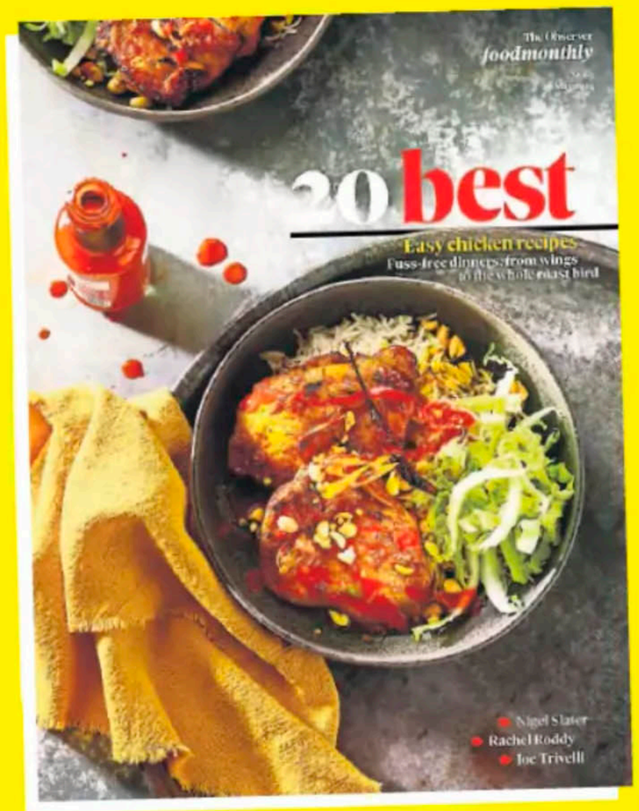
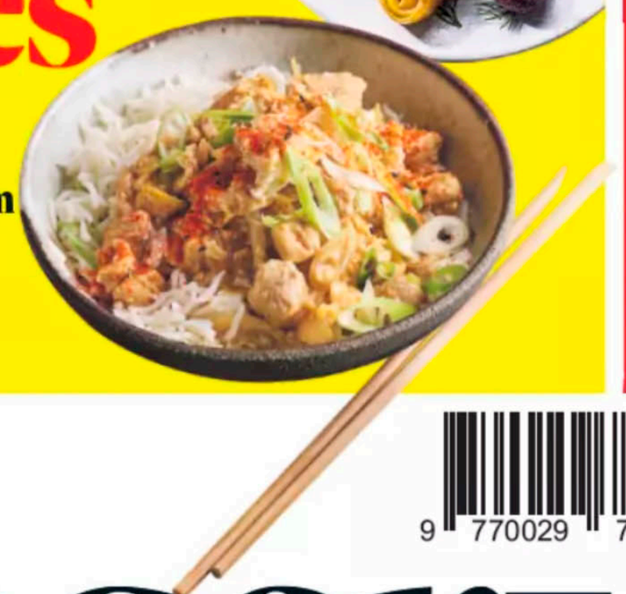


Free inside

Easy chicken recipes

Simple meals and stunning flavours from Nigel Slater, Rachel Roddy, Joe Trivelli, Sri Owen and more





D-day
The last veterans and their legacy

This section



Paul Weller
Modfather at 66: still angry after all these years

In the magazine



9 770029 771229 21

The Observer

From £2.30 for subscribers
www.observer.co.uk
Sunday 26 May 2024
£4.00

Reeves slams 'reckless' Sunak over £64bn tax cut pledges

- Unfunded promises 'bid to save campaign'
- Tory feuding erupts after PM's early poll call

Toby Helm, Michael Savage & Kiran Stacey

Shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves today accuses the Tories of making £64bn of unfunded spending commitments in a "desperate and reckless" effort to rescue their gaffe-strewn general election campaign.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Reeves said that what appeared to be pledges to slash taxes – including national insurance, income tax and inheritance tax – were reminiscent of Liz Truss's catastrophic mini-budget and showed the Conservatives had learnt nothing from her disastrous time at No 10.

Labour's attempt to portray the Tories as so desperate that they were "throwing around billions of pounds of unfunded spending commitments" came as bitter Conservative recriminations began over a series of early campaign disasters by Rishi Sunak and his party.

The internal Tory bloodletting follows simmering anger over the prime minister's decision last Wednesday to call a surprise election on 4 July, which many MPs believed was too early and did not leave time for improving economic news to register with voters.

The blunders included the PR nightmare of a visit to Belfast's Titanic quarter amid a flurry of announcements from senior Tory MPs that they were standing down.

Several Tories said their own party, not Labour, had been caught off guard by Sunak's decision to go to the country early. A senior Tory

Continued on page 2 ››

The man who would be PM
Keir Starmer's biographer on what drives the Labour leader towards No 10
Focus, pages 33-36

Teen spirit

Goal heroes Alejandro Garnacho, left, and Kobbie Mainoo, both 19, celebrate after Manchester United's 2-1 win over Manchester City in the FA Cup final at Wembley yesterday. This was the first final in which two teenagers scored. (Sport, pages 1-6; Focus, page 40) Photograph by John Walton/PA



Revealed: church's direct link to slavery

Desirée Baptiste & Jon Ungoed-Thomas

An archbishop of Canterbury in the 18th century approved payments for the purchase of enslaved people for two sugar plantations in Barbados, documents seen by the *Observer* have revealed.

Thomas Secker agreed to reimburse a payment for £1,093 for the purchase of enslaved people on the Codrington Plantations, as well as hiring enslaved people from a third party. It was stated the measures were "calculated for the future lasting advantages of the estates".

The papers are among a cache of documents found in the archives of Lambeth Palace Library which detail the direct links between the Church of England and chattel slavery on plantations owned by its missionary arm, The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG).

In response to the *Observer's* revelations, Justin Welby, the archbishop of Canterbury, said: "Every new piece of evidence around the Church's involvement in the slave trade is sobering, and reading that a former archbishop of Canterbury was involved in the purchase of enslaved people is particularly painful.

"It is also a reminder that this work is not finished and there is more we need to do to examine our role in the

Continued on page 15 ››



LEFT Rachel Reeves talks yesterday to staff at a London branch of Iceland about the cost of living crisis. *Yui Mok/PA*

Reeves slams Sunak over £64bn in unfunded tax cut promises

» *Continued from page 1*

source said: "It's quite staggering that we've managed to call a snap election that took ourselves by surprise. I just feel sorry for the professionals in the party machine who will be watching all this with their head in their hands.

"These arrogant men and women from No 10 turn up and think they're brilliant at politics. It's staggering arrogance.

"It had been apparent to people inside the government for a long time that some of the No 10 operation in general was just extremely inexperienced and showed repeated bad judgment. That's just been exposed for the entire country ... the problem is we've got a cycle now where he's in danger of becoming hapless."

Among the senior Tory figures in the line of fire and who are said to have been consulted on the election date are deputy prime minister Oliver Dowden, the Downing Street chief of staff Liam Booth-Smith and adviser James Forsyth, as well as Sunak's close cabinet ally Claire Coutinho, the energy secretary.

'It's quite staggering that we've managed to call a snap election that took ourselves by surprise'
Senior Tory

Sunak is said to have gone against the advice of Isaac Levido, his campaign chief, who wanted an autumn election.

In a further attempt to reignite his election campaign after an error-strewn start, Sunak announced last night that a future Conservative government would bring back mandatory national service.

Under the plan, which appeared to be his latest attempt to reduce Tory losses by winning over voters drifting to Reform UK, the prime minister said every 18-year-old would have to spend time in a competitive, full-time military commission, or one weekend a month volunteering in "civil resilience".

Yesterday, Sunak took a helicopter owned by a millionaire Conservative donor to fly from his constituency in North Yorkshire to London before appearing at a hastily arranged campaign trip in south London after the *Guardian* had revealed on Friday that he was planning to spend the day away from the campaign trail following a terrible few days.

In an interview with the *Daily Telegraph*, the chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, described inheritance tax as "profoundly anti-Conservative", thereby hinting at a desire to scrap it, while also promising additional moves to cut national insurance and, for the first time, floating the idea of ending what is, in effect, a 60% income tax rate on those earning between £100,000 and £125,140, which is a result of reductions in the tax-free allowance.

Reeves said that collectively these moves, along with suggestions that the Tories would scrap £4bn of green levies, totalled £64bn, or £2,270 for each household, in unfunded commitments.

Reeves said: "After a chaotic start to their campaign, the Conservatives are now throwing around billions of pounds of unfunded tax cuts in a desperate attempt to cling on to power.

"Rishi Sunak and Jeremy Hunt's behaviour is not only desperate, but also reckless and irresponsible and shows they have learned absolutely nothing from Liz Truss's disastrous mini-budget that crashed the economy.

"The past 72 hours are the clearest sign yet that the biggest threat to the economy is five more years of Conservative chaos."

After the *Daily Mail* yesterday led its front page with the shadow chancellor's promise: "I'll never play fast and loose with your money" – and her praise for Margaret Thatcher's commitment to "sound money" – Labour is embarking on a campaign offensive to persuade voters, including in Tory-voting middle England, that it is now the party of fiscal responsibility and security.

Reeves added: "Labour has changed. We are the party of sound money. Labour's first step for change is to deliver economic stability with tough spending rules to grow the economy and keep taxes, inflation and mortgages as low as possible."

While the Tories appear this weekend to be on the brink of a campaign crisis, they will take some encouragement from the latest Opinium poll for the *Observer*, which shows Labour's lead is at 14%, down 4 percentage points since last week.

Labour is down 2 points on 41%, while the Conservatives are up 2 points on 27%, with Reform UK and the Liberal Democrats both on 10% and the Greens on 7%.

ON OTHER PAGES

The prospects are not wholly bleak for the Tories
Robert Ford, page 8

Why did Sunak go to the polls? It was the economy, stupid
Phillip Inman, page 9

'Make drug firms pay for infected blood costs'

Jon Ungoed-Thomas

Global pharmaceutical firms that supplied products involved in the contaminated blood scandal face calls this weekend to foot part of the estimated £10bn compensation bill.

MPs and campaigners want the government to pursue drug firms that to date have not paid any compensation in the UK. Their products were contaminated with viruses, including HIV and hepatitis C.

The official inquiry by Sir Brian Langstaff last week concluded the pharmaceutical industry's contaminated product manufactured by subsidiaries of Bayer, Baxter and other drug groups to treat haemophilia did not contain adequate warnings and should never have been licensed.Diana Johnson, the Labour MP and the chair of all-party parliamentary group on haemophilia and contaminated blood, said: "The pharmaceutical companies need to apologise and there needs to be a claim against them for some of this money."

Johnson said claimants in other countries had been given payouts of hundreds of millions of pounds and it was "outrageous" similar payments had not been made in the UK. The government set out details on the infected blood compensation scheme last week, with payments to victims of up to £2,735,000.

About 3,000 people died and 30,000 were infected after being given contaminated blood transfusions and products in the 1970s and 1980s. Many of the deaths were caused by commercial blood products given to people suffering from haemophilia to replace a clotting protein called factor VIII.

In March 1996 in Japan, drug firm executives involved in the global blood scandal were pictured in newspapers bowing on their knees to haemophiliacs who had filed lawsuits. The firms, including subsidiaries of drug giants Bayer and Baxter, agreed to pay 60% of a settlement worth up to $810m, with payments of $450,000 for each person infected with HIV.

In the US, drug firms, including Bayer, Baxter and Armour, accused of selling infected product agreed a $640m settlement for haemophiliacs in August 1996. These drug firms and others were also required to contribute to a settlement package established in Germany in July 1995.

The prospects of pharmaceutical firms agreeing similar payouts to victims in the UK were undermined by the insistence for years by ministers and officials that patients were given the "best available treatment". Langstaff found this claim was wrong and the treatment disaster could largely have been avoided.

Until now, the drug firms have not apologised for nor acknowledged any mistakes in the supply chain to the UK which led to the scandal. They have said they complied with all relevant regulations at the time. The inquiry report found drug firms did warn that their products may contain viruses, but did not adequately warn of the risk of HIV and hepatitis C.



Affected families wait to hear the findings of the infected blood inquiry in London last week.

In December 1982, an executive at Cutter Laboratories, then a Bayer subsidiary, wrote a memo stating: "It appears advisable to include an Aids warning in our literature for Factor VIII." The inquiry found that the earliest product warning it was able to identify was in March 1984.

Bayer said it had fully cooperated with the infected blood inquiry. It said in a statement: "We are truly sorry that the haemophilia treatments developed by Cutter, intended to save and improve lives, ended up causing so much suffering."

Baxter said it had spun off its bioscience business in 2015. The company said: "We sincerely sympathise with anyone impacted by infected blood in the 1970s and 1980s."

CSL Behring, which acquired Armour's manufacturing facilities in 2004, said it was not in a position to comment on Armour's historical activities.

Liverpool turns into Taylor Town as the Fab One takes over city

Art installations and a supersized gold throne will welcome 150,000 Swifties to her shows



RIGHT Taylor Swift on stage on her Eras tour. Reuters

ABOVE LEFT Artist Bethan Flanagan at the workspace of Make CIC, a local social enterprise.

ABOVE St George's Hall in Liverpool hails Swift. Photographs by Richard Saker



LEFT Swift-themed bracelets are among arts and crafts offered at Make CIC.

ABOVE Artist Lucy Sneddon works on the Reputation installation.

Josh Halliday
North of England Editor

The name of music royalty hangs from Liverpool's historic buildings. Art installations mark the biggest pop hits. An army of loyal fans is about to invade. But this isn't Beatlemania. This is Taylor Town.

For one fortnight only, Liverpool will be transformed into a Taylor Swift "playground" to give the US megastar a "proper scouse welcome" as her history-making world tour lands in the UK.

More than 150,000 Swifties will descend on the city for her three sold-out shows at Anfield football stadium next month, while thousands more "Taylor-gaters" are expected to arrive without tickets.

Buoyed by its Eurovision 2023 success – and eyeing a slice of the £1bn riches surrounding Swift's UK shows – Liverpool is rolling out the red carpet. A dedicated council taskforce, codenamed Taylor Town, has been drawing up its plans for more than nine months.

Eleven Instagram-friendly art installations will be placed across the city from 8 to 16 June, each symbolising one of her 11 albums. There is a baby grand piano, bought for £300 from Facebook Marketplace by Make CIC, a local social enterprise, decorated with living moss to represent Swift's *Evermore* "era".

Fans will be able to pose for selfies on a supersized gold throne – a £400 online purchase – wrapped in snakes and skulls to mark her *Game of Thrones*-inspired *Reputation* album.

The University of Liverpool is getting in on the act with a Tay Day of lectures about Swift, ending with a "critical karaoke" session in which academics will perform their research to some of the star's biggest hits.

If that sounds a little mad – well, Swift has that effect. All 600 tickets to the session were snapped up within hours (a similar level of demand to a lecture last week by chief medical officer Prof Chris Whitty).

The idea, said Claire McColgan, Liverpool's director of culture, is to "turn the whole city into an experience".

"What we found with Eurovision is that people came who didn't have tickets – and you've got the city which is like a playground for people who are going to a concert," she said.

"We did it for Eurovision, so why not do it for Taylor?"

The council has been watching the seismic impact of Swift's global tour as it moves from country to country. And it really is seismic: in Seattle and Los Angeles, the crowds' reaction to Shake It Off registered on the Richter scale.

Officials in Liverpool said they would be closely monitoring her gigs for any small-scale earthquakes at Anfield, a stadium accustomed to exuberant fans. The cheering this time "will be slightly higher-pitched" ,said McColgan.

With Swift only playing 15 nights across four UK cities – Liverpool, Edinburgh, Cardiff and London – tickets are swapping hands online for as much as £3,600 each for a child's ticket, while a non-VIP seat at one of Swift's eight Wembley shows ranged from £562 to £4,723.

Research by Barclays earlier this month estimated the 34-year-old singer will bring a £1bn boost to the UK economy, with the average fan expected to splurge £848 on restaurants, hotels, new outfits and merchandise.

For a city where roughly one in five jobs rely on tourism, it's a no-brainer. But the vision for Liverpool is longer-term too: "These young women will soon be choosing where they want to go to university," said McColgan.

> ***'The city is like a playground for concertgoers. We did it for Eurovision, so why not for Taylor?'***
> ***Claire McColgan, Liverpool director of culture***

Harry Doyle, the council's cabinet member for tourism, said the city-wide exhibition – which will be free – would cost only £65,000 to produce but could bring in millions of pounds. "It's the cheapest PR campaign we've ever done," he said.

Searches for hotels in Liverpool soared by almost 6,000% when the tour dates were announced last year, according to data from Booking.com, with almost every room and Airbnb rental now booked.

Officials are warning fans not to pitch tents in the 111-acre Stanley Park, right next to Anfield, given the safety risks. In Argentina, some people reportedly camped outside the stadium for five months to get the best spot.

"It's the equivalent of Beatlemania," said Kirsten Little, the co-founder of Make CIC, which is crafting the 11 Swift-inspired installations.

Rachel Smith-Evans, a decorative artist, had the daunting task last year of painting the official Eurovision handover key that was passed to this year's host city, Malmö. Decorating the town for the arrival of Swifties, she said, came with "the same pressure but on a bigger scale".

Fans will be able to book workshops hosted by Make CIC's resident artists on everything from making Swift-themed cupcakes and friendship bracelets to upcycling denim – a key fashion trend among her eco-conscious fans.

Designer Bethan Flanagan is upcycling "Tay" denim jackets for fans going to the gigs, who pay her to decorate them with images of the singer's face alongside her lyrics. "This has been huge for me," she said.

Local artist Pamela Hanlon is making hundreds of Eras tour friendship bracelets and hosting classes to show people how to create their own. Hanlon's usual customer base is a relatively small circle of family, friends and the local Brownies group, which she leads.

"This is on a totally different scale," she said, surrounded by beads and bands in her workshop on the banks of the River Mersey. "A few Brownies around the table is a bit different from doing something for Taylor Swift [fans]."

General election 2024

The sharpest insight, writing and analysis

Over the next six weeks, the Observer will offer unrivalled coverage of the choice Britain faces in the summer election. From the heart of Westminster to key marginal battlegrounds, our political staff, columnists, reporters and photographers will uncover the essential stories, talk to the key figures, and dissect the campaign as it unfolds.

IN THIS WEEK'S PAPER

- *Keir Starmer's biographer Tom Baldwin explores the unique background and influences that have shaped the man who would lead Britain (p33).*
- *Andrew Rawnsley explains how Rishi Sunak's decision to hold a July election is already starting to unravel (p43).*



- *Andrew Anthony reports from Islington, north London, where Jeremy Corbyn will be standing against his old party in the seat he has held for 40 years (p7).*
- *Political scientist Professor Robert Ford sets out the electoral mathematics that will need to be satisfied if Starmer is to overturn Sunak's majority (p8).*
- *Sonia Sodha argues that even for disaffected leftwing voters unhappy with Starmer's move to the centre, there can only one way to vote at the election (p46).*



- *In our leader column, we welcome an overdue electoral reckoning on the legacy of austerity, populism and neglect left behind by 14 years of Conservative rule (p42).*
- *... and cartoonist Chris Riddell casts his eye over the week (p34).*

NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING The recycled paper content of UK newspapers in 2017 was 64.6%

Sections of The Observer are carefully collated at our print site and by newsagents. If any section of today's UK edition of The Observer is missing, call freephone 0800 839100. Back issues sold and provided by Historic Newspapers from www.historic-newspapers.co.uk/old-newspapers/observer, or by calling 03300 669700.

© 2024 Published by Guardian News & Media Limited, Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU (020-3353 2000) and Centurion House, 129 Deansgate, Manchester M3 3WR. Printed at Reach Watford Limited, St Albans Road, Watford, Herts WD24 7RG; Reach Oldham Limited, Hollinwood Avenue, Chadderton, Oldham OL9 8EP; Reach Saltire Ltd, 110 Fifty Pitches Place, Glasgow G51 4EA; and Irish Times Print Facility, 4080 Kingswood Road, Citywest Business Campus, Dublin 24. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.
ISSN 0029-7712

Wet launch

Rishi Sunak announces the 4 July election outside No 10 as the rain gets heavier and Labour anthem Things Can Only Get Better blares from beyond the gates.



Sunak's bad week



Own goal

On a visit to a brewery in Barry, Wales, Sunak asked staff if they were looking forward to 'all the football' ... Wales didn't qualify for the Euros.



Stand down

Michael Gove and Andrea Leadsom, who both stood for the party leadership in 2016, join the exodus of Tory MPs from the Commons.

The campaign started badly... but things could only get worse

Rishi Sunak's election date announcement left his own MPs perplexed and the Commons in a scramble. If the PM thought he had the advantage of surprise, he was soon proved wrong

The first days

Toby Helm, Michael Savage & James Tapper

Two days after Rishi Sunak stood in Downing Street to announce an early general election, only for the heavens to open, Tory MPs were still scratching their heads in disbelief.

"Why did he do it? We were all told it would be the autumn and were hoping that by then we could turn things round. It is very perplexing," said one former minister, frowning. Others said they were simply not ready to fight a campaign and that they couldn't raise the money in time.

In the corridors and lobbies between the two houses of parliament, the few MPs and peers who had remained in Westminster until Friday were involved in a mad legislative scramble. "A message from the Lords!" shouted a Commons official at around 11.30am, one of many such cries to ring out that day.

Doors to the lower house were flung open. The way was cleared in a great hurry. A clerk in a black cape marched solemnly from the upper house to deliver a bundle of papers from their lordships tied by a ribbon, as MPs swerved to avoid her.

It was all too frantic and at the same time too final for some to take. Tearful MPs – mostly Tory – were saying their goodbyes in the lobbies knowing they would not return. Grandees in the Commons were delivering stirring farewell speeches in the chamber after long and august careers, Harriet Harman and Theresa May among them.

