the division's top 20 players for tackles won.

The former Fluminense man has struck up a strong midfield partnership with compatriot João Gomes, but their tenacity can carry a cost.

With nine yellow cards apiece, Gomes and André are the joint-most booked players in the Premier League this season, while the former has conceded more fouls (55) than any other player in the top flight. That can be a dangerous trait, not least because 27 per cent of Premier League goals this season have come from set-pieces - the highest proportion in England's top flight since 2009/10.

Head coach Edwards hailed the Brentford game as a "cup final" following Wolves' recent FA Cup exit, and the same could be said for Keith Andrews' side, given the Bees' European ambitions.

Can Wolves turn the tables after Brentford's 2-0 win at Molineux earlier in the season?

Scout Report

Dan Long, *Sky Sports*: Can Edwards pull off the Premier League's greatest escape?

This season has been one of two halves for Wolves.

The first was - to put it in no uncertain terms - horrifying.

It started with five straight defeats and, after some respite in the form of 1-1 draws against Tottenham and Brighton, continued with another 11 consecutively. That run is the joint-third worst in Premier League history, surpassed only by Norwich (16) and Sunderland (20).

Vitor Pereira was sacked three games into that run and replaced by Rob Edwards, who came in after defeat number four. The pressure increased when he could not get a tune out of the squad, either, leading to seven more losses. More concerningly, Wolves only managed three goals across those seven and conceded 14, at an average of two per game.

By Christmas, they still only had two points and were 16 from safety. Derby's record-low tally of 11

points looked like it would be obliterated.

“It is another loss, so it is difficult,” said Edwards after the 2-1 defeat to Liverpool on 27 December. “I said to the lads, I am getting really fed up with this, and I know they are hurting as well.”

Since then, though, they have channelled that hurt into their performances.

On 30 December, they held Manchester United to a 1-1 draw at Old Trafford, before starting 2026 with their long-overdue first league win of the season. It came in style, too, with a 3-0 half-time scoreline leaving too much for West Ham to do. Four points from the next eight slowed momentum, but in the last two Premier League games, Wolves have given their supporters a reason for cautious optimism.

First, there was the 2-0 home win over Aston Villa, which ensured Derby’s record would stay intact for another season. “That’s a moment that will live with me forever,” said Edwards afterwards. Then came the shock 2-1 victory over Liverpool. Rodrigo Gomes put Wolves in front, Mohamed Salah equalised, and Andre struck in the 94th minute to dramatically seal the points.

There was a repeat of the latter in the FA Cup fifth round three days later, but Liverpool managed to avoid an upset in that one. Afterwards, Edwards said: “We have got eight games. The next game against Brentford has to be our cup final.”

The gap to safety is now 12 points, and the chances of actually completing the greatest of escapes are slim at best. But there is hope at long last - and that is a priceless commodity.

In the Dugout

Rob Edwards

Rob Edwards had a 14-year career as a professional footballer that started with Aston Villa in 1999 and ended with Barnsley in 2013. Largely owing to injuries, the centre-back played less than 250 games in club football, but did appear in each of the top four divisions in English football, as well as earning 15 senior international caps for Wales.

In October 2013, Edwards confirmed his retirement aged just 30, but returned to Wolves, where he first managed the club’s Under-18s. He later became first team coach, then had a two-game spell as interim head coach following the sacking of Walter Zenga. His first managerial job was at hometown club Telford in 2017/18, which preceded a third return to Molineux to take charge of the Under-23s side.

After he embarked on role in the England youth set-up, Edwards was appointed Forest Green Rovers head coach. In his first season, he led Rovers to the 2021/22 League Two title, but jumped ship for Watford just over a fortnight later. He was afforded just 11 games there before being dismissed, but two months later, he took over at Luton and guided the Hatters to the Premier League for the first time in May 2023.

Luton were relegated in 2023/24 and on the way to a second when Edwards was relieved of his duties in January 2025. But after just six months out of work, Middlesbrough provided him with a return to the Championship and they were third in the table after his final game on 4 November, a 1-1 draw with Leicester. He signed a three-year deal to return to Wolves for a fourth time on 12 November.



Local Primary Schools Invited to Take Part in Annual Playground Design Competition

From Thermapply

Project Playgrounds, the specialist playground solution from Thermapply, has announced the launch of its **new annual Playground Design Competition**, inviting primary schools across the UK to take part in a creative initiative that encourages children to design their perfect playground for play, learning and wellbeing.

The competition challenges pupils to think about how outdoor spaces can be used not just for fun, but also to support learning, social interaction and physical activity. **The winning school will receive a playground created by Project Playgrounds, helping to turn children's ideas into a real, engaging play environment.**

Built around the concept of **“play with purpose”**, the competition aims to highlight how well-designed playgrounds can support key developmental skills. From numeracy through number grids and counting games, to teamwork through social play zones, and physical wellbeing through fitness trails, playground markings can help children learn while they play.

