

Twickenham & Richmond Tribune



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TickerTape - News in Brief

Hampton student dies after 'disappearing in lake' on school trip to Malawi in Africa.

Eugene Enoch Kwon, 17, vanished on Tuesday whilst swimming with fellow students in Lake Malawi at Cape Maclear.

Police confirmed that suffocation from drowning was the cause of death.

Eugene was a pupil at Hampton School in Richmond-upon-Thames.

Royal Parks Press Statement

Please see our statement in response to footage shared on social media over the weekend showing a group of adults and young children crowding around deer in Richmond Park.

Paul Richards, Park Manager, Richmond Park, said:

"We are shocked and extremely concerned by footage shared on social media showing a group of adults and young children crowding around deer in Richmond Park, with children seen touching and stroking the animals. This deeply irresponsible and highly dangerous behaviour will cause the deer stress and create a serious risk of a tragic accident resulting in life-changing injuries or, in the worst case, a fatal incident.

"Richmond Park's red and fallow deer are wild, powerful animals. Although they may appear calm, they can react suddenly and aggressively if they feel threatened. Stags can weigh more than 25 stone and run at speeds of up to 30 miles per hour, making them highly dangerous if visitors get too close.

"We urge parents and carers to keep children well away from the deer at all times and never allow them to approach or interact with the animals. Visitors should always stay at least 50 metres away - or further if the deer are moving - and never approach them for photographs or selfies.

"The deer are one of the park's most iconic and valued features. But please - keep yourself, your families, and others safe, by giving deer the space they need."

See guidelines here: [Deer in Richmond Park | The Royal Parks](#)



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darryl parkin

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The Tree Agency

The Local Picture Postcard Page - Part 335

Crown Road – A Snapshot (Part Two)

By Alan Winter

My thanks to those of you who sent me positive comments about last weeks postcard column that featured Crown Road in St Margarets. I have a few more postcards of Crown Road in my collection so thought I could show a few more of them this week.



The first postcard was posted in 1920 and shows the view looking north down Crown Road. The photographer was clearly standing with his back to the Crown Hotel as he shoots across Richmond Road taking in the newsagent and tobacconist that is still there on the corner of Crown Road.

Our second postcard features Highshot House and the photograph dates around 1910. It was on the left of Crown Road before you get to Napoleon Road. Highshot House at that time was a home for inebriates. In later years the building was changed into quite large factories that were still there into the 1970's when the site was turned into flats.





Postcard number three was published around 1907 and shows the shop at number 12 which was one of two dairy product shops owned by L. Christian. They had another branch in Feltham. There are a few smart members of the shop staff outside the door and the driver with his sign written delivery cart all ready to deliver to the shop's local customers.

Final postcard this week shows the Northern stretch of Crown Road looking towards the St Margarets Hotel on the far right. In the foreground is the Beaconsfield Road junction to the left with the Kings Road junction to the right.



Thanks for reading this. Hope to have column 336 published next week. I'm finding it harder to find postcards of the borough that haven't already been used in previous columns during what is now almost 10 years of the Twickenham and Richmond Tribune.

But I have a plan! – It might even work. Watch this space!

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Richmond's New Political Question Time Comes with One Important Catch

Outside parties have been invited into the Council chamber, but the rules reveal how carefully that invitation has been framed.

By James Knight



Richmond Council faces a problem born of electoral success. The Liberal Democrats now hold every seat in the chamber, leaving the authority without an elected opposition and without the daily political friction on which local democracy normally depends.

Richmond is understood to be the only principal local authority in England where one party holds every seat. The Council knows this is awkward. Its Leader, Councillor Gareth Roberts, has been active on social media, promoting Full Council as a sort of Palace of the People where residents can “see local democracy in action” and “have your voice heard”. The authority has also created a new Political Parties Question Time, allowing parties outside the chamber to question the Leader, Deputy Leaders and committee chairs.

That is a sensible response to an unusual constitutional position. But the detail matters. Richmond has invited opposition parties into the chamber while retaining tight control over the form their opposition may take.

A political question time with limits

Under the new rules, eligible parties may ask no more than two questions at each meeting. Questions must be submitted six working days in advance, must not exceed 100 words, and must relate to matters within the Council’s powers or affecting the borough. Supplementary questions must be brief and free from commentary or preamble.

Most strikingly, the Chief Executive may reject a question if it “contains purely political arguments”. The rules also state that questions should not be framed primarily to convey a political point of view. There is a reasonable case for excluding speeches disguised as questions. Council meetings should not become campaign rallies, and officers must be able to reject material that is abusive, defamatory or irrelevant.

Yet the wording goes further. Politics is the process of arguing about priorities, spending and responsibility. A serious question about debt implies that borrowing may be excessive. A question about transport suggests that different priorities should have been chosen. A challenge over service failure may contend that political leadership, not merely administration, is at fault. Those arguments are not incidental to scrutiny. They are its substance.

The appearance of opposition

The deeper question is why the Council has created the procedure.

The most charitable explanation is also the most obvious. Richmond's leadership recognises that an all-Liberal Democrat council needs some external challenge. It is better to hear rival voices than to behave as though electoral victory has removed the need for scrutiny.

There is also a political advantage. No democratic council wishes its chamber to resemble the rubber-stamp assemblies once associated with Eastern Europe's communist regimes, where speeches were applauded, decisions endorsed and meaningful opposition was absent. A visible question session involving the Greens, Reform, Labour or the Conservatives allows the administration to demonstrate pluralism without surrendering any seats, committee votes or powers of investigation.

That may prove useful as the 2030 elections approach. The Council will be able to argue that outside parties have been heard, that residents have questioned the administration, and that meetings have remained open. The existence of these mechanisms may soften demands for an elected opposition by suggesting that scrutiny is already being provided by other means.

But occasional access is not the same as institutional power. Visiting parties may ask two tightly regulated questions every few months. Elected opposition councillors can examine reports, challenge budgets, sit on committees and return repeatedly to unresolved failures. The two are not equivalent.

The questions councillors asked

The July meeting itself illustrated the difference.

Many questions from Liberal Democrat councillors invited committee chairs to explain or promote existing Council work. Members asked about tree planting, the Smarter Homes Hub, Sir David Attenborough's centenary, youth programmes and cultural initiatives. Some were useful requests for information but taken together they read more like opportunities to showcase activity than attempts to expose weakness.

