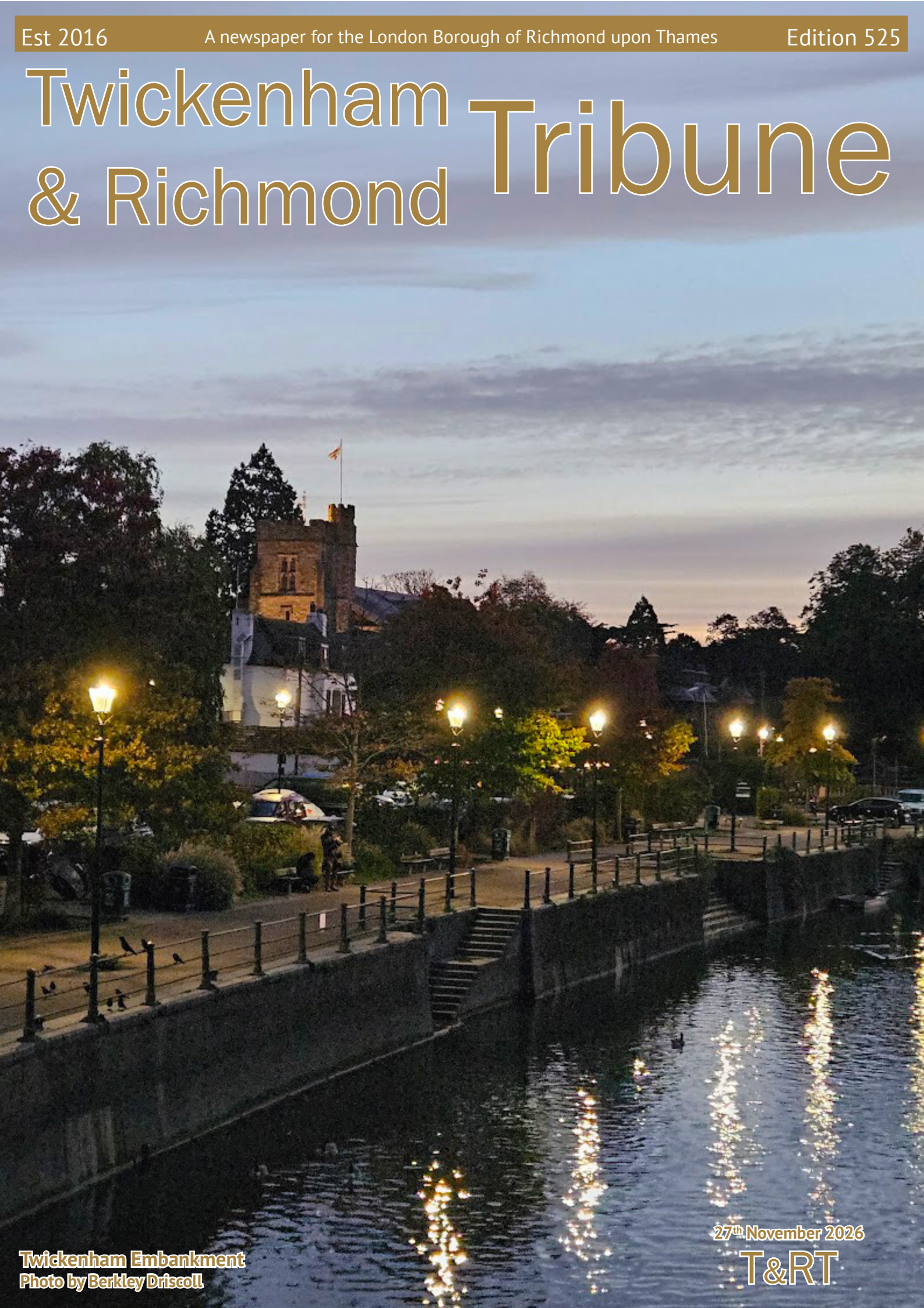
Est 2016 A newspaper for the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Edition 525

# Twickenham & Richmond Tribune



Twickenham Embankment
Photo by Berkley Driscoll

27th November 2026
T&RT

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. . . . . 200. 8 ½. . . . . 66. 92 ¾. . . . . 20. 99. . . . 16 ⅝. . . . . 76.

# TickerTape - News in Brief

## Rugby at Twickenham Stadium

From RFU Home Turf

**Saturday 28th November**
13:10 Wales v Japan
16:40 England v New Zealand

**Sunday 29th November**
13:10 Scotland v Argentina
16:40 France v South Africa

Whitton, Rugby & London Roads likely to close 11:10-13:10 and 18:10-20:40





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darryl parkin

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# The Local Picture Postcard Page - Part 354

## Coach And Horses Pub – Kew Green

By Alan Winter

Both of our postcards today were published well over 100 years ago and the Coach and Horses on Kew Green has been there much longer than that.

Standing at 8 Kew Green TW9 3BH across from the Royal Botanical Gardens for well over 300 years, it is one of Kew's oldest inns, with historical records stretching back to the early 18th century and coaching-inn roots tied to the area's transport and local trade.




A pub inventory at The National Archives dates the pub back to 1712, noting features such as a skittle alley. Trade and gazette records also list William Day at the address in December 1797. The pub was one of the earliest owned by Youngs brewery and remains a Youngs pub today.

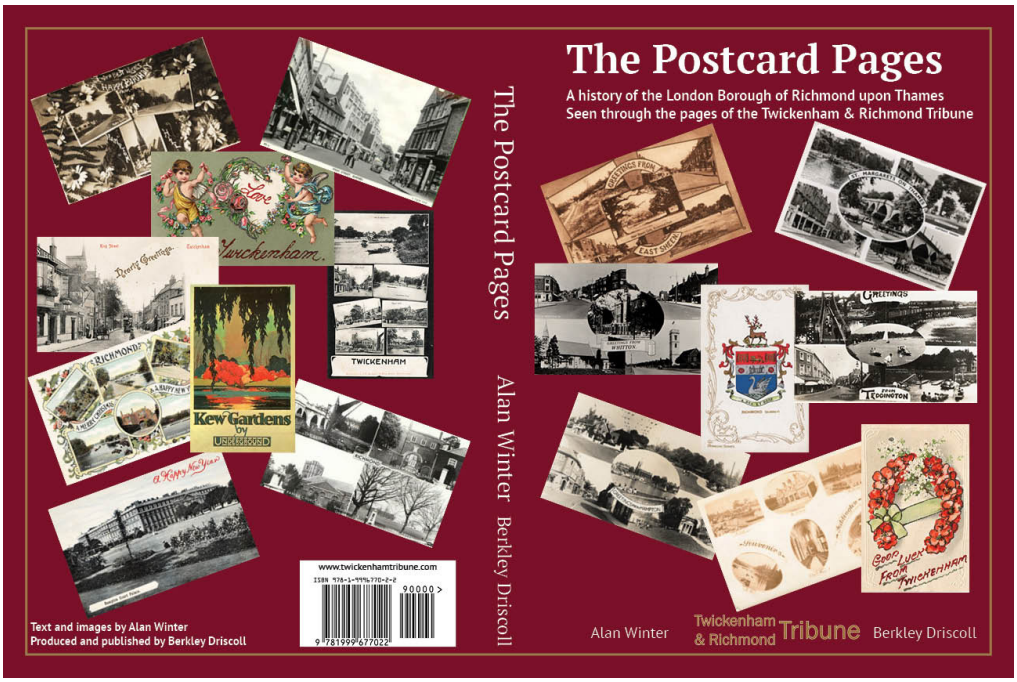
Today the pub enjoys a great location, fine food and good public transport to Central London. The Coach & Horses Hotel has a traditional bar and restaurant, a large garden, and en suite, air-conditioned bedrooms. It is a few minutes' walk from the National Archives and Kew Steam Museum.

If you are going to a Brentford football match at the new G Tech stadium the Coach and Horses has become a good pre and post match meeting point with just a 5 minute walk over Kew

Bridge to the stadium.




Don't forget to get your copy of our new book "The Postcard Pages" for Christmas. See details for purchase elsewhere in this edition.



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# Richmond Council Faces Searching Questions Over Spending, Services and Accountability

By James Knight




Richmond is fortunate to have one of the country's larger and most active civic societies. With well over 1,000 members and run entirely by volunteers, the Richmond Society makes a substantial contribution to the town's civic life, championing its heritage, scrutinising development proposals and providing a forum for informed public debate. With all 54 seats on Richmond Council now held by the Liberal Democrats, its role in facilitating independent public scrutiny is particularly valuable.

At the Society's Annual Forum, the Council's leadership faced a series of searching questions over public spending, town centre pedestrianisation, antisocial behaviour, public toilets and community consultation. The meeting, moderated by former BBC executive Roger Mosey, brought together Council Leader Gareth Roberts and councillors Katie Mansfield, Julia Neden-Watts and Chris Farley. Opening the meeting, the Society's acting chairman observed that having 54 Liberal Democrat councillors "possibly gives them more problems than they might think".

Facing an increasingly hostile audience, Gareth Roberts sought to defend his administration's record through a combination of humour, rebuttal and references to external financial pressures. However, after eight years of Liberal Democrat control, explanations for longstanding problems appeared to carry little weight with many of those present. Repeated challenges over spending priorities, the lack of tangible progress and the adequacy of public consultation increasingly put Roberts on the defensive. It was an evening from which the Council leader emerged with little credit.

**Financial pressures and Council Tax**

Gareth Roberts outlined the financial pressures facing the borough, citing a cumulative £104 million reduction in government funding over four years. Asked which services might be affected by spending cuts, Roberts replied: "To be brutally honest, everywhere."

The Council is undertaking a detailed examination of expenditure, with services across the authority potentially affected. One significant announcement was Roberts' commitment that the next Council Tax increase would not exceed 4.99%. Pressed by Mosey on the implications of his remarks, Roberts responded: "This year it won't be above 5%. What happens in future years, I honestly can't tell you."

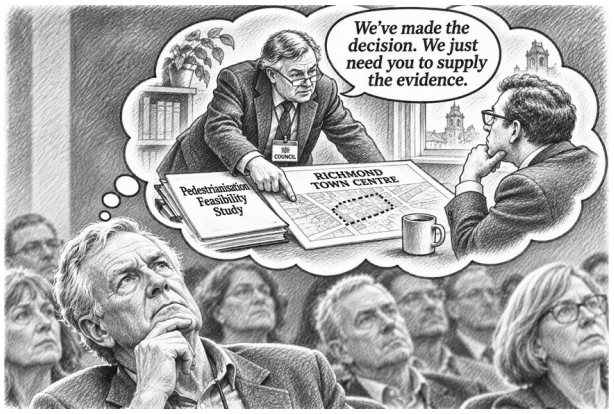
Whilst reductions in government funding present significant challenges, the discussion also raised questions about the Council's own spending decisions and the affordability of its more ambitious projects.

**Pedestrianisation and the future of Richmond town centre**

The proposed pedestrianisation of Richmond town centre attracted more questions than any other subject. Residents expressed concerns about the displacement of traffic into neighbouring residential streets, the impact on businesses and the manner in which the proposals had been developed. One resident questioned why assurances had reportedly been given before May's local elections that there were no plans for pedestrianisation, only for proposals to emerge shortly afterwards.