Children will be encouraged to think creatively about how their playground could include:

- Games that support maths and problem-solving
- Areas that encourage social interaction and teamwork
- Fitness zones that promote active, healthy lifestyles
- Inclusive designs that allow all children to take part

Jonathan Hamp, Joint Managing Director at Thermapply Group, commented, *“At Thermapply, our focus is simple: make every step safer, and every play space more purposeful. We believe playgrounds should inspire movement, creativity and learning. This competition gives children the opportunity to shape the spaces they use every day, while helping schools see the real value of play that supports education, wellbeing and social development.”*

With nearly two decades of experience and more than 3,000 school installations across the UK, the Project Playgrounds solution has helped transform outdoor areas into vibrant, engaging environments that encourage children to be active, imaginative and confident.

As a nationwide supplier and installer, **Thermapply will deliver the winning playground design anywhere in mainland UK**, ensuring schools from all regions have the chance to benefit from the competition.

Schools will be invited to submit pupil-designed playground concepts, showcasing how their ideal play space would support fun, learning and inclusion. Full entry details and timelines are available on this link – <https://www.thermapply.co.uk/ppcomp>

With 18 years of continued success and thousands of playground enhancements delivered nationwide, Project Playground remains committed to improving outdoor school environments, helping children stay active, engaged and inspired for many generations to come. The products are manufactured from high-quality thermoplastic, a material that looks fantastic in the playground due to the bright, vibrant colours and unique designs.



CQC rates London Borough of Richmond upon Thames's adult social care provision as good

From The Care Quality Commission

The Care Quality Commission (CQC), has rated London Borough of Richmond upon Thames as good, in how well they are meeting their responsibilities to ensure people have access to adult social care and support under the [Care Act \(2014\)](#).

CQC has a new duty under the Act to assess how local authorities work with their communities and partners to meet their responsibilities. This includes promoting the wellbeing and independence of working age disabled adults, older people, and their unpaid carers to reduce their need for formal support where appropriate. Where support is needed it should provide people with choice and control of how their care needs are met.

CQC looked at nine areas spread across four themes to assess how well the authority is meeting their responsibilities in order to create their good rating. CQC has given each of these nine areas a score out of four with one being the evidence shows significant shortfalls, and four showing an exceptional standard.

Theme	Area	Score
How the local authority works with people	1. assessing people's needs	3
	2. supporting people to lead healthier lives	3
	3. equity in experience and outcomes	3
Providing support	4. care provision, integration and continuity of care	3
	5. partnership and communities	3
How the local authority ensures safety in the system	6. safe pathways, systems and transitions	3
	7. safeguarding	3
Leadership	8. governance, management and sustainability	3
	9. learning, improvement and innovation	3

Chris Badger, CQC's chief inspector of adult social care and integrated care, said:

"Adult social care works best when local authorities, communities and partners pull together around what matters to people. In Richmond upon Thames, we saw strong collaboration that helped create positive experiences for residents and carers.

Most people generally had positive experiences, and told us they felt listened to and involved in decisions about their care. Assessments were person-centred and strengths-based, meaning they focused on what mattered to people and supporting them to maintain their independence.

"We saw that strong partnership working well in how they were supporting people to regain their independence and return home safely after a hospital stay. Around 97% of people aged 65 and over remained at home 91 days after discharge into reablement or rehabilitation services, higher

than the England average of 84%. In addition, there were also significant levels of people receiving short-term support that no longer required further assistance, indicating a focus on promoting independence.

“Richmond also performed well in carrying out timely reviews of care. About 77% of people receiving long-term support had a review, compared with 59% nationally.

“Unpaid carers told us they felt supported and involved. They felt involved in discussions about the care of their loved ones and felt their own needs were understood. They told us this helped them feel less isolated and more confident in their caring role.

“Although many people had positive experiences, some families told us that transitions from children’s to adult services weren’t always consistent.

“Overall, Richmond should be really pleased with the many positive findings in our report and their good rating. Richmond has a stable leadership team, a committed workforce and good partnership arrangements. We look forward to seeing how their improvement plans progress.”

The assessment team found:

1. The local authority had embedded working with people who use services across commissioning and strategic planning. People with lived experience of accessing care influenced the design of supported accommodation, carers’ assessments and the introduction of care technology.
2. The local authority increased support for unpaid carers through direct payments over two years. A higher proportion of people received direct payments than the England average providing flexibility and enabling carers to tailor support to meet their own individual circumstances.
3. Richmond had strong arrangements in place to support people who lacked mental capacity. The local authority ensured all people in this situation had support from an advocate, family member or friend.
4. The local authority trialled digital solutions, including AI-enabled systems and robotic process automation, to reduce administrative burden enabling staff to spend more time with people needing support.
5. Staff described a positive culture of learning and development. Leaders improved retention of newly qualified social workers significantly over the previous year.

However, the assessment team also found:

1. Some people experienced delays and unclear communication when applying for home adaptations. In a small number of cases, they were told months after an occupational therapy visit that they were not eligible, with limited explanation. This caused frustration and, in some cases, affected their independence.

The assessment will be published on CQC’s [website](#) on Friday 13 March.



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