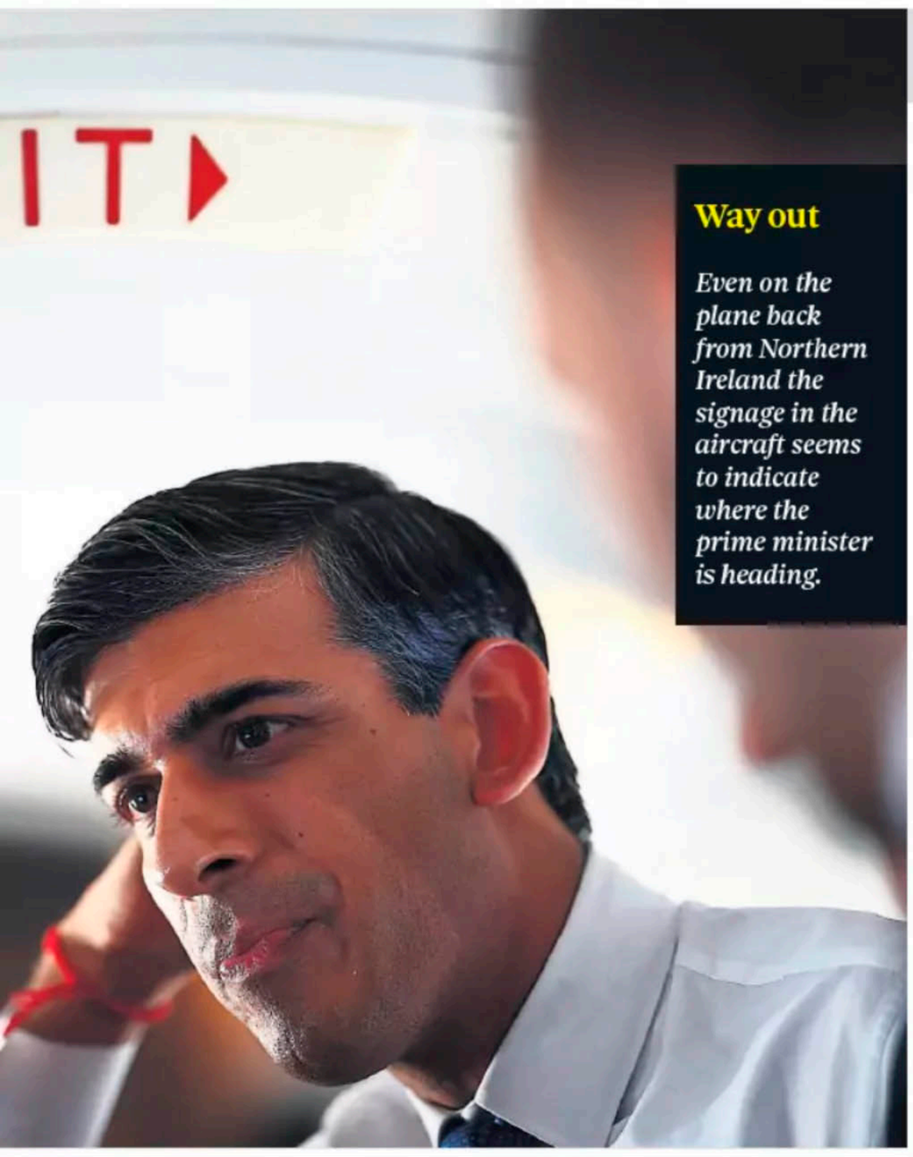
At the same time staff were pulling out all the stops, dispatching messages by hand one after another, trying to salvage important legislation that they had been poring over for weeks, months, even years.

Sunak's decision to go to the country on 4 July had created legislative turmoil. It meant parliament would shut down later that day, several weeks earlier than anyone had expected, and the whole place had been caught on the hop. Suddenly there was so little time.

Some laws that had been passing through their later legislative stages were saved and rammed on to the statute book in double quick time. But others that were not so advanced – including one to stop smoking and another to end no-fault evictions that Sunak had said would form key parts of his legacy – were too far back in the queue and had to be dropped.

In the Lords, peers stood up to bemoan the fact that important laws affecting the City of London had been ditched, at least for the time being, because of the early election.

Tories were dismayed. "It just shows how well No 10 had thought



Way out

Even on the plane back from Northern Ireland the signage in the aircraft seems to indicate where the prime minister is heading.



Friends in need

Sunak visits a warehouse in Ilkeston in the east Midlands. It later emerged, at least two of the questions he faced came from Tory councillors.



All at sea?

Sunak visits the Titanic Quarter on the Belfast leg of his election tour. Predictably, one reporter asks him if he's the captain of a sinking ship.

this through," said one senior Conservative MP. "We have been talking about these bills for months. Stopping young people smoking was one of Rishi's things. Now he has killed one of his legacy bills off just in time for the campaign. Brilliant." It was an extraordinary end to the life of a parliament, and in all probability, to 14 years of Tory rule.

Not in their wildest nightmares could things have gone any worse for the Conservatives in the first three days of their election campaign.

The right to go to the country at the time of his or her choosing is supposed to give prime ministers the weapon of surprise. But Sunak seems to have surprised his own side more than the opposition parties, which had been ready for months. He even went against the advice of his campaign chief Isaac Levido, who had wanted an election later in the year, believing that by then people would feel better off.

From the moment he announced the date in the pouring rain, to the sounds of the 1997 Labour anthem Things Can Only Get Better booming out from a speaker nearby, one mishap followed another, creating a sense of negative momentum that many Conservatives fear it may be impossible to reverse.

Keir Starmer was merciless in his mocking of the prime minister after photos of a drenched Sunak appeared on TV news bulletins and newspaper front pages. "The image of someone saying I am the only one with a plan standing in the rain without an umbrella is, to put it mildly, pretty farcical," said the Labour leader.

Gaffes and blunders followed one another as if written into a script. First Sunak had to admit that no flights would take off for Rwanda with asylum seekers on board before polling day, depriving his MPs of a line they had all wanted to use on the doorsteps.

Then at an event in Wales Sunak asked whether people were looking forward to the Euro 2024 football tournament, which Wales had been knocked out of in a moment of great pain. After that on Friday he travelled to Belfast and visited the Titanic Quarter, with its suggestions of captains and sinking ships.

To compound the gathering sense of a party in full tailspin, the number of Conservative MPs announcing they were standing down rose by the hour to 78, surpassing the previous record of 72 who had departed before the general election of 1997. Were they going in order to avoid terrible defeats?

On Friday, Michael Gove announced he was throwing in the towel after 19 years saying it was time for a "new generation" to lead the party. The former cabinet ministers Dame Andrea Leadsom and Greg Clark also said they were stepping down.

In Gove's constituency of Surrey Heath, there were mixed feelings about the departing MP. But in his part of Tory Surrey there were telltale signs that Gove might just be getting out before suffering his own "Portillo moment". Tracey Reading runs her own hair salon in Lightwater, in Gove's patch, and made it clear she was now an ex-Tory voter. She said she waited 17 months for a back operation. "Rishi Sunak's wife is minted. I bet none of them have had to wait – 17 months is a long time to be in pain. The NHS needs a lot of money put into it and we need to have Brexit cancelled."

Reading voted for Brexit, which Gove championed, but feels she was lied to and wants health workers who returned to Europe to be coaxed back to the UK. As for Gove? "He's done nothing for us." She met him once and felt he was looking down at her. "You get that feeling when someone thinks 'why are you talking to me?'. He doesn't even live here."

James Stewart is a 75-year-old retired airline worker. He was sorry to hear that Gove was leaving. "But I can't see what else he could do," he said. "I've always supported the Conservatives but I'm not going to this time. It's a waste of time." Even in the party's strongholds held by big names loyalty was waning.

Downing Street has claimed that the decision to go for an early election was taken by Sunak himself "several weeks ago". But that is contested by others who also claim to be in the know and who say he only decided, finally, on Tuesday.

One view among Tory MPs is that the PM was fed up and simply wanted out. Several backbenchers said they had detected a growing impatience in private meetings with him and in his public utterances over some weeks. "Many colleagues believe he had just had enough," said a senior MP. "I don't know. In 1997 the economy was improving but it made no difference to us. Maybe he thought going on for longer would do nothing or even that inflation would go up again, so just go now and hope for the best."

A member of the 1922 executive of backbenchers said he suspected that Sunak "was getting to the end of his tether". But he added: "I think he

'Maybe he thought going on for longer would do nothing, so just go now and hope for the best'

A senior Tory MP

should just have stuck it out till the autumn." Another Conservative former minister said there was a feeling across the party that it was the wrong decision, and one which would not help the campaign: "People were living in hope. This is their livelihood, their career. They hoped that with the economy improving and Labour in the spotlight more, we could make progress. When you take away that hope people feel a bit betrayed."

Amid the chaos there has been early bloodletting inside the government over its start to the campaign. Blame is being delivered squarely at a group of advisers in No 10 who are accused of being "arrogant" for ignoring warnings about an early poll.

The Tory peer and former MP Paul Goodman said it may be that things did not improve for the Conservatives and that their only tactic then might be to admit that a massive Labour majority was in prospect – in the hope that this would shock enough voters back into the fold. "The polls suggest that Starmer is on course for a landslide. They may be wrong. Or they may turn," said Goodman. "But if they don't the Conservatives may find themselves asking voters whether they really want to hand Labour a three-figure majority – and say: 'Don't give Starmer a blank cheque.'"

That Conservatives are thinking this way after just a few days of the campaign is evidence of just what a dire state the party finds itself in.

One way or another, it is Sunak who took the decision to go early and is certain to carry the can. "We'll never know if October would've produced a better result," said a senior Tory. "There may have been nothing we could have done. But this way, he will own the result. It will be all on him."

A glorious summer of sport won't help Sunak

Timing

Tim Adams

The PM might hope for a football feelgood factor. History is not on his side

There were obvious immediate beneficiaries of the timing of Rishi Sunak's surprise election call: Post Office villain Paula Vennells, for example, bumped off the front pages, and civil service chief of staff Simon Case, whose long awaited evidence to the Covid inquiry went largely unnoticed.

But what of the date itself? What advantages, beyond unutterable relief that the end might be in sight, can the prime minister have forecast for 4 July?

At times like this, psephologists' thoughts turn to fantasy football theories. Sunak offered a hint that the feelgood factor of the European Championships might have played a part in his panicked calculations by suggesting on Thursday to a group of regulars in a Welsh pub that come election day they would be enjoying the football. It had apparently escaped his attention that Wales had not qualified for the tournament.

It was Harold Wilson who insisted: "Governance of a country has nothing to do with a study of its football fixtures." A persistent urban myth had suggested that his 1966 victory was carried on the red-shirted shoulders of Bobby Moore and England's World Cup triumph – in fact that year's election occurred in March, three months before the tournament began.

More relevant was England's shock defeat to West Germany four years later, after leading 2-0 with 20 minutes left. Wilson's government also dropped the ball in the election the following week. Denis Howell, his sport minister, was in no doubt what had shifted sentiment on the eve of polling day. "The moment goalkeeper Bonetti made his third and final hash of it on the Sunday, everything simultaneously began to go wrong for Labour for the following Thursday," he said.

If not football, perhaps there are other events in the July calendar that have prompted the unusual summer season date: a Wimbledon bounce? A Glastonbury gee-up? More likely it is simply that, after six months of non-stop rain, the prime minister is pinning his vanishing hopes on the sun finally coming out. If so, his sodden announcement on Downing Street did not bode well.

General election 2024

Labour saved from 'summer vacuum' but Tories hope to exploit weak spots



BELOW Keir Starmer on the campaign trail yesterday in Stafford next to Labour candidate Leigh Ingham. PA

The party feared an awkward wait until autumn. Now it has hit the ground running but may yet trip on vulnerable areas like defence, writes *Michael Savage*

Labour has been rescued from an awkward summer vacuum by Rishi Sunak's surprise snap election, senior figures believe.

Some of the party's most prominent figures are using this weekend to ridicule the chaotic start of the Tory campaign, accusing Sunak of displaying a "reverse Midas touch" after his rain-soaked election announcement outside Downing Street and a series of early gaffes on the campaign trail.

However, there is also some relief inside Labour HQ that the party has avoided several potentially uncomfortable months before an election. There had been internal concerns that Labour faced unwelcome pressures to make new policy announcements in the months leading up to an expected autumn poll.

Concerns arose because the party had spent much of the spring preparing a manifesto for a May election, and then a campaign plan for one in the autumn. It left a long summer stretch in which the party would have had little it wanted to say, creating a potential vacuum where internal ructions could break out. "That is a long time to fill and it's not clear what we would say," said one insider.

That strategic challenge has now been erased as a result of Sunak's summer gamble. Labour's campaign timetable has kicked in, with advisers largely given their roles either at HQ or out on the campaign trail, while shadow cabinet ministers have been allocated specific constituencies to oversee.

Critical 6.30am campaign calls have begun, including Keir Starmer, director Morgan McSweeney, chief of staff Sue Gray, campaign coordinator Pat McFadden, communications chief Matthew Doyle and gatekeeper Jill Cuthbertson.

Insiders boast that within an hour of the election announcement, activists were already working battleground seats with leaflets and boards all emblazoned with Labour's "change" slogan. Strict anti-gaffe protocols have already been implemented that limit Starmer's exposure to unexpected pictures or encounters.

Cuthbertson is now emerging as a key figure, both in terms of deciding what issues Starmer must adjudicate on and ensuring his event calendar has no unscheduled surprises.

Starmer is this weekend preparing for a big campaign speech tomorrow in which he will attempt to flesh out how Labour would transform the country for the better, given that the party has now thrown its campaign squarely behind the idea that its leader represents the "change candidate". Starmer will try to take on the idea that there would be little difference from the Tories once he was in power, concentrating on political stability.

Senior figures are trying to play down the notion that there will be many policy surprises during the campaign, with the manifesto launch still a couple of weeks away. "Our strategy hasn't changed, and that's a deliberate choice," said one figure involved. The party will, however, flesh out its six "first steps", covering economic stability, NHS waiting times, border security, antisocial behaviour, energy and new teachers.

Starmer has decided to take part in a small number of TV debates, but shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves and deputy leader Angela Rayner are also expected to feature heavily during the campaign.

Despite the testing start for Sunak, senior Tory figures believe that defence remains a possible vulnerability for Starmer's team that has not yet been properly explored. The Labour leader has already attempted to neutralise the party's record on defence by committing to spend 2.5% of gross domestic product on it "as soon as resources allow".

This is slightly weaker than the

Conservatives' commitment to spend that proportion by 2030, though neither side has clarified how they would afford it.

More pressing for the campaign is the issue of the Trident nuclear weapons programme. Senior Tories have been totting up the number of Labour MPs and frontbenchers who have voted against Trident in the past, including the shadow foreign secretary, David Lammy.

Labour insiders are trying to balance the obvious glee of many aides with a warning that the Tory campaign will improve. The party is now having to hurry through a few issues, including candidate selection in seats they are mostly unlikely to win.

The bigger problem is managing internal competition for some safe and winnable seats that have become available as MPs stand down. They also face a big decision over whether or not to allow suspended MP Diane Abbott back in to the fold.

On Friday night, the party quietly released its plans for sweeping employment law reforms that the left has accused it of diluting after lobbying by employer groups.

It included a rebranding of the reforms in an attempt to nullify Tory attacks on the plan and reassure the business world. Formerly the "new deal for working people", it will now be known as "Labour's plan to make work pay" to better reflect the party's message to help with the cost of living.

The newly released document confirms a series of compromises reached with union leaders in recent weeks that will see many of the principal changes put through consultations. The main elements include an end to "fire and rehire" practice, the scrapping of some recent Tory trade union laws and more rights for newly appointed workers.

As previously hammered out with unions, a commitment to ban zero-hours contracts is now an undertaking to outlaw "exploitative" versions of these contracts. The party has spent much time behind the scenes keeping union leaders on board, with only Unite breaking with the rest.

"The again revised new deal for working people has more holes in it than Swiss cheese," said Sharon Graham, Unite's general secretary. "The number of caveats and get-outs means it is in danger of becoming a bad bosses' charter. The country desperately needs a Labour government, but the party must show it will stick to its guns on improving workers' rights."

While many in the party acknowledge there is little evidence that the public are enthusiastic about the prospect of an incoming Labour government, there is some evidence that the electorate expects things to improve more under Labour than under the Tories. According to research by the More in Common group, people tend to expect that NHS waiting lists would go up under the Conservatives, but down under Labour, and even believe that a Tory government would be more likely to increase taxes than a Labour one.

Corbyn's backers have the passion – do they have the numbers?

Ex-Labour leader goes it alone in the seat he has held for 41 years





Islington North

Andrew Anthony

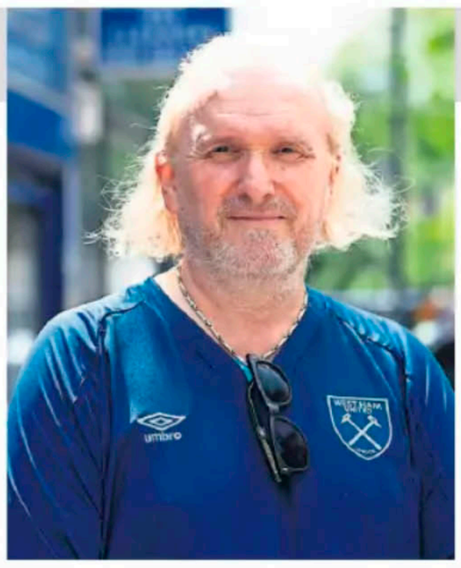
Backers of Jeremy Corbyn, above right, Jim Munro, top, and Primal Scream's Bobby Gillespie, above top. Support for the ex-Labour leader at one local cafe last year, above. Teri Pengilley/ the Observer; Martin Godwin; PA

Ever since the Labour party withdrew the whip from Jeremy Corbyn in 2020 after he claimed that antisemitism in the party had been overstated, there has been much speculation about whether the former Labour leader would run as an independent.

Last week Corbyn announced that he would stand independently in Islington North, the constituency he has represented for 41 years, on a platform of "social justice, human rights and peace".

"It's a big gamble," says a local Labour councillor. "If he's defeated, it would be a terrible blow to him."

Defeat is a distinct possibility, not least because it's extremely rare for independents to win at general elections. Both Corbyn and his neighbouring MP in Hackney North, Diane Abbott, have been left out in the cold – she has been suspended for more than a year. Keir Starmer would doubtless take it as a validation of his tough stance if the godfather of Corbynism is democratically rejected.





For these reasons, his friends say Corbyn has deliberated long and hard. They also emphasise that he remains emotionally attached to a party he joined 58 years ago as a 16-year-old.

Standing against him as the Labour candidate will be Praful Nargund, an Islington councillor and private health entrepreneur – it's perhaps significant that Corbyn emphasised last week that he would "never take donations from private healthcare".

That kind of statement plays well to many in Islington (even the ones with private health insurance). And in Highbury there is no shortage of Corbyn supporters, but not all of them will be supporting Corbyn.

A government worker in her late 20s, who wishes to remain anonymous, used to be "obsessed" with Corbyn, she says, "but I'm probably going to vote Labour".

Her boyfriend, David, is less troubled. "Corbyn had his chance as leader. I want to see a change at the national level, so I'm voting Labour."

Sue, a middle-aged woman who can't give her surname, is "conflicted". She wanted to see Corbyn readmitted to the Labour party and is dismayed that he was rebuffed while former Tory MP for Dover Natalie Elphicke was personally welcomed by Starmer.

A Labour insider insists that Corbyn was given "many opportunities to row back" on his repudiation of the party's position on antisemitism. There have also been suggestions from Labour that Abbott has dragged her feet in complying with her investigation process.

'I'll definitely vote for Corbyn – a great British patriot who wants the best for everybody'

Bobby Gillespie, Primal Scream

But Abbott is adamant that Starmer is wrong to claim that the decision about whether to let her back into the party – due to be taken on 4 June – has nothing to do with him. "It has EVERYTHING to do with him," she tweeted on Friday.

Sue thinks Corbyn has been a great community MP. "I want to vote Labour, but it seems a bit of a kick in the teeth to him," she says, adding that at the moment she is "50/50".

There is no such deliberation from two pronounced Corbyn supporters.

"Jeremy Corbyn has always stood firm for what he's believed in," says Jim Munro. "Lifelong Labour supporters like me have to make a statement. It may just show the Labour party that they need to rethink some of the things they're doing."

Further up Highbury Park, the Primal Scream singer Bobby Gillespie is on his way to celebrate his wife's birthday. "I'll definitely vote for Corbyn," he says.

He described the former Labour leader as a "great British patriot who wants the best for everybody". Getting into his stride in a long disquisition on the state of Britain, he says he's disillusioned with parliamentary politics, quotes Noam Chomsky and denounces the "worldwide network of financial capitalism" before finishing off with a two-fingered salute and: "Fuck Labour."

Most people I spoke to in Highbury were intending to vote Labour. Some expressed their dislike of the Corbyn cult – one woman scoffed: "He hasn't changed his mind since he met Tony Benn" – but most just saw a Labour vote as the most effective means of helping to oust the Tories. No one had heard of Nargund, and no one was strongly in favour of Starmer.

The calculation that Corbyn's people are making is that some of the nearly 200,000 members who have left Labour since Corbyn resigned as leader four years ago will volunteer in Islington North as canvassers. But the local councillor argues that such an influx would alienate rather than gain voters.

"I don't think a Corbyn fan club has got the canvassing experience and organisational capability," he says.

Rumour persists that some senior figures in the local party, to which Corbyn has been very close over the years, might yet defect to his cause or help his campaign surreptitiously. But they are so far just that: rumours.

Of course Islington North is only one constituency. So large is the Labour majority that even if Corbyn splits the vote, it won't allow in a third party. Yet politics is not just pragmatic. It's also about symbolism and even sometimes romanticism.

If Corbyn were to win, against national trends, it would be a small but heartening victory for the embattled left. But by the same token, defeat would mean an ignominious end to a parliamentary career that has spanned five decades and will almost certainly be the final nail in the coffin for Corbynism.

General election 2024

It looks like 1997 again – but the prospects are not yet wholly bleak for the Tories



Sunak's gamble needs an unprecedented turnaround to pay off – and he faces challenges from both flanks, writes *Robert Ford*

Here we go again. For the third time in a row, the general election starting gun has been fired early by a Conservative prime minister. Theresa May started well ahead and nearly lost it all. Boris Johnson started well ahead and took that lead to the bank. Rishi Sunak doesn't start with his predecessors' advantages – his is the gamble of a man with nothing to lose.

Victory requires an unprecedented turnaround. All the evidence suggests it is Keir Starmer who is about to make history. But he, too, faces a mammoth task in the coming weeks as he seeks to take Labour from its worst Commons defeat in 90 years to a governing majority in one big leap.

When examining the challenges facing both men, the words "since 1997" are unavoidable. Sunak's Conservatives face their biggest polling deficit since 1997. This is the first Tory government to trail Labour on the economy since 1997. Starmer's Labour is favoured on all the major issues for the first time since 1997. The opposition needs the biggest swing since, yes, 1997.

Yet the prospect is not entirely bleak for the Conservatives, nor wholly sunny for Labour.

Sunak has a healthy majority; Starmer knows he needs to gain 150 seats to secure a working majority. That is a massive mountain to climb, and requires the Labour leader to match or exceed Tony Blair's 1997 electoral achievements just to secure a slender working majority.

While Sunak starts the campaign even less popular than John Major, Starmer is no Blair – polling conveys grudging respect, not the exceptional enthusiasm found in Blair's early approval ratings.