Katie Mansfield maintained that no final decision had been taken and that three options remained under consideration: retaining existing traffic arrangements, partial pedestrianisation and full pedestrianisation. Further transport modelling is being undertaken through Transport for London, following earlier work by consultants Steer.

Mosey questioned the justification for spending hundreds of thousands of pounds examining pedestrianisation, and potentially millions implementing it, when the Council was facing difficult decisions over essential services such as adult social care. Roberts defended the proposals, arguing that there was also enthusiasm for pedestrianisation and emphasising the distinction between capital and revenue expenditure. Capital investment, however, can have lasting consequences for revenue budgets through borrowing costs and additional maintenance liabilities.




The economic case for pedestrianisation was also challenged. Mansfield argued that people arriving on foot or by public transport spent more money, telling the audience: "You can laugh, I've got the data." Roberts added: "It's not fantasy economics, it's fact."

Neither councillor identified the source of their data, although similar claims feature prominently in research published by Transport for London. Higher cumulative spending by pedestrians may reflect more frequent shopping trips rather than greater expenditure per visit. Aggregate spending figures can also obscure differences in purchasing patterns, retail margins and the commercial requirements of different types of retailer.

Higher-margin retailers, including fashion, furnishings and specialist shops, typically depend on considerably wider geographical catchment areas than businesses serving everyday local needs that have much lower margins. At a time when Richmond is struggling to retain some of its larger retailers, the economic consequences of any changes to accessibility warrant particular attention.
Indeed, the Government itself has recently cautioned local authorities about the risks associated with pedestrianisation. In written evidence to Parliament, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government acknowledged its potential benefits but warned that "removing traffic risks undermining the 'movement economy' of high streets and making them less accessible". It stressed that such risks must be addressed within a broader town centre strategy.

Roberts cited Church Street in Twickenham as an example of successful pedestrianisation, describing it as "absolutely thriving". A resident immediately challenged that assessment, describing the street as frequently empty and asking to see the supporting evidence. Another questioned the approach to commissioning consultants, observing that "a lot of it is about how the client briefs them".

The central question is whether the Council has sufficient Richmond-specific evidence to demonstrate that pedestrianisation would strengthen the town's position as a shopping destination, rather than simply encourage more frequent visits by those who already live nearby.

**Council rules out funding additional police officers**

Concerns about crime and antisocial behaviour prompted an extended discussion about policing,

with residents highlighting problems around Richmond Green, Church Road, Waterloo Place and neighbouring streets. Asked whether Richmond would follow Wandsworth's example by funding additional Metropolitan Police officers, Roberts replied: "To take the question about the additional Metropolitan Police officers head on, the answer is no."

Roberts cited financial constraints, Wandsworth's access to developer contributions and concerns about locally funded officers being redeployed elsewhere. However, council-funded policing is not without precedent in Richmond. London Assembly records from 2010 identify Richmond as funding four additional police personnel under the previous Conservative administration.

Furthermore, minutes of Richmond's Safer Neighbourhood Board meeting in July 2025 record Roberts questioning the value of funding additional police officers, favouring alternative measures such as Park Guard. This suggests that there is a longer-standing policy dimension to the Council's position, alongside its current financial difficulties.

Discussing antisocial behaviour in Waterloo Place, Chris Farley acknowledged that the Council's interventions had been too slow, adding: "We need a police station here, or some kind of permanent presence for the police."

**Residents Already funding their own security patrols**

In one of the evening's more striking exchanges, Lord Lee asked whether residents could collectively fund their own wardens or security patrols. Roberts revealed that he understood residents around St Matthias Church were already paying for private patrols, although he expressed a personal preference against such arrangements.




When Roberts suggested that greater pressure should instead be placed on the Government, Mayor of London and Metropolitan Police, Lord Lee responded: "But that's not going to achieve anything, Gareth, let's be realistic about it." Roberts subsequently suggested that any privately funded patrols should operate independently of the Council, explaining that council-employed Park Guards might have to be redeployed elsewhere in the borough.

Mosey also questioned whether the Council's ambitions to develop Richmond's evening economy were supported by adequate policing. Roberts acknowledged the greater police presence in Kingston during the evenings, but asked: "Does one necessarily want Kingston levels of vibrancy in Richmond?"

That some residents are reportedly already paying for private security, whilst others are considering similar arrangements, illustrates the strength of concern about existing policing provision.

**Questions over the Council's enforcement arrangements**

Residents also questioned the Council's use of its own enforcement powers. Asked about its ability to bring prosecutions under Section 222 of the Local Government Act 1972, Roberts told the questioner: "Do you know you're more informed than I am about that sort of thing."

Roberts also addressed the controversy surrounding a fixed penalty notice issued for disposing of coffee down a drain. He said: "Personally if I'd been the enforcement officer in that case I would have said, do you realise you're not allowed to do that? Please don't do it again rather than issue a fixed penalty notice."

His comments are particularly relevant given the Council's use of private environmental enforcement contractor WISE. Whilst the Council leader expressed a preference for a more proportionate approach,

it remains unclear whether such discretion is reflected in the operational instructions given to enforcement officers.
Greater transparency over the Council's contractual arrangements, enforcement policies and the circumstances in which officers can exercise discretion would help establish whether practice reflects the approach advocated by Roberts.

**Eight years on, still no plans for new public toilets**
The inadequacy of public toilet provision in Richmond remains a longstanding source of frustration. Residents questioned the effectiveness of existing arrangements, particularly outside normal shopping hours. Katie Mansfield acknowledged: "I don't think we're going to build any public toilets as it stands at the moment. We do have an aspiration to provide public toilets and we haven't found the solution for it at the moment."

Mosey pointed out that possible locations had already been under consideration 18 months earlier. One resident expressed frustration at the lack of progress, asking: "Who's holding you to account to do these things? It feels like I'm grasping at air. I'm eating candy floss. You're making lots of nice noises but actually nothing happens."

Another resident described the problems caused by people urinating in residential front gardens on their way towards the Old Deer Park car park. Roberts described the temporary toilets provided during the pandemic as "murderously expensive", recalling that expenditure may have exceeded £250,000. Mosey drew a comparison with expenditure on pedestrianisation, although Mansfield emphasised the distinction between capital and revenue costs.

The recent reopening of the substantially refurbished Marks & Spencer Food store, incorporating a barista counter but reportedly no customer toilets, raises further questions about the Council's approach. Under Section 20 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, the Council has statutory powers to require toilet provision at premises selling food or drink for consumption on site. Indeed, the Council's own planning guidance expressly recognises these powers. Given the acknowledged shortage of public toilets in Richmond, it would be pertinent to establish whether the Council considered exercising these powers and, if not, why not.

**Litter, street cleaning and cycle hire**
Residents raised concerns about litter, commercial waste and the condition of Richmond's pavements. Julia Neden-Watts acknowledged the pressures created by the large number of visitors, describing the town as, in effect, a victim of its own attractiveness. The Council has invested in jet-washing equipment and intends to introduce a more routine cleaning programme, whilst timed commercial waste collections are also being considered.




Concerns were also raised about the number of Forest hire bicycles being left on pavements and in public spaces. Councillors acknowledged that even designated parking areas were experiencing significant overspill. Mosey questioned why some of the bicycles could not be accommodated within the cycle parking facility at Richmond station, where space reportedly remains unused. The Council is awaiting a response from the relevant railway organisations.

The discussion also illustrated the benefits of door-to-door cycle hire for women travelling alone after dark. One resident explained how using a hire bicycle had reduced her journey home from 25 minutes on foot to just five minutes. The challenge remains to accommodate these benefits without compromising pavement accessibility for other users.

**A "Kafkaesque" consultation process**

The evening concluded with questions about community consultation and democratic accountability. Mosey explicitly linked the discussion to the fact that the Council now comprised "54 Liberal Democrats and no opposition".

Peter Whelan, representing the Old Deer Park Working Group, expressed concern that the Council's revised events policy appeared to have removed previous arrangements for consulting residents' associations and local amenity groups. He described this as a "loss of democracy", whilst acknowledging that it might not have been intentional.

The discussion centred on a proposed festival on Richmond Green, which councillors had initially regarded as a potentially attractive family-oriented food event, before the scale and implications of the proposal became clearer during the licensing process.

A representative of Old Palace Lane residents described the Council's events approval process as "Kafkaesque", adding: "It's not transparent, and as Peter Whelan said, there's no, to our knowledge anyway, resident input or community input."

She argued that considerable time, money and unnecessary anxiety could have been avoided had the suitability of the location been properly considered at an earlier stage. Following the exchange, Mansfield announced: "Julia and I have just conferred and we are going to be doing a review just on the process." It was one of the evening's clearest examples of residents securing a specific commitment through public questioning.

**Failing to get the basics right**

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of the forum was the modest nature of many residents' expectations. They wanted clean streets, adequate public toilets, effective enforcement and safer public spaces. These are the foundations of good local government, not ambitious policy aspirations.

When the Tribune visited Richmond, the signs of neglect were readily apparent: untreated graffiti, overflowing litter bins and deteriorating road markings. The contrast between the condition of the public realm and the Council's ambitions for a multimillion-pound transformation of the town centre raises fundamental questions about its priorities.



Faced with persistent questioning, Gareth Roberts frequently resorted to humour, counterarguments and references to external pressures. Whilst humour occasionally lightened the atmosphere, it also appeared to deflect criticism. Roger Mosey's incisive questioning exposed the gap between the administration's assurances and residents' experience. Too often, explanations and promises of further reviews took the place of substantive commitments.

In closing the meeting, the Richmond Society's acting chairman thanked the councillors for coming "into the lion's den to be chewed by the audience". With no elected opposition on the Council, the Society deserves considerable credit for providing a forum in which the administration's decisions and assumptions can be challenged.