In a chamber with a real opposition, other questions would normally follow. Why had targets been missed? Was money being spent effectively? Had services improved? Were official claims supported by evidence?

The public asked the harder questions

The sharper scrutiny came from residents and external parties. Public questioners pressed the administration on Pensford Field, the handling of information requests and the documentary basis for Council decisions. These were not invitations to recite achievements. They required the administration to explain discrepancies, defend procedure and account for matters that had already become politically awkward.

Pensford Field produced the most uncomfortable exchange. Martin Baker drew attention to what he said was a discrepancy between the delegated authority recorded in different Council documents, raising the question of whether the decision had been taken under the correct power.

As Mr Baker developed his supplementary, Councillor Gareth Roberts tried to cut him off mid-flow. Mr Baker completed his point, after which Councillor Roberts promised a written response. That may have been procedurally convenient, but it did not resolve the matter in the chamber. Under Richmond's present practice, written answers are not routinely published alongside the meeting papers, so a question raised in public can receive an answer that remains effectively private.

That leaves Pensford Field capable of causing further embarrassment, not because the issue was necessarily mishandled, but because the documentary discrepancy was not settled in public. In a Council without an elected opposition, moving a difficult question into unpublished correspondence inevitably weakens confidence in the scrutiny process.

Political Parties Question Time

The new Political Parties Question Time was intended to show that Richmond could still accommodate challenge, despite having no elected opposition. In practice, only Reform UK and the Green Party took part. Labour and the Conservatives submitted no questions, leaving the first use of the new procedure narrower than the Council may have hoped, but still revealing in its effect.

Reform's question about value for money exposed an awkward gap. The Leader could not say how many of the Council's key performance indicators directly measured it. For an authority responsible for substantial budgets and major capital projects, that was not a trivial matter.

The Green Party then sought firmer commitments on transport policy, only to be told by Deputy Leader Alexander Ehmann: "I will not commit to your agenda. I'll commit to ours." It was a clever rhetorical device for rejecting the premise of the question, but less useful as an exercise in accountability.

These exchanges mattered because they showed the new procedure working as intended. They required senior members to defend priorities, explain omissions and respond to demands they had not chosen. That is the essence of political scrutiny, and it was noticeably sharper than much of the questioning from councillors in the chamber.

They also showed why external challenge matters. Questions from Liberal Democrat councillors are framed by a shared manifesto and a common ownership of the administration's record. Questions from rival parties are not. They test priorities the Council did not choose to publicise and seek commitments the Council may prefer not to make.

Yet the challenge is carefully contained. Questions are submitted in advance, vetted against the Council's rules, and may be rejected if they contain "purely political arguments". Each party is limited to two questions, debate is normally prohibited, and supplementaries are tightly controlled. Richmond has therefore created a political question time in which outside parties may challenge the administration, provided the challenge does not become overly political.

That is the central tension in the scheme. The Council seeks the legitimacy that comes from visible opposition while retaining substantial control over its form, tone and duration. The chamber has been opened to rival voices, but only within tight boundaries set by those they are there to question.

A clever substitute, but not an opposition

Richmond deserves credit for acknowledging that total political control poses a democratic problem. Councillor Roberts has devised a politically astute response: outside parties are invited into the chamber, the Council can point to a visible challenge, and the administration gains the appearance of pluralism without surrendering any of the powers that belong to elected opposition councillors.

That is clever politics, but it is not the same as opposition. The questions are limited, submitted in advance, vetted under rules written by the Council, and subject to rejection if they contain "purely political arguments". Outside parties may challenge the administration, but only within the boundaries set by the authority being challenged.

Labour and the Conservatives may therefore have been right to stay away from the first session and simply ask the public questions instead. Participation risks lending the arrangement greater constitutional weight than it deserves. Their absence left the chamber with the more uncomfortable fact: Richmond has no elected opposition, and a carefully managed question period cannot conceal it.

Reform and the Greens showed that useful scrutiny can still emerge from the process. But occasional questions cannot replicate the independence, persistence or authority of councillors who sit on committees, examine budgets and repeatedly return to unresolved failures. Richmond has opened the chamber to rival voices. The important catch is that it still decides how political those voices may be and how far their challenge is allowed to go.

Seven 'Shouts' in Seven Days for Teddington RNLI

From Teddington RNLI

Volunteer lifeboat crew at Teddington RNLI lifeboat station were called out seven times in seven days during the week commencing July 6th, its busiest week so far in 2026.



The requests came from HM London Coastguard and all of the call outs or 'shouts' were safely resolved with volunteer crews launching one lifeboat, in all but one incident where both D class lifeboats were launched.

Not all incidents were related to the current heatwave. However, they highlight the need for caution when on or near the river and the risks around diving or swimming.

'This stretch of the Thames is well used which also means a large amount of debris on the riverbed, this is dangerous to those jumping into relatively shallow water.' warns Matt Allchurch, Teddington RNLI Lifeboat Operations Manager. *'Currently at low tide there is only around 2.5 metres of water under Teddington Foot Bridge.'*

'Even though the air temperature is very warm, water temperatures are still cold, so cold water shock remains a very real risk,

eventually preventing you from being able to swim.

If you are going to swim in the river, go with others, enter the water slowly, make sure you are visible and swim parallel to the bank. Always take a charged phone with you in a waterproof pouch. If you get into trouble float on your back and call for help.'

The lifesaving charity is appealing to people to share its safety advice with family and friends, particularly young people and teens, who accounted for the majority of the 12 drowning fatalities during the last heatwave.

If you see someone in trouble in the water dial 999 and ask for the Coastguard.

Photo Credit: RNLI/Grace Palmieri



Lifeboats

Nature adventures on Barnes Common at the Eco-Explorers Summer Camp

From Barnes Common

Barnes Common's popular Eco-Explorers Summer Camp for young people aged 8 to 14 is back. Join them daily for outdoor adventures and to learn about local wildlife!

This year's Eco-Explorers Summer Camp will run for 4 days from Tuesday 21 July to Friday 24 July. Young people aged 8 to 14 will learn how to identify, record and understand wildlife around them. Building skills throughout the week, they will take part in practical conservation activities and learn how to share their knowledge with others!



Programme:

- **Day 1** - Investigating plants. A closer look at the trees and other plants around the common
- **Day 2** - Navigating and wayfinding. Understanding how to navigate around open spaces and safely explore wild spaces
- **Day 3** - Investigating invertebrates. Compare the wildlife living in different habitats
- **Day 4** - Conservation activities & sharing skills and knowledge. Assist with practical habitat management activities. Learn how to use art and creative skills to engage the community around us with nature

The programme may be subject to changes or adjustments.