Neither Sunak nor Starmer has had their leadership tested in the furnace of a general election campaign before. Many of the voters who only tune in as polling day approaches will be judging both for the first time. First impressions could be particularly important with many who have not decided or say they could yet change their minds. The undecided skew unusually Tory this time, with many who backed Johnson telling pollsters they haven't yet made a choice – this group could provide an opportunity for Sunak and a challenge for Starmer.

Labour does start the campaign with three big opportunities, two familiar to Blair and one not.

The first is that Labour has recently developed a knack for advancing most where it most needs to advance. This pattern, known as proportional swing, is hugely important – if Labour treads water where it starts ahead, but makes big gains where it needs to win, then the opposition's vote becomes dramatically more efficient.

A second pattern reinforces this – large-scale tactical voting, with voters so determined to remove Conservative incumbents that they will coalesce behind whoever is best placed to defeat them. This will provide opportunities for smaller parties, notably the Lib Dems.

Both patterns reflect a strong anti-Tory mood, familiar to Blair and his team. But the anti-incumbent mood may also help on a battleground unfamiliar to New Labour veterans – Scotland. Current polling suggests a huge swing against the nationalists that could sweep dozens of Scottish Labour MPs into the Commons.

Then there is Reform UK, which, by standing candidates in hundreds of Tory seats where there was no Brexit party candidate in 2019, threatens to split the Tory vote.

Reform, though weaker overall than Ukip, is more threatening to the Conservatives, who are now more reliant on the immigration hardliners who find Nigel Farage most appealing. Yet tacking to the right to see off this challenge risks further tarnishing the Tory brand with moderate voters.

This election will be a messy, noisy and complex affair. Yet at its heart lies a simple choice: change, or more of the same. Governments stand and fall

ON OTHER PAGES

Lib Dems blitz 'blue wall'
This section, page 10

Election diary: Reform, Redwood and a Titanic error
This section, page 10

The man who would be PM
Focus, pages 33–36

Sunak's summer election gamble is already backfiring
Andrew Rawnsley, Comment, page 43

Sunak promises to bring back national service for 18-year-olds

Young people

Michael Savage
Policy Editor

Rishi Sunak announced last night that a future Conservative government would bring back mandatory national service last night, as he attempted to reignite his election campaign after an error-strewn start.

Under the plan, which appeared to be his latest attempt to reduce Tory losses by winning over voters drifting to Reform UK, the prime minister said that every 18-year-old would have to spend time in a competitive, full-time military commission or spend one weekend a month volunteering in "civil resilience".

The party said that the country needed to be "open and honest" about the long-term challenges it is facing, adding the scheme would ensure young people had "the opportunities they deserve".

The proposals would see a "bold new model of national service" for 18-year-olds that could see them opt to spend one weekend per month volunteering in roles such as special constable, RNLI volunteer, or NHS responder. Officials claimed it would give young people "real world skills, while contributing to their country and community".

In practice, a royal commission would be set up to design the new national service programme, leading to a pilot programme to open for applications in September 2025. However, it would be backed in law by a National Service Act.

The Tories insisted the scheme did not amount to conscription, stating that the Covid pandemic had shown the importance of civic service. The party said that a new scheme was "completely essential".

"Only by nurturing our shared culture and fostering a sense of duty can we preserve our nation and values for decades to come. This is an investment in both the character of young people and our security," it said.

It insisted a similar scheme was successful in Sweden, claiming 80% of young people completing national service said they would recommend it to their peers.

Labour lambasted the idea as another uncosted policy from the Tories, who have already raised the prospect of tax cuts they have yet to fund. "This is another desperate, £2.5bn unfunded commitment from a Tory party which already crashed the economy, sending mortgages rocketing, and now they're spoiling for more," said a spokesperson.

"This is not a plan – it's a review which could cost billions and is only needed because the Tories hollowed



Isabel Infantes/Reuters, Simon Chapman/LNP, Lesley Martin and Lucy North/both PA

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
Tory supporters in London last week; Lib Dem deputy leader Daisy Cooper, right, with campaign worker in St Albans; Green candidate Carla Denyer with supporters in Bristol; SNP leader John Swinney and Reform UK leader Richard Tice.

on their records. In this parliament, incomes have fallen and bills have risen. Healthcare is unavailable and housing is unaffordable.

Change is attractive when the status quo has manifestly failed. As Ronald Reagan famously asked: "Are you better off now than you were four years ago?" Voters know the answer to that question. They have for some time. And that is why, barring miracles or disasters, a change of government is just weeks away.

Robert Ford is professor of political science at Manchester University



UK army cadets. A new national service scheme is being proposed.

out the armed forces to their smallest size since Napoleon. Britain has had enough of the Conservatives, who are bankrupt of ideas, and have no plans to end 14 years of chaos. It's time to ... rebuild Britain with Labour."

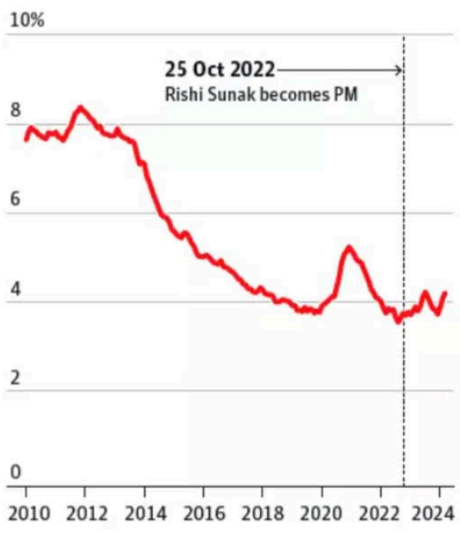
The Tories said the scheme would be part-funded through a £1bn tax avoidance clampdown and £1.5bn currently spent on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. A similar scheme was outlined in 2010 by David Cameron. Under his proposals, a special youth programme for 16-year-olds would be established to end a "pointless waste of potential" among teenagers. The plans never came to fruition.

Sunak was accused of hypocrisy over his scheme. In January, the prime minister rebuked the chief of the general staff, Sir Patrick Sanders, following his suggestion the UK might need a citizen army to fight Putin. The prime minister's spokesman said at the time that Sunak did not agree with his comments and insisted there would be no return to national service, which was abolished in 1960.

Labour figures also privately accused the Tories of making 18-year-olds fix the problems the government had created, by boosting numbers in the military, helping the NHS and repairing infrastructure.

UK unemployment rate increased in the first three months of 2024

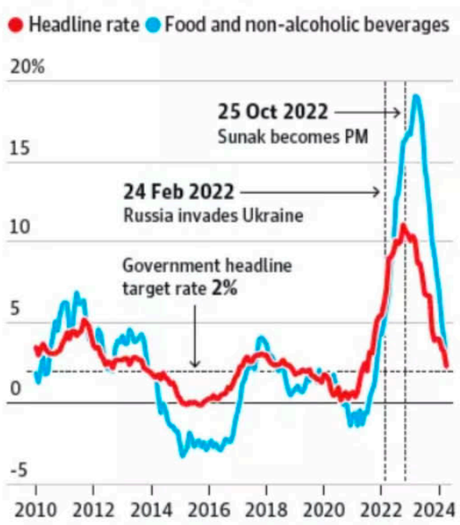
Unemployment rate for people aged 16 and over



Source: ONS. Labour market overview, May 2024

Inflation has fallen from a high of 11.1% in October 2022 to 2.3%

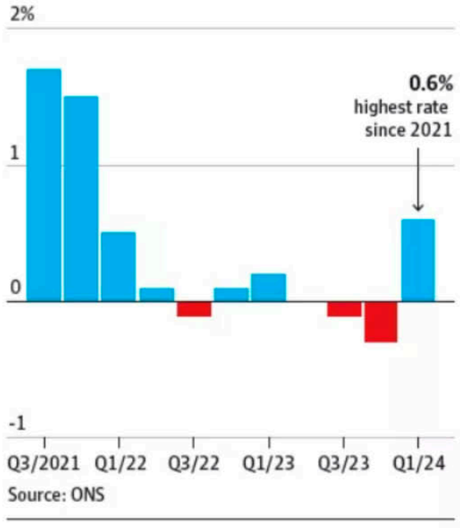
CPI annual inflation rate, %



Source: ONS

UK GDP growth largely stagnant since the end of the pandemic

Quarter-on-quarter GDP growth, seasonally adjusted



Source: ONS

Why did the PM go early? It was (brief) good news for the economy, stupid

Analysis

Phillip Inman
Economics Editor



There was an economic logic to Rishi Sunak's election dash, a decision that defied earlier predictions of a vote in the autumn or even winter. The prime minister could see that hopes of a recovery were fading, and with them his chances of redemption as the architect of Britain's future prosperity.

Unemployment was going to continue rising. Inflation, after falling steadily over the past year, could bounce back in the autumn. And interest rates, which are a burden for mortgage payers and indebted businesses alike, looked like remaining stubbornly high.

This all meant an economy that had looked set a few months ago to be gathering strength without generating higher inflation – and with flat prices allowing the Bank of England to reduce the cost of borrowing – would be at best a neutral factor in the election, and at worst a stick for Labour to beat the government with. A vote-enhancing outcome was still possible, but the balance of risk had shifted – and not in Sunak's favour.

Crucial to this outlook for the economy were less-than-sunny reports from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). They both predicted that, after a modest bounceback from last year's recession, the momentum to drive growth would be lacking until at least next year.

The OECD was especially pessimistic: it poured buckets of cold water on Sunak's aspirations by suggesting that annual growth this year would be just 0.4%. The IMF pitched in with a slightly higher increase of 0.7%.

Official figures published after these reports showed that in the first three months of the year the economy grew by 0.6%, but privately many economists thought this would be revised down at a later date, and that with the Conservatives still in charge, growth would not climb above 1% for 2024.

Some Tory strategists, keen on playing a longer game, focused their hopes on a bigger drop in inflation through the year than was expected by the major international forecasters.

If inflation fell below the Bank of England's target of 2% and stayed there, these insiders believed, the central bank would be duty bound to reduce interest rates. Three or four cuts could, they thought, see the rate drop from its current 5.25% to nearer 4%, generating a feelgood factor that could disguise stagnation in the wider economy.

The Capital Economics consultancy has predicted that inflation will follow this path, falling dramatically over the next few months and staying low, triggering a series of interest rate cuts. However, some forecasters sit firmly on the other side of the fence, arguing that inflation could return, as it has in the US.

UK inflation dropped to 2.3% in April, but that was a smaller-than-expected fall, and once analysts dug into the data, they found signs of persistently high price rises in the services sector that were likely to prevent overall inflation falling much further. This persuaded the financial markets that the UK was likely to push back the first interest rate cut, possibly to November.

Sunak was also shocked by the IMF's assessment of the public finances and its view that a £30bn gap had appeared between what the government expected to spend and its forecast revenues over the next five years.

The IMF said that, to be certain of stabilising debt by 2029-30, the government would need to increase borrowing, raise taxes or make savings equivalent to 1% of GDP – roughly £30bn.

Deficit figures from the Office for National Statistics supported this view, showing that the government was off to a poor start in April, the first month of the financial year.

A July election allows Sunak to boast about figures that register a modest return to growth in the first quarter, low unemployment and rising consumer confidence. He can say inflation is falling, and there is every sign it will have dropped again when figures for May appear – on 19 June, two weeks before polling day.

Such bragging is unlikely to win favour with a public battered by waves of unnecessary economic shocks, from Boris Johnson's hard Brexit to Liz Truss's mini-budget fiasco. The millions of people barely able to cope with shop prices 20% higher than they were in 2021 will also need a more substantial recovery before they can smile again.

The logic for Sunak of going to the polls early is clear. What is more difficult to discern is how it changes the outcome.

General election 2024



Ed Davey, left, joins candidate Jess Brown-Fuller on a boat trip during his visit to Birdham Pool Marina, Chichester, yesterday. Andrew Matthews/PA

Lib Dems blitz 'blue wall' in bid to beat senior Tories

Party will distribute millions of leaflets in early attack on key constituencies, writes *Michael Savage*

More than 2 million leaflets will be distributed by the Liberal Democrats in their target "blue wall" seats this weekend as the party launches its bid to dislodge some of the most senior Conservatives from parliament.

The seats of cabinet ministers Jeremy Hunt and Gillian Keegan have been included in the party's long-planned assault on liberal Tory heartland seats that have been drifting away from the party since 2019. Michael Gove's Surrey Heath seat was already in Lib Dem plans before the levelling up secretary announced on Friday night he was stepping down.

Lib Dem strategists said the party had to deploy a leafleting and digital advertising blitz early on to convince voters, especially those intending to vote Labour in these seats, that Lib Dems were better placed to remove the Tory incumbent.

While they believe tactical voting has the potential to work, they want to reach voters while they are focused on the announcement of the election.

The Lib Dems are now seeking to begin a "Labour squeeze" in a collection of target seats in Tory southern heartlands. It means the swift return of Lib Dem bar charts claiming they are the only party with a realistic chance of removing the incumbent Tory MP.

Activists have already been warned they have a "critical" job to reach voters in the opening weeks of the campaign. A series of 200 digital ads across dozens of seats where the Lib Dems are the main threat to the Tories are being sent to Labour voters.

In Hunt's new seat of Godalming and Ash, for example, the party has compiled a chart based on 2023 local election results, suggesting that it is notionally only narrowly behind the Tories. It argues the party is the "clear choice" in the area and is desperately hoping Labour will not bother to pump its own resources into the seat.

"We saw in our recent byelection wins that even massive Tory majorities can be overturned when people swing behind us as the party most likely to beat the Conservatives," said a Lib Dem source. "Several cabinet ministers are vulnerable, but to deliver a Portillo moment we need Labour supporters to lend us their support.

"We know these opening weeks of the campaign will be critical, which is why we are aiming to reach as many voters as possible in marginal seats where Labour can't win but we can." Other senior Tories who had been in the sights of the Lib Dems have already stepped down in the past week, after Rishi Sunak announced the election. Lib Dems had been heavily targeting former Tory cabinet minister John Redwood in Wokingham, but he revealed on Friday that he would not run. Another former cabinet minister on their list, Greg Clark in Tunbridge Wells, also announced he was not standing again.

Running a highly targeted campaign could not be more different from the party's disastrous 2019 strategy, when it billed former leader Jo Swinson as an alternative prime minister and ran a firmly anti-Brexit message that it believed could see it win as many as 200 seats. When the votes were counted, it returned only 11 MPs, while Swinson lost her own seat to the SNP.

A review into that defeat summed it up as a "high-speed car crash". After a change of course, the party opted to focus on building activist bases in constituencies where it saw potential. They claim that, while the tactic has seen its national poll share remain flat for some time, it is concentrating votes in the right places – with realistic ambitions for modest gains.

More recently, the party has been attempting to create a second front in the south-west, where it used to be a strong presence before the decision to enter the Tory-led coalition government.

On the stump: Michael Savage



History boys

Every election needs some questionable statistics. Lovers of crimes against line graphs will be pleased to hear of one from Reform UK showing migration since 1066, which missed out migration spikes long before William the Conk was even a twinkle in his father's eye. A major peak came, for instance, about 25,000 years ago, when the population went up from zero – a startling increase – and Reform also had nothing to say about the Romans, Anglo-Saxons or Beakers. And why leave the Vikings out? Reform's obsession with small boats might have actually captured the zeitgeist.

Redwood felled

Timber! Among the Tory MPs making a rather unseemly bolt for the exit is former comedy leadership candidate John Redwood. Among his greatest hits is the fact he was nicknamed "Vulcan" by colleagues, on account of a passing resemblance to Mr Spock – minus the uncanny reasoning abilities. In many ways Redwood was ahead of his time. In 1993, his attempt to sing the Welsh national anthem before realising he didn't actually know the words was so potent with absurdity that it managed to go viral before social media was even invented.



Who needs satire?

Fuelling unemployment is rarely the aim of any politician, but Rishi Sunak's first few campaign days threaten to send satirists straight to the dole queue. When the prime minister forgets that rain is wet and Welsh people don't like to be reminded about the Euros, your services aren't required. But Sunak's trip to Belfast's Titanic quarter as MPs headed for the lifeboats felt a bit too on the nose. Do his planners have other coastal visits in mind? Perhaps a photoshoot on the beach where Neil Kinnock was knocked over? Failing that, West Sussex is usually safe territory. Any decent venues in Goring-by-Sea?



Deja vu in Islington

There are few new things in politics – except the time a Tory MP caught watching porn claimed he'd been looking for tractors. Take North Islington, where Jeremy Corbyn will stand as an independent against the party he once led. Sounds familiar? That's because in 1983, the former MP for Islington North ran against Labour as an independent. It may ring a bell with the fresh-faced Labour candidate back then – one J Corbyn.

A different kind of thrill

Wycombe's Tory MP and self-styled Brexit hardman Steve Baker had clearly given some thought to his post-parliament activities should he fail to retain his seat. When asked what he might get up to next, he instantly reeled off his high-octane and in no way overly specific wishlist of "skydiving, motorcycling, fast catamaran sailing". Having survived the damage that Liz Truss did to his party's poll ratings during her time in No 10, Baker seems to be, understandably, looking for something a bit less hair-raising.

It's murder off the dance floor: how overtourism is forcing Ibiza's workers to live in vans





ABOVE Felipe Keilis-Carrasco, a musician from Argentina, left behind the rental market and his home is now an old caravan. Patricia Escriche/ the Observer

LEFT Sunset at Cala Benirras in Ibiza. Europa Press/ Getty

A surge in visitors has locked locals out of the housing market and across the Balearics protests are growing

Sam Jones
Ibiza

In a hot, dusty car park within sight of Ibiza's old town, but a world away from the Balearic island's hedonistic clubs and bougainvillaea-fringed villas, Ami Mohamed-Ali sits in his van, patiently brewing the first of three late-afternoon cups of strong tea.

"The first glass is bitter like life," says the 33-year-old seasonal worker from Western Sahara, quoting an old refrain. "The second is sweet, like love, and the third is soft, like death." As he adjusts the camping stove and pours the liquid from glass to glass to ensure a decent head of foam, Mohamed-Ali ponders his living quarters without a trace of life's bitterness. So what if this van is his home for the next six months?

"I don't really like to complain because I'm from a refugee camp that's home to thousands of people," he says. "Plus, I'm much better off than a lot of my countrymen, who are living in the desert."

Mohamed-Ali is one of a growing number of locals and foreign workers who find themselves locked out of Ibiza's rental market. Faced with exorbitant rents for cramped, shared homes, many have little choice but to live in vans, caravans or tents.

In Ibiza – as in neighbouring Mallorca and in the Canary islands – it is increasingly obvious that neither the island nor its housing market can put up with the huge numbers of tourists that arrive each year.

"Over five years – but mainly since the pandemic – people have been feeling that everything's oversaturated and that leads to roads and public services becoming overloaded," says Rafael Giménez, of Prou Eivissa (Enough Ibiza), a group that is campaigning for limits on the number of visitors and vehicles on the island.

"Ibiza's an island, so housing is limited by definition. The law of supply and demand has broken down."

Tourism accounts for 84% of the island's economy and last year, a record 3.7 million tourists visited Ibiza and the smaller, neighbouring island of Formentera, whose combined population is around 160,000.

Giménez stresses that Prou Eivissa is not opposed to tourism. The problem, he says, is overtourism, the issue that led tens of thousands to protest in the Canaries last month, and which was behind Prou's demonstration on Ibiza on Friday night.



LEFT Around 1,500 activists on the streets of Ibiza on Friday night, protesting against overtourism. Geoff Robinson/ Bav Media

> *'Here I have solar panels, electricity and heating. I'm a self-sufficient, sustainable snail now'*
> *Leonardo Nogueira, chef*

Thousands more people protested last night against mass tourism ahead of the summer season. Holding placards reading "SOS Residents, Enough Mass Tourism", protesters marched through Palma de Mallorca, the capital of the largest Balearic Island. About 10,000 took part, a Spanish National police spokesperson said. A smaller protest with a few hundred people was staged in Menorca.

"Tourism's always been here – it was here when I was growing up – but there was a balance," Giménez says. "It's not like we don't want tourism; that's not the case at all. But when it starts affecting your life directly, then things have got out of control."

Giménez says holiday homes and tourist flats are not the only problem. "The fact that you have more tourists and more tourist properties means that you need more workers from elsewhere to work in the shops, bars and restaurants," he says. "Those workers need more housing."

These days, he adds, it is common to find up to eight people sharing a three-bedroom flat, and rents have almost doubled over the past decade, rising from €800 a month to at least €1,500.

Mariano Juan, the vice-president of Ibiza's governing *consell*, says that while he understands the malaise that prompted Friday's demonstration, the problem lies not with tourism, but with illegal tourism.

He says that Ibiza's licensed tourist capacity has shrunk over the past two decades from around 109,000 beds to just under 100,000 as smaller hotels have shut or reduced their room count to focus on quality rather than quantity.

"If the association organising the demonstration is suggesting ... cutting the number of legal tourist places then maybe we're not getting to the root of the problem, which is the illegal market," he says. "It's the thousands of adverts on Airbnb and the hundreds on Booking.com. It's all just mushroomed since social networks made it all easier to find illegal accommodation."

To that end, he says, the government has been cracking down on illicit landlords, who can be fined €40,000 just for advertising an illegal letting.

"For many years now, the *consell* has been working to promote family, sporting, gastronomic, medical and conference tourism," he adds. "Five or 10 years ago, we used to dream of having a tourist season that lasted five or six months – not just three months of sun and partying. We're now getting a seven-month season ... so we're already managing to change the tourist model."

In the meantime, car parks and campsites are playing home to the bricks-and-mortar homeless. Given the stresses of cramped, shared flats, some have even come to embrace the freedom of a mobile home.

Leonardo Nogueira, a 45-year-old Uruguayan chef, swapped his €800-a-month, one-bed flat for a Fiat campervan last year. So far, he has no regrets and there is enough room for the essential creature comforts: his coffee pot, *yerba maté*, guitar, surfboard and bike. "Here I have solar panels, electricity and heating. I'm a self-sufficient, sustainable snail now."

Similarly phlegmatic is Felipe Keilis-Carrasco, a musician from Argentina who plays clubs, bars, weddings and birthdays with his *cumbia* band. Having left behind the rental market, home is now an old caravan he bought for €2,000. "I don't think it's that bad," he says.

Such equanimity is not universal. One Romanian man, who asks not to be named, has now spent two of his 10 years in Ibiza living in a caravan. "Things aren't going to change; they're only going to get worse," he says. "This is an island for rich people."