Richmond does not lack strategies, consultants or ambitious proposals. What residents are asking for is simpler: a council that delivers its core services effectively. Civic ambition is no substitute for competent administration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# Marks & Spencer Begins a New Chapter in Richmond



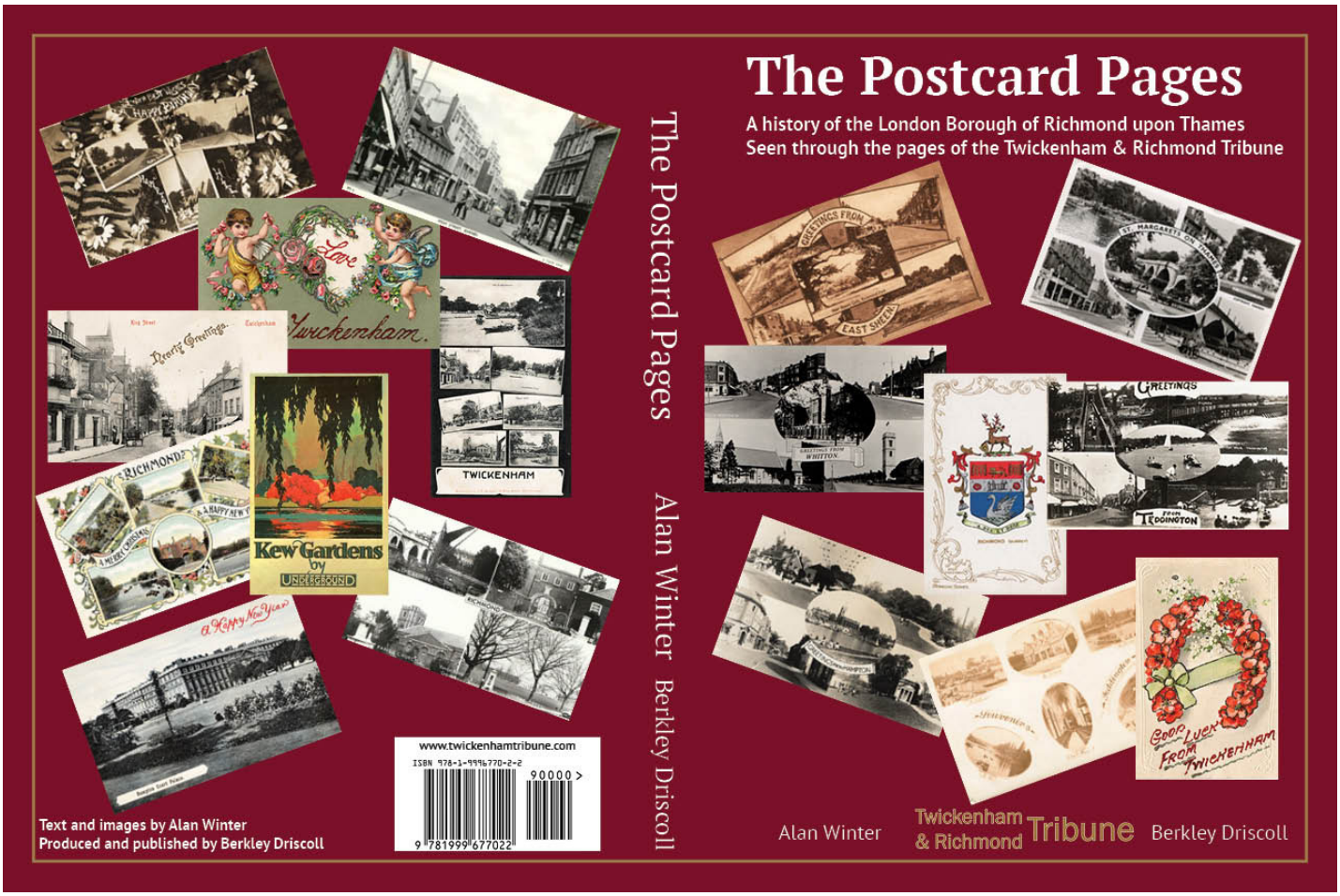

After almost eight months of refurbishment, Marks & Spencer reopened its George Street premises on Wednesday, 25th November, with television presenter Andi Peters attending the opening. The transformation has almost doubled the space devoted to food, with an expanded bakery, a coffee counter and dedicated areas for wines and flowers. When the Tribune visited on Thursday, the store was packed with shoppers, and the considerably broader range of products was immediately apparent. The investment has created more than 40 additional jobs, with the store reopening in time for the Christmas trading period. A gym is expected to open on the upper floors in 2027.

Seventy years after Marks & Spencer established itself in George Street, the reopening marks a significant change in the character of its Richmond business. Clothing and homeware have made way for groceries, whilst the café and customer toilets have also disappeared. Although the investment is welcome, particularly at a time when many high streets are struggling to retain established retailers, the redevelopment reflects a wider change in the character of Richmond's town centre. Following the closure of House of Fraser in 2020, the town is becoming increasingly well served for food, hospitality and leisure, but rather less so for the wider range of goods traditionally associated with a thriving shopping destination.

# The Postcard Pages

A history of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames seen through the pages of the Twickenham & Richmond Tribune

## Reserve your copy HERE




The Twickenham and Richmond Tribune celebrated its 10th Anniversary on 11th November. To celebrate this, we are publishing a book based on the Postcard Pages, which have featured in the Tribune.

More details to follow but the book is scheduled to be ready early December. The book will be a clothbound A4 hardback, with approximately 260 pages.

It will make an excellent local Christmas present and purchasing details will be announced shortly.



# The first year of The Elleray Centre: from opening doors to opening lives!

It's been 12 months since The Elleray Centre first opened its doors, so it is a good time to take a look at what's been going on there! And there's been a lot!



The Centre is managed by a local charity, Elleray Community Association and its Chair, Douglas Chisholm, explained to us that the charity has two main focuses. "*Our charity has two complementary roles.*" he says, "*Our charitable purpose is to alleviate loneliness and social isolation among adults, especially those who are vulnerable in some way. To achieve this, we provide an adult Social Club that is open every weekday and offers members a variety of activities to help keep them fit, healthy and entertained. We also provide a lunch prepared in our own kitchen. So the Elleray Centre is a place where our members come to make and meet friends and participate.*"





The charity benefits from funding, primarily from the local authority and The Hampton Fund but needs additional income to sustain the building and extend and develop the charitable services it offers. "*Our second focus is the management of the Elleray Centre itself, with the objective of building it into a thriving social hub, a venue where people of all ages come together to improve their fitness and wellbeing, to learn, to enjoy hobbies and pursuits and to generally have fun!*"

To meet this objective, the Centre hires out its rooms to a variety of local tutors, groups and organisations and regularly hosts children's parties. During the past year, the Centre has been the venue for a wide variety of different activities. These include yoga, Pilates and belly dancing, a bridge club, a wine tasting group, adult and children's dance classes, martial arts classes, a ukulele group and a very enthusiastic choir and choirmaster. There have also been several talks and workshops on subjects ranging from arts, crafts and carpentry to Bushy Park, communication and photography. More are planned!

The Centre is very mindful of its community responsibilities and is proud to give a home to local branches of a number of charities including Alcoholics Anonymous, NCT, Brighter Together and Alzheimer's Society's Singing for the Brain. The Centre also works with another charity, Surplus to Supper, to provide a free community lunch every month to which everyone is



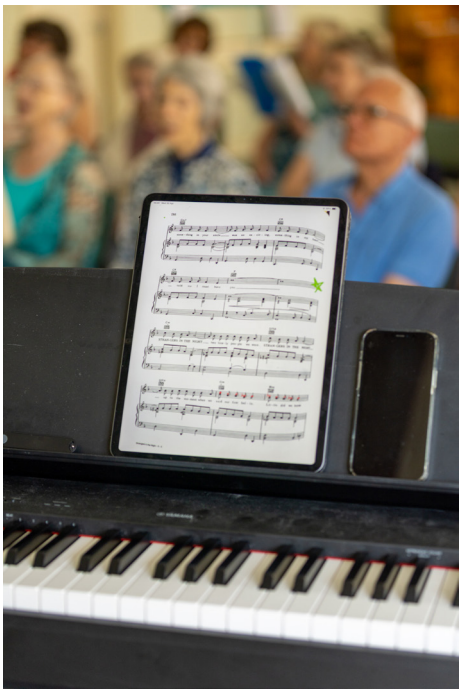
invited, but especially those who live alone or are in some way disadvantaged.

The Social Club has well over 200 members. Among the activities are plenty of exercise classes along with a singing group, a reminiscence group, skittles, bowling, quizzes, games, sessions with a singer/guitarist and, of course, bingo. The Centre Manager, Sam Vaughnley says, "*I love being able to offer so much at The Elleray Centre. With very affordable activities, outings and celebrations, there really is never a dull moment! For me it's all about bringing people together, making friends and making sure that everyone feels a part of our community.*"



If you or someone you know – an elderly neighbour or parent perhaps? - is enthused by this, please encourage them to get in touch or, better still, bring them along so that we can show them just how much fun there is t be had here!

The Centre has a staff of just three full timers, an out of hours facilities team and a cook who prepares the members' lunches. This team is supported by a team of dedicated volunteers who help out with the club's activities, accompany members on outings and provide administrative support in the office. Rebecca Hitt, the Activities & Volunteer Co-ordinator says. "*Without our volunteers, we just wouldn't be able to provide our members with the same service. We always need more volunteers and, regardless of whether they are with us for a couple of hours a week or a couple of hours a month, we are so grateful for the time they give us.*"



2026 has been an exciting first year for The Centre! 2027 looks like being an even better one as it establishes itself as a place for the entire community to enjoy and becomes just one more reason why Teddington is such a great place to live!

Maybe this has inspired you to find out a little more about the Elleray Centre! Whether you are a potential Social Club member, volunteer or room hirer, the management team would love to hear from you. The contact details are below.

Tel: 020 8977 0549
enquiries@elleraycentre.org www.elleraycentre.org

The Elleray Centre




# Community Planting at Oldfield Meadow

From Habitats & Heritage

Oldfield Meadow Wildlife Site in Hampton is set to welcome exciting new additions. Students from St Mary's Hampton CE Primary School will help plant a Miyawaki micro-forest, led by LGOAL in partnership with CPRE. This project will create a rich new habitat and boost biodiversity across the site.



Members of the community can join us too! Come help us on Saturday 12 December from 10am, to plant a new hedgerow and spring bulbs!

Join us at Oldfield Road, Hampton, TW12 2DW. That what3words reference is medium.pose.ballots.

All are welcome - just turn up! Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Find out more about Community Planting at Oldfield Meadow on the Habitats & Heritage website or email groups@habitatsandheritage.org.uk.

MONTHLY EDITION

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Saturday 21st
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Weekend of 27th -28th
England V TBC

Football

Thursday 12th
England V Croatia KO 7.45pm

Sunday 15th
Spain V England KO 7.45pm



*We're looking forward to more match-day revelry in Twickenham.*

We're getting ready for a huge month of rugby, with the Autumn Internationals bringing a packed schedule of action every weekend. We'll be showing every game live on our big screens, giving you the perfect place to catch all the action without the expense of a match ticket.

On Twickenham match days, our garden bar will be open, doubling our pouring capacity to keep queues moving and pints flowing. Expect quality, perfectly poured drinks and always served in a glass.

Heading to Twickenham? Make us your destination for a pre-match pint and a post-match catch-up. Not going to the stadium? Settle in, grab your spot and enjoy the rugby alongside fellow fans in the comfort of the pub.

Great rugby, proper pints and a brilliant atmosphere — join us this November for another fantastic season!




*Our pergola area is getting weather proofed for larger gatherings*

### COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS

The weather is turning colder, and before you know it, you'll be settling in with a glass of mulled wine by our roaring log fire, surrounded by the festive magic of the best-decorated pub in town!

But that's not all we have in store this Christmas. We're gearing up for a fabulous festive season packed with live music nights, comedy, a craft market and more to get you in the holiday spirit.

Still planning your Christmas party? There's still time to get booked in! Ken is busy weatherproofing our pergola to make it extra cosy for those larger parties, so there's no excuse not to get everyone together for a festive celebration.

So, what are you waiting for? Get in touch and book your spot before the diary fills up!

### IN LOVING MEMORY OF JANE CARRICK

We are very sorry to share the news of the passing of our lovely regular, Jane Carrick. We will remember Jane for her kindness, her cheery spirit and the warmth she brought to those around her. She will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by all of us here at the Prince Albert.