Each day will run from 9.30am to 3.30pm, with opportunities for breaks and socialising. Young people aged 8 to 14 will work as a group and develop their confidence and social and interpersonal skills.

[Register for Eco-Explorers Summer Camp.](#)



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Asleep at the Wheel for Another Four Years

By Derek Jones



The staggering laziness and inefficiency of Richmond Council continue now with no prospect of any improvement following the successful eviction of all other parties by the Liberal Democrats at the recent election.

Anybody who has ever been just a day or two late with their Council Tax payment will know how quickly they receive threatening letters – promising the withdrawal of monthly payment facilities, and debt recovery action.

But when the boot is on the other foot, and the Council owes *us* money, it seems a whole new set of rules apply. If (as I have done several times over recent years) you sell a house or move, having overpaid Council Tax, good luck with receiving a refund. My most recent experience was when, on June 4th, I reported a new tenant in a property that had been unoccupied, but for which I had been paying Council Tax. I was therefore owed around £300 and emailed asking for a revised bill and a refund.

I received the stock response stating: “Enquiries are dealt with in the order in which they are received. Our target is to respond to all written and emailed correspondence within 20 working days Please only write again if you are sending us new or updated information. Sending repeated copies of emails causes delays in our response.”

So, I waited. And waited. Until 29th June, when I was due (according to the Council) to pay my next instalment. I sent a reminder, pointing out that I had had previous problems, and that I intended to escalate the matter if I received no response within 7 days. It was read. But I received no response.

On July 7th, now over a month since I had first requested a refund, I decided to lodge a formal complaint online. The acknowledgement I received promised that I would receive a response “shortly”, but I have had none.

This experience begs several questions:

- Why can the Council act so swiftly on missed payments, yet not act with reasonable speed when it owes money to residents?
- Why does the Council need 28 days or more to respond to a simple matter like this?
- Why has an increase of 30% in staff headcount (and a doubling of the salary bill) in 6 years mean that the Council is now even slower at dealing with everyday administration?
- Does the average occupancy of Council offices (a staggering 28% when last measured) signify that staff are sitting at home, unsupervised and unproductive?
- And what exactly is the point of a complaints procedure that is itself as inefficient and ineffectual as the very Council which is it designed to scrutinise?

The people of Richmond had a chance to do something about this. Electing a few councillors from other parties would have stirred things up and held the Lib Dems to account. Instead, they chose four more years of the same.

So, one thing is for sure: with NO opposition in the Council Chamber anymore, the good people of Richmond must now accept whatever shoddy service standards the Council metes out. Because there is now nobody to champion their cause and hold the current Lib Dem administration to account; an administration that has been asleep at the wheel for years and remains content to let this kind of appalling service go unquestioned by the officers it is supposed to oversee and control.

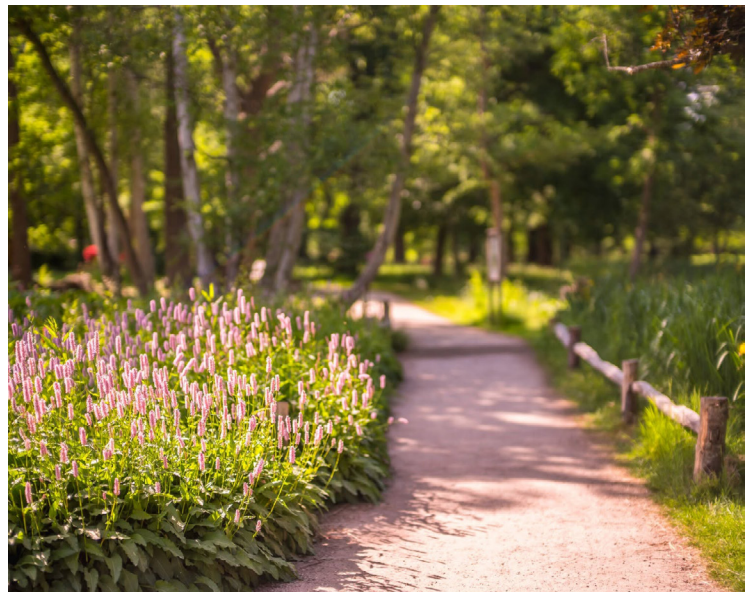
Bushy Park Award

From The Royal Parks

We are delighted to share that Bushy Park has achieved the highest possible overall score (80+) in this year's Green Flag Award assessments, earning both the Green Flag Award and Green Heritage Site Accreditation.

These awards recognise the very highest standards in the management of parks and green spaces, and this achievement reflects the dedication, passion and expertise of our teams who care for these extraordinary places every day.

We're incredibly proud of everyone involved in helping these iconic landscapes thrive for millions of visitors while protecting their heritage and wildlife for future generations.





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Mortlake Community News

From EastSheenMatters

Mortlake Community Association Hub will now be closed for a summer kitchen and w.c. refurbishment after the final Strength & Balance for the season on **Monday 20th July**.

During the closure most of the activities will be paused, save for History and Gardening.

So NO CHESS. Next occasion to be announced.

The full suite of activities will restart on **Wednesday 9th September**.

The employees of Waitrose in East Sheen have chosen Mortlake Community Association as one of their chosen charities! Please do pop in and put a green token in the box when you are passing.

And the best news Oscar has arrived!

Letters

Dear Editor,

Petition on affordable housing presented to LBRUT 14 July 2026

Tonight, the Council debated our petition asking the Council to become one of the best Councils for providing affordable homes instead of being the worst. I am hoping you are able to report on our petition (well over 2000 residents have signed it) in your online newspaper.

I attach a copy of what I said tonight in the 5 minutes I was given to speak. It was unfortunate that in the subsequent “debate”, involving the Lib Dem Leader and the Lib Dem Chair of ASSHH Committee talking to the rest of the Lib Dem Cllrs, both Cllrs missed the chance to respond to our 4 x point request for much better transparency for residents. Instead, they resorted to what are now their two standard answers:

- claiming that a few other Councils are worse than LBRUT (no figures were given)
- unfairly blaming their failing performance on the Mayor of London despite LBRUT being sanctioned because delivery is below 75%. As a result, Richmond remains subject to:
 -
 - the **presumption in favour of sustainable development**
 - a **20% housing land supply buffer**
 - a requirement to maintain a Housing Delivery Test Action Plan.