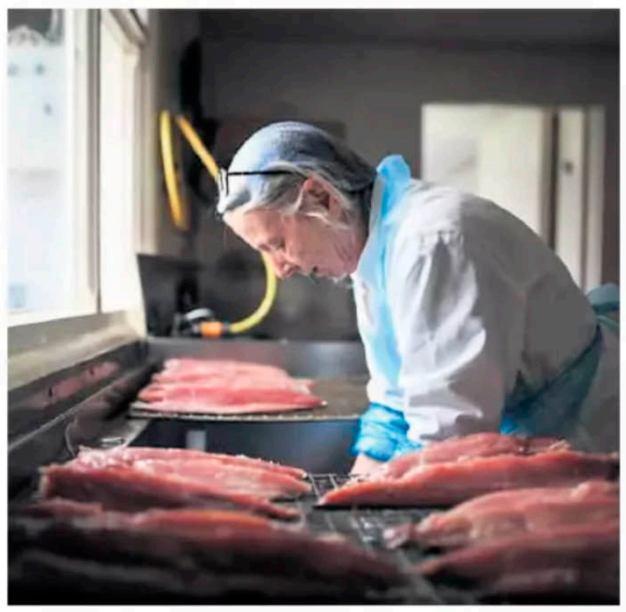






Sally Ferns Barnes at her Woodcock Smokery in West Cork, Ireland.







Gourmet food awards forced to move to Ireland to avoid Brexit red tape

Some producers now say the paperwork for exports is not worth the effort or the cost. *James Tapper* reports

The Great Taste awards are a British success story – the world's largest food awards, celebrating the best products on the planet. But new post-Brexit import controls have forced the organisers to hold a judging panel outside the UK for the first time in the awards' 30-year history.

Today, judges from the Guild of Fine Foods panel will travel to County Tipperary in Ireland to spend three days tasting products that have become much harder to bring to the UK.

Since January, anyone sending meat, dairy or fish products to the UK has to find a vet to fill out a seven-page form showing that the product is disease-free. And since April, exporters have also had to pay a fee of £29 for each product, whether it's a container full of Irish beef or a single packet of Tayto cheese and onion crisps, unless they are for personal use. This includes the 13,672 samples sent to the Great Taste judges from 115 countries.

John Farrand, the managing director of the Guild of Fine Food, said: "The friction at the borders has tripped us up this year. We're a bellwether for the wider problems in the market. We're going to judge [in Clonmel, Co Tipperary] to help the smaller food and drink producers who can't cope with the paperwork and the cost."

Some judging will still take place in the UK. Sally Ferns Barnes, a Scot who founded the Woodcock Smokery in West Cork in 1981 and won supreme champion at the 2006 Great Taste awards for her cold-smoked wild Atlantic salmon, is not entering this year. "I didn't enter because I thought, 'what's the point – I can't offer it to customers in the UK any more.'"

Barnes is the last Irish producer working exclusively with wild salmon – she refuses to use farmed salmon, and this creates a problem with the paperwork to export to the UK.

Fish get a "catch certificate" when they are landed to prove their origin, and Barnes needs this certificate to be able to apply for a vet's health certificate to export to the UK. "An issue with wild salmon is that you don't get catch certificates because it's a freshwater fishery," she said.

"I've spoken to other producers who would have been exporting, and most of them are not interested any more. We'll look to Europe instead."

The possibility that a paperwork error will mean that entire consignments are delayed or even destroyed is a major risk.

Border controls for the new Brexit red tape will cost at least £4.7bn, the National Audit Office said last week, and importers have complained that perishable shipments of food and flowers have faced delays because computer systems have failed.

Overall, the cost of importing alone is likely to add £1bn to the UK's food bill, according to the Cold Chain Federation, although the government estimates the cost will be £330m a year. Fruit and vegetables are not yet subject to the new rules but are expected to be included from October.

The import controls also affect suppliers to larger retailers, including supermarkets. "The government is telling us to do more trade with Europe and the rest of the world in light of Brexit," Farrand said. "And we're busy trying to get business with retailers, but the movement of samples is being affected by border controls.

"We are removing the colour, diversity and interest in our food and drink. We're going to end up with fewer suppliers. That's bad for our economy and for our nutrition."

A government spokesperson said: "These border checks are fundamental to protecting the UK's food supply chain, farmers and natural environment against costly diseases.

"The cost is negligible compared to the impact of a major disease outbreak, such as foot and mouth disease in 2001, which cost our economy more than £12.8bn in 2022 prices."

'We are removing the colour, diversity and interest in our food. That's bad for our economy and nutrition'
John Farrand

ON OTHER PAGES
Labour can gamble over Europe
Bill Keegan, Business, page 55

Just can't get the staff: royal retreat shuts doors to tourists

Richard Palmer & James Tapper

Even the monarchy is not immune to Brexit. The king's London home, Clarence House, will be closed to tourists this summer because of staff shortages in the royal household caused by Brexit and the pandemic.

Palace officials had hoped to open this summer, along with another royal retreat, Frogmore House, where Prince Harry and Meghan had their evening wedding reception. But the Royal Collection Trust, the department of the royal household that oversees tourist visits to the palaces, has struggled to find people willing to work in front-of-house, retail, catering and other jobs.

It means that officials only have enough people to staff the other properties on what is known as the Occupied Royal Palaces estate – a disappointment for anyone hoping to get an insight into how the king lives.

Interest in Clarence House, a four-storey 19th-century building in the Mall where Charles has lived since 2003, has risen since the coronation.

"We've been concentrating on other palaces and areas," said a spokeswoman for the Royal Collection Trust. "I think there would be renewed interest in it [Clarence House], given that it is now the home of the monarch."

Her department lost 150 staff to redundancy during the pandemic, when the trust was forced to draw down up to £33.5m from a £52m loan facility from Coutts just to keep going during the lockdowns. "We lost a lot of experienced staff who could lead tours," she said.

No one is sure exactly how important the royal family is to British tourism. But royal residences have been popular attractions since first opening to the public during the summer of 1993, and last year Windsor Great Park attracted more than 5 million visitors, making it the third most visited attraction in the UK.

Clarence House also used to open every summer but was closed for short-term building work in 2019 and has never reopened.



A Guards band plays in the gardens of Clarence House.

The staff problems facing the royal residences are shared across Britain's tourism industry. UK Hospitality estimates there are 132,000 vacancies, and the 11% vacancy rate compares with 4% across the UK. European students who used to fill summer jobs while improving their English now need expensive work visas.

The result is that only six of the eight main royal residences can open this summer, with most attention focusing on Buckingham Palace's east wing, which tourists will be able to see for the first time, including the Centre Room that leads out to the famous palace balcony.

Beatings, brandings and suicides: life on plantations overseen by the Church of England

Documents from Lambeth Palace archives show how an 18th-century archbishop approved the purchase of enslaved people for the notorious Codrington sugar estate



Desirée Baptiste & Jon Ungoed-Thomas

In the 18th century an enslaved mixed-race woman named Quasheba escaped from a sugar plantation where she was held captive on Barbados.

There are no records of Quasheba's fate, but the horrific conditions from which she fled in 1783 are well-documented. She is simply recorded in official papers as "run away".

Other enslaved people on the same plantations killed themselves in the face of violence, punishment and tyranny. People transported from west Africa were forced "under the whip" to harvest canes and carry them to the mills to be crushed and boiled. Many were branded with hot irons.

The sugar estate, known as the Codrington plantations, generated an estimated £5m a year in today's money and covered 763 acres. It was owned and overseen by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), the missionary arm of the Church of England.

The Codrington estate is now one of the focal points in a public debate about the Church of England's links to chattel slavery, in which people were traded as personal property.

The *Observer* this weekend reveals evidence found in the archives of Lambeth Palace library of how an archbishop of Canterbury in the 18th century approved funds to buy enslaved people.

Justin Welby, the archbishop of Canterbury, this weekend said it was "particularly painful" to read that a predecessor was involved in buying enslaved people. He said: "While nothing can fully atone for these crimes, we are committed to finding out more, realising this will take many years."

RIGHT Codrington College, a theological institution on the plantation estate, which is still operating today.





'I think there is a lot more that will reveal the extent to which the Church was involved in slavery'

Prof Robert Beckford

Robert Beckford, professor of social justice at the University of Winchester, said: "I think there is a lot more in the archives that will reveal the extent to which the Church of England was involved in transatlantic chattel slavery and this was probably just the tip of the iceberg."

Beckford said a more thorough review was required to quantify the extent of the church's links. He claimed the Church had previously "distanced" itself from its activities in the SPG, and needed to acknowledge "this difficult part of its history".

In 1710 Christopher Codrington, a colonial administrator and plantation owner, left on his death a bequest to the SPG of the two plantations in the east of Barbados. His will stipulated they should be maintained and "continued entire with three hundred negros at least kept always thereon" and that the estate should be used for education, with "a convenient number of professors and scholars ... all of them to be under the vows of poverty and chastity and obedience."

Codrington, a former fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, also left a £10,000 bequest to All Souls for a new library. The college has put a memorial plaque at the entrance to the library in memory of those who worked in slavery on the plantations.

Enslaved people on the estate left to the SPG were until at least 1732 branded "society" on the chest with hot irons, to show they were the property of the Church's missionary arm. One plantation manager was a "particularly vicious" individual, according to a source cited by historian Travis Glasson in his book *Mastering Christianity: Missionary Anglicanism and Slavery in the Atlantic World*.

Death rates among enslaved people were high. From 1710 to 1838, it is estimated that between 600 and 1,200 lived and died on the plantations. From 1712 to 1761 the SPG purchased at least 450 enslaved Africans.

Rewards were paid for the return of escapees. In August 1725, the plantation paid 12 pounds and six shillings for the return of five "runaway negroes", according to documents seen by the *Observer*.

The SPG was overseen by Church of England leaders and the incumbent archbishop of Canterbury would typically serve as its president. On 17 November 1758 Thomas Secker, the then archbishop, chaired a meeting of the SPG and agreed to reimburse funds to the society accounts for "the purchase of new negroes [from Africa] and for the hire of enslaved labour from a third party".

Secker was told the measures were "calculated for the future lasting advantage of the estates". It was agreed that £1,093 be paid. Two years later Secker approved another payment of £264 for new enslaved people. A meeting, chaired by Secker on 15 August 1760, recorded the funds were for "the purchase of nine negroes".

Secker's personal correspondence that year indicates an awareness that the need for new purchases of enslaved people from Africa was con-



ABOVE
The coast of Barbados, where the Church of England's missionary operation once owned sugar plantations.
Getty

LEFT
Justin Welby giving a sermon during a visit to Zanzibar.

BELOW
Archbishop Thomas Secker and, bottom, Christopher Codrington.





Documents reveal extent of Church of England's ties to slavery

» *Continued from page 1*

trade in enslaved Africans, which was a blasphemy against God's creation in treating men, women and children as less than human.

"While nothing can fully atone for these crimes, we are committed to finding out more, realising that this will take many years and could span generations." He said research into "the most egregious aspects of our history" was "most welcome".

The SPG was left the two sugar plantations in 1710 by the colonial administrator Christopher Codrington. His will stipulated that he wanted the plantations to be worked with 300 enslaved people and a college to be founded on the estate. It has been estimated the plantations generated £5m a year in today's money.

The SPG was founded in 1701 by royal charter to convert people in the colonies and its governance meetings were regularly chaired by the incumbent archbishop of Canterbury. Successive archbishops of Canterbury were sworn in as SPG president throughout the period that enslaved persons worked on the plantations, from 1710 to 1838.

At meetings chaired by Secker in November 1758 and August 1760, payments were approved to reimburse accounts for the purchases of "new negroes", as well as hired enslaved labour, according to the documents in the Lambeth Palace Library archive.

Trevor Prescod, a Barbados MP and chair of the Barbados National Taskforce on Reparations, said the evidence showed the involvement of the church in slavery on the plantations "right up to the archbishop".

"The church was at the centre of establishing slavery and was probably one of the biggest benefactors," he said. "No one can understand the seriousness of this crime against humanity better than the church itself and it now has a responsibility to compensate all the victims of slavery."

Enslaved people on the Barbados plantations owned by the Church of England's missionary arm were branded with irons and forced to work "under the whip". A document listing those on the plantations in 1781 revealed 73 children among the enslaved people.

The Church of England apologised in 2006 for "its involvement in the slave trade" and operation of the Codrington Plantations but has not previously acknowledged the role of an archbishop of Canterbury in approving funds for the purchase of enslaved Africans.

The Church Commissioners, the body that manages the church's financial assets, published a full report in January last year on its financial links to the chattel slavery trade via the Queen Anne's Bounty, a fund used to supplement the income of clergy. It pledged £100m in a fund to "address past wrongs".

A report by an independent oversight group to advise the Church Commissioners on historic links to transatlantic chattel slavery recommended in March that the church "fund research to uncover the full picture of the Church's involvement in African chattel enslavement and use of the wealth derived from it".

In September last year, the United Society Partners in the Gospel, the successor organisation to the SPG, issued an apology over chattel slavery at its plantations which it recognised as "crimes against humanity".

The Church Commissioners said: "We have committed to undertake and enable further research, in the knowledge that our archives will have far more to tell about other ways in which the Church was involved in African chattel enslavement."

nected to the high death rate. In a 1760 letter to a bishop he wrote: "I have long wondered and lamented that the negroes in our plantations decrease and new supplies become necessary, continuously. Surely this proceeds from some defect, both of humanity and good policy. But we must take things as they are at present."

Research shows that by 1781 there were 162 enslaved persons who were field workers at Codrington, 73 of them children. Another 60 enslaved persons worked as stock keepers or in other jobs. A list of English manufactured goods shipped to the plantations in 1756 includes four dozen agricultural hoes "very small for children".

A school for white boys was opened on the estate in 1745, housed in an imposing building with thick limestone walls, and in 1830 Codrington College opened to train candidates for the ministry. It remains there today and is the oldest Anglican college in the Americas. It is managed by the Codrington Trust, established in 1983 and now the estate's governing body.

The SPG was united in 1965 with the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, forming what is now known as the United Society Partners in the Gospel (USPG). Justin Welby, the archbishop of Canterbury, is the USPG president, but it is now governed by an independent trustee board.

The church apologised in 2006 for its "involvement in the slave trade" and the operation of the Codrington estate, but faces calls to acknowledge the extent of its role in the plantations in Barbados and agree reparations.

The Church Commissioners, which manages Church assets, has done extensive work on its links to chattel slavery. It published a report last year showing how its £10bn endowment fund was partly linked to Queen Anne's Bounty, a financial scheme established in 1704 which invested funds in transatlantic chattel slavery.

The USPG apologised for its historic role at the Codrington estate in September last year. In a statement to the *Observer*, it said it pledged £7m in response to proposals from the Codrington Trust for a renewal and reconciliation project. The apology and investment was criticised for being announced without dialogue and agreement with the Barbados National Task Force on Reparations.

The Church Commissioners has said that questions on the work to address the history of the Codrington plantations are a matter for the USPG. An exhibition on historic links to chattel slavery last year only briefly touched on the plantations, but the Church states on its website there are further documents in the Lambeth Palace library and "we anticipate having more information and artefacts to share in due course".

Trevor Prescod, a Barbados MP and chair of the Barbados National Task Force on Reparations, said: "The church was one of the main bodies that justified enslavement of Africans. They can't escape that responsibility and must right the wrongs."

The Church Commissioners said: "The Church Commissioners is committed to researching its history and sharing our findings transparently. Some historians contacted us with feedback on the Lambeth Palace library exhibition last year – we are grateful for their feedback and will continue to welcome constructive engagement as we seek to learn and understand more."

Making reparations

In November 2023, insurance market Lloyd's of London agreed to invest £52m to promote racial equality in recognition of its "significant role" in the transatlantic slave trade. An independent review by Johns Hopkins University, in Baltimore, found the insurance market was part of "a sophisticated network of financial interests and activities" that made transatlantic slavery possible.

The Scott Trust, which owns the *Guardian* and *Observer*, apologised in March last year for the role the founders of the *Guardian* had in transatlantic slavery. Research commissioned in 2020 found John Edward Taylor, the journalist and cotton merchant who founded the *Manchester Guardian* in 1821, and at least nine of his 11 backers had links to chattel slavery. The trust said it expected to invest more than £10m during a decade of restorative justice. The *Guardian's* journalistic series, Cotton Capital, explores the history of transatlantic slavery and its legacy.

The Bank of England presented new research in an exhibition in 2022 that it had owned 599 enslaved people in the 1770s, after taking possession of two plantations in Grenada.

The National Trust published a report in September 2020 which found that up to a third of its properties had links to colonialism or slavery. It found 29 properties had links to successful claims for compensation after the abolition of slavery. The Slavery Abolition Act (1833) provided for £20m compensation to be paid to the owners of "slave property".

The brewery and pub chain Greene King, founded in 1799, apologised in June 2020 for its links to chattel slavery. Founder Benjamin Greene owned sugar plantations in the West Indies, where he enslaved people.



All-electric and Plug-in hybrid models available.

Discover more

Mpg (l/100km) (weighted combined): [282.5 (0.83) to 235.4 (1)]. CO_2 emissions (weighted): [23 -24g/km]. Electric energy consumption (weighted combined): [23.5 to 24.7 kWh/100Km] / [2.6 to 2.5 miles/kWh] (N.Comp). Equivalent all-electric range: [49.7 to 47.2 miles]. These figures were obtained using a combination of battery power and fuel. The 750e xDrive Excellence is a plug-in hybrid vehicle requiring mains electricity for charging. Figures shown are for comparability purposes. Only compare fuel consumption, CO_2 and electric range figures with other cars tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including, accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles, fuel type and vehicle load.

Mpg (l/100km): Not applicable. CO_2 emissions: 0 g/km. Electric energy consumption (combined): 18.5 to 19.6kWh/100Km / 3.36t o 3.17miles/kWh (N.Comp). Electric range: 366.6 to 387.1 miles. These figures were obtained after the battery had been fully charged. The i7 xDrive60 Excellence is a battery electric vehicle requiring mains electricity for charging. WLPT figures shown are for comparability purposes. Only compare fuel consumption, CO_2 and electric range figures with other cars tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the starting charge of the battery, accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load.

‘My heart is with the actors we left in Iran’: director’s poignant tribute





LEFT Mohammad Rasoulof at Cannes yesterday with members of his cast holding pictures of their missing co-stars Missagh Zareh and Soheila Golestani, above. Getty/Run Way Pictures

Exiled Mohammad Rasoulof praises absent cast and crew as his new movie wins an award at Cannes, writes *Vanessa Thorpe*

The exiled Iranian director Mohammad Rasoulof, who fled his home country last month before taking his new film to the Cannes festival where it won the special jury prize, has spoken of drawing from his encounters with the repressive justice system in the Islamic Republic.

Rasoulof, who fled Iran after receiving an eight-year prison sentence for making *The Seed of the Sacred Fig*, also made an impassioned call for resistance directed at the film-makers and artists he left behind.

“My only message to Iranian cinema is: don’t be afraid,” he said, adding that he believed the leadership of the theocratic state was afraid. “They want to discourage us – but don’t let yourself be intimidated. They have no other weapon but fear. We have to fight for a dignified life in our country.”

Speaking after the premiere of the movie, screened on the last day of the 77th annual film festival on the Côte d’Azur, Rasoulof gave details of his knife-edge decision to flee the country. “I had counted on the slow pace of the legal administration in Iran to be able to finish this film,” he said, explaining that he had sent footage out to studios in Europe for editing while he awaited an appeal verdict and sentence.

“We learned that the existence of the film was known to the authorities and that the secret service might arrest members of the team. So I had to think whether I wanted to be arrested or to leave Iran and join the cultural Iran that now exists outside the country. It took two hours. “I paced around my house and said goodbye to my many plants. It so happens I could see the wall of the prison from my house. So I looked at the prison and I looked at the mountain, and I left all my possessions and walked out of my house.”

Joining two of his actors, Setareh Maleki and newcomer Mahsa Rostami, in front of the Cannes press, Rasoulof emphasised his debt to the rest of the cast and crew inside Iran. His “heart was with them”, he said.

Rasoulof, 52, is known for *There is No Evil*, which won the top prize at the Berlin film festival four years ago, and for *A Man of Integrity*, which earned him plaudits at Cannes in 2018 but also resulted in a string of travel restrictions, prison sentences and film-making bans in Iran. In 2023 he was unable to take up an invitation to join the Cannes competition jury because he was under detention.

The idea for *The Seed of the Sacred Fig*, he said, sprang from “years of confrontation with the secret services and with cultural censorship”. Rasoulof recounted how, during a previous stint in prison, he and fellow film director Jafar Panahi tried to follow the demonstrations going on in the streets outside their cell.

The film is set during the 2022 protests in Iran and includes real demonstration footage as it follows a family of four with a father who works in the justice system. His daughters are played by Rostami and Maleki.

His new film, shot clandestinely to avoid state censorship, received rapturous support from the audience at Cannes as the director held aloft images of the missing actors unable to join him to see their film compete for the coveted Palme d’Or prize.

Maleki said she had not been scared to take part in the film, and she saluted her director’s bravery.

“Who else would have this courage to make this film?” she said, adding that she was not ashamed to have also been forced to leave her home country: “It is the Islamic Republic that should be ashamed, not me.”

Rasoulof said that, in depicting characters inspired by Iranian prison warders and security guards, he had tried to understand the thinking of loyalists.

“What is their mindset? They are human beings, so what can justify their way of thinking?” he asked. “How did they get to that point? How do they persuade themselves?”

ON OTHER PAGES

Xan Brooks on the second week of the Cannes film festival
New Review, pages 26–27

Tragi-comic movie about a stripper wins Palme d’Or

Vanessa Thorpe
Arts and Media Correspondent

Anora, a tragi-comic modern-day Cinderella story about a stripper who marries a multimillionare, made by the American director Sean Baker, has won the coveted Palme d’Or at the 77th Cannes film festival.

Baker, 53, dedicated the award to “all sex workers past and present” as he accepted the honour from the *Star Wars* creator George Lucas in front of an audience of stars gathered in the Palais des Festivals on the Côte d’Azur.

And for Baker it really was a coveted prize. “This literally has been my singular goal as a film-maker for the past 30 years,” he said, going on to thank his leading actor, Mikey Madison, who plays Ani, a Brooklyn call girl whose life changes into a fairy tale and then into a nightmare after she meets the son of a Russian oligarch who wants to make her his wife.

Greta Gerwig, who headed the panel that judged the main feature film award, praised the humanity in *Anora* as she declared it the winner. “It captured our hearts and lets us laugh and then broke our hearts,” the *Barbie* director added.

Baker admitted he was shaking, and then spoke about the importance of seeing films in the cinema rather than at home or on a phone screen.