*THE PRINCE ALBERT, TWICKENHAM TW2 5QB | princealbert@fullers.co.uk | 020 8894 3963*

# Richmond's Libraries Face the Axe

By James Knight




Six months after promising to protect public services, Richmond's Liberal Democrats are proposing library cuts and higher leisure charges as their savings programme expands by 30%.

Richmond's libraries are among the most successful in England. They lead London for book borrowing, attract exceptionally high visitor numbers and are used by almost half the borough's residents. Yet their future is under review as the Liberal Democrat-run council seeks £500,000 in annual savings.

Only six months ago, the party's election manifesto placed libraries at the heart of community life, promising to support culture, encourage participation and make council facilities more accessible. Papers presented to the Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sports Committee on 18 November reveal proposals to restructure library services, reduce spending on books and digital resources, and increase a range of charges.

The administration blames substantial reductions in government funding, while a projected £1 million departmental overspend is adding to financial pressures. But although those pressures are real, decisions about how to respond remain a matter of local political responsibility.

**Libraries: Success Is No Protection Against Cuts**

Richmond's libraries rank first in London and third nationally for physical borrowing, while visitor numbers place the borough second in London. Some 48% of residents use libraries in person, compared with a national average of 31%. Nevertheless, officers must identify at least £500,000 in recurring annual savings from 2028/29.

Councillors agreed to preliminary market testing of alternative management arrangements, potentially involving an external provider, charitable trust or community partnership. Officers maintained that existing service standards should be protected, while the committee required further approval before procurement proceeds. Separately, the council is examining how library buildings might be shared, relocated or used more flexibly.

A charitable operator could potentially save approximately £230,000 annually through business-rates relief, almost half the savings target. This raises the question of whether outsourcing would deliver genuine operational efficiencies or rely substantially on different tax treatment.

Richmond spends £25 per resident on libraries, compared with a London borough median of £16. But higher expenditure does not necessarily demonstrate inefficiency when usage is exceptionally strong. The test of the manifesto's cultural commitments will be whether any restructuring preserves the accessibility and quality residents currently enjoy.

**Fewer Books and Higher Charges**

Officers have recommended £43,000 in annual library stock savings, approximately 10% of the existing budget. These include ending selected online resources, stopping new reference purchases at the Old Town Hall, discontinuing DVD purchases and reducing spending on books. The consequences may emerge gradually as collections become less current.

Adult overdue fines are also proposed to increase by 50%, from 20p to 30p daily, while automatic concessions for residents aged over 60 would be replaced by means-tested eligibility. Targeting support towards those on lower incomes may be defensible, but removing universal concessions sits uneasily alongside the manifesto's commitment to age-friendly communities.

**The £1.85 Million Riverside Question**

The council estimates that government funding changes will reduce its annual core allocation by £29 million by 2028/29. Council leader Gareth Roberts has launched a campaign against the reductions, arguing that essential services are threatened. Yet Richmond's finances also reflect substantial commitments made locally.

In June 2025, councillors increased the Twickenham Riverside budget from £49.58 million to £67.19 million, with net council investment rising from £20.2 million to £37 million. The council's financial report confirms that the development is expected to add £1.85 million annually to revenue costs, equivalent to 3.7 times the proposed library savings.



Riverside is already under construction and promises housing, public space and economic regeneration. It was also explicitly supported in the Liberal Democrats' manifesto. Nevertheless, the council acknowledged that the scheme would incur a net financial cost, justifying its expenditure through wider social and economic benefits.

That raises a question of consistency. If Riverside's wider public benefits justify substantial ongoing expenditure, how should the educational, cultural and social benefits of libraries be valued? The issue is not whether Richmond should regenerate its riverside, but whether comparable standards are being applied when deciding where money should be spent and where savings must be found.

**A £1 Million Overspend**

The committee's financial monitoring report forecasts a £1 million overspend against its £36.8 million budget. Waste and recycling account for £452,000, parks £105,000 and libraries £79,000, while sports services are expected to underspend by £94,000.

Library pressures are principally attributed to staffing costs, despite branches already operating with minimum staffing requirements. Waste costs have also risen despite collection volumes falling by 4.1%, illustrating the difficulty of translating operational improvements into financial savings.

The Liberal Democrats went into May's elections promising £30 million in annual savings by 2029. Just six months later, that target has risen by 30% to £39 million by 2030/31. The proposed library cuts are part of this significantly expanded savings programme, raising questions about how far the administration's financial plans have moved beyond what voters were told before the election.

**Waste Reduction and Crane Park**

Councillors considered £273,000 in additional waste-reduction expenditure, funded through Extended Producer Responsibility payments. Proposals include improving food-waste recycling and trialling different collection arrangements for flats above shops. These measures reflect manifesto commitments, although their effectiveness should be assessed against measurable environmental and financial outcomes.

The committee also examined designating part of Crane Park as a Local Nature Reserve, consistent with promises to protect biodiversity. A wider review of nature conservation management highlights increasing reliance on environmental organisations, volunteers and external funding. Such partnerships can bring benefits, but future arrangements must preserve public access, maintenance standards and accountability.

**Burial Space Running Out**

An independent review identified approximately 1,459 potential new grave spaces at Richmond and Twickenham cemeteries, representing an estimated seven to ten years of capacity. Further provision is planned at Teddington Cemetery, with a draft borough-wide strategy expected in spring 2027.

This directly reflects the Liberal Democrats' manifesto commitment to develop a long-term cemetery strategy. The challenge will be securing sufficient capacity and sustainable funding before existing provision becomes inadequate.

**Leisure Charges Rise as Access Is Promised**

The council proposes generating approximately £196,000 in additional culture and leisure income during 2027/28. Adult Swim & Stay charges at Pools on the Park could rise by up to 20%, alongside increases in other charges and reductions in block-booking discounts.

The manifesto promised wider participation in sport and expanded access to discounted leisure activities. Higher standard charges need not contradict those commitments if concessions remain effective, but the council should demonstrate that increases will not discourage participation. The proposed changes to allotment charges, including age-related concessions, are examined in a separate article in this edition.

**Promises Meet Financial Reality**

Richmond's Liberal Democrats were elected promising to protect vital services, support thriving communities and manage public money responsibly. Their manifesto also acknowledged the need for difficult decisions and substantial savings.

Some proposals, including waste reduction, nature conservation and cemetery planning, directly advance those commitments. Others, particularly library savings and higher leisure charges, require the administration to demonstrate that financial efficiencies can be achieved without diminishing the services residents were promised.

Government funding changes undoubtedly contribute to Richmond's difficulties, but they do not determine every local spending decision. Six months after the election, the question is no longer simply what the Liberal Democrats promised to protect, but how much of that promise they can deliver, and what residents may be asked to surrender along the way.

# Richmond Lights up for Festive Crowds

From Be Richmond

Richmond town centre was packed with festive crowds as families turned out to celebrate the switching on of the Christmas lights, with Basil Brush, superheroes and a host of colourful characters helping to launch the town's festive season.



George Street was filled with families and shoppers on Thursday 19th November as Be Richmond staged its annual Christmas Lights Switch On, bringing live entertainment, music and street performances to the heart of the town.

Much-loved television favourite Basil Brush was among the special guests, joining performers from School of Rock and an assortment of festive characters including Buddy the Elf, giant Nutcrackers, Candy Cane Stilt Walkers and superheroes.

Riverside Radio hosted the evening's entertainment, with the Mayor of Richmond taking centre stage for the official switch-on at 5.45pm.




The celebrations brought together local businesses, residents and visitors, with crowds stretching along George Street as the town's Christmas decorations were illuminated.

The event also marked the launch of Be Richmond's first Christmas Gifting Market in Whittaker Avenue, featuring independent traders, vintage finds, handmade gifts and festive food and drink.

Organised in partnership with Judy's Vintage and the Big Flea Market, the four-day market ran from Thursday 19th to Sunday 22nd November, giving shoppers an opportunity to discover unusual presents and support independent businesses.

Be Richmond CEO Fay Cannings said: "It was wonderful to see so many people coming together to celebrate the start of Christmas in Richmond.

"George Street was absolutely buzzing, and the atmosphere was fantastic. Basil Brush was a huge hit, and the entertainers, performers and colourful characters helped make it a memorable evening for families.

"Events like this are about bringing people together, supporting our town centre businesses and reminding everyone what a special place Richmond is at Christmas. We're delighted with the response to the Christmas lights switch-on and our first gifting market, and we'd like to thank everyone who helped make the celebrations such a success."

Richmond's festive celebrations continue in December with Be Richmond's 12 Days of Christmas competition, running from 1st to 12th December.

Each day offers the chance to win a prize donated by a local business, with details available through Be Richmond's website and social media channels.

# Richmond Pensioners Face 145% Allotment Rent Rise as Council Scraps Age Concessions

By James Knight




Richmond Council has approved allotment rent increases that will leave some older residents paying almost 146 per cent more, raising questions about the financial evidence behind the decision, the council's statutory obligations and the wider consequences of abandoning universal age concessions.

At its Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sports Committee meeting on 18 November, councillors agreed to increase standard allotment rents by 21.5 per cent while withdrawing the longstanding 50 per cent discount for residents aged over 60. For an older allotment holder who does not qualify for the replacement concession, the annual cost of a five rod plot will rise from £61 to £150 when the changes take effect in October 2027.

According to the Borough of Richmond Allotment Group (BRAG), which represents more than 2,000 plot holders across 23 sites, 53.7 per cent currently benefit from the age concession. The organisation acknowledges the council's financial difficulties but has questioned whether such substantial increases are necessary or proportionate.

**A statutory duty overlooked?**

During the debate, Liberal Democrat Councillor John Coombs questioned whether taxpayers should subsidise allotment holders, describing the provision as a service the council was not obliged to provide. However, the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 places a statutory duty on local authorities to provide allotments where sufficient demand exists. The Allotments Act 1950 also requires rents to be reasonable, having regard to the land and the terms of tenancy.

Neither provision prevents councils from increasing rents or withdrawing concessions. Nevertheless, allotments occupy a different legal position from discretionary leisure facilities. The published committee papers contained no specific assessment explaining how the proposed rents satisfied the statutory requirement of reasonableness, nor was that obligation expressly examined during the recorded debate.

There was also no detailed comparison with allotment charges elsewhere in London, despite officers presenting benchmarking evidence to justify substantial increases in cricket pitch charges. BRAG warned that Richmond's existing allotment rents were already relatively high compared with other London boroughs, raising questions about how the council determined that the revised charges represented reasonable value.

**The economics of age concessions**

Councillor James Chard, who has previously advocated removing age-based concessions for swimming,

supported withdrawing the over 60s allotment discount, arguing that assistance should be directed towards those in financial need rather than awarded automatically on grounds of age. There is a legitimate argument for targeting limited public resources towards poorer households, but age concessions have an economic rationale extending beyond personal income.

Older residents may have different patterns of demand for recreational activities, reflecting retirement, mobility, available time and the importance of maintaining social connections. Age-based discounts can encourage participation in activities whose benefits extend beyond the individual. The principle is familiar in public transport, where pensioner concessions recognise different travel patterns and can encourage journeys that might otherwise not be made.