Housing Summit

The Lib Dem Cllrs did mention a Housing Summit about affordable housing to be held at the end of this year. This was first mentioned at the March 2026 Council, but despite asking we have not been able to obtain any more information. It would be a real public service to the residents of LBRUT if your newspaper could find out more about this Summit and encourage residents to attend.

Kind regards

Pam Marum

For Twickenham Labour Party

View the speech [HERE](#)

Letters

Dear Sir,

Comments seen in Edition 505

I look forward to reading the Tribune each week and even though I have occasionally disagreed with certain articles and letters that have been included I have not felt the need to comment until today.

In my opinion, Michael Jay's letter commenting on Alison Jee's review of Sticks and Sushi in the previous week's edition was unnecessarily sarcastic and completely uncalled for, particularly the entire paragraph devoted to his personal experience of all things Japan. Alison made it clear from the outset that the restaurant was a fusion of Danish and Japanese cuisine. She never claimed to be an expert in either of those cuisines or cultures.

In her weekly column Alison is simply giving her personal opinion and experience of different restaurants and foods. She is not rating them or suggesting we should/shouldn't visit the establishment on the basis of her reviews. She just highlights the many wonderful dining options we have close to home and occasionally tells us about new foods on the market that we might want to try.

I, for one, look forward to reading what she has to say fully aware that if I want to know more I can try them out for myself. It's just about the food after all.

Regards,

Maggie Parkes
Twickenham

It's All Coming Up Rosé

There's something rather special about rosé wines, whether they be still or sparkling. They are the ideal, versatile, bridge between red and white. More to the point, though, to many people they're the very essence of summer drinking, and a sparkling rosé or champagne, seems to raise the level and add a note of extravagance. The blush colour is usually obtained by leaving the white grape juices in contact with some dark grape skins for just a short period—typically anywhere from a few hours to a couple of days—before being filtered and fermented like a white wine. Sometimes an amount of red wine is added, a method known as blending or *rosé d'assemblage*.

Here are a few rosés that are definitely worth trying if, like me, you're a fan.

English rosés are really coming into their own now. The award-winning Surrey vineyard **Denbies Rose Hill** is a blend of Pinot Noir and Dornfelder. A full flavoured rosé, pale pink in colour, which benefits from the English cool climate. A vibrant nose of summer fruits leads to a palate bursting with punnets of strawberries and raspberries, a hint of toffee apple and a persistent cassis finish. Available from **Waitrose** and **Ocado** at around £12 a bottle.

Gusbourne, one of England's most celebrated wine estates, has released its **2025 English Rosé** - a wine from an extraordinary growing season and the singular character of its Kentish terroir. Crafted from 100% Pinot Noir, hand-harvested from Gusbourne's vineyards on the ancient south-facing escarpment above Appledore, the 2025 vintage has precision, vibrancy and an exceptional natural balance: the hallmark of truly great English rosé. Available from Gusbourne, at £29 per bottle from [gusbourne.com](https://www.gusbourne.com)

Jardin de Roses, boasts fresh fruit aromas of grapefruit, cherry and strawberry, enriched by floral notes similar to those found in a rose garden. A blend of Grenache, Cinsault, Syrah this wine produced in the Languedoc region of France by Domaines Paul Mas is great value at £10.50 a bottle from **Tesco**.

Legends Bordeaux Rosé Tutiac, is dry, refreshing, and deliciously fruity, showcasing another side to Bordeaux beyond its famous reds. A delightful aperitif and equally at home with salads, omelettes, fish dishes, or garlic prawns. Part of the Legends range from **Spar** at £8.49

Casillero del Diablo, Chile's No.1 wine brand, has just launched its new Chilean Rosé. It's a pale, bright pink wine with subtle silver highlights, made to be enjoyed "ice cold". The tasting profile is fresh and expressive on the nose, with delicate aromas of rose petals and red fruits. On the palate, notes of strawberries and white peaches lead to a long finish, with delicate saline and mineral nuances. Available at Sainsbury's and Morrisons (RSP a very affordable £8.50).



Bruce Jack Wines Lifestyle Sauvignon Blush is a fresh and expressive rosé-style blend made predominantly from Sauvignon Blanc with a small addition of Shiraz. The Sauvignon Blush is pale salmon in colour with notes of rose petal, nectarine sorbet, and a squeeze of lime. The palate is crisp and refreshing, balancing delicate fruit with lively acidity and an easy drinkability. Available from £8 at **Asda** and **Sainsbury's**.

Tavel is a cru in the Southern Rhône Valley that produces only rosé wines, known for their complexity and finesse. They can be appreciated in their youth and unlike much rosé, can also be considered for aging. This wine is dry and full bodied, with notes of grapefruit, raspberries and spices. **Arbousset Tavel Rosé** is an award-winning example, and available for £13 at **Tesco**.

Wild Child Rosé 2025 is a 100% Grenache Rosé from the wild West Coast of South Africa. This beautiful light salmon pink coloured wine features aromatics and flavours of fresh strawberry, rose petals and orange blossom. In the background lingers some Turkish delight and potpourri. Dry and crisp with a medium body and a flinty mineral finish. £12.25 from **Ocado**.

Straight from the heart of Provence, **Ultimate Provence** is the kind of bottle that feels made for special lunches, garden parties and golden-hour aperitifs. With its elegant pale-pink hue, highly distinctive bottle and beautifully fresh, fruit-forward profile, it's a standout choice if you want to upgrade your summer sipping. The dry, white pepper notes come from the Syrah, and the Rolle grape lends acidity, brightness and notes of citrus. Available from **Waitrose** and **Tesco** for around £20.

And finally, some summer rosé fizz: **Graham Beck Vintner's Selection Brut Rosé** is produced by methode traditionnelle. This Rosé Cap Classique with a minimum of 15 months on the lees, expresses subtle yeasty characters with a burst of red fruit flavours. A fine, lively bubble, perfect for summer celebrating. £14.50 from **Tesco**.



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School's Out - If you hadn't noticed

By Bruce Lyons

Just as I was swamped with rescheduling some middle East bookings and sorting out Wedding Visits the school holidays poked it's head around the corner.

And yes, people want "value" especially as nobody know what Andy plans for us next week !!!!

Well! If you are still hankering for a blue sea, beautiful Greek

Up to 60% off!!