Anora had been a favourite to take the prize, although it had some competition from an unlikely Spanish-language musical, *Emilia Pérez*, directed by the French film-maker Jacques Audiard. The film did not take the Palme, but was acknowledged with the unusual choice of giving the best acting prize to an ensemble of female cast, including the first trans woman actor to be honoured with this award. Karla Sofía Gascón shared her prize with co-stars Adriana Paz, Zoe Saldaña and Selena Gomez. The best actor award went to Jesse Plemons who starred alongside Emma Stone in Yorgos Lanthimos’s brutal anthology film, *Kinds of Kindness*.

The Grand Prix went to a young female Indian director, 38-year-old Payal Kapadia from Mumbai, who received her award from Viola Davis for her film *All We Imagine As Light*. A lyrical tale of affection and loss, it delighted critics as it tracks the lives of three provincial nurses who find themselves adrift in the city. Payal told the audience she wanted the message of “solidarity” among women to emerge from her film.

Miguel Gomes won the best director prize for *Grand Tour*, while the Iranian director Mohammad Rasoulof, who fled a prison sentence in his native land to attend the festival, was given a special award in recognition of his bravery and his film, *The Seed of the Sacred Fig*.

The French director Coralie Fargeat had been seen as in contention for the top prize with her American film *The Substance*, starring Demi Moore and Margaret Qualley, but in the end she left the ceremony holding the award for best screenplay in acknowledgement of her striking feminist story about the cruel politics of ageing for a woman in the public eye.

Lucas was in Cannes to receive an honorary Palme d’Or for his contribution to world cinema. After a montage of moments from his films from the *Star Wars* franchise and *American Graffiti*, to *Willow* and *Labyrinth*, and a standing ovation, he took his award from his friend, the director Francis Ford Coppola, who premiered his film *Megalopolis* at the festival opening.

Other winners were the director Halfdan Ullmann Tøndel, who took the Camera d’Or for his first film, *Armand*. The Short Film Palme d’Or went to *The Man Who Could Not Remain Silent*, directed by Nebojša Slijepčević, and there was a special mention for Daniel Soares’s *Bad For A Moment*.



Palme d’Or winner Sean Baker, right, with Star Wars director George Lucas, at the festival’s closing ceremony.

The winners

Palme d’Or Sean Baker for *Anora*

Grand Prix Payal Kapadia for *All We Imagine as Light*

Best director Miguel Gomes for *Grand Tour*

Best actress Jointly awarded to Karla Sofía Gascón, Zoë Saldaña, Selena Gomez and Adriana Paz for *Emilia Pérez*

Best actor Jesse Plemons for *Kinds of Kindness*

Best screenplay Coralie Fargeat for *The Substance*

Special Jury Prize Mohammad Rasoulof for *The Seed of the Sacred Fig*

Camera d’Or (for best first film) Halfdan Ullmann Tøndel for *Armand*

Best short film Nebojša Slijepčević for *The Man who Could Not Remain Silent*

Advertisement

100 REASONS REVOLUT IS THE FUTURE OF MONEY

→ 1. Open an account in minutes, free. (T&Cs apply) → 2. Available in over 70 currencies in 160 countries worldwide. → 3. Send money with a GIF. → 4. Set a budget without a spreadsheet. → 5. Split the tab, instantly. → 6. Teach your kids how to budget. From age 6. → 7. Invest with as little as $1.* → 8. Send friendly reminders to your late-paying friends. → 9. Don't miss a trade. Get personalised trade alerts and market news. → 10. Get annual interest paid daily into your savings account. → 11. Automatically buy and sell currencies when the rate is right. → 12. Manage every subscription, even the ones you forgot to cancel. → 13. Local IBAN numbers for local bills. → 14. Exchange currencies directly in-app. → 15. Charities get 100% of in-app donations. → 16. Encrypted in-app chat keeps everything private. → 17. Earn cash for friend referrals. (Subject to availability. T&Cs apply) → 18. Invest in over 2000 global company stocks. → 19. Help kids set up personalised savings goals. → 20. Get up to 10% instant cashback on big brands online and in-store with Shops. (T&Cs apply) → 21. Book Stays now, pay later. (T&Cs apply) → 22. Accept payments easily, around the world. → 23. Save without realising you're saving, with Savings accounts. → 24. Book over 300,000 experiences, directly in the app. → 25. Instant payment notifications. → 26. Manage your kids' accounts together with a co-parent. (Paid plans only) → 27. Set approvals and limits to control your outgoing payments. → 28. Upgrade to Metal to get a metal card. (T&Cs and subscription fees apply) → 29. Set an alert for your ideal currency rate, pre-holiday. → 30. Easily top up from other accounts. → 31. End the overspend, with daily insights. → 32. Go global with multi-currency business accounts. → 33. Personalise your metal card. (T&Cs and subscription fees apply) → 34. Settle international bills, from the sofa. → 35. Set payment limits to help protect from fraud. → 36. Analyse your spending, easily. → 37. Use

Payment services provided by Revolut Ltd (FRN: 900562), an Electronic Money Institution. Stock trading services are provided by Revolut Trading Ltd (FRN: 832790), an Appointed Representative of Resolution Compliance Limited (FRN: 574048) authorised and regulated by the FCA.

Advertisement

a virtual card as soon as you open an account. → 38. Arrange your home screen widgets to suit your priorities. → 39. Even our CEO doesn't wear a suit. → 40. Automate tonnes of business transactions with our Payment API. → 41. Upgrade to Ultra to get a platinum-plated card. (T&Cs and subscription fees apply) → 42. Use our ready-made invoice templates for your business → 43. Create and send a payment link in seconds. → 44. Trade stocks on the go, from anywhere. → 45. Hide your account balances in public. → 46. Kids get a customisable card, with emojis. (Fees may apply) → 47. Organise your bills with Pockets. → 48. Next-level security features help keep you and your money safe. → 49. Send money directly to their card, bank account, or digital wallet. → 50. Track and control your company spend as it happens. → 51. Round up spare change every time you spend into a pocket account. → 52. Personalise your home screen background colour. → 53. Keep tabs on market movements in-app. → 54. Set – and meet – your goals with spending categories. → 55. Enjoy commission-free stock trades, within your allowance*. → 56. Track all your bills, in one place. → 57. Customer service still open on bank holidays. → 58. Track all upcoming payments in one place. → 59. Lost your card? Freeze it instantly. → 60. Send money to friends around the world, instantly. → 61. Protect your money with biometric security. → 62. Your entire family's finances all in one place. → 63. Your company gets every exchange at our interbank rate. → 64. Build your investment knowledge with our in-app courses. → 65. Teens can split costs with friends, instantly. (Subject to parent approval, ages 13+). → 66. Set up an automatic weekly allowance for your kids. → 67. Hold money in 30+ currencies. → 68. Set location-based triggers to protect from fraud. → 69. Track your side hustle spending and earnings. → 70. Set reminders for upcoming payments. → 71. Spend, save and budget, all in one place. → 72. Award-winning in-app support, available 24/7 in 100+ languages. → 73. Capture company spending on the go with quick receipt submissions. → 74. Link external accounts, to the app. → 75. Shop safely with single-use virtual cards. → 76. Joint accounts, even if you don't live together. (T&Cs apply) → 77. Set super specific spending limits. → 78. Get advanced fraud protection. → 79. Track the status of international transfers. → 80. Sync your business accounting tools into the app, easily. → 81. Send, receive, and chat about money, all in one place. → 82. Send money privately and securely. → 83. Discounted airport lounge access. (Premium and Metal paid plans only, T&Cs apply) → 84. No branches means no more standing in line. → 85. Keep track of spending with instant alerts on <18 accounts. → 86. Transfer money abroad in just a few taps. → 87. Send over 25 currencies to over 100 countries from your business account. → 88. Give your employees spending power with physical and virtual cards. → 89. Hide your surname when sending money to a new contact. → 90. End-to-end security, always. → 91. Revolut Pro, an account just for freelancers. → 92. Donate directly to charities in-app. → 93. Send money back home easily, with low fees. → 94. Book homes and hotels in-app, and we'll charge you no booking fees. → 95. Create group chats to split everything from holidays to bills. → 96. Browse and book holiday accommodation in-app. → 97. Track daily spending totals. → 98. Donate your spare change to charity. → 99. Created in this century. → 100. Used by 40+ million global customers and counting.

Capital at risk. Past performance is not indicative of future results. Learn Courses are informational only. *Other fees may apply. You must be 18+ to open a Revolut account.

Revolut

Laughter is the best medicine: why male comedians are reliving their trauma on TV

After the runaway success of Richard Gadd's Baby Reindeer, this week sees the launch of a new sitcom that uses comedy to process personal pain



Michael Hogan

Comedian Mark O'Sullivan was sexually assaulted by a member of his extended family when he was 12 years old. In his 30s, he reported the abuse to the police and, following a court case, the perpetrator was convicted and jailed.

Now 47, O'Sullivan is addressing this painful part of his past through his comedy. A documentary *My Sexual Abuse: The Sitcom*, will be screened on Channel 4 on Tuesday, with the accompanying sitcom streaming online.

"Comedy has helped me get through all the darker moments of my life," said O'Sullivan, who is best known for Channel 4 sitcom *Lee & Dean* and ITV drama *Tell Me Everything*. "Making something positive out of the trauma I went through as a child really feels like the best – the only – way for me to deal with it."

The documentary chronicles the writing, rehearsal and filming of the sitcom in front of a studio audience. "I've wanted to make something about what happened to me for a long time," said O'Sullivan. "After writing *Tell Me Everything*, where I explored my teenage years and what happened to me when my dad died suddenly, I knew this part of my life had to be next. I don't know if I was ready to tackle it before now, to be honest."

O'Sullivan is part of a new wave of male comedians making TV out of their trauma. Comedian Richard Gadd turned his separate experiences of alleged stalking and sexual violence into the dark drama, *Baby Reindeer*, which has been the most-streamed show on Netflix in recent weeks, playing himself in the guise of a struggling standup called Donny.

"I thought *Baby Reindeer* was remarkable TV," O'Sullivan said. "Brave and harrowing."

Bruce Dessau, editor of comedy website beyondthejoke.co.uk, believes these male comedians are reflecting a broader societal shift. "After *Baby Reindeer*, this is another example of how comedians and writers are increasingly prepared to mine their own trauma when creating their work," said Dessau.

> ***'If we talk about sexual abuse, we can deal with it. Making this sitcom has helped me so much'***
> *Mark O'Sullivan*

"As a society, we've become more open about mental health. It's only natural this would be echoed in popular culture ... comedy is the perfect medium for confessionals. Humour is a powerful way of processing experiences."

Previously it has tended to be women who have used TV comedy to address their personal pain, including some of the most successful shows in the past decade, Phoebe Waller-Bridge's *Fleabag* and Michaela Coel's *I May Destroy You*.

Billy Connolly and Alan Davies both spoke about the abuse they suffered in boyhood, although neither has directly addressed it in their standup. Younger generations seem more prepared to do so. Bradford comic Jonny Pelham performed his show *Off Limits* at the Edinburgh festival in 2019, addressing how he was sexually abused as an eight-year-old.

Pledge a 'child lock' to wipe out poverty, urge charities

Toby Helm
Political Editor

The next government should pass a new law within 100 days of winning the general election that would commit ministers to eradicating child poverty for good, the five biggest UK children's charities say this weekend.

The organisations demand legislation in the first king's speech that would include plans for a "child lock" – equivalent to the current pensions "triple lock".

This would ensure annual rises in the financial help parents receive from the state, rather than allowing them to rise or fall subject to political decision-making and economic conditions.

The call for action from the NSPCC, Action for Children, Barnardo's, the National Children's Bureau and the Children's Society will put particular pressure on Keir Starmer and Labour to act on child poverty as the parties prepare to announce their election manifestos.

Another key demand from the coalition of charities is the scrapping of the controversial two-child limit on benefits, which they blame for plunging hundreds of thousands of children into poverty.

On Friday, Starmer said Labour wanted to end the policy "in an ideal world" but that they "don't have the resources at the moment".

Last weekend, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, told the *Observer* that the two-child cap should be ended without delay because it was cruel and immoral.

The charities say a "child lock" would guarantee that child-related benefits are uprated by the rise in average earnings or the rate of inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index each year, whichever is higher.

The current pensions triple lock means that state pensions rise by the rate of inflation, average earnings or 2.5% each year – whichever is highest.

Recent figures have shown there are now 4.3 million children living in poverty in the UK – a rise of 100,000 on the previous year. This means that, in an average classroom of 30 children, nine are living in poverty.

The charities have formed a campaign, Children at the Table, which will also argue for better mental health support for young people, more investment in children's social care and an increased focus on early years support.

In a joint statement, the CEOs of the five charities said: "Child poverty in the UK means millions of children and young people struggling with





TOP
Richard Gadd in Baby Reindeer. Above, O'Sullivan in My Sexual Abuse. Ed Miller/Netflix, Channel 4/Jack Barnes

BELOW
Jonny Pelham, right, and John Robins, left, have both tackled personal issues in Edinburgh comedy shows.



"There's a growing trend for male comedians to confront emotional issues, notably with the rise of the 'dead dad' show, in which comedians have tackled tricky familial relationships," said Dessau. "The first was probably Russell Kane's *Smokescreens and Castles*, which won the Edinburgh comedy award in 2010. More recently, John Robins was acclaimed for his show *Howl*, in which he reflected on his mental health and alcohol use."

In O'Sullivan's documentary, he consults a psychotherapist about using comedy to confront some of the worst periods of his life. He shares aspects of his ordeal for the first time with his wife, Jenny, and discusses with his comedy partner, Miles Chapman, how it continues to shape his mental health. Fellow comedian Iain Lee, himself an abuse survivor who has retrained as a counsellor, challenges O'Sullivan about the project, warning that it could get him "cancelled".

O'Sullivan chose to tell his story in the style of an 1980s family sitcom. "I want to make the point that sexual abuse can happen anywhere, to anyone," he said. "There's a perception that it only happens to certain types of people, in certain parts of society. That just isn't true. So I wanted a bright 'normal' family in the type of sitcom setting I grew up watching."

He plays the 12-year-old version of himself, as he didn't want to put a young actor in the position of being groomed and abused, even in a fictional setting. Paedophile "Uncle Steve" is portrayed by a cartoonish giant teddy bear. "It just felt right. As for the bear, while there are great documentaries that deal with the abusers – who they are, what motivates or drives them – mine isn't about the abuser. I wanted him to be more of a symbol, like a life-sized emoji."

O'Sullivan added: "I hope it helps to normalise the conversation around sexual abuse. Silence is fuel to abusers. It stops people from coming forward to say what happened to them. If we talk about it, shine bright light directly on to it, we can deal with it. Making this has helped me so much. I hope it helps others too."

hunger and housing needs while also having to deal with psychological factors like shame, social isolation, and parental stress.

"Without support and help from our political leaders the fabric that holds families togethers will continue to erode, leaving more and more children exposed and vulnerable.

"Whoever forms the next UK government needs to wake up to this shocking reality and make tackling child poverty a national priority.

"A strong signal of intent would be a commitment to new legislation in the first king's speech that sets a series of ambitious targets to reduce and ultimately eradicate child poverty from our communities. This should be coupled with wider reforms, led by whoever is prime minister, that would see the implementation of an ambitious multiyear strategy and outcomes framework involving all relevant government departments designed to transform the lives and futures of babies, children and young people."

'Whoever forms the next government needs to wake up and make this a national priority'
Charity coalition statement

The coalition also wants government to work towards implementing an "essential guarantee" which would ensure people are given even months through the benefits system to ensure they can pay for the most basic necessities including food, heating and clothes.

Lack of physio jobs sees waiting lists soar by 27%

Untreated patients left in pain are bad for the workforce and for the NHS, doctors warn

James Tapper

The rising number of people waiting for physiotherapy treatment is causing problems in other parts of the NHS and harming the UK's economy, leading clinicians have warned.

Waiting lists for treatment for musculoskeletal (MSK) problems such as back, neck and knee pain have grown by 27% since January last year. The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) said the number of physiotherapy posts in the NHS was not keeping pace with demand from Britain's ageing and increasingly obese population.

The CSP said the UK needed a 7% increase in NHS physiotherapy positions every year to meet rising demand. Musculoskeletal conditions that are left untreated can become more complex and lead to mental health problems or the need for surgery, as well as time off work.

The latest NHS community health service figures show 323,965 people were waiting for musculoskeletal treatment in March, a year-on-year rise of 33,257 or 11%, and 27% higher than the 254,521 people waiting in January 2023.

Rishi Sunak last month accused Britain of having a "sicknote culture", with 2.8 million working-age people classed as economically inactive. Ministers have focused on rising mental ill health, claiming that doctors are "overmedicalising" conditions while also floating a plan to cut benefits for 420,000 sick and disabled people.

However, more people are living with chronic pain, according to the Health Foundation. Google searches about pain reached their highest ever levels in the UK earlier this year, with searches for lower back pain at their highest ever level in March.

Sara Hazzard, the assistant director of the CSP and co-chair of the Community Rehabilitation Alliance, said that there were plenty of people who wanted to become physiotherapists, but a shortage of NHS positions.

"We haven't got posts being created where people need them, so people are not able to get appointments," she said.

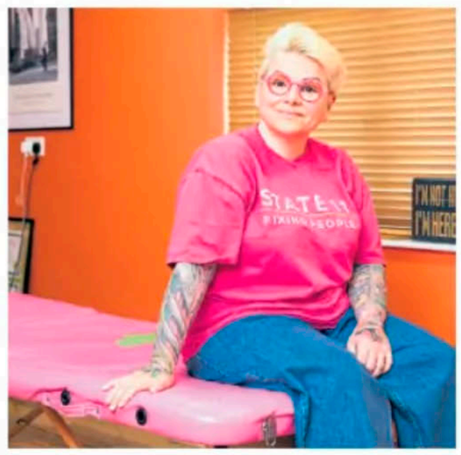
"And by not being able to get that treatment, people 'snowball' – their mental health suffers because they're in pain, and then it snowballs into other problems.

"So rather than people getting what they need to get back to work, they end up being off work. Once people are off work for a year, it's very difficult for them to get back into the workforce."

There were knock-on effects to other NHS services as well, Hazzard said. Untreated aches and pains can turn into conditions that require surgery, adding to other waiting lists for knee or hip replacements. "We're at a point where we need to recognise that rehab is as important as medicine and surgery, because that is the answer for a large group of people."

Freedom of information requests by the CSP indicate that the unmet needs for physiotherapy may be having broader effects. In the North East and North Cumbria integrated care service, the number of 111 calls received about back pain was 52,431 in 2019. That rose to 73,660 in 2020, when people spent long periods of time inactive at home in lockdown. Calls fell in 2021 and 2022 but then rose sharply to 71,427 last year.

The picture was similar in Sussex, where the South East Coast ambulance service fielded 45,677 back pain calls in 2019 but more than 97,000 in 2021 and 70,595 last year.



Vic Paterson retrained as a physio after developing back problems.

Some patients have gone to extreme lengths to get treatment. Vic Paterson was a frontline police officer in Cambridgeshire eight years ago and slowly developed excruciating back pain, possibly from wearing heavy body armour.

She realised she had a problem when she went out into her garden one evening to look at the International Space Station overhead. "I realised I couldn't look up," she said. "I tried to put my head up and it really, really hurt. I just came inside and cried because of how much it hurt, and the realisation that it was an issue."

Paterson was lucky enough to get access to a police rehabilitation centre, and after two weeks was able to move her neck. She was sent away with advice to have fortnightly massages, but couldn't afford the £40 cost.

"Me and my husband worked out it would be cheaper for us to do a training course," she said. "Seven years later, neither of us are police officers." Instead they run State 11, a soft tissue therapy clinic in Spalding, Lincolnshire.





LEFT
Rice terraces in the Philippines and, above, genetically modified Golden Rice compared with ordinary rice.
Getty, Erik de Castro/Reuters

Scientists' alarm at Greenpeace over blocking of GM Golden Rice

Warning that thousands of children could die from lack of vitamin A after court backs campaign group

Robin McKie
Science Editor

Scientists have warned that a court decision to block the growing of the genetically modified (GM) crop Golden Rice in the Philippines could have catastrophic consequences. Tens of thousands of children could die in the wake of the ruling, they argue.

The Philippines had become the first country – in 2021 – to approve the commercial cultivation of Golden Rice, which was developed to combat vitamin A deficiency, a major cause of disability and death among children.

But campaigns by Greenpeace and local farmers last month persuaded the country's court of appeal to overturn that approval and to revoke this. The groups had argued that Golden Rice had not been shown to be safe and the claim was backed by the court, a decision that was hailed as "a monumental win" by Greenpeace.

Many scientists, however, say there is no evidence that Golden Rice is in any way dangerous.

"The court's decision is a catastrophe," said Professor Matin Qaim, of Bonn University, and a member of the Golden Rice Humanitarian Board, which promotes the introduction of the crop. "It goes completely against the science, which found no evidence of any risk associated with Golden Rice, and will result in thousands and thousands of children dying."

The decision is to be challenged by the Philippines government and it is likely it will be overturned some time in the near future. But the setback is still likely to have profound impacts. Other countries such as India and Bangladesh – where vitamin A deficiency is also widespread – have been considering planting Golden Rice but are now likely to be deterred.

"The situation is extremely alarming," said Adrian Dubock, another board member. "Planting Golden Rice was not being done for profit. Nobody was trying to control what farmers grow or control what people eat. It was being done to save lives."

Vitamin A is found in most foods in the west but in developing countries it is conspicuously lacking in diets, a deficiency that "is associated with significant morbidity and mortality from common childhood infections, and is the world's leading preventable cause of childhood blindness," according to the World Health Organization. Estimates suggest it causes the deaths of more than 100,000 children a year.

As a solution, Peter Beyer, professor of cell biology at Freiburg University in Germany, and Ingo Potrykus of the Institute of Plant Sciences in Switzerland, began work in the 1990s using the new technology of genetic manipulation. They inserted genes into the DNA of normal rice to create a variant that could make beta-carotene, a rich orange-coloured pigment that is also a key precursor chemical used by the body to make vitamin A.

Countries including America, Australia and New Zealand have ruled Golden Rice is safe. Yet three decades after its development it has still to be grown commercially – thanks to the green movement's vociferous opposition to the growing of any GM crop, regardless of any potential benefit.

"Golden Rice was the first transgenic crop to be created that benefited people not companies or farmers, yet its use has been blocked from the start," Potrykus told the *Observer* last week. "I am extremely worried about the decision of the Philippines court."

This view is shared by many scientists. In 2016, more than 150 Nobel laureates signed an open letter that attacked Greenpeace for campaigning against Golden Rice and other GM crops. Greenpeace had "misrepresented the risks, benefits and impacts" of genetically altered food plants, they said. "There has never been a single confirmed case of a negative health outcome for humans or animals from their consumption."