Allotments are not directly comparable to rail travel, since plots are limited and waiting lists are long. Nevertheless, the underlying question remains whether removing an age concession changes participation among older residents, even if every plot continues to be occupied. The economic distinction is between the total demand for allotments and the demand among particular groups, whose circumstances and sensitivity to price may differ considerably.

Chard argued that a five-rod allotment would still cost approximately 41 pence a day, describing the revised charge as good value. However, that calculation concerned the standard rent, rather than the much larger increase facing older residents losing their concession. He also suggested that long waiting lists meant the number of people enjoying the health benefits of allotments would remain broadly unchanged.

But maintaining occupancy is not the same as maintaining accessibility. A plot surrendered by an older resident may quickly find another tenant, while the exercise, companionship and established routines lost by its former holder are not so easily replaced. The relevant question is therefore not simply whether pensioners can afford higher rents, but whether removing the concession changes their participation and imposes wider costs that are not reflected in the council's immediate financial calculations.

**Financial savings, wider consequences**

BRAG proposed introducing the increases gradually over two or three years, with transitional protection for existing concession holders. It also requested a clearer financial justification, including the additional revenue expected, alternative savings and an assessment of affordability and equality impacts. Although councillors discussed these concerns, including the possibility of phasing the changes, the committee ultimately approved the proposals.

The council will retain a 50 per cent concession for residents meeting its Fairer Access criteria, including those receiving qualifying benefits. This will protect some financially vulnerable residents, although others on modest incomes may fall outside the eligibility thresholds. The published papers did not provide a separate, quantified assessment of how many existing tenants might surrender their plots or the wider consequences for older residents.

Richmond faces genuine financial pressures, and universal concessions inevitably involve choices about how public money is distributed. But the economic case for withdrawing them cannot be established solely by demonstrating that some recipients could afford to pay more. It also requires consideration of how different groups respond to higher prices, the social benefits of continued participation and whether the resulting charges are reasonable.

For pensioners facing a 145 per cent increase, those are questions that deserved answers before the decision was made.

# Twickers Foodie – By Alison Jee

# Christmas Great Value Wine Suggestions

If you're looking to stock up your drinks cupboard in advance of festive feasting and drinking, now is a good time as there are so many offers available, either in supermarkets (many with 25% discount on six or more bottles), or online with lots of 'Black Friday' deals. I've been going to tastings aplenty recently, and here are some of my recommendations.

**Asda** has a great value range of wines, including dessert wines and sparkling. This supermarket was crowned The **UK's Most Awarded Supermarket for Wine** earlier this year and its **Exceptional** range is particularly good and excellent value. The **Exceptional By Asda Cava Brut Rose** is great for parties, and a steal at just £7.76 a bottle (a wonderful full-bodied wine, with a depth of flavour similar to vintage cava). The **Exceptional Viognier** (a portion of the blend aged in oak barrels gives the wine fullness, structure and length) at £8 is delicious. Another great value white is the **Exceptional Soave Classico Superiore £**8 (a delicate and smooth Soave with aromas of almond and honey, and apricot and citrus notes on the finish). For reds I would suggest the **Exceptional Garnacha** (from 20 year old vines creating concentrated and intense black cherry and plum flavours with a hint of spice) or the **Exceptional Douro** at £7.50, (a rich, full-flavoured red, crafted from hand picked grapes to create a densely fruity blend full of red and black fruit flavour). For Christmas day the **Asquith Gardens Traditional English Sparkling Wine** is an absolute steal at just £15 (an elegant palate with citrus, red apple and honey notes and a long biscuity finish), A particularly unusual, and absolutely delicious, dessert wine is the **Mavrodaphne of Patras NYX** at £7.75 for 75cl (Deep mahogany in colour, bright with crimson lights, with aromas of figs, plums and rosemary and notes of black cherry, overlaid with spices and aromatic wood). or if you are more traditional, try the **Noble Riesling Dessert Wine** at £9.94 for 37.5cl (a multi award-winning dessert wine produced with botrytis affected fruit - a bespoke blend for Asda)




One of Asda's biggest recent wine successes now has the sparkling treatment, as **Screaming Devil Sparkling** follows the extraordinary success of **Screaming Devil Côtes de Provence Rosé**, which has become a firm favourite and attracted significant attention on social media

and national press. Screaming Devil Still Rosé grew 112% in value over the past 12 months. Now, following strong consumer demand and the brand's continued momentum, Asda has extended the range into sparkling for the first time. £10 a bottle




A widely available range of wines for different tastes and occasions, without a premium price tag, is **La P'tite Pierre.** There are three easy, affordable, wines for the festive season, readily available in supermarkets with an RRP of £7.50. **La P'tite Pierre White** pairs well with smoked trout pâté or creamy Brie on crackers, or roast turkey. (Tesco, Morrisons, Sainsbury's and Ocado) La **P'tite Pierre Rosé** pairs with a festive grazing board of mild cheeses, charcuterie, olives and savoury pastries. Its bright fruit character also pairs well with prawn cocktail or Boxing Day turkey sandwiches with cranberry sauce. (Tesco, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Ocado and Asda) And **La P'tite Pierre Red** is a natural choice for Boxing Day cold cuts, a leftover turkey ...and to enjoy with unexpected visitors. (Tesco, Sainsbury's and Ocado)




Another reliable range - this time from South Africa - that demonstrates great winter drinking at a very reasonable price is from **Bruce Jack**. Bruce Jack Wines offers two approachable, food-friendly bottles made for sharing around a busy festive table: the **Bruce Jack Pinotage Malbec** (a juicy red for roasts and cheeseboards) and **Bruce Jack Chenin Blanc** (great for starters or the main event). Available from Sainsbury's and Asda, from around £8 the red and white pairing covers everything from festive drinks and Christmas lunch to evening cheeseboards and Boxing Day leftovers, without placing additional pressure on the Christmas budget.







To Chile now for the range from **Casillero del Diablo.** The **Sauvignon Blanc** is a great-value alternative to pricier New Zealand Sauvignon, with Chile's cold Humboldt Current helping create the fresh, crisp style. The **Cabernet Sauvignon** is a crowd-pleasing red, ideal alongside the main event. And the very drinkable **Sparkling Zero** is available at Sainsbury's and perfect for an alcohol-free Christmas morning Bucks Fizz. This **Diablo Purple Malbec** really packs a punch (with its deep purple colour, and pleasant hints of blackberry, black cherry and chocolate). RRP around £11 but currently on offer at Asda for just £8.75 and of course 25% off if buying six or more bottles...a bargain.




**Les Deux Pins** is a collection of four approachable French wines available exclusively at Ocado, between them covering every occasion. From crisp Sauvignon Blanc and refreshing Merlot Rosé to smooth Merlot and full-bodied Cabernet Sauvignon, priced less than £8 per bottle, the range offers an easy answer for shoppers seeking dependable and affordable food-friendly wines. **Les Deux Pins Sauvignon Blanc** is Fresh, zesty and bursting with citrus and tropical fruit flavours. **Les Deux Pins Merlot Rosé** is made from Merlot rather than the more common Grenache or Provence blends, and offers ripe berry fruit, refreshing acidity and surprising versatility. **Les Deux Pins Merlot** is soft, smooth and fruit-forward, an easy-drinking everyday red with gentle tannins. **Les Deux Pins Cabernet Sauvignon** is ideal for heartier meals, offering richer black-fruit flavours and subtle spice.

An extremely good, and very well priced English sparkling wine is **Silver Reign** from **The Silverhand Estate**, nestled deep in the Kent countryside. Crafted using the Charmat method, the juice is fermented - 85% in stainless steel to retain crisp primary fruit notes and 15% in new oak barrels to impart a refined texture and complex mid-palate. Made from estate grown Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, (the classic champagne grapes) it displays delicate. flavours of citrus fruit, pear and green apple Priced at £17.50, Silver Reign makes premium sparkling wine from England more accessible to consumers, offering a local alternative and a natural trade- up from established categories such as Prosecco and Cava. It's vegan and organic, available in white or rose (with notes of ripe strawberries, fresh raspberries, and hints of citrus, all balanced by a crisp acidity that refreshes the palate), You can find it in Sainsbury's at £17.50 or Ocado at £17



# Twickers Foodie – By Alison Jee

## Festive Feasting Value from Scott's




There's always something rather reassuring about booking a restaurant that has a good value set menu. And the new Festive set menu from **Scott's Richmond** sounded so good, we decided to check it out this week...and boy, are we glad we did! At £45 for two courses and £55 for three it offers a fabulous taste of luxury in the most spectacularly beautiful premises on Richmond riverside.



On arrival you're greeted at the door by a pair of beautifully decorated giant Christmas trees. This is just an introduction to Evergold, a celebration of winter by the river, created in partnership with **Sipsmith**. The restaurant is dressed with a richly detailed festive installation, alongside a menu of Sipsmith winter cocktails, live Christmas Piano Sessions every Thursday evening and this new Christmas set menu.

We were seated by the window, with views to the river, and started with cocktails: a non-alcoholic one for my husband, and the special ***Evergreen Collins*** with Sipsmith London dry gin, matcha, rosemary, lime, fig leaf soda, for me. It was a fascinating cocktail - cleverly made and the fig leaf soda was certainly a new discovery. It was pleasant, but to be honest, on a bitterly cold day, I rather regret not having the special Dark Cherry Negroni that was also part of the Sipsmith collaboration.



I love vol au vents, and am pleased to note that they seem to be having a comeback. The starter of ***Scallop and prawn vol au vent*** with shellfish velouté and sauteed baby spinach had me at first glance, and my husband opted for the ***Cauliflower soup*** with truffled Welsh rarebit. Typical of the attention to detail one finds at Scott's, was the fact that my starter arrived with two generously sized prawns on top, with the heads carefully removed, but neatly replaced for presentation purposes and ease of eating. On top was a herb that I couldn't quite place, and Pierre, the general manager, informed me that it was in fact Monk's Beard - another new one for me! The sauce had incredible seafood depth, and underneath those prawns was a big fat scallop, on top of a base layer of spinach. This was one of the most delicious starters I've enjoyed for a long time. My husband's soup was creamy and rich, and has now possibly surpassed parsnip as his favourite veggie soup. The Welsh rarebit to accompany it was a touch more finesse, and a perfect pairing.



There were three mains to choose from, and I couldn't resist the ***Pan-fried skate wing*** with sauce Grenobloise. It was seriously good, coated with a deeply rich buttery sauce with big fat capers and croutons. My better half chose ***Roast chicken breast*** with glazed carrot, parsnip purée, pork and sage stuffing croquette, roast chicken and tarragon sauce - a nod to the festive season and a very generous portion of chicken breast. We had tasted the Fried Brussels sprouts with edamame, sesame and kimchi dressing - or something very similar - last time we visited Scott's, so couldn't resist having these again. They are so delicious, and I would urge anyone visiting Scott's to try them - set menu or a la carte. We also had a portion of tenderstem broccoli with preserved lemon and aged Parmesan - again superb. Scott's really does excel when it comes to veggie dishes, despite being a superb fish restaurant.







Having enjoyed two generous courses, I chose the ***Panettone ice cream coupe*** with clementines, whipped cream, chocolate shavings, thinking it would be a light finish to my meal. How wrong I was. It was a triumphant bowl, beautifully presented and the ice cream was fabulous. The whipped cream, I felt, was overkill, but as Pierre pointed out, it was a festive menu!