Villages, and great food you are in luck. There

still 60 % off last minute holidays to Greek Islands.



An example Sivota, 19th July beach cottage for 4 with flights, transfers and accommodation £2386 in total walk to shops/beach

You have more than 4? Want 2 weeks? Like a car too - no problem

26th July 3 bedrooms Meganisi; 2 weeks £1262 each -

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Corsica Free Child Place.

This is ONLY available on the Sunday Stansted to Calvi flight. A large selection of villas with pool/shared pool -some with car

2/3/4/5/6/7 or 8 occupancy.

The free child offer is worth around £950 per booking.

Great Beaches Day flights, offers for ½ or 3 weeks.

Free
Child
Places

**Small Ship
Sailing
“partner goes
free”**

I wrote last week about AMA Waterways and their 25th Anniversary offer - this has been extended to a book by 31st JULY offers vary but they can be worth up to £1900 per Cabin.

A popular request is Small Ship Sailing and there is a Summer Offer on a variety of ships - book one and the partner goes free- Italy / Greece and even a sailing from Greece to Croatia (one way)
Enquire for dates and itineraries.

Finding it a bit too hot??

Just published Winter Trips to Santa to Meet Father Christmas

Just opened booking - 3 nights from Gatwick 7th December from £1249 per person - always sell out

So call for further information, Crusader Travel!

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



Eugene Onegin

by Pyotr Tchaikovsky, libretto by Konstantin Shilovsky after Alexander Pushkin
The Grange Festival at The Grange, Alresford

Eugene Onegin is really about the shy, eager romantic teenager, Tatyana. But in the overture of this production we get fifteen Tatanas! These persistence of vision images of her emotions are the chorus, dressed in pink and purple pastels. A lithe and kinetic group of six dancers similarly echo Tatyana's emotions. Tchaikovsky paints a compelling picture of early nineteenth century Russian life in the music for the dances. Dances pitch the mood of the plot, which indeed pivots around one ill-fated dance. Arthur Pita's inventive choreography is a delight, culminating in a supercharged polonaise in a high society St Petersburg ballroom.



Frankie Bradshaw's inventive designs are epitomised in this ballroom. There are just seven chandeliers, but she conjures hundreds, the room infinitely extended in its mirrored walls. This veritable Versailles is populated by myriads of elegant figures, chorus and dancers, in black frock coats and white-tie.

Armenian soprano Ruzan Mantashyan is much sought after in the European opera houses. In the role of Tatyana, she is completely absorbing, whether as the willowy youngster lost in books and daydreams, her singing sinuous and silky; then the confident and mature voice, as the aristocratic society beauty she becomes.

Vladislav Chizhov makes his UK debut as Onegin, and, my, he certainly looks the part, tall, upright and detached. Onegin is a complicated character, and Chizhov manages to crack the surface, to get more out of the part than just the haughty, scornful snob. Chizhov's sleek and secured baritone pairs impressively with Mantashyan's mellifluous soprano.



For all Onegin's suavity, his chafed response to hearing gossip at his expense is purely adolescent mischief in deciding to flirt with Olga at Tatyana's name-day party. Here his very explicit advance on the none-too reluctant Olga seems misplaced, but it is clear that this is only as Lensky's mind misinterprets it. Korean-American mezzo-soprano Alice Chung plays a very vivacious Olga, lightly flitting across the rural scenes, her supple voice adding to her lively appearances.

Welsh tenor Ryan Vaughan Davies makes a very personable Lensky, head over heels in love with Olga, his fiancée. His opening arioso, a love song to Olga, is heartfelt and vocally tender. When events take their fateful turn, and Lensky waits at dawn before the duel, Vaughan Davies sings the *Kuda, kuda* aria with intense pathos, “Where have you gone, golden days of my spring?” He knows he may never see his beloved Olga again, and it is profoundly moving.



To lighten all this heavy tragedy, Tchaikovsky introduces the role of the blithesome Monsieur Triquet, a French tutor who sings a ditty for Tatyana on her name-day. Toby Spence sings with precision, but rather plays down the flamboyant Triquet.

The mother and the nurse of the two young sisters share reminiscences, recognisable matronly characters as they gossip and laugh. Two very experienced and highly respected mezzo-sopranos comfortably inhabit these roles. Diana Montague’s generous lyrical mezzo is well suited to the warm-hearted motherly Madame Larina as she busies herself in the home and the farm. Catherine Wyn-Rogers plays the loyal servant Filipyevna, now a fond member of the family having nursed the sisters since their baby years. Her portrait of Filipyevna, as innately intelligent and sharply observant, is sung with warmth and spirit.



Another highlight is the single-aria role of the elderly retired General, Prince Gremin. Seven years on from the ill-fated meeting with Onegin, Tatyana is now his dignified, beautiful and noble wife. There is a mutual devotion between Tatyana and her much older husband. Prince Gremin’s aria beautifully expresses how he feels. Kazakh-Serbian bass Mark Kurmanbayev sings radiantly in this tender, passionate aria, richly and sonorously expressed. However, he seems several decades too young as the venerable Gremin.

Lidiya Yankovskaya conducts the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in a spirited performance that is rigorous and rousing, yet romantic and lyrical, taking the score on the roller-coaster of emotions that is *Eugene Onegin*..

Tchaikovsky used the term “lyrical scenes” to describe the opera’s realism, which probes the predicaments and passions of real people. Director Max Webster’s *Eugene Onegin* is a polished and stylish production that does just that. With its outstanding vocal and instrumental music, inventive use of dance and movement, and great visual impact, it is a winner. And all is done with restless energy.

Read Mark Aspen’s review at www.markaspen.com/2026/07/05/eugene-onegin-gf

Photography by Richard Hubert Smith

Romeo and Juliet

by William Shakespeare

Putney Theatre Company at the Surrey Docks Farm, Rotherhithe
and on tour until 17th July

All over West and South London Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is popping up. Open-air venues include pubs, churchyards, and Surrey Docks Farm, a surprisingly pleasant venue for a warm sunny evening by the side of the Thames.

This really is (as the football pundits say) a play of two halves; the first part has the mirth, merriment and ribaldry of many a Shakespeare comedy, but then everything takes a darker serious turn. Even Shakespeare's most serious tragedies feature a jester, but director Tom Sainsbury really lean into this. It initially feels like we are watching a fun, fast-paced comedy.