Greenpeace remains adamant, however. "There are specific problems with Golden Rice," said Wilhelmina Pelegrina, head of Greenpeace Philippines, last week. "Farmers who brought this case with us – along with local scientists – currently grow different varieties of rice. They're rightly concerned that if their varieties get mixed up with patented, genetically engineered rice, that could sabotage their certifications, reducing their market appeal and ultimately threatening their livelihoods."

Pelegrina added that relying on a single-crop system to alleviate malnutrition reduced resilience and increased vulnerability to climate impacts – a serious problem in one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries. "If things don't work out, it's the farmer and the consumers who pick up the tab."

There are also more practical, tried-and-tested solutions to tackle vitamin-A deficiency such as food supplementation programmes and supporting people to grow a range of crops including those rich in vitamin A, she claimed. "That should be where attention and investment is focused."

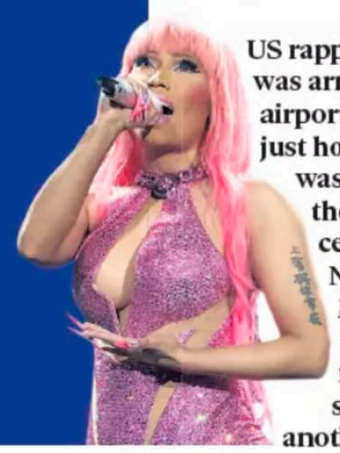
ON OTHER PAGES

The Green movement is doing the planet a disservice
Observer Comment, page 42

News in brief

NETHERLANDS

Minaj arrested before UK show



US rapper Nicki Minaj was arrested at Schiphol airport in Amsterdam just hours before she was due to fly to the UK for a concert, police in the Netherlands said. Minaj, 41, left, was allegedly arrested for trying to take soft drugs into another country. The American was later released but her show at Manchester's Co-op Live Arena last night, part of her Pink Friday 2 World Tour, was cancelled.

Minaj claimed in social media posts that police said they found drugs in her luggage after items were checked by customs.

She wrote that "they found weed" and her security "already advised them" that the items belonged to them, and not her.

Promoters Live Nation and the venue Co-op Live have been contacted for comment.

DISNEY

Mary Poppins composer dies

Richard M Sherman, one half of the award-winning pair of brothers behind some of the memorable songs for films *Mary Poppins*, *The Jungle Book* and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* has died, aged 95.

Sherman, with his late brother Robert, won two Oscars for Walt Disney's 1964 smash *Mary Poppins* — best score and best song, Chim Chim Cher-ee. Robert Sherman died in London at age 86 in 2012.

"Generations of moviegoers and theme park guests have been introduced to the world of Disney through the Sherman brothers' magnificent and timeless songs. Even today, the duo's work remains the quintessential lyrical voice of Walt Disney," the company said.

Their hundreds of credits as joint lyricist and composer also include the films *Winnie the Pooh*, *The Slipper and the Rose*, *Snoopy Come Home* and *Charlotte's Web*.

AIR ACCIDENT

RAF pilot killed in Spitfire crash

An RAF pilot was killed after the Spitfire he was flying crashed into a field in Lincolnshire yesterday.

The pilot, who has not been named, was declared dead at the scene of the accident near RAF Coningsby. The second world war era Spitfire was part of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight which is based at the RAF station.

Computer games help deaf children understand speech

Robin McKie
Science Editor

Scientists have recruited an unusual ally in their efforts to help children overcome profound deafness. They are using computer games to boost the children's ability to localise sounds and understand speech.

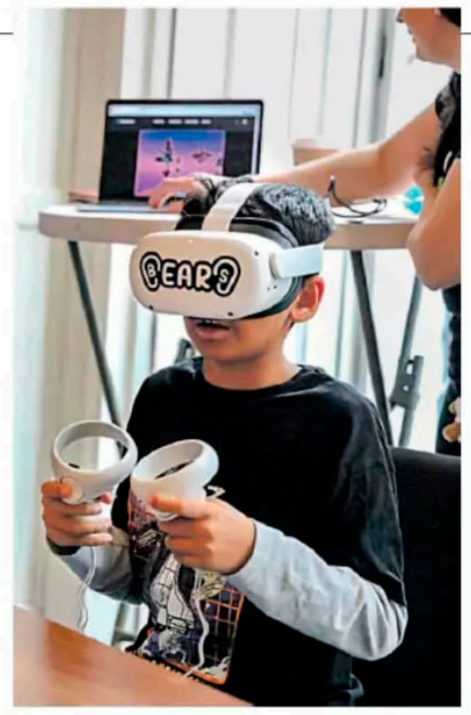
The project is known as Bears – for Both Ears – and it is aimed at youngsters who have been given twin cochlea implants because they were born with little or no hearing.

"These are children who are profoundly deaf," said audio engineer Lorenzo Picinali, a scientist on the project from Imperial College London. "They require major interventions to restore their hearing and we have found that computer games can make these much more effective."

In one game, a player – wearing a virtual reality headset – operates a food stall and wins points for each order that is completed. The tempo hots up and the player receives increasingly elaborate requests from cartoon characters. These are fired at them at faster and faster from different directions. At the same time, background noises become louder and more confusing. "It's very challenging but the game improves a child's ability to localise sound and that, in turn, helps them understand speech," added Picinali.

"Our research has shown that the better you are at localising a sound – in pinpointing the location of a noise – then you also get better understanding what someone is saying to you. Their speech becomes clearer in noisy situations.

"By using computer games we can help the person to boost their ability to localise sound and in the process to understand speech."



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

The **Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme** is now open for applications.

The Payment Scheme provides financial payments and health supports to eligible people in acknowledgement of circumstances experienced while in Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions in Ireland.

The application process is straightforward, and there is support available for those who wish to apply.

To apply to the Payment Scheme, or for further information, please visit gov.ie/paymentscheme or call our helpline on +353 1 522 9992.

Opioid scandal's 'lurid tale of greed' inspires new opera

Director who staged War Horse is part of an international team telling story based on the deadly epidemic, reports *Dalya Alberge*

The opioid crisis is to be the subject of a new opera by a former artistic director of English National Opera (ENO) and the man behind the stage adaptation of *War Horse*.

The Galloping Cure would tell "a lurid tale of the greed surrounding the tragedy of the opioid crisis", said Tom Morris, its director.

Morris's staging of *War Horse* with puppets has been seen by more than 8.3 million people worldwide, has won at least 25 awards and is about to embark on another tour.

John Berry, the award-winning former artistic director of ENO, who is developing the project alongside international production companies, said: "This is a newly commissioned opera based on the opioid crisis and the destructive nature of addiction. Opera can tell these multi-emotional and big subjects like no other art form."

The premiere is planned for 2026. Missy Mazzoli is writing the music to a story by Karen Russell and Royce Vavrek.

Two of the creators have lost close friends or relatives to addiction.

Morris said: "As [the librettist and composer] are digging into the story, it is already starting to chime with the ways in which the peddling of dreams and falsehoods of other kinds creates opportunities for exploitation, dishonesty and injustice."

The opera will not mention real individuals, such as the billionaire Sackler family, who owned Purdue Pharma, the manufacturer of OxyContin, a highly addictive painkiller that fuelled an opioid epidemic responsible for the deaths of more than half a million Americans.

In the UK, opioid-related deaths make up the largest proportion of drug-linked fatalities, with an average of 40 deaths a week.

Berry said: "The creative team have found an unexpected and fascinating approach to the subject matter, setting it in the present day and in a deprived, down-on-its-luck, nonspecific small town."

The opera, said Morris, would be an allegorical story about the advent of an apparent miracle cure and its devastating consequences, transposing "the beleaguered hero of Franz Kafka's classic story *A Country Doctor* to the dreamless landscape of a depressed post-industrial town".

Morris said: "The nightmare begins as our hero is seduced by a diabolic salesman with a vision of a world free from pain: new to the town, the charismatic Lucky Mack is busy handing out his miracle cure – a painted carousel, providing gallop-



'Two of my cousins died of overdoses before they were 25. One was prescribed opioids'

Missy Mazzoli, composer

A child plays a Bears game to improve his hearing skills.
NIHR

All sorts of factors affected how a person picked up sounds, added Picinali, including the size of their head or the shape of their ears.

Other innovations developed at Imperial include a computer game in which children aim at targets that become fainter and fainter until they can only be pinpointed by acoustic cues. Others require players using differences in pitch to aim at sound-emitting targets.

"The crucial point is that children with implants were involved in designing the games," said Picinali. "They have played a key role in the development of the project from the start."

Unlike hearing aids, which merely amplify sounds and are therefore of little to use to profoundly deaf children, cochlea implants – which are fitted to the skull behind the ears – turn vibrations in the air into electrical signals that can be transmitted to the brain where they are experienced as sound.

However, these signals are often confusing and disorienting and can result in users receive highly distorted sounds. Localising sounds and listening to conversations in noisy places are still very difficult using a cochlea implant, and some wearers find they simply cannot adjust to the sounds they produce.

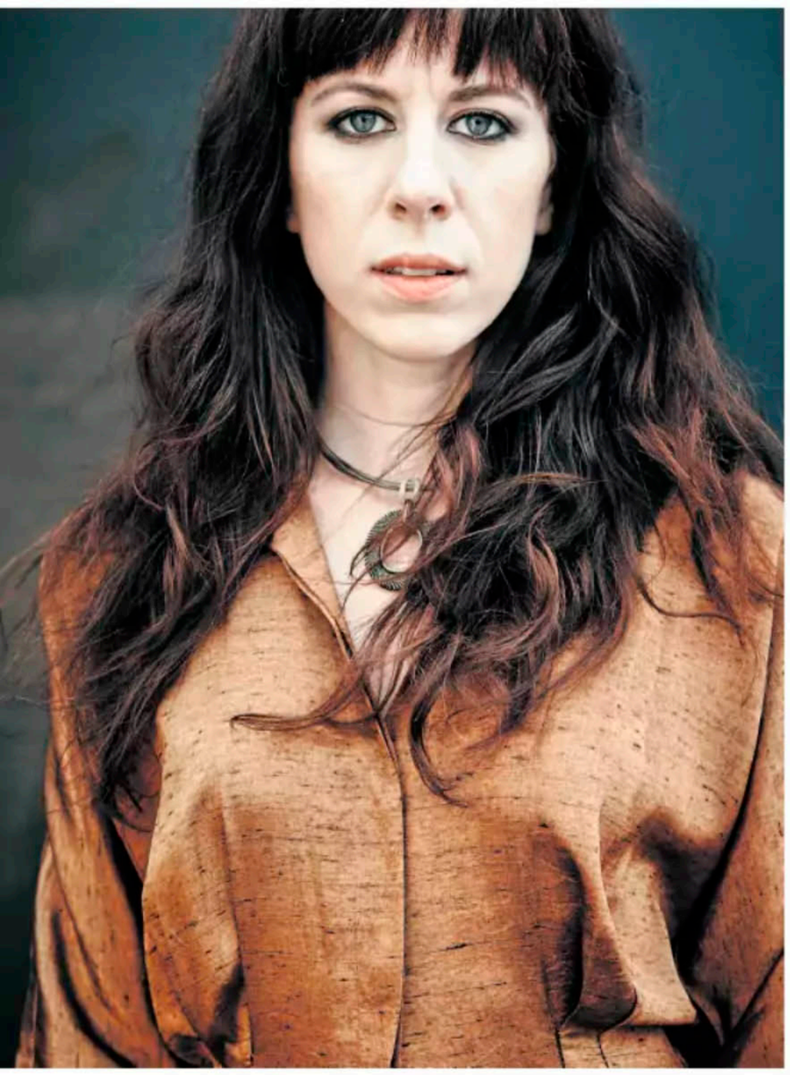
"An implant is a lifeline for profoundly deaf children but they are not easy to get used to," said Picinali. "We needed to find ways to make them easier to understand the signals being sent to their brains – and training with computer games should make a vital difference. What we are doing is helping them remap their hearing systems."

There are about 6,500 children in the UK who are profoundly deaf and for whom a cochlea implant is the only hope for restoring their hearing. With the help of the comprehensive clinical trials unit at University College London, the project – which is led by Debi Vickers at Cambridge University and Dan Jiang at Guy's and St Thomas' hospital in London, will recruit more than 300 youngsters with hearing difficulties and will be completed in about 18 months.

The end result, it is hoped, will not just aid children with cochlea implants, but could make major improvements to the hearing of all deaf children, about 50,000 children in the UK.

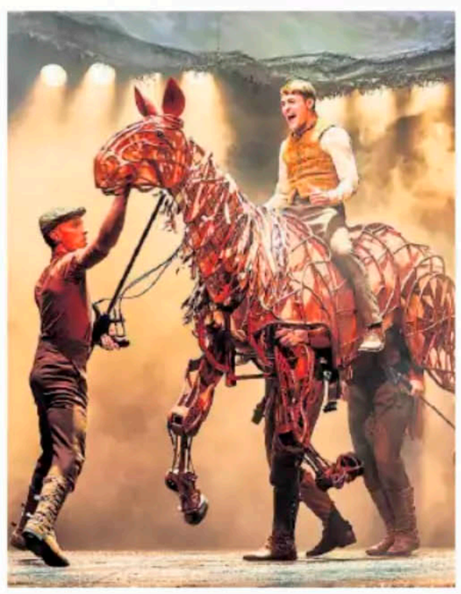
"All sorts of different causes can produce severe deafness in children, from genetics to accidents and infections," added Katarina Poole, another member of the Imperial team.

"This could make a major difference for the lives of thousands of children."



LEFT Composer Missy Mazzoli. Marylene Mey





FAR LEFT The artist Nan Goldin in All the Beauty and the Bloodshed, a documentary about the Sackler family's opioid maker Perdue Pharma. Left, a scene from a National Theatre production of War Horse.

ing relief to a community racked with exhaustion and despair. As addiction takes hold, the world floods with surreal colour."

Mazzoli said: "Two of my cousins died before they were 25, of overdoses. For pain relief, after surgery, one of them had been prescribed opioids. It got them into an addiction, which became a heroin addiction. The other died from a heroin addiction.

"Royce and I have several friends we've lost to addiction in their 30s. So it's a very real thing for us. Opera is a place for big ideas. Its superpower is in its layering, communicating many things at the same time."

San Francisco Opera and Norrlandsoperan in Sweden are among leading international commissioners and collaborators that are ensuring the production will be staged worldwide, which is unusual for a contemporary opera.

Berry led the ENO from 2005 to 2015, staging award-winning productions including *The Damnation of Faust*, directed by Terry Gilliam. Berry then founded Opera Ventures Productions, putting on acclaimed operas that have toured worldwide, including Osvaldo Golijov's *Ainadamar*, about the murdered Spanish playwright Federico García Lorca.

50GB
£8
WAS 16GB.
FLEXIBLE 1-MONTH PLAN.
APRIL 2024
Which?
Recommended Provider
MOBILE NETWORK PROVIDERS
LESS MALARKEY MORE
SMARTY
SWITCH TO SMARTY MOBILE
Limited time offer. SIM only 1 month plan. Extra 34GB data applied per month to 16GB/£8 plan for 15 consecutive months. Terms at smarty.co.uk

Dispatch
Soweto



Soweto's freedom square bears scars of poverty and misrule on eve of poll

Thirty years ago the ANC led South Africa to freedom, but as the nation votes this week, its legacy is being tested as never before, as *Steve Bloomfield* reports from Kliptown

In the heart of Soweto, the birthplace of South African democracy has been burned, looted and stripped for parts.

Almost 70 years ago, in the early days of apartheid, more than 3,000 people gathered in a dusty square to draw up the Freedom Charter, demanding a series of rights and proclaiming that South Africa "belongs to all who live in it, black and white".

When apartheid ended in 1994 and Nelson Mandela was elected president by a landslide, the charter became the foundation for the country's optimistic new constitution. So it made sense, 50 years on, to mark its anniversary and turn this square in the Kliptown area of Soweto into a place that represented the new South Africa. There would be shops and offices, a museum, a monument to freedom. To top it off, a new hotel opened, marketed as "the first four-star luxury hotel offering African hospitality in the heart of Soweto". A flame of freedom was lit, surrounded by the words of the charter.

South Africa then was on the up. New homes had been built, and access to electricity and water extended across the country. While much of the country's wealth still rested in a few white hands, a black middle class was growing and South Africa was preparing to host the football World Cup.

But if the first 15 years of democracy was a success, the same cannot be said for the last 15. And the impact can be seen vividly in the square where modern South Africa was born.

Poverty is rampant, unemployment is high and three years ago riots led to the burning and looting of shops. Everything that can be stolen and sold has gone, including the metal grates that covered the sewers. The hotel is still here but staff admit there are barely any guests. And in the monument where the charter lies, the flame of freedom has long since burned out.

As South Africa prepares to go to the polls on Wednesday, 30 years on from the first democratic elections, it is a nation in crisis. It's the most unequal country in the world and among the most dangerous. The economy is stagnant, with almost zero growth in a decade and nearly half of adults are out of work. Basic public services are falling apart. In many parts of the country there is no clean water, while rolling power cuts have become a regular feature of daily life. The government proudly points out it has been 55 days since the electricity went off, a streak that the more cynical expect to last until election day but not much longer. And in the final week of campaigning, Johannesburg has suffered a strike by rubbish collectors, leading to piles of garbage on street corners and strewn across pavements.



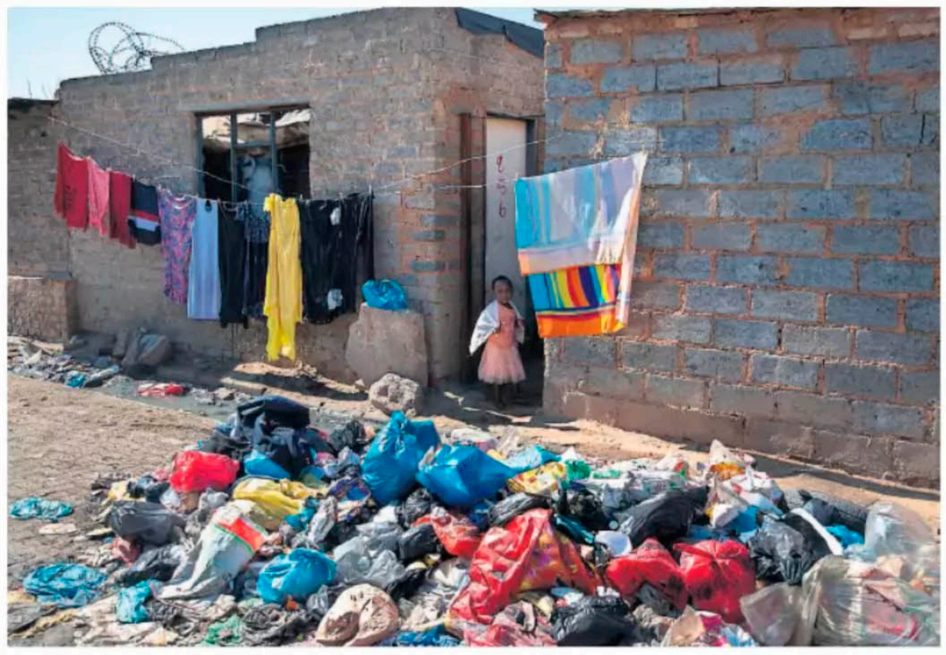
At the heart of it all is corruption. What was a minor issue under Mandela and his successor Thabo Mbeki exploded when Jacob Zuma came to power in 2009. By the time he was kicked out of office by the African National Congress (ANC) in 2018, billions had been looted from the state, leaving almost every part of it bankrupt, from the national airline to the agency that ran the railways.

"The tax authority was effectively taken over by a syndicate of criminals," says Anthony Butler, a professor of politics at the University of Cape Town. An inquiry into what became known as "state capture" concluded that "the ANC under Zuma permitted, supported and enabled corruption", though Zuma himself denies any direct role in it.

After Zuma, the ANC tried to turn the page, choosing a former Mandela ally, Cyril Ramaphosa, as the new president. Despite admitting his party "made mistakes", Ramaphosa has been unable to change the country for the better and is now haunted by the

Quail and spinach?
Menus from the royal feasts of Napoleon III, Victoria and more
Page 29

'With dignity'
How a state law in Oregon changed the assisted dying debate
Page 30



LEFT
Hostels, a remnant of apartheid, still loom over the streets of Alexandra.
All photographs Madelene Cronjé/ the Observer



ABOVE
Alexandra resident Vusi Khosa says the township is in a state of 'anarchy' and is unsure if he will vote for the ANC again.

ghosts of the ANC past. An unrepentant Zuma has formed his own party, uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) – named after the former paramilitary wing of the ANC – which has peeled away support, particularly in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

Coupled with the strength of another populist leftwing party, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) led by Julius Malema, a former ANC youth league leader, the opinion polls suggest the party of Mandela will fall to its lowest level of support since 1994, and could even slip below 50%, meaning it would have to rule as a minority government or go into coalition.

The size of Ramaphosa's task can be seen on the streets of Alexandra, one of Johannesburg's largest townships and once an ANC stronghold. "It's filthy, densely populated, ungovernable," says Vusi Khosa, a softly spoken Alexandra native. "It's anarchy. People do what they wish."

Khosa used to work in construction, but like many here, the 46-year-old now struggles to find work. He lists friends who trained to be doctors and engineers but are now unemployed. "That doesn't give a good picture, does it?"

He worries about crime too. It's rare to see a police officer, he says, so some people have set up patrols at night. But one person's neighbourhood watch is another person's militia. "Some people take extreme measures," Khosa says.

For Queen Pungula, who works at a local creche, crime keeps her inside once the sun goes down. "By 6 o'clock I can't go outside," she says. Pungula lives and works in one of Alexandra's hostels, built by the apartheid government in the 1970s to house migrants from rural areas who were allowed to come to the city to work. Her hostel is relatively safe, but others are notorious for overcrowding and crime.

Housing remains a nightmare for most. Parts of Alexandra have expensive bungalows with high walls and manicured lawns, but across the road and round the corner it's a slum. None of the homes have toilets, so along one street hundreds of portable toilets are lined up along a wall. "We have no flushing toilets," yells a passing pastor, Charles Mahumani. "This is an insult to us!"

The ANC will not have his vote, and it may not have Khosa's either. He is an ANC member, but – he pauses, sighs – "I do not know. I do not know."

Khosa is not alone. In most democracies, a ruling party that has been in power for 30 years and presided over such a horrendous series of interlocking crises would be facing a long period in opposition. But the ANC is not just a political party – it's a former liberation movement, and that makes a difference. People have a different attitude to a movement that won their freedom: for many South Africans, it's a complicated relationship, and the decision to take their vote elsewhere is as much emotional as pragmatic.