Husband couldn't resist the ***Sticky toffee pudding*** with Drambuie ice cream, and managed to polish it off in record time, declaring it to be one of the lightest and best ones he'd ever tried.

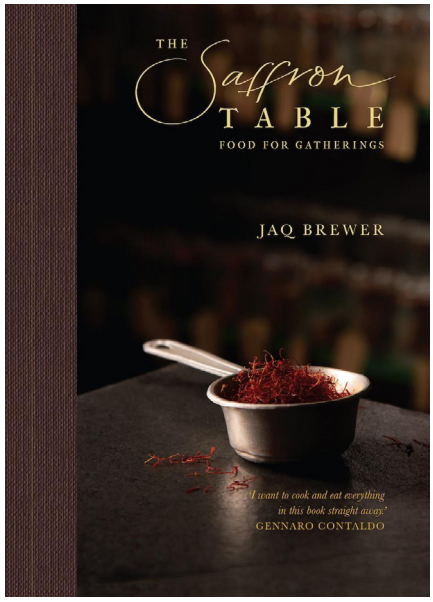
I enjoyed a glass of Chablis with my meal (Domaine de la Genillotte £17) as suggested by Pierre and an ideal pairing. It's worth mentioning though, that the wines by the glass start at just £10.

If you fancy treating yourselves, I'd hurry up and book your table - I suspect that many folk, like us, will be wanting to return before the last service of this special menu on 17 December.



# Twickers Foodie – By Alison Jee

# The Saffron Table: What A Debut!




Published just in time for the festive season, chef Jaq Brewer's debut cookbook, ***The Saffron Table***, celebrates a lifetime of generous cooking, unforgettable gatherings and food made to share. After more than three decades as a professional chef, she is finally sharing the recipes, stories and philosophy that have earned her a devoted following and the admiration of Britain's best-loved food names. The book features a foreword by Italian chef Gennaro Contaldo and pays tribute to the late Antonio Carluccio OBE, whose friendship and philosophy of 'minimum fuss, maximum flavour' left a lasting mark on Jaq's approach to food and hospitality. The pair met at London's legendary Neal Street Restaurant, and their friendship lasted more than 30 years.

A career quietly feeding people: as a food stylist for a national newspaper, running her own catering company, and leading kitchens in and around Bath, was guided by the same principles: simple ingredients, bold flavours and generous hospitality. ***The Saffron Table*** is filled with vibrant recipes for every kind of gathering, from relaxed family suppers to full-blown celebrations. Recipes include: Slow-Roasted Lamb Shoulder with Prunes and Almonds; Spiced Aubergine and Brazil Nut Salad; Purple Sprouting Broccoli, Taleggio and Parmesan Pie; Spiced Chickpea Puff Parcels; Saffron Champagne Jelly and Saffron Gin Fizz amongst many more. Interwoven throughout are thoughtful, lyrical essays on taste, seasonality, sensuality, foraging, confidence in the kitchen and the art of hospitality.

***The Saffron Table*** is an invitation to slow down, open the front door and bring people together — rich in flavour, warmth and encouragement, urging readers to cook with confidence rather than perfection, and to savour the simple pleasure of gathering around the table. Published by *Field Kitchen Publishing* at £28 for a gorgeous hardback with photography by Andrew Callaghan that will make a lovely Christmas gift, but I warn you, you'll want to keep it for yourself. Here are a couple of recipes to tempt you...

**THE CHARLIE SPECIAL** Serves 2

*"This is a proper brunch plate – crispy potato cubes, sweet and hot halloumi, wilted spinach and softly poached eggs, all served on lightly toasted sourdough. It's a crowd-pleaser for a reason and a firm favourite in our household. Made for Charlie."*

- 4 thick sourdough slices
- 2 tsp white wine vinegar
- 4 large free-range eggs
- 2 large handfuls of spinach, roughly chopped
- extra-virgin olive oil, to serve



**For the potatoes**

- 300g (10½oz) potatoes (Maris Piper or Koffmann's), cut into 1cm (⅜in) cubes
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Sea salt
- 1 tsp rose harissa

**For the halloumi**

- 200g (7oz) halloumi, sliced
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1/2 tsp dried chilli flakes, plus extra to serve
- 1 tbsp runny honey

1. Heat the oven to 220oC/200oC fan/425oF/Gas 7.
2. In a large roasting tray, toss the potato cubes with the olive oil and salt, and roast for 30 minutes, turning halfway through, until golden and crisp. Remove from the oven, stir through the rose harissa and set aside.
3. Toast the sourdough.
4. Meanwhile, bring a saucepan of water to the boil. Reduce the heat to low, add a splash of white wine vinegar, and stir to create a vortex. Crack in an egg and poach for 3 minutes, or until the whites are set and the yolks are soft. Scoop out with a slotted spoon and drain on a clean tea towel. Repeat with the remaining eggs and vinegar.
5. Place a griddle pan over a high heat. On a plate, drizzle the halloumi with olive oil and use your hands to rub the oil evenly over the slices. Transfer the halloumi to the hot pan, sprinkle with dried chilli flakes and drizzle with the honey. Cook for 30 seconds a side, until deeply golden, sticky and lined from the griddle.
6. Divide the toast between warm plates, and pile with the potatoes, spinach and halloumi. Top with the poached eggs, a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil, and more chilli flakes, if you like.

**DRUNKEN FIG COMPOTE WITH RED WINE, HONEY AND THYME** Serves 4

*"This is one of the finest treats that I know how to make, and a recipe that appears regularly in my kitchens. I can take no credit for its creation and must thank my dear friend Rachel Roddy for introducing me to it. I serve these wine-soaked figs as a dessert alongside Taleggio cheese, whose creamy richness is the perfect accompaniment to their sweetness. They are equally wonderful spooned over thick Greek yoghurt for breakfast the next morning.*
*As the figs gently simmer, they plump up beautifully, while the wine, honey and thyme reduce to a luscious, glossy syrup. "*



- 200g (7oz) runny honey
- 2 thyme sprigs
- 100g (3 1/2oz) caster sugar
- 300ml (10 1/4fl oz) red wine, plus extra to serve
- 500g (1lb 13/4oz) dried figs
- Taleggio, to serve (optional)

1. Fill a saucepan with 330ml (11fl oz) of water. Add the honey, thyme, sugar and red wine and place over a medium-low heat. Slowly bring to the boil, continuously stirring, then reduce the heat to a simmer.
2. Add the figs and cook for 10 minutes, until they are tender but not falling apart. Remove the figs with a slotted spoon, transfer to a bowl or container, and set aside.
3. Return the pan of syrup to a medium heat and reduce the liquid by a third.
4. Pour the syrup over the figs and set aside to cool completely.
5. Serve at room temperature with cheese and a glass of red wine, if you like, or seal in an airtight container and transfer to the fridge for up to a week.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# Black Friday. When they are gone - they're gone!

By Bruce Lyons




Today IS BLACK FRIDAY. So, as the offers will by and large be expiring this weekend and some in the early part of Next week.

I thought I would tell you what I thought was the best of the best.

The HX offer of 25% off an Antarctic Cruise is an offer rarely seen -
Iconic Antarctica - The Explorers Route
2nd December `26 - 16 Days
25% off Cruise only was £11,303 NOW £9,178.



Or

Antarctica & The Falklands Expedition
18th March `27 - 16 Days
was £10,688 now £8,374




And their Sister Company Hurtigruten are offering a massive 50% off their Winter Norwegian Coastal Voyages - and these offers include the flights too.

Jules Verne are offering 20 % off a selection of their Small Group Tours Japan/Sicily/Patagonia/Costa Rica/India/Tunisia /Indo China Southern Kenya Safari/Mexico/Vietnam & Cambodia/ Silk Road/ Uzbekistan/ Turkey Grand Tour/Morocco Grand Tour / Best of Madeira and more.....

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Mark Aspen
www.markaspen.wordpress.com
Expressing the art of the theatre critic

# Six Lethargies

by Iván Pérez and Seirian Griffiths, music by Keaton Henson
BalletBoyz at the Sadler's Wells Theatre, Islington



The stage is darkened. Blurring into one large mass, a crowd of writhing bodies clamber over each other to reach down to a solitary crouching figure, his hands wrapped around his body.

This intense scene from the world premiere of Six Lethargies draws us into the tormented world of composer Keaton Henson. His mournful haunting score is performed by thirty-seven string players on stage, while forty-four dancers use movement to convey chronic forms of clinical anxiety and depression suffered by Henson. He poses the question, "If I write how it feels to me, will you feel it too?".

Choreographers Iván Pérez and Seirian Griffiths have worked with BalletBoyz artistic directors Michael Nunn and William Trevitt to create an absorbing depiction of emotion, both personal and universal. The result is intimate, claustrophobic, and grips the audience in a vice of tension. Nunn and Trevitt have helped discover a way to "speak about anxiety, depression, vulnerability and empathy without having to resort to words".



Exploring pain, fear, vulnerability and tenderness, the string orchestra mirrors the body's response to trauma and stress. One would have to be made of stone not to be moved by the visceral intensity of the mesmeric and unsettling music.

Henson discovered how his music impacted an audience physically at premiere of the score at the Barbican in 2018. Volunteers were used to measure physiological arousal throughout the show. Skin sensors were linked to the lighting rig, which brightened or dimmed according to their levels of anxiety or excitement. At Sadler's Wells the audience is free from monitors, but the tension is palpable as the dancers display despair, yearning, turmoil, trauma and torment. Here the sombre lighting is the work of Andrew Ellis, emphasising the earthy tones of costumes by Elisa Mozzanica.

Six Lethargies is BalletBoyz' largest ever production after twenty-five years of presenting innovative and ground-breaking contemporary ballet. On a breathtaking scale, they attempt to present an intimate human experience and embody the intangible. It is a sensitive journey through vulnerability and fragility towards resolution.

And the answer to Henson's question, will you feel it too? With the collaboration of the magnificent dancers of BalletBoyz, the answer is a resounding YES.

Read Gill Martin's review at www.markaspen.com/2026/11/21/six-lethargies

Photography by Alex Storey

# It's a Wonderful Life
## at the Mary Wallace!

Playing from December 5th for one week, Mary Elliott Nelson's It's a Wonderful Life.



When a personal crisis causes good citizen George Bailey to question the value of his own life, an encounter with a guardian angel shows him an alternative world, a world damaged by George's absence. Consequently, he comes to understand that love, family and companionship are the things that make life truly wonderful, and that he is indeed indispensable.



You've seen the film, a perennial heartwarming holiday favourite for all the family, and now the RSS offers the chance to join George on his journey of emotional highs and lows on Christmas Eve, onstage.

Playing from December 5th – 12th and with a captioned performance on Thursday 10th – booking at www.richmondshakespeare.org.uk

Find the Mary Wallace on Twickenham's Embankment, close to the Barmy Arms.

Photo credit – Simone Sutton

RICHMOND SHAKESPEARE SOCIETY


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Hampton
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# St Mary's University

## St Mary's University celebrates success at the Times Higher Education Awards 2026

St Mary's University is celebrating a successful evening at the Times Higher Education Awards 2026, having won the *Outstanding Estates Team Award,* and having been shortlisted in two further categories: *International Collaboration of the Year;* and *Outstanding Marketing and Communications Team*.