It's a lot to take on anew one of Shakespeare's most popular plays, and here the warring Capulets and Montagues are university sports rivals. Rather than a street brawl, the show opens with the two sides playing a muscular hockey game. The Capulets don green; the Montagues are in blue. It's simple but effective, as is the versatile set, just a single wooden box, used as a doorway, a bed, a seat. It even becomes the famous balcony where Romeo admires Juliet from afar and hears her declaring her love.

Interspersed with fast-paced 1990s pop music, there are some great comedic turns particularly from Mark McNaul as Benvolio and a captivating Romeo, Nathan Golo, channelling well-heeled, Hooray Henry vibes. When we are introduced to Juliet, played by Isla Bell, we are reminded that these are all teenagers, and her youthful exuberance is a good foil to Golo's Romeo. Emotions come to the fore after Tybalt and Mercutio are slain and Romeo banished. As Juliet's world begins to crumble, Bell brings believable pain and anguish that delivers an emotional punch.

It's a fairly faithful version of the play, but not everything is lifted verbatim from the First Folio. Romeo and Juliet are now eighteen rather than the more troublesome early teens of the original. The Prince of Verona acts as a narrator to contextualise the plot, useful to a family audience.

This energetic company takes Shakespeare out into the world and finds an enthusiastic audience. Watching something written in the 1590s, overlaid with a 1990's theme, with a backdrop of modern riverside skyscrapers feels like we are transcending generations. It's a thoroughly enjoyable production, and there is some real talent on display.



Read Fi Mead-McNish's review at www.markaspen.com/2026/07/12/romeo-juliet-ptc

Photography by Lesley Strachan and Tom Sainsbury

Is the UK set for a bumper summer of butterflies?

From Butterfly Conservation

Britain could be on the brink of a bumper summer of butterflies, with a warm, dry spring raising hopes of an abundant season ahead for some of the nation's best-loved species.

After 2024 delivered the worst results in the history of Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count and a butterfly emergency was declared, a sunnier 2025 offered some encouragement, and with this spring one of the [warmest on record](#) the UK could be treated to a kaleidoscope of colourful butterflies this year.

That's why wildlife charity Butterfly Conservation is calling on the public to get out for its annual Big Butterfly Count, which runs from Friday 17 July - Sunday 9 August.

Anyone, anywhere can take part and help to paint a picture of how butterflies are faring by submitting their sightings to help create an interactive map.



Fairy-like Holly Blue butterflies have had an excellent spring. Picture: Iain H Leach

These sightings provide important data that help scientists understand where butterflies are thriving, struggling, or shifting due to climate change, habitat loss or restoration.

Some of the country's most recognisable and loved species have had a better than average spring, setting them up for a potentially abundant summer.

The Small Copper and Holly Blue have been seen in excellent numbers, while Peacock, Red Admiral and sunshine-yellow Brimstone also had a promising start to the year.

This rainbow of colourful characters includes four of the top five of the recent vote to find [Britain's Favourite Butterfly](#), in which the Peacock took the crown.

With heatwaves, warm dry spells and the occasional welcome downpour creating ideal conditions for breeding and for caterpillar growth, this summer could see gardens and green spaces filled with fluttering wings.

Butterfly Conservation's Head of Engagement, Kate Merry, said: *"After the colourful spring with seemingly lots of beautiful butterflies appearing across the UK, it's tempting to assume we're heading for a bumper summer, and we'd love nothing more as most of our butterfly species have undergone long-term declines.*

"But a bright spring is only ever part of the story, which is why we need people out there taking part in the Big Butterfly Count this summer. We genuinely don't yet know how this year will unfold, and the only way to find out is for people to tell us what they're seeing in their own gardens and green spaces."

The world's largest butterfly survey, the Big Butterfly Count asks people to spend just 15 minutes outdoors in a sunny spot, count the butterflies and day-flying moths they see, and submit their sightings via the free app or at www.bigbutterflycount.org.

80% of UK butterfly species have declined over the past 50 years, the result of habitat loss, pollution and climate change, and scientists need as many eyes as possible looking for butterflies this summer to see what's happening. Every sighting counts.

The Peacock, Holly Blue, Red Admiral, Brimstone and Small Copper can all be recorded as part of Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count, along with 15 other butterflies and day-flying moths.

Kate Merry added:

"Butterflies are icons of summer and, more importantly, key indicators of the UK's biodiversity and environmental health. Every single person that takes part in the Big Butterfly Count and submits their sightings is helping us to see how these pollinators are doing, which in turn helps conservationists build a wider picture of how all insects are faring.

"It's easy, fun for all the family, and a great excuse to get outside and experience the simple joy of spotting butterflies. You'll also be helping to protect butterflies for future generations, and if that doesn't give you the feel-good factor I don't know what will!"

How to take part

- Download the free Big Butterfly Count app or visit www.bigbutterflycount.org
- Between Friday 17 July - Sunday 9 August spend 15 minutes in any sunny outdoor space and count the number and types of butterflies and day-flying moths you see.
- You don't need to be an expert - use the free ID guide on the app and website to help you identify what you've seen.
- Log your sightings on the website or free app and help protect UK butterflies for future generations

This summer, experience the joy of butterflies and see how many you can count. Will it be the bumper, colourful season spring has hinted at?

Only time will tell...



Richmond's New Landmark Mural Officially Unveiled in Celebration of Town's Heritage and Community

From Be Richmond

A striking new mural celebrating Richmond's heritage, wildlife and community has been officially unveiled by the Mayor of Richmond upon Thames, marking the completion of a major public art project in the heart of the town centre.

Commissioned by Be Richmond - the business improvement district for the town - and created by London-based artist duo Alice and Katie of A&K Art, the large-scale artwork now transforms the pedestrian route at 20 Hill Street into a vibrant cultural landmark, celebrating the places, people and stories that make Richmond one of London's most distinctive destinations.

The mural brings together some of Richmond's most recognisable landmarks and local treasures, including Richmond Bridge, Richmond Theatre, the famous view from Richmond Hill, Richmond Park, the River Thames, a traditional London black cab and the iconic red post box. Wildlife also features prominently, with herons inspired by Corporation Island and a kingfisher paying tribute to the Wilkinson family, whose building is home to the artwork.



The design also includes a commemorative blue plaque honouring the late Ann Wilkinson. Her sons, Guy and Neil Wilkinson, landlords of the Hill Street building that now features Richmond's newest mural, worked closely with the artists to incorporate personal family connections into the design.