There is a fear among older ANC supporters that their children's generation are unaware of just how bad life was under apartheid. "I know where I came from," says Frank Baloyi, a 56-year-old teacher in Kliptown's freedom square, officially called Walter Sisulu Square. "I'm from apartheid. If you're from that era, you understand. There was no silver platter. We suffered a lot."

He describes the ANC's failings as "minor mistakes" made by "human beings". Young people, he says, "don't understand what we went through".

Those worries are present among the ANC's leadership too. "We're pleading with South Africans to give us another chance," says Snuki Zikalala, president of the ANC's veterans' league and an ally of Mbeki, who has returned to frontline politics after the end of Zuma.

They are not just pleading, they are promising. The minimum wage has been raised by 8.5%, social grants have risen, and this month Ramaphosa signed into law a national health insurance bill giving access to healthcare for all. Left unsaid is how the government will pay for it.

Zikalala admits the party lost its way under Zuma, who "brought down the whole South African state. That's why the country is in a mess. It took us 100 years backwards. It was all about himself and his family."

He adds: "We have everything in this country. If we can just have proper governance and run the country professionally..."

The ANC will still be running the country on Thursday, but if the polls are right, it will be in coalition. However, its potential alliances are fraught with problems. How can it do a deal with Zuma, a man who it now freely admits perpetrated one of the biggest corruption scandals of any government anywhere in the world?

How can it do a deal with Malema's EFF, a party that wants to appropriate land and who Zikalala says "does not believe in the rule of law"?

Of the main parties, that just leaves the Democratic Alliance, a centre-right party opposed to the ANC's social spending and, more importantly, still seen as dominated by and catering for white people.

Optimism is hard to find. But Butler, who wrote a biography of Ramaphosa, believes the president might be "the right person for this situation. He's a consensus politician, a negotiator. He's exactly the leader you'd want for a period of coalition government." Also, he adds: "There isn't anyone else. He's all they've got."

There is another question about what happens after the election: where does the anger go if things don't improve? Several people last week muttered darkly about foreigners, accusing them of taking jobs and being responsible for crime.

But there are reasons to be hopeful too. No one doubts the election will be free and fair – unlike in the US, there is no possibility of a coup attempt if the ANC was to lose power. The country's institutions, especially the judicial system, have remained independent and strong. There is a free, vibrant press. And while the state has collapsed, business and civil society has stepped in, providing health and education, delivering social services, filling potholes.

Despite everything, South Africa remains a country of successful businesses, vibrant creative scenes and a thriving tourism industry.

But back in Kliptown, over the railway tracks from the square, Bob Nameng disagrees. The head of a local youth organisation, he points back over the tracks to the Freedom Charter and its proclamations about the new South Africa. "It's bullshit, it's a contradiction. You speak of land – us here are congested in a small piece. You speak of rights – there are no rights here."

He won't vote ANC – "I can't afford to sell myself again" – and will instead support Malema's EFF. Not that he's is hopeful anything will change.

"Nothing is OK in our country. I can't be lying. This is not what we fought for."



Nelson Mandela presided over an era of economic growth, which was squandered under Jacob Zuma.

After apartheid

1990–94 The end of apartheid and the dawn of democracy
After Nelson Mandela's release from prison in 1990, four years of negotiations with the apartheid government lead to a multiparty democracy. Black South Africans queue for hours in April 1994 to cast their first ever vote. The ANC wins by a landslide and Mandela becomes South Africa's first black president.

1999–2008 Aids crisis and commodities boom
Mandela steps down and is replaced by Thabo Mbeki. Helped by a global commodities boom, the economy continues to grow. But Mbkei's conspiratorial views on HIV block the rollout of much-needed antiretroviral drugs, and this worsens the country's Aids epidemic.

2010 The World Cup
South Africa hosts the men's football World Cup, an event that has the potential to cement the country's position as a rising global power. But while South Africa puts on a good show, the country's political situation has already begun to take a turn for the worse.

2009–2018 The Zuma crisis
During Jacob Zuma's presidency, much of the good work done under Mandela and Mbeki is undone. Corruption becomes endemic, growth becomes anaemic and crime rates grow much higher. Zuma is forced out following devastating reports into so-called state capture – taking over state institutions and using them for self-enrichment.

2018–2024 Ramaphosa's struggles
Cyril Ramaphosa, a key ally of Mandela and the ANC's main negotiator with the apartheid government, had hoped to succeed his friend in 1999. But after that bid failed, he became one of the country's richest businessmen. His election in 2018 is heralded as the dawn of a new era, but his presidency is beset with problems, many of them inherited from Zuma.

ON OTHER PAGES

How anti-apartheid campaigners in the UK helped South Africa's long march to freedom
New Review, cover story



Israel attacks on Rafah escalate despite ruling to halt from UN court



Palestinian women in Gaza City paint inscriptions on a damaged wall. Getty

Bethan McKernan
Jerusalem

Israel appears to be forging ahead with its offensive on the southern Gaza city of Rafah, despite a new ruling from the UN's top court to halt the assault, which it said is worsening an already "disastrous" humanitarian crisis.

About 900,000 people have fled Rafah, previously the shelter of last resort for 85% of the Gaza Strip's 2.3 million population, since the Israeli ground operation in the area began on 6 May. At the same time, deliveries of humanitarian supplies and fuel to the Palestinian territory have slowed to a trickle, with the two main aid crossings – Rafah, on the border with Egypt, and nearby Kerem Shalom, a goods crossing linking Gaza with Israel – effectively blocked by the fighting.

On Friday, the International Court of Justice in The Hague (ICJ), which arbitrates disputes between nations, made its third intervention in the conflict so far, ordering Israel to immediately stop its Rafah operation. The court president Nawaf Salam said when announcing the 13-2 majority ruling, that Israel is obliged under the UN's genocide convention not to inflict "conditions of life that would bring about [the Palestinian people's] physical destruction in whole or in part".

But Israeli airstrikes on the south and eastern edges of Rafah appeared to escalate even as the ICJ delivered its decision, residents and medics said, as Israeli ground troops edge closer to the overcrowded city centre. Another 30 Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire in the last 24 hours, Palestinian medics reported on Saturday; battles are also ongoing in northern and central parts of the Strip, such as Jabalia and Zeitoun, where forces belonging to the Palestinian militant group Hamas have regrouped.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said on Friday night that it had carried out "operational activity in specific areas of Rafah" including killing Hamas fighters and destroying parts of the group's tunnel network.

Egypt's president, Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, said in a phone call with US President Joe Biden on Friday night that the country would resume allowing UN trucks to travel to Kerem Shalom, but with Rafah still closed and fighting raging it remains unclear whether relief agencies will be able to access or distribute deliveries. Delivery operations that began from a new US-funded floating pier were halted almost immediately after desperate people seized most of the shipment last week.

The order from the ICJ is not enforceable, and Israeli ministers have vowed that they will not comply with it.

About 1,200 people, mostly civilians, were killed in Hamas's 7 October surprise assault, with a further 250 taken hostage. Nearly 36,000 people have been killed in the ensuing war in Gaza, according to the Palestinian health ministry, which does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths.

Before the beginning of Shabbat on Friday night, Israeli war cabinet minister Benny Gantz said his country was "obligated to continue fighting to return its hostages and ensure the safety of its citizens, at any time and place – including in Rafah. We will continue to act according to international law in Rafah and wherever we operate, and make an effort to avoid harming the civilian population. Not because of The Hague tribunal, but first of all because of who we are."

A statement from the office of Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, rejected the accusations of genocide first brought to the ICJ by South Africa in December as "false, outrageous and disgusting".

Yet the ICJ decision comes the same week as the news that the International Criminal Court, which tries individuals, is considering issuing arrest warrants for senior Hamas and Israeli officials, including Netanyahu, for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Meanwhile, the bodies of three more hostages killed on 7 October were recovered overnight from Gaza, the Israeli army said on Friday evening. About 100 hostages are still believed to be alive in Gaza, and Israel estimates 39 have died in captivity. A total of 17 bodies have now been recovered.

ON OTHER PAGES

Call to prosecute Netanyahu exposes west's moral doublethink
Simon Tisdall, Comment, page 41

An URGENT appeal to Observer readers

In just **one day**, people can lose everything and become refugees...

MAKE TODAY THE DAY YOU DECIDE TO HELP.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, exists to protect refugees. The number of people needing protection is growing rapidly, leaving UNHCR's lifesaving humanitarian work seriously underfunded. Recent years have seen multiple emergencies where, in just one day, people's lives have changed forever as they were forced to flee their homes and become refugees.

On **24 February 2022** Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, displacing millions of people. Tatiana, from Kharkiv, describes the scene she woke to:

"We looked out the window and saw smoke, fire, explosions. In an hour or two there were tanks under our windows. We realised we had to leave but had nowhere to go. We didn't know what to do. We didn't know where we were going."

On **6 February 2023**, a series of earthquakes killed over 55,000 people in Türkiye and Syria, and destroyed tens of thousands of homes. UNHCR teams on the ground sprang into action, providing items such as 31,600 tents, 45,000 sleeping bags and over 100,000 thermal blankets in Türkiye.

Just two months later, on **15 April 2023**, the escalation of conflict in Sudan saw millions forced to flee in fear of their lives. UNHCR's emergency response teams welcomed refugees at Sudan's borders, providing them with shelter and lifesaving essentials.



A UNHCR team member leads Rohingya refugees to safety after they were forced to flee their homes in Bangladesh to escape violence.

Türkiye/Syria and Sudan were amongst 43 emergencies declared in 2023. Many, such as Sudan, are continuing to force more people from their homes. That's why **UK for UNHCR is asking Observer readers if you will make today, 26 May 2024, the day that you take action to help refugees.**

A gift of £96 today could provide a family of four with a lifesaving Emergency Rescue Kit containing the essentials they need to survive far from home.

When bombs are falling and bullets flying, people often escape with only the clothes on their backs. Your support today can ensure that the next day people are forced to flee, UNHCR can be there to provide the humanitarian aid that could save their lives.



£96 could help provide a family of four with a lifesaving Emergency Rescue Kit, containing essentials such as warm clothes, shoes, bottled water and high-energy food.

Give now at
unrefugees.org.uk/oneday-observer
Call **0800 029 3883**, or **fill in the form below**

I would like to give: ☐ £96 ☐ £192 ☐ £288 ☐ Other £ _____

☐ I enclose a cheque made payable to **UK for UNHCR** OR
☐ I would like to make a donation by debit/credit card

Card no. ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ Expiry date ☐☐/☐☐

Signature | Date ☐☐/☐☐/☐☐

☐ Tick here, if you don't want to receive an acknowledgement by post

Title | First name | Last name

Address

Postcode

Provide your details below to receive updates by email and/or phone on the impact of your support and how you can donate and help in other ways.

Email

Phone

Please return this form along with your cheque to: P24ODAOB1

Freepost UK FOR UNHCR (you don't need a stamp)

Increase your donation by 25p for every £1 you donate *giftaid it*

☐ I would like UK for UNHCR to claim Gift Aid on this donation (currently 25p for each £1 donated), as well as any donations I make in the future and have made in the past four years to UK for UNHCR, until I notify you otherwise. I confirm I am a UK taxpayer and I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. I understand that council tax and VAT do not qualify. If your circumstances change or you have any questions, please contact our **Supporter Care Team** on **0800 029 3883** or email **supportercare@unrefugees.org.uk** The Gift Aid claimed will be used to fund the whole of UK for UNHCR's work.

Respecting your personal data: We will use your details to process your donation and to keep you up to date with our work, fundraising activities and other events. You can read more about how we use your data in our Privacy Policy **unrefugees.org.uk/privacy-policy** You can opt out of any communications at any time by contacting our **Supporter Care Team** using the details above.

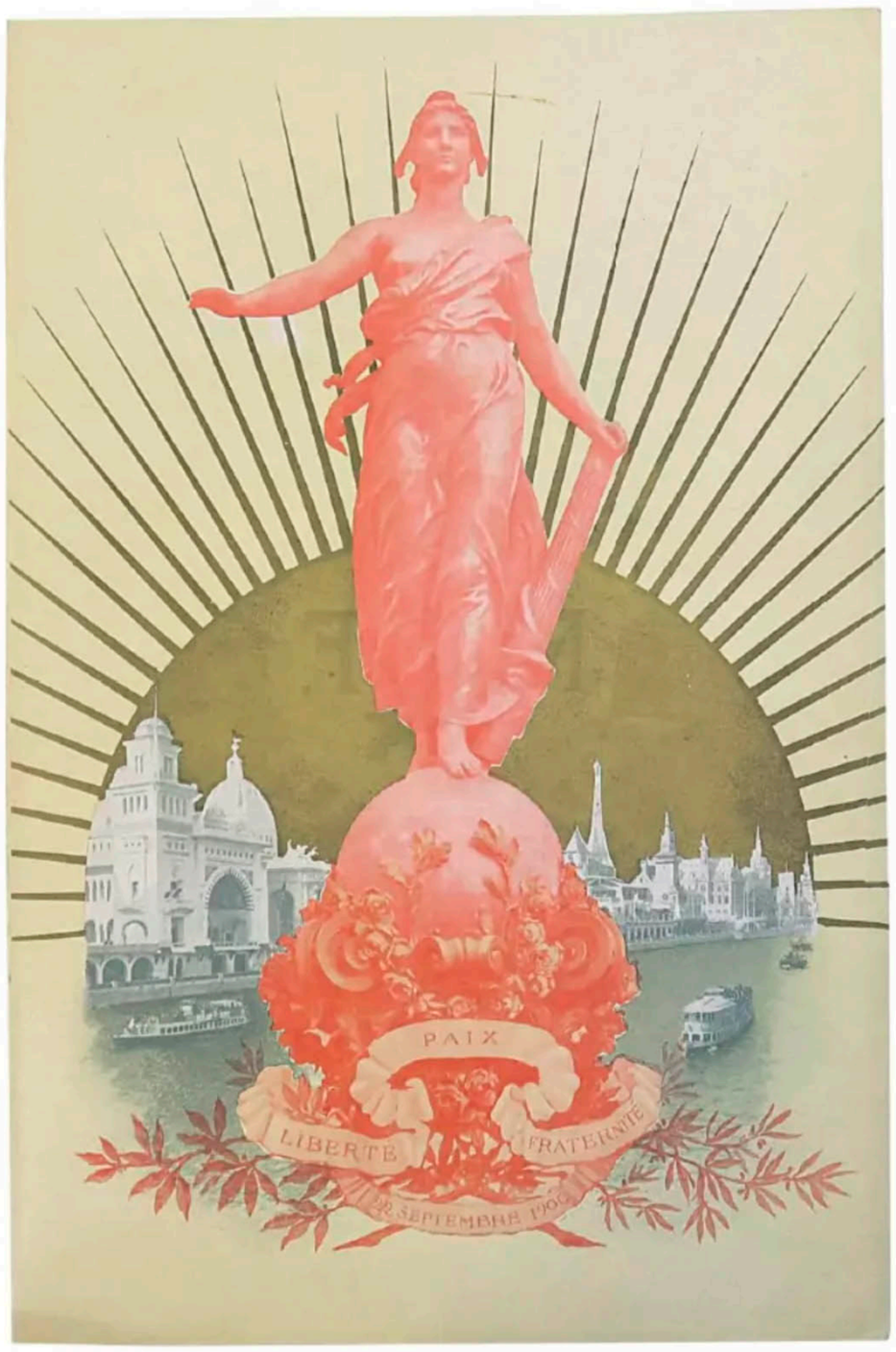
Scan this QR code to donate online

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

A minimum of 75% of your gift will directly help displaced and refugee families, funding Emergency Rescue Kits and other humanitarian interventions.

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency United Kingdom for UNHCR

United Kingdom for UNHCR is a registered charity in England and Wales (1183415). P24ODAOB1



LEFT
A menu from the banquet in Paris for the Universal Exposition of 1900.



BELOW
The last meal of French president Sadi Carnot, before he was killed in 1894.



LEFT
Dinner at Balmoral for Queen Victoria in October 1885.

Cometh dine with me ... historic fare at Versailles and Balmoral revealed

Menus documenting 150 years of royal gastronomy will go up for auction in Paris

Kim Willsher
Paris

On Friday, 22 May 1896, guests of Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle had a lot on their plates. A hand-written menu shows "Her Majesty's Dinner" offered soup with vermicelli, trout meunière, boudin (black pudding), quails, ducklings and spinach with croutons followed by peaches and cream, then cheese. For those still peckish, hot and cold meats including pork tongue and beef were laid out on a side table.

The finely decorated card is one of 4,600 menus in a unique collection being sold in Paris on Friday, spanning 150 years of high-society dining from the late 19th century.

They were collected by 56-year-old chef Christophe Marguin, and date from a banquet given by the Lord Mayor of London at the Guildhall in 1862. From there, they range from a dinner hosted by France's last monarch, Napoleon III, in 1868 to the dinner for King Charles hosted by President Emmanuel Macron at Versailles in September last year.

"It is a beautiful collection and is unique. Many of these menus are works of art in their own right," Marguin said. "History is also written at the dining table."

Marguin, who runs Le Président restaurant in Lyon, France's culinary capital, is the fourth generation of chefs in his family and began collecting menus aged 19 when working in the restaurant of the five-star Hotel Lutetia in Paris.

"I was told there was a chef who was going into a retirement home and had no family. He didn't want his collection to go in the bin," Marguin said. The chef turned out to be Frenchman Henri Cédard, who had worked for six British monarchs from Queen Victoria to the future Queen Elizabeth II between 1885 and 1935.

'Many of these menus are works of art in their own right. History is written at the dining table'
Christophe Marguin, chef

"I realised it was a bit of history and I couldn't let it go. And that's how the collection started,"

Today, it includes menus from dinners at the Elysée and Versailles palaces given by successive presidents marking state visits and summits. Guests included Elizabeth II, John F Kennedy, Margaret Thatcher and Colonel Gaddafi, and there are almost 600 menus from meals hosted by the British royal family.

As well as Queen Victoria's dinners at Balmoral and Windsor, the menus record meals at the coronations of George V in 1911, George VI in 1937 and Elizabeth II in 1953 as well as the wedding breakfast of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer in 1981 and the dinner following the marriage of Prince William and Catherine Middleton on 29 April 2011.



BELOW
Roast quail, a meal fit for a queen.

Marguin says the menus reflect more cultural than culinary changes and that gastronomic dinners have become simpler and shorter over the last century-and-a-half.

A menu from an April 1914 dinner given by the French president, Raymond Poincaré to mark the 10th anniversary of the entente cordiale between Britain and France shows that George V and Queen Mary dined on 17 courses including turtle soup, foie gras, poultry mousseline, trout, lamb and a champagne sorbet with Italian meringue.

On 4 April 2004, Elizabeth II travelled to Paris to mark the 100th anniversary of the treaty and was served just five courses – broccoli soup, stuffed quails, salardaises potatoes, cheese and a pudding accompanied by a 1990 Château d'Yquem, white and a 1988 Château Mouton Rothschild, followed by a 1995 Dom Pérignon.

Marguin said: "At the beginning of the 20th century, life was slower. A grand dinner was often the event of the week and could involve up to 18 courses. Today, the protocol is that the meal lasts 45 minutes from when the president starts eating.

"The diplomacy is still done around the dinner but not so much at the table. It's a pity, but people eat less and have less time for a long meal."

The menus also reflect presidential tastes. President Jacques Chirac was a celebrated bon vivant who enjoyed traditional dishes, Nicolas Sarkozy, who did not drink or pay much attention to what he ate, took cheese off the menu to save time. His successor, François Hollande liked his food, and put cheese back on.

Marguin hopes his collection, estimated at €100,000, will be sold as one lot and remain in France. He says his favourite menus are from John F Kennedy's visit to France in June 1961, when President Charles de Gaulle hosted two dinners for the American leader and his wife, Jackie. "They are special because it was his first visit to Paris, and [soon after] he was assassinated, so they are unique," Marguin said.

Virginie Vernier, director of the Lyon office of Maison Millon auction house which is selling the collection, said: "The collection highlights French savoir faire and quality of life of which we are so proud, from the gastronomy to the [menu] artwork."



Thirty years, 3,000 assisted deaths: how Oregon pioneered a revolution

The state's death with dignity act has faced many hurdles since 1994. Now the tide of public opinion is turning across the US and the world, writes *Chris McGreal*

It has been three decades since Ann Jackson voted against the first assisted dying law in the world.

But after watching two partners succumb to cancer, and fearing the prospect of a lingering death herself as she grapples with autoimmune diseases, Jackson is now a vigorous proponent of the Oregon legislation used by thousands of people to end their own lives, and providing a blueprint for other US states and countries considering similar laws, including the UK.

"I voted twice against the law but once it went into effect and I saw how it worked, I changed my mind," said Jackson, the former chief executive of the Oregon Hospice and Palliative Care Association. "I really thought that if everyone had hospice care they wouldn't need this, which was very arrogant of me, because hospice is something where others decide. One of the things that really bothers me is the idea that doctors should decide when to allow you to die. That is just awful. I came to realise this is about choice. Someone should be able to decide for themselves when to die."

Oregon voters passed the state's death with dignity act in a 1994 referendum by a slim margin. Since then, more than 3,000 terminally ill people with just months to live have used the law to end their lives using a prescribed cocktail of lethal medications. Along the way, the death with dignity act has survived a second referendum, an attempt to axe it in congress and a challenge in the supreme court.

The number of people using the law to end their lives continues to grow each year, with 367 taking the fatal drugs in 2023, fewer than 1% of deaths in Oregon. Support for assisted dying in the state has risen to the point where it is no longer a significant political issue.

Eight other US states and Washington DC now allow what is also known as physician-assisted dying along the lines of the Oregon law, and a dozen more are debating bills to legalise it. The legislation has influenced laws in Australia and Canada, and features strongly in debates as the UK, France and Japan contemplate their own action.

But assisted dying has not been without its challenges, including a reluctance by doctors to approve requests by patients to end their lives.