The awards celebrate exceptional work, innovation and achievements across higher education institutions in the UK and Ireland.

The University's Estates Team was recognised for its distinctive approach to campus development, placing students and the wider St Mary's community at the heart of its work.

Through a model of co-creation and collaboration, the team has transformed the University's estate into a student-centred environment, with spaces designed to support learning, wellbeing and belonging.

Students are active partners in the development of the campus, contributing directly to the design and delivery of projects. This approach has helped deliver innovative spaces such as the Living Room in the Library and The 1850.

Alongside enhancing the student experience, the team has reduced carbon emissions by 15 per cent in a single year, while continuing to safeguard the University's complex heritage estate.

Jo Blunden, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer at St Mary's, said: "Winning the Outstanding Estates Team award at the Times Higher Education Awards is a fantastic achievement for our University. It reflects our commitment to developing a campus that puts community at its heart, creating an environment where students feel they belong and have the facilities and space to reach their potential.

"The Estates team use innovation and agility in responding to the changing needs of our students and wider University community. Despite being a relatively small team, they have made a significant impact across our campus, demonstrating that you don't need scale to make a real difference. I am incredibly proud of everyone involved – and of our wider team who have remained supportive throughout.

"To be recognised across three categories is testament to the dedication to the student experience that we see across our University."

St Mary's was also shortlisted for International Collaboration of the Year, recognising its partnership with the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE). The partnership provides opportunities for academic exchange, professional development and research, strengthening educational links between the UK and Mauritius.

The University's Marketing and Communications team was also shortlisted for its work in strengthening St Mary's institutional identity and driving consistency across its communications, an approach which has improved engagement throughout the student lifecycle.

St Mary's University Twickenham London

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

# CHRISTMAS MARKET

## SATURDAY , 5th DECEMBER

**10.30am – 12.30pm**

**At**

**St Mary the Virgin Church**

**Mortlake High Street**

**Come and enjoy a cup of coffee, mince pies and chat**

**Home produce, gifts, cake stall and raffle**

**Everyone Welcome**



# RuTC Celebrates Best-ever Open Event

Richmond upon Thames College (RuTC) hosted a hugely successful open event earlier this month.

The record-breaking event on Tuesday 17th November saw 524 prospective students and their families enjoy a glimpse of what it is like to study at RuTC.

**First-class courses and facilities**
Our enthusiastic and experienced staff were on hand to discuss the range of available pathways, such as:

- GCSEs
- A-Levels
- T-Levels
- Higher Education
- Apprenticeships
- Foundation learning.



The courses on show included:

- Construction
- Childcare
- Electrical Installation
- Engineering
- Health and Social Care
- Professional Cookery
- Performing Arts
- Sport, and much more.

Attendees also had the chance to tour the college's first-class facilities, which include the cutting-edge STEM Centre, The View restaurant, a 160-seater theatre, science labs, engineering workshops, and art studios.

**Outstanding experience**
This marked the best open event for RuTC to date, with an increase of over 200 attendees compared to autumn 2025.

RuTC is committed to providing an outstanding educational experience for students and this is reflected in our reputation as one of London's best performing colleges.

**A warm welcome**
Gavin Hughes, Principal of RuTC, said:
*"We always enjoy welcoming prospective students and their families to our open events to learn more about what a fantastic place RuTC is to learn and grow. It was great to hear that this was our most successful open event yet, and we look forward to welcoming many of those who attended when they enrol with us next year."*

To hear more from Gavin, watch the new Meet the Principal video on our Principal's Welcome page.

**90 years of excellence**
RuTC's next open event takes place on Wednesday 3rd March 2027 from 4pm to 7pm.
To find out more and book your place, click here.

Next year, RuTC is celebrating its 90th anniversary, marking nine decades of providing academic excellence in London. Keep an eye on our News and Events page for details of the upcoming celebrations.

Richmond upon Thames College




**SATURDAY 12 DECEMBER • 6pm**

**ALL SAINTS CHURCH**

**EAST SHEEN AVENUE, SW14 8AT**

**All proceeds will go to Macmillan Cancer Support Registered charity no. 261017**

# Local actress Anya Marco Harris gives Hampton's much-loved bookshop a new lease of life

From The Hampton Bookshop

The much-loved Hampton bookshop is embarking on an exciting new chapter, with local residents Anya Marco Harris and her husband Peter Harris bringing fresh ideas, renewed energy and a little extra magic to a community institution.




The Bookshop, situated next to Hampton station, has been part of the local community for more than 50 years. Facing the possibility of closure, Anya and Peter decided they weren't ready to see this much-loved little bookshop disappear.

*"The Hampton Bookshop is loved by everyone, near and far. It serves a vital role in the community, not just by raising funds for local charities, but as a place for families and local people to buy affordable books during what have been challenging economic times as well as a place for local volunteers to socialise and give back to their community. I couldn't let it close,"* said Anya Marco Harris.

**A Hampton institution**

Generations of Hampton residents have browsed the shop's shelves, donated books and discovered unexpected treasures. It even retains its original WH Smith bookstall blinds, carefully restored during a major refurbishment following its COVID-19 closure.

Munira Wilson, MP for Twickenham, welcomed the news, saying:
"Sharing and supporting the joy of reading is so important for young and old alike. I'm incredibly grateful to Anya and Peter, and all of their wonderful volunteers, for saving this beloved local bookshop. The Bookshop Hampton, like so many other independent bookshops across the country, plays a hugely important role in spreading a love of books, supporting our local high streets, encouraging sustainability and bringing together communities."

**Books, community and a little Christmas magic**

Entirely reliant on donated books, the shop raises funds for local charities while helping keep books in circulation and out of landfill. More than 40 volunteers now help bring the bookshop to life, creating a growing community around a shared love of books and the shop itself.

With longer opening hours, imaginative displays, themed window installations and plenty of new ideas, the shop is embracing its next chapter. Its Christmas window has already been transformed into a festive Lego-themed display following a Halloween Hogwarts that delighted passers by.

On Sunday 6 December, during the Hampton Christmas Fair, the bookshop will be giving away a free wrapped book to every child who visits, with books looking as though Santa has accidentally left them behind. The giveaway will run throughout the day from the shop's 10.30am opening, with the shop also open during the fair from 4–7pm.

**From the bookshop to the screen**

Anya has also brought the bookshop to a wider audience through *The Bookshop Investigations*, her cosy crime comedy web series filmed on location in the shop. Blending humour, mystery and the distinctive character of the bookshop, the series has developed its own following, with Series Two now available to watch.

**Watch** the series here The Bookshop Investigations

The Bookshop Hampton is more than a place to buy a book. It is a reminder of what community spaces can be: welcoming, affordable, sustainable, charitable and full of character. And its next chapter is only just beginning.

Hampton & Hampton Hill

# Voluntary Care

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**Could you join our Transport Services Team?**
**Do you have some time to spare during the day?**
**Do you drive?**

**We are looking for Volunteer Drivers to provide a lift for local residents to hospital, doctor or dental appointments as well as lifts to clubs, activities or similar journeys**



For a friendly chat with one of our team about this and other volunteer opportunities call:

**T:** 020 8979 9662

**E:** enquiries@greenwoodcommunity.org.uk

**W:** www.greenwoodcommunity.org.uk

greenwood Community Centre

**Hampton & Hampton Hill Voluntary Care**

Supporting Local People : Improving Local Lives

1a School Road Hampton Hill. TW12 1QL
Registered in England & Wales Company No. 6431882
Charity No. 1140070

# England Team To Play New Zealand

England men's head coach Steve Borthwick has named his team to face New Zealand in the Nations Championship Finals Weekend on Saturday 28 November at Allianz Stadium, Twickenham (kick-off 4.40pm GMT, live on ITV1).

There are five changes to the starting XV that defeated the All Blacks last Saturday, with Ellis Genge, Luke Cowan-Dickie, Greg Fisilau, Tommy Freeman and Freddie Steward all coming into the starting line-up.

Elsewhere, Archie McParland is named amongst the replacements and is set to win his second cap, with England retaining a 6-2 split on the bench.

*"To have the opportunity to play New Zealand again is something the players are really looking forward to,"* said Borthwick.

*"We know the quality New Zealand have and the challenge they'll bring across the field.*

*"For us, it's about building on last Saturday's performance, maintaining the standards we set and finding that same level again."*

Tickets are still available for Finals Weekend, with each day's ticket offering access to two international matches: www.nationschampionshiprugby.tmtickets.co.uk

ENGLAND v NEW ZEALAND
Saturday 28 November 2026
Allianz Stadium, Twickenham
Kick-off: 4.40pm GMT

15. Freddie Steward (Leicester Tigers, 45 caps)
14. Tommy Freeman (Northampton Saints, 31 caps)
13. Henry Slade (Exeter Chiefs, 80 caps)
12. Seb Atkinson (Gloucester Rugby, 9 caps)
11. Will Joseph (Gloucester Rugby, 3 caps)
10. Fin Smith (Northampton Saints, 21 caps)
9. Jack van Poortvliet (Leicester Tigers, 30 caps)

1. Ellis Genge (Bristol Bears, 86 caps) – vice-captain
2. Luke Cowan-Dickie (Sale Sharks, 64 caps)
3. Joe Heyes (Leicester Tigers, 28 caps)
4. Maro Itoje (Saracens, 105 caps) – captain
5. Alex Coles (Northampton Saints, 25 caps)
6. Ollie Chessum (Leicester Tigers, 40 caps) – vice-captain
7. Greg Fisilau (Exeter Chiefs, 3 caps)
8. Ben Earl (Saracens, 57 caps)

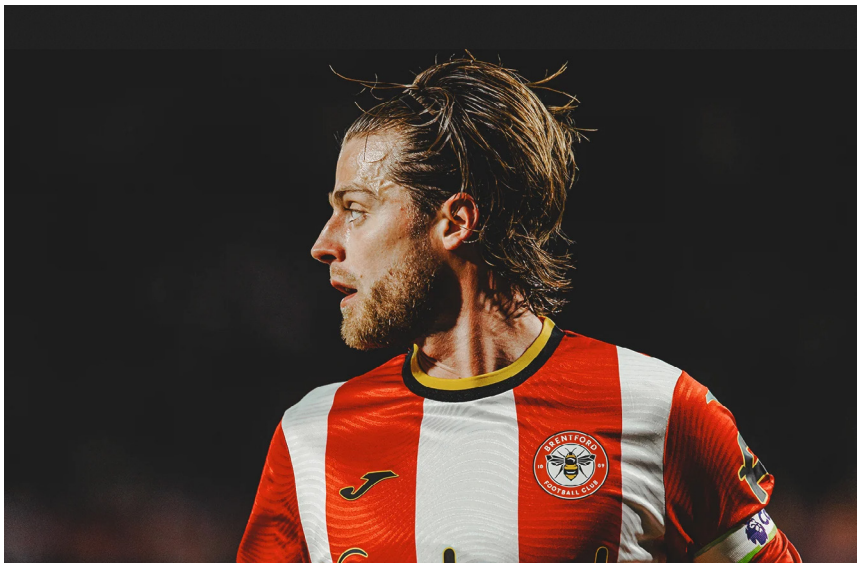
Replacements:
16. Jamie George (Saracens, 115 caps) – vice-captain
17. Fin Baxter (Harlequins, 20 caps)
18. Will Stuart (Bath Rugby, 55 caps)
19. George Martin (Saracens, 27 caps)
20. Ben Curry (Sale Sharks, 17 caps)
21. Henry Pollock (Northampton Saints, 16 caps)
22. Archie McParland (Northampton Saints, 1 cap)
23. Marcus Smith (Harlequins, 56 caps)

RFU

# Match Preview: Manchester United v Brentford

Written By Brentford Football Club

Brentford travel to Old Trafford on Saturday to face Manchester United in what is Mauricio Pochettino's first home match in charge of the Red Devils (3pm kick-off GMT).