The official unveiling was led by the Mayor of Richmond upon Thames, Councillor Nancy Baldwin, alongside representatives from Be Richmond, project partners, local businesses and community stakeholders.

Mayor of Richmond upon Thames, Councillor Nancy Baldwin, said:

"Richmond is home to many stories, and this new mural is a wonderful way of celebrating the people, places, character, heritage, and natural beauty that make our town so distinctive and special."

"Public art can bring communities together. This artwork celebrates the things that connect people to this town and to one another."

"I hope it will be enjoyed by residents, businesses, and visitors for many years to come."



The mural forms part of Be Richmond's ongoing placemaking programme, which aims to enhance public spaces, strengthen local identity and encourage people to spend more time exploring Richmond town centre.

Fay Cannings, Chief Executive of Be Richmond, said:

"Seeing the mural completed is a proud moment for everyone involved. From the very beginning, our ambition was to create something that reflects Richmond's unique identity while giving residents and visitors a new landmark they can enjoy every day. "The response from the community has already been incredibly positive. This artwork celebrates Richmond's rich heritage, its beautiful natural surroundings and the people who make the town so special. We're grateful to our partners, the artists and everyone who helped bring this vision to life."

The project has been delivered as part of a long-term vision to create memorable public spaces and strengthen Richmond's identity through art and placemaking.

Sixty Richmond students and parents conquer Snowdon

A 60-strong team from Marshgate Primary School in Richmond took on an ambitious trek to the summit of Snowdon over the weekend of 11–12 July. The team was made up of parents and Year Five students from the school who were raising money for Momentum Children's Charity, and for the school's Parent Staff Association (PSA).

The school's chosen charity, Momentum, was nominated by Alba Fransson, a parent from the school, whose family received support from the charity when her youngest son, Jack, was diagnosed with cancer in 2021 at just two years old. Throughout his treatment and recovery, Momentum provided invaluable support to the family. Alba took on the Snowdon challenge alongside her 10-year-old son, Liam. Her 12-year-old daughter, Marina, had also completed the challenge two years earlier when she was a pupil at the school.

The Snowdon Summit Challenge saw the team climb to the summit of Mount Snowdon, the highest mountain in Wales at 1,085 metres (3,560 feet). The demanding nine-mile trek involved a significant ascent and descent, meaning it took around 8 hours to complete. On reaching the summit, the pupils and their parents were rewarded with spectacular views across Snowdonia National Park.



Talking about the challenge, Alba Fransson, from Richmond, said: "It was an amazing weekend – I feel so proud of my son Liam and all his school friends. We all felt a real sense of achievement when we reached the summit – we all collectively shouted 'Momentum' when we got there. It was a hot day with temperatures of more than 30 degrees, and the terrain was very uneven and stoney, which definitely made it more challenging. It was an emotional weekend with everyone proudly wearing their Momentum green t-shirts. Lots of people would stop us and ask why we were doing it and who Momentum was, so it meant a lot to be able to raise awareness of this wonderful charity.

Alba continued: "We called the children 'mountain goats' as they just seemed to trot down – it was much tougher for the adults! Everyone received a medal at the end and went home knowing a lot more about Momentum. We celebrated by watching England win their quarter-final World Cup match."

Talking about why they are fundraising for Momentum, Alba said: "We found out about Momentum when we were in Kingston Hospital with Jack. We met a Family Support Worker from the charity who was welcoming and understanding, and even though initially we felt we didn't need them, they helped in so many ways. From a secret cupboard full of goodies in each hospital, to trips to their respite cabins next to the seaside, visits from Santa, outings on their riverboat, and unexpected but needed chats over a cup of tea – they were brilliant. Slowly we realised that they were helping other families in the local area too and that we were all connected by their warm embrace. Sadly, there are many families nearby living with children with cancer and serious illnesses. All of them need that warmth that Momentum can bring, to make them remember that they are still a family that can share smiles and happiness in these difficult times."

Momentum Children's Charity supports families across London, Surrey, and Sussex whose children are facing cancer or a life-challenging condition. The charity partners with local hospitals to offer personally tailored support to the entire family through their family support workers, both in hospital and at home.

If you are inspired by the team from Marshgate Primary School, you can sponsor them here: [Fundraiser - Marshgate primary school Snowdon expedition 2026](#)

To find out more about the work of Momentum Children's Charity, please visit www.momentumcharity.org



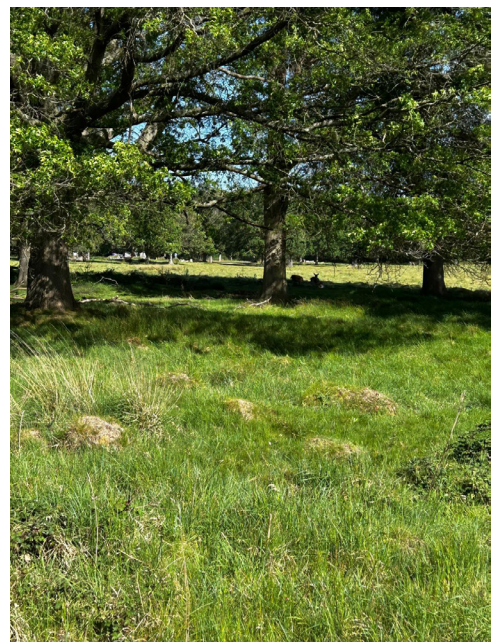
Lynde House Care Home Went to Summer Fun at Isabella Park!

From Lynde House Care Home

Our residents at Lynde House enjoyed a wonderful summer outing to Isabella Park, making the most of the beautiful sunshine and fresh air.

The day was filled with smiles, laughter, great conversations, and lovely moments shared with our amazing Activity Team and dedicated volunteer, who helped make the day so special. Getting outdoors, enjoying nature, and spending quality time together is so important for wellbeing, and it was wonderful to see everyone having such a fantastic time.

Lynde House Care Home is run by Barchester Healthcare, one of the UK's largest care providers, which is committed to delivering high-quality care across its care homes and hospitals. Lynde House provides [nursing care, residential care, respite care].



England and The Football World Cup!

By Ron Brand

All good things must come to an end. In this case once again a Bitter End!

Losing is never good, but to go out to Argentina?