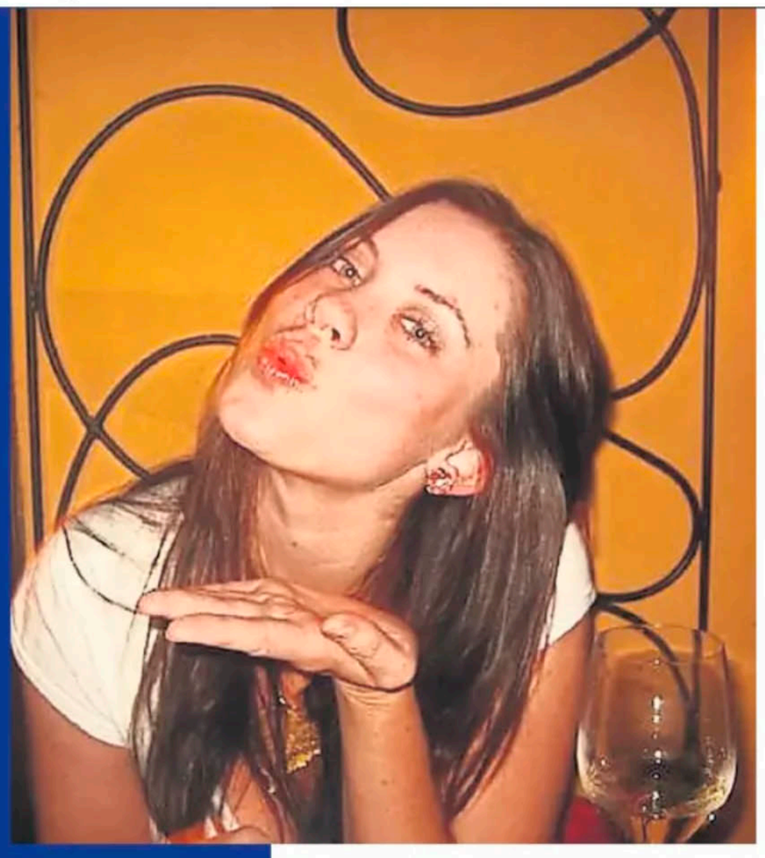
Oregon's death with dignity act was designed to head off accusations that any such law would result in people being pressured to take their own lives against their will. Applicants must have a terminal illness with less than six months to live and be mentally competent. They are also required to self-administer the lethal medicines, which often include a mix of opioids and barbiturates.



Two doctors must agree to the prescription and tell a patient about alternatives such as palliative care. Built-in waiting periods prevent people acting on impulse, although these have been amended to take account of those who only have a few days to live. The law also includes legal protection for doctors who prescribe lethal drugs.

But those requirements did not stop bitter arguments during the 1994 referendum. The state's largest newspaper, the *Oregonian*, was strongly opposed to the act. So was the senior US senator for Oregon, Ron Wyden, who said he feared the law could be used to push people who could not afford medical expenses into taking their own lives.

The Roman Catholic church, alarmed at the precedent the law would set, spent millions of dollars campaigning against it by claiming that assisted dying would encourage a rash of suicides. The archbishop of Portland, William Levada, called proponents of the law "murderers in the name of mercy".



ABOVE Brittany Maynard, who moved to Oregon to end her life in 2014.

LEFT Brittany's mother, Deborah Ziegler, holds a photograph of her daughter. AP



Other opponents claimed that disabled and sick people would take their own lives so as not to become a burden on their families. Some even warned that Oregon's beaches would be littered with the bodies of people who chose to die next to the sea.

Voters approved the law by a slim margin, with 51% in favour. But the anti-abortion group National Right to Life almost immediately persuaded a federal judge to block its implementation for another three years. Then Oregon's legislature decided to put the issue to voters again.

Support for the law increased to 60% on a second ballot in 1997, including some Oregonians who voted against it the first time but resented outside pressure groups failing to respect the original result.

The legislation finally took effect, but two years later Congress tried to legislate against it. By then, Senator Wyden thought differently about the death with dignity act. "Not only did I change my views but I filibustered in the Senate to protect it. I consider it one of the most important things I've done in my time in public service," he told the *Willamette Week*.

Even as public support for the law grew among Oregonians, there were continuing challenges. Those who wanted to make use of it often struggled to persuade their doctors to sign the necessary papers. Some had moral objections, believing it breached the Hippocratic oath, or worked for medical institutions that were opposed. Others feared legal consequences after President George W Bush's administration threatened to punish doctors who prescribed the life-ending drugs.

In response, Sue Dessayer Porter helped found End of Life Choices Oregon to guide people through the process and link them with doctors willing to help.

"When I started, in this whole Portland area there were maybe three doctors who would sign off," she said. "For a lot of them, I think it was the legal fear. We have done so much outreach, speaking to doctors, working with hospitals and hospices, to tell them that nobody has faced any legal problems. But so many are still badly informed about the law."

Jack and Marilyn Pasternack struggled to find a cooperative doctor after they were both diagnosed as terminally ill five years ago. Their son, Alan, said that when his father began to succumb to melanoma, his 89-year-old mother decided she wanted to die with him. "She had a serious heart condition and her cardiologist told her she would die within months without surgery. He wanted her to have open-heart surgery and she didn't want to," he said.

Alan said that the cardiologist refused to sign the papers because he opposed the law. Eventually, he was able to get his mother into hospice care, which set in motion the process that allowed the couple to obtain the medication and die together. Still, it took weeks and there was opposition from other quarters.

"My sister belongs to a congregation in New York. She spoke to the rabbi there, who flat out told her: you have to call your parents and tell them to stop doing what they're doing," he said.

Jack and Marilyn had a last week of visiting a favourite Irish pub and a jazz club. "We got together. We sang songs. After a while, they drank the magic potion. They sat there holding hands. They had a beautiful day on their own terms," said Alan.

Families of those who have chosen to end their lives under the law frequently say that having the lethal drugs to hand provides comfort that can transform their last days.

But Alan and his wife, Gail, said the process was frustrating because his parents were constantly asked by doctors if they still wanted to go through with it. "Even the moment before they give you the drink, they ask you again, because you have to be of sound mind to make this decision," said Gail. "They kept asking. It seems like they're trying to beat you down into changing your mind."

> ***'My parents drank the magic potion. They had a beautiful day on their own terms'***
>
> ***Alan Pasternack, son of terminally ill parents***

Dr Mark Rarick, an oncologist who has approved more than 200 applications from people seeking to end their lives, said he understood the frustration, but regarded the system as necessary to reassure society that people were not being pressured into ending their lives against their will.

"We need the support of society to continue this. The safeguards are very important so that people know that someone with cancer cannot just say, 'I'm feeling down today and I think I want to end my life,' and do it tomorrow," he said.

The Oregon health authority said it has not received a single report of the law being misused. But because it does not require a doctor to be present when the lethal medication is consumed, critics say the authority cannot know for certain that someone has not come under pressure to take it.

Doctors have also expressed concern about the motivation of some patients in asking to die. According to the state health authority, the three leading reasons given for using the law are "losing autonomy", being "less able to engage in activities making life enjoyable" and "loss of dignity". Nearly half said that being a "burden on family, friends/caregivers" was a concern. More than 150 people said the cost of medical treatment fed into their decision.

Porter said she was not disturbed by these numbers because "everyone who is sick worries about being a burden on their family", and patients were not citing that as the primary reason for ending their lives.

She said that almost everyone she had dealt with had made their peace with being terminally ill, in part because more than 80% of those who asked to end their lives were 65 or older and most were in hospice care. But occasionally she was called on to assist someone young, and that was a different matter.

In 2014, a 29-year-old woman with brain cancer, Brittany Maynard, moved from California to Oregon to take advantage of the law. Maynard went public, setting a date for her death and posting a series of videos pressing for legalisation of assisted dying in other states.

Three days after Maynard took the medication, a Vatican official condemned her for "saying no to life". Maynard's mother, Deborah, wrote that her daughter did "not deserve to be labelled as reprehensible by strangers a continent away who do not know her or the particulars of her situation".

Maynard's public discussion of her decision to end her life did more than any other single patient in Oregon to spread awareness and support for the law. She prompted California to adopt similar legislation. More broadly, Oregon's law has put a greater focus on how people die, with doctors and medical institutions paying closer attention to palliative care and reducing suffering towards the end of life. It has also contributed to the rapid expansion of hospice care.

But some in the medical profession remain steadfastly opposed. Dr Charles Bentz, one of the law's most prominent critics in Oregon, has described it as "one of the worst things to happen to the profession of medicine since the middle ages".

Jackson regards such views as marginal amid growing public support for assisted dying, both in Oregon and nationally. "My Catholic cousin did it with a blessing of his family," she said.

She has personal reasons to support the death with dignity act. Thirty years ago, her partner John endured a "terrible death" from liver cancer before assisted dying was available. In 2009 she met William Duncan, a vascular surgeon from Massachusetts on a dating website.

A few years later, Duncan was diagnosed with prostate cancer and became very ill. His doctor was reluctant to sign the necessary forms but eventually agreed when Duncan declined further treatment.

The day after Thanksgiving, the family drove him through the snow to his log cabin in central Oregon. Duncan drank the medication with a bourbon cocktail as a chaser and Jackson at his side. "Now he had that prescription, he was able to enjoy his last days," she said.

Now Jackson, who has the autoimmune diseases multiple sclerosis and scleroderma, wonders if some day she may use the act herself. "It's comforting to know the law is there."

Brazilian freed after 'racist' rape conviction

Tiago Rogero
Rio de Janeiro

Carlos Edmilson da Silva had already served three years for a crime he did not commit when he was arrested in a São Paulo suburb and accused of a string of rapes. His face was plastered across the media, where he was dubbed the "maniac of Castelo Branco", after the motorway where 12 women had been raped in two years.

He was eventually sentenced to a total of 170 years in jail. He had served 12 years when DNA tests revealed that another man committed the crimes. Da Silva was released this month, and at 36 is trying to rebuild his life.

But his lawyer says the police procedure that led to his arrest is still widely accepted by Brazilian courts. Da Silva's convictions were based on victims being shown a picture and asked whether that is the perpetrator. Now there are calls for the practice to be scrapped, amid evidence that it perpetuates racial bias.

In 2023 281 verdicts in which defendants had been convicted with photo recognition were overturned.



Carlos Edmilson da Silva served 12 years of his 170-year sentence for multiple rapes.

Judge Rogerio Schietti said: "We accept a kind of amateurism in investigations. We're satisfied with so little to condemn people to long sentences."

Da Silva was first arrested in 2006, and photographed by police. In 2006 and 2007, four São Paulo women were raped. According to Da Silva's lawyer, Flávia Rahal, one victim was shown Da Silva's photograph and wrongly identified him as her attacker.

Between 2010 and 2012, 12 more women were raped, and Da Silva was again arrested. At the trial, a detective said: "I had arrested him in 2006. I took his photo and called the victims to see if they recognised him, because the characteristics always matched.'

Those "characteristics" were a "medium-height Black man", said Rahal. "The investigators showed the victims the photo as the only suspect."

Four years ago, Innocence Project Brazil, of which Rahal is a founding director, became aware of the case When DNA tests were done, they revealed that the perpetrator was a man already in jail for robbery.

On 16 May, the court annulled all Da Silva's convictions. Schietti said photographs should be used as a last resort: "But in many cases, the detective only shows a photograph of the one he considers is guilty. And usually it's a Black man."

Da Silva, when asked about his immediate plans said: "To get a job and make up for lost time."



LEFT
Kaufbeuren, in Bavaria, where the far-right AfD took 20% of the vote in the 2023 state election.
Alamy



The fears driving affluent Bavarian town into the arms of the far right

Party scandals don't deter those at an AfD rally in Kaufbeuren, where resentment of migrants and of the war in Ukraine is rising, reports *Deborah Cole*

Soaring church spires, the 1,000-year-old town centre unblemished by second world war bombing or graffiti, snow-capped Alps in the middle distance – Kaufbeuren, in Bavaria, can count many blessings.

Unemployment is in the low single digits, the Luftwaffe backed away from plans to move its training school for Eurofighter and Tornado jet technicians elsewhere and crime is at a historic low.

However, as voters prepare to elect a new European parliament next month, deep-seated fears have gripped a significant share of the electorate in one of the most affluent pockets of Europe's top economy and delivered it to the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD).

The bond between the party and its voters appears unshaken even by a cascade of recent scandals. The AfD's lead candidate, Maximilian Krah, was forced by his party leadership on Wednesday to resign from its board and stop campaigning after he told Italy's *La Repubblica* that the SS, the Nazi paramilitary force which ran the death camps, were not all criminals and could only be judged on the basis of "individual guilt".

The SS remark led France's far-right National Rally (RN) to announce it would sever ties with the AfD in the EU assembly after the June election. The populist Identity and Democracy political group in the European parliament then moved to expel the AfD delegation "with immediate effect".

Krah had already been in the spotlight for suspected Chinese and Russian ties after one of his aides was arrested on charges of spying for China. On the eve of his resignation, he told the *Observer* the allegations were "merely an attempt to distract from our political arguments" and threatened legal action.

Polls show the AfD going into the EU election with 14-18% of the vote, well off its 23% high in October but up from its 11% score in 2019. Krah is virtually guaranteed a seat in the next European parliament.

As he arrived for the Kaufbeuren rally last week wearing a blue suit and his trademark pocket handkerchief, Krah posed for selfies with dozens of fans including young men with short haircuts wearing lederhosen.

Surprisingly for many, the AfD continues to make inroads in Germany's prosperous south and west, beyond its heartland in the poorer ex-communist east, as it embraces more extreme views on immigration, the war in Ukraine and national atonement for the Holocaust. But the right's ascendancy has also given rise to a lively local pro-democracy movement that seeks to draw lessons from the town's grim Nazi past.

In Kaufbeuren, nearly one in five gave the AfD their vote at the last state election in October. Pelted by cold rain, about 200 people gathered in a quaint town square for the AfD rally waving large German flags. A similar number of peaceful counter-protesters rallied 300m away, led by the Omas gegen Rechts (Grannies Against the Right) movement and joined by mayor Stefan Bosse and a brass band.

Krah's supporters said they were disgusted by chancellor Olaf Scholz's centre-left-led coalition and anxious about their children's future.

"It's a catastrophe – the worst government we ever had," said civil servant Manuela, 55, who, like most of the AfD supporters, declined to give her surname. She brought her teenage daughter to the rally. Despite the low rates of violent crime, she said her family no longer felt safe on the streets due to "Islamists".

Anti-AfD activists booed and whistled from the sidelines as Krah addressed the rally. Manuela said: "They call us Nazis just because we're patriots. The world laughs at us because no country is as dumb as Germany, with our exaggerated tolerance and diversity. They've been telling us for decades we should carry this guilt, and so we should rescue the whole world and be its dole office."

A bombshell report in January revealed that senior AfD members had attended a meeting at a lakeside villa where they discussed a scheme for the mass deportation of German citizens with immigrant backgrounds. The revelation sparked anti-extremism demonstrations nationwide, including in Kaufbeuren.



LEFT
Maximilian Krah, centre, at an AfD rally last week in Kaufbeuren.
Frank Bauer/ the Observer

Elke, a 54-year-old nurse, said she liked the AfD's opposition to what she called overreach in Berlin and Brussels. "I want to drive a car with an internal combustion engine, I want gas heating and I don't want a war against Russia," she said.

Several AfD voters said they opposed Germany's military support for Ukraine and worried about a Europe-wide conflagration triggered by standing up to Vladimir Putin.

As Krah took the stage, local party officials released eight white doves of peace to applause from the crowd.

Krah spoke of his fear that his 21-year-old son could become "cannon fodder on the eastern front" if Germany brings back conscription, a proposal floated in limited form by defence minister Boris Pistorius.

Bosse, the mayor, told the *Observer* that a large part of the AfD's base in Kaufbeuren comprises ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union who arrived in the 1990s. In the pandemic, the region had a strong anti-vaxxer movement, which now opposes Nato aid for Ukraine.

Bosse has led the town for 20 years. In his office overlooking the town's immaculate high street, he said that he was "ashamed" that the far right had gained a foothold again.

"I also feel shame toward the British all those who suffered so much under the Third Reich that in Germany you have a political force establishing itself that is trying to just wipe away these horrible crimes," he said.

Bosse, from the conservative Christian Social Union, said he is haunted by the Nazi past in Kaufbeuren, which under Adolf Hitler hosted a dynamite factory employing forced labourers, satellite concentration camps belonging to Dachau and a psychiatric hospital that orchestrated the extermination of more than 1,500 men, women and children.

Speaking at the counter-demonstration, Bosse noted that 2 July is marked by the town each year with a memorial ceremony for the victims as a reminder of the need for civil courage. "We have got to stand up for this democracy together," he said.

Keir Starmer
The man who would be PM

Tom Baldwin, author of an acclaimed new biography of the Labour leader, reveals what has driven him to change his party – and why he wants to do the same for the country

Over a cup of tea around his kitchen table a few weeks ago, Keir Starmer compared waiting for the general election to being in jail. "It feels like I'm chalking off the days on my cell wall before I can be released," he told me.

Like many real prison inmates across the country recently, he's been allowed out a bit earlier than expected by the government. Rishi Sunak's surprise decision to call a 4 July election means the gates have swung open and the Labour leader is emerging into the white light of a campaign.

Starmer is relishing it all now and, for better or for worse, voters will at least know more about him by the time this election is over.

A small industry is already

Continued overleaf

General election 2024

>> Continued from page 33

sprouting up to answer questions such as "Who is Keir Starmer really?" and "What does he stand for?" Despite the fact that Starmer is apparently heading for Downing Street, word-cloud polls about him routinely find the most popular answer is "Nothing" or "Don't know".

The Labour leader defies definition partly because he resists being forced into the frame that constrains most politicians. I doubt many of them would have likened his past few months to serving a prison sentence. Sitting on a 20-point poll lead while your opponents self-immolate is, for leaders of any party, about as good as it gets. Not Starmer, though, who says that he loathes opposition for being a waste of time.

At his kitchen table, he explains: "I've achieved less as a politician than I have at any other time in my life." But to most, the nine years he has spent since being elected an MP would appear to be a roaring success. Starmer survived the firestorm of Brexit that turned so many other careers to ash, became Labour leader and has now taken his party back from the brink of political bankruptcy to the verge of power.

But for Starmer, politics is a means to an end. He did not give up a stellar legal career so he could make big speeches and have photographers outside his house, nor did he become Labour leader to save the party from the adoring crowds that chanted the name of his predecessor. By his account, everything he's done in politics has had one goal: to get into government so he can create change.

There are, of course, plenty who will dismiss such talk as the sort of thing that politicians always say. After all, it was Tony Blair who stood outside Downing Street after his victory 27 years ago and declared: "Enough of talking – it is time now to do." And on one level, it's possible to make a comparison with Starmer, who has taken Labour relentlessly, and sometimes ruthlessly, on another journey back to the centre ground.

There was something superficially reminiscent of a "Britain deserves better" poster from 1997 when Labour launched its new pledge card last week, not least because the image on both was a black and white photograph of a leader in shirtsleeves and dark tie.

But look closer and there are key differences. Whereas Blair gazes up and imagines a new dawn breaking somewhere with an impossibly wide grin and his tie jauntily askew, Starmer is shown unsmiling as he stares down the barrel of the camera, tie buttoned up and sleeves pinned with iron precision on to his forearms.

The image suggests that Starmer is driven by a sense of duty rather than joy. And perhaps that seriousness is better suited to an era when, in contrast to the sunshine of 1997, people face fiscal austerity, darkening international horizons, and the sense, symbolised by Sunak's soaking on Wednesday, that if the rain ever stops it will be only a temporary lull in the storm.

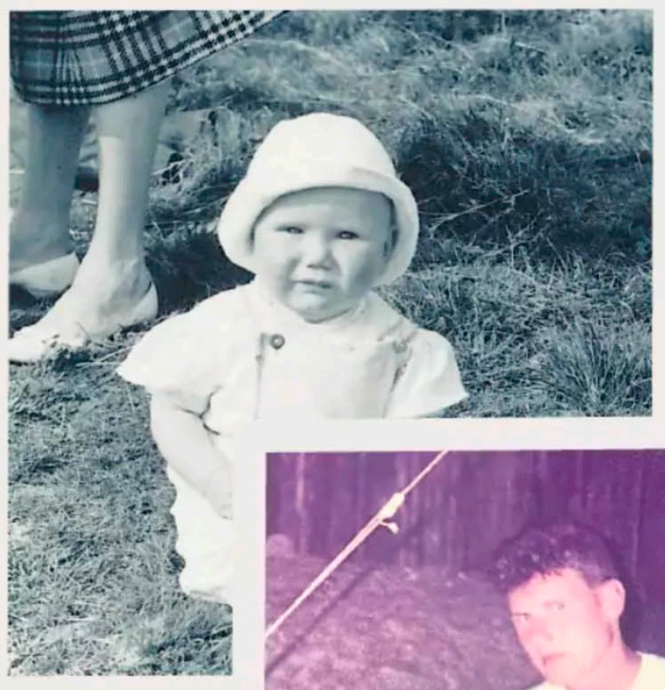
Those in thrall to the entitled swagger that was Boris Johnson's "charisma" will try to dismiss the Labour leader for being "dull". But the Conservative leadership has belatedly realised this quality makes Starmer appear stolidly reassuring after the political and economic mayhem of recent years.

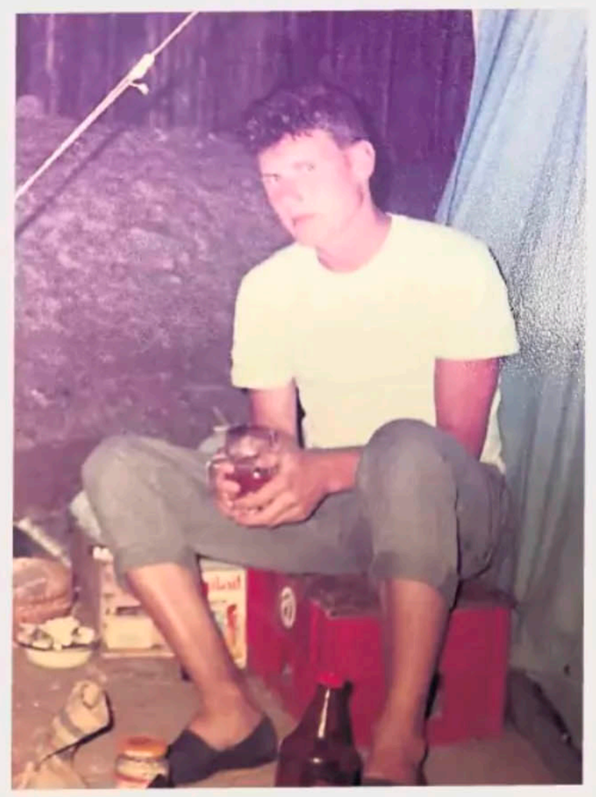
Their attacks on him now echo Jeremy Corbyn's angriest supporters as they accuse Starmer of changing his mind on policy pledges made during the Labour leadership contest four years ago. This, they say, makes him "untrustworthy" and shows how "he doesn't have a plan".

The flaw with their strategy is that it plays directly into everything the Labour leader wants to say over the next weeks. His one-word slogan in this campaign is "change". Starmer will happily point out how he's turned his party inside out to face the electorate and admit that he's changed some policies because he has to overcome obstacles to change the country too.

Far from this making him untrustworthy, Labour will argue that someone who doesn't get rid of expensive spending commitments after the triple economic catastrophes of Covid, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Liz Truss shouldn't be trusted to hold sharp objects let alone the nation's purse strings.

In pictures