The fixture will not be televised in the UK.

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*: Fast start could be key

Keith Andrews will take charge of his 50th Premier League game as Brentford head coach on Saturday – and what better way to mark the occasion than by guiding the Bees to a first victory at Old Trafford in nearly 90 years?

Having climbed to sixth in the Premier League table courtesy of Monday night's emphatic 4-0 win over Everton, the Bees will provide the opposition for Mauricio Pochettino's first home game in charge of Manchester United.

Brentford have lost all five of their Premier League encounters with United at Old Trafford but have come agonisingly close to breaking their duck – most notably in October 2023, when two Scott McTominay goals deep into stoppage-time snatched victory from the west Londoners' grasp.

Beaten 2-1 on each of their last three visits to the Theatre of Dreams, the Bees will travel north in good spirits having scored 20 goals across their opening 11 Premier League fixtures this season – only Brighton (26) and Manchester City (22) hitting the net more often.

It is also notable that when Brentford click into gear in attack, they are very hard to stop. Andrews' side have inflicted convincing defeats upon Tottenham Hotspur, Chelsea and Everton this term, with only Brighton (four) recording more top-flight wins by a margin of three or more goals.

Increasingly impressive at the other end of the pitch, the Bees chalked up their fourth Premier League clean sheet of the season against Everton on Monday night, with only four teams – Arsenal, Leeds United, Brighton and Liverpool – having conceded fewer goals than Brentford (11) this term.

A fast start could be key on Saturday against a United side that has yet to score in the opening 15 minutes of a game this season but is susceptible to conceding early goals – as was the case in the 4-0 defeat to Liverpool at Anfield last weekend.

It was the third time in the space of six games that United had shipped four goals, and the Red Devils have kept just one clean sheet across all competitions this season, against Azerbaijani outfit Sabah in the Champions League.

United have conceded 34 goals in 16 games across all competitions this term, more than any other team competing in Europe's top five leagues, and Pochettino will be keen to shore up his new side defensively. Brentford, however, will look to exploit any frailties.

Two of the Bees' strikes against Everton on Monday night stemmed from set-pieces – a potential source of joy for Andrews' side on Saturday given that United have conceded a league-high nine goals from dead-ball situations (including penalties) this term.

It should also encourage the Bees that only Crystal Palace (69) have conceded more shots on target in the Premier League this season than United (63), given that Brentford currently boast the best conversion rate from shots on target in the division (44 per cent).

The expected goals (xG) metric offers a fascinating insight into United's struggles at both ends of the pitch this season, with the Red Devils conceding shots with an average xG value of 0.16 – the highest in the Premier League.

At the other end of the pitch, the converse is true. Although no team in the division averages more shots per game than United (18.5), the average xG value of those efforts (0.09) is the lowest in the top flight – fewer than seven per cent of their 200-plus shots finding the back of the net.

In Bruno Fernandes, Matheus Cunha and former Bee Bryan Mbeumo, Pochettino has considerable attacking talent at his disposal – and a passionate Old Trafford reception is no doubt in store for the new United boss.

Brentford's challenge is to dampen that enthusiasm and apply pressure in the right places at the right times – if they do so, Andrews could bring up his half-century in style.

**Scout report**
Dan Long, *Sky Sports*: United's 'concerning' Premier League form

In the first half of 2026, it seemed the good times were back at Manchester United. Club legend Michael Carrick replaced Ruben Amorim in early January, returning to the dugout for the first time since a caretaker spell in late 2021. He immediately had the fans on board after a 2-0 Manchester derby win in his first game.

"I am not getting carried away," he told Sky Sports. "It is one result, but it needs to be a regular feeling with that level of performance."

There were 16 Premier League games remaining after that; United won 11 and finished third - their highest position since 2022/23. Crucially, they secured a return to European football after a one-season absence.

Carrick was given a new two-year contract in May. "Now it's time to move forward together again, with ambition and a clear sense of purpose. Manchester United and our incredible supporters deserve to be challenging for the biggest honours again," he said.

Six months on, he is no longer in the role, and the current aims could barely be further from those set out in the summer.

In the Champions League, they have won two and lost two, while they were dumped out of the Carabao Cup at the third-round stage by Brighton in September, having lost 3-2 despite going 2-0 up.

Most concerning, though, is their Premier League form. After 11 games, United sit second-bottom, one point from safety. In five of those games, they have drawn a blank; they scored more than one goal in only three of the others.

Carrick was dismissed on 12 November and Mauricio Pochettino was appointed six days later. The former Tottenham and Chelsea boss signed off his spell as USA chief with a 2-0 win over Haiti in Cincinnati before immediately jetting across the Atlantic to finally take the job he has long been linked with.

The 54-year-old threw himself straight into the role and told Sky Sports he was sleeping only three or four hours per night in the first few days. While jet lag will have played a significant part in that, being as prepared as possible for his first game against Liverpool was imperative.

Unfortunately for him, United were thumped 4-0, which has left them still searching for their first league win since 30 August, when they beat Ipswich 5-2 at Old Trafford.

It would be a brave call to back United for the drop, particularly with an elite new manager in charge and 27 more games to play. But Opta Analyst predicts them to finish 16th, with a current chance of relegation in excess of 27 per cent.

**In the Dugout**
Mauricio Pochettino

Mauricio Pochettino had a 17-year professional career, which started at Newell's Old Boys in 1989 and concluded in 2006, after a second permanent spell with Espanyol, for whom he played over 300 times in all competitions. The defender also played for Paris Saint-Germain and Bordeaux, as well as earning 20 senior Argentina caps.

He retired at 34 and took his first job in management with Espanyol aged 36 in January 2009. In the latter half of that season, Pochettino kept the Periquitos in La Liga with a 10th-place finish. He stayed for almost four years before his contract was terminated by mutual consent in November 2012. Less than two months later, he was announced as Southampton's new manager and, in his first full season in charge in 2013/14, he guided Saints to eighth.

That piqued Tottenham's interest and, in May 2014, Pochettino signed a five-year contract in north London. Between 2015/16 and 2017/18, he guided the club to two third-place finishes and one second-place finish - their best-ever in the division. In 2018/19, they reached the Champions League final, where they were beaten by Liverpool. His biggest triumph at Spurs was arguably the success of Harry Kane, who scored over 150 goals during his time in charge.

Pochettino left Spurs in November 2019 and took over at former club PSG in January 2021. In his first few months, he won the Coupe de France and, in his only full season, he won the Ligue 1 title. Next came a season at Chelsea in 2023/24, where the Blues finished sixth in the Premier League and were runners-up in the Carabao Cup. He left Stamford Bridge by mutual consent in May 2024 after less than a year in the job.

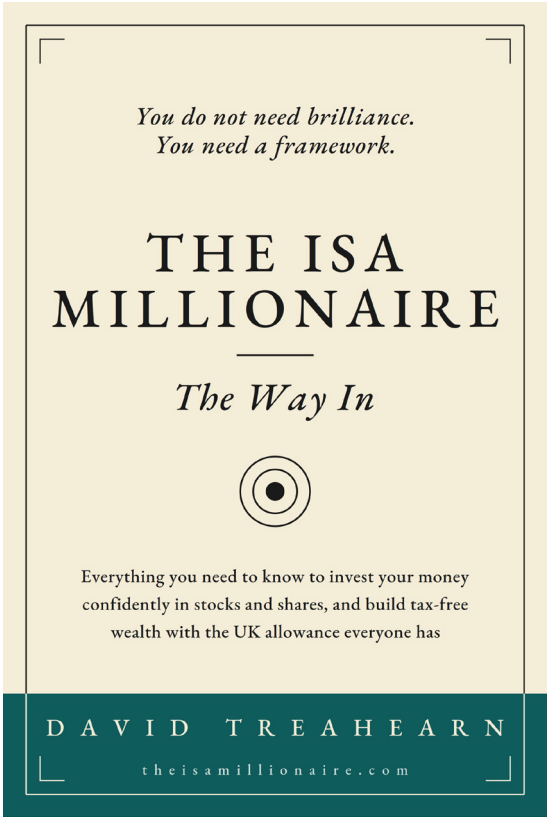
In September 2024, Pochettino took on his first international job as USA head coach. In 2025, he took them to the CONCACAF Gold Cup final, where they were beaten 2-1 by Mexico and, earlier this year, he took them to the last 16 of the 2026 World Cup, where they were beaten 4-1 by Belgium. He won each of his last six matches before departing for Old Trafford.

# UK investing guide The ISA Millionaire: The Way In revised for the Autumn Budget 2026, ready for Christmas

From David Treahearn

*Richmond author David Treahearn has updated his jargon-free guide to investing through a Stocks and Shares ISA, after the Budget reversed several planned ISA changes.*

The November 2026 edition of The ISA Millionaire: The Way In is out now in paperback and on Kindle. It sets out the ISA rules as they stand after the Autumn Budget on 28 October 2026. At the time of writing, the planned cut to the cash ISA limit, the ban on transfers from a Stocks and Shares ISA to a cash ISA and the 22% charge on cash held in a Stocks and Shares ISA will not go ahead. The full £20,000 allowance can still go into cash, investments or a mix.




The new edition also covers the changes that do go ahead. From April 2027, interest above the Personal Savings Allowance is taxed at 24%, 44% or 49%, depending on tax band. Since 29 October 2026, the Lifetime ISA withdrawal charge is 20% for a first home costing more than £450,000, and a new First Time Buyer ISA is planned for April 2029.

Alongside the rule changes, the book adds a short guide to reading it at every level, a new section on buying your first fund, The Words, Without the Jargon (the key terms explained), Questions Readers Ask, and the book's principles on a single page. It runs to 440 pages with 81 illustrations.

Readers with an earlier copy can see every rule change since their edition, free, on the book's page at www.theisamillionaire.com/the-book/.

Out in time for Christmas, the new edition is written for a reader many people will have in mind this year: someone who keeps meaning to start investing but has never been shown how.

"When the Budget changed course on ISAs, it was easy to lose track of what still applied. I wanted the book to match the rules as they are now, and to make it simple for anyone with an earlier copy to see what's changed." David Treahearn

The book is written for everyday working people who want to build long-term wealth, with the Stocks and Shares ISA as the tax-free way to do it. It reached #7 in Amazon UK's Kindle Investing chart within four weeks of publication, and #3 in Personal Taxation for the paperback. One reader wrote: "This book is so simple and easy to read, and it gives you real clarity on what to do."

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