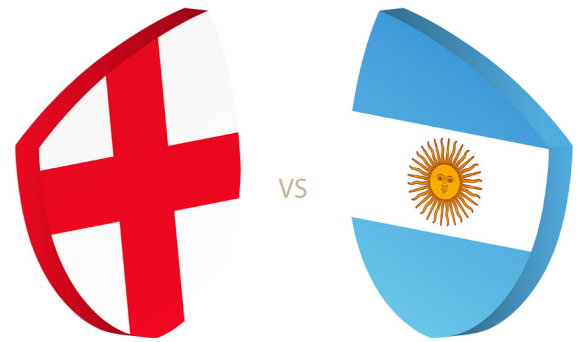
We have a long football history together, never mind the political history, which we will steer clear of in this article.

In 66' Alf Ramsey the then England manager called them Animals after we defeated them in the Quarter-finals in 1966. This followed a match of aggravation and frankly cheating, by the Argentina players. Their captain Antonio Rattin was sent off then refused to leave the pitch, the game was delayed by 8 minutes and a stain was left on World Cup football.

Just hours before the Argentina v Switzerland game Rattin died at the age of 89.

We then had David Beckham sent off in 1998 after lashing out following a deliberate foul by Diego Simeone who achieved precisely what he had intended.

Then we had the Maradona 'Hand of God' goal followed a few minutes later by the Goal of the Century, the same player was involved in both incidents and now we arrive at the latest encounter.



ENGLAND vs ARGENTINA

This game was definitely as they say a 'Game of two halves'

The first Half England tried to play football whilst Argentina took every opportunity to commit niggling fouls. Fortunately the England players showed some discipline and did not react.

The second Half England attempted to play some football, controlled the game, scored in the 55 minute to take the lead then surrendered completely and tried only to hang on by their finger tips!

There has been much speculation on the decisions of the England Coach?

I refuse to get involved in that conversation. Hindsight is 20/20 and we can never know what may have happened had different decisions been taken?

The situation is that the England World Cup dream comes once again to a disappointing end.

However, I think this time we can recognise what was achieved in difficult conditions and welcome the boys home with some self respect.

Ready ourselves for the next World Cup in four years time?

Public consultation: Concerts at Gtech Community Stadium

Written by Brentford Football Club

Brentford Football Club is exploring hosting up to six live music events each year at Gtech Community Stadium. The concerts would be held over weekends in the summer months, when the pitch isn't being used for football.

We have a strong track record of managing attendees safely at the Gtech, and we would apply that same experience, expertise, and operational planning to a small number of concerts each year.

The concerts would make use of the existing stadium, with no building works or permanent changes required. They will require permission from Hounslow Council, and we will agree limits on timings and noise as well as clear plans for transport, stewards, toilets and litter.

At the Gtech we have the opportunity to introduce a professionally managed, medium-scale concert destination for west London, bringing new cultural experiences to the local area, supporting local shops, restaurants, and hospitality businesses, and attracting new visitors to Brentford.

We are holding two public drop-in events for our neighbours, supporters and the wider community to find out more about our proposal to host concerts at the Gtech. Come along to meet the project team and ask any questions you might have. These are taking place on:

Saturday 18 July 2026, 10am - 1pm at Brentford FC Community Sports Trust, 1A Thomas Layton Way, London TW8 0SB

Monday 20 July, 5pm - 8pm at Clayton Hotel Chiswick, 626 Chiswick High Road, Chiswick, London W4 5RY

Can't make the events?

Find our exhibition materials [here](#).

After viewing the materials, we would appreciate if you could take the time to let us know your thoughts via our feedback survey linked below.

[Feedback form](#)

Your feedback will be considered as the project team finalise the proposals before a planning application is submitted to Hounslow Council.

Contact us

You can contact the project team by emailing:

bfcconsultation@thisislca.com



Summer visitors to UK Parliament can view new Lying-in-State exhibition

Visitors to the Palace of Westminster this summer will be able to view a new exhibition commemorating the Lying-in-State of Queen Elizabeth II. Running from 14 July to 2 October 2026, the exhibition is included with all booked UK Parliament tours during the exhibition period at no additional charge.

The temporary exhibition - '***A Historic Farewell: Art as Witness to the Lying-in-State of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II***' - has been constructed in Westminster Hall, the location of the Lying-in-State of Queen Elizabeth II, displaying the artworks of six artists from across the UK, who were invited to observe the ceremony in 2022 and the formalities surrounding the occasion.

Palace of Westminster tours begin in Westminster Hall, which has stood at the heart of Parliament since 1099. It is where visitors of all ages can continue their journey through the Palace on either a guided tour led by Parliament's expert in-house guides or a self-guided multimedia audio tour.

Both experiences take visitors through some of Parliament's most recognisable spaces, including Central Lobby, the House of Commons Chamber, and the House of Lords Chamber, offering a unique insight into the history of the Palace and the work of Parliament today.



Tours also pass through Norman Porch where, earlier this year, one of the Lying-in-State artworks – Eleanor Crook's sculpture entitled 'May Flights of Angels Sing Thee to Thy Rest' - was permanently installed to mark 100 years since the birth of Queen Elizabeth II.

Visitors choosing the self-guided multimedia audio tour can explore at their own pace using a handheld device featuring engaging commentary, interactive maps and stories from Parliament's past and present. Guided tours offer the opportunity to learn more about the people, events, and traditions that have shaped Parliament over the centuries.

Located in the heart of Westminster, just a short walk from Westminster Underground station, Parliament is easily accessible for visitors travelling from across the UK, whether as part of a day trip to London or a longer summer break.

UK Parliament tours have been highly ranked by VisitEngland's Quality Assurance Scheme, achieving a 92% overall quality score. The audio tour was commended for its "engaging commentary that brought the history and function of the institution to life", while Tripadvisor has recognised UK Parliament among the top 10% of attractions worldwide for two consecutive years.

How to visit

A Historic Farewell: Art as Witness to the Lying-in-State of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II runs from 14 July to 2 October 2026 in Westminster Hall.

The exhibition is free to visit with advance booking. Visitors attending a guided tour or self-guided multimedia audio tour of Parliament during the exhibition period can also see the exhibition as part of their visit, at no additional charge.

Visitors can also take advantage of reduced-price tour tickets this summer. As part of the Government's Great British Summer Savings scheme, tickets for UK Parliament tours booked before 1 September 2026 are available at a lower price, providing additional value for those visiting the Palace of Westminster and the exhibition.

Tickets and further information are available at www.parliament.uk/visiting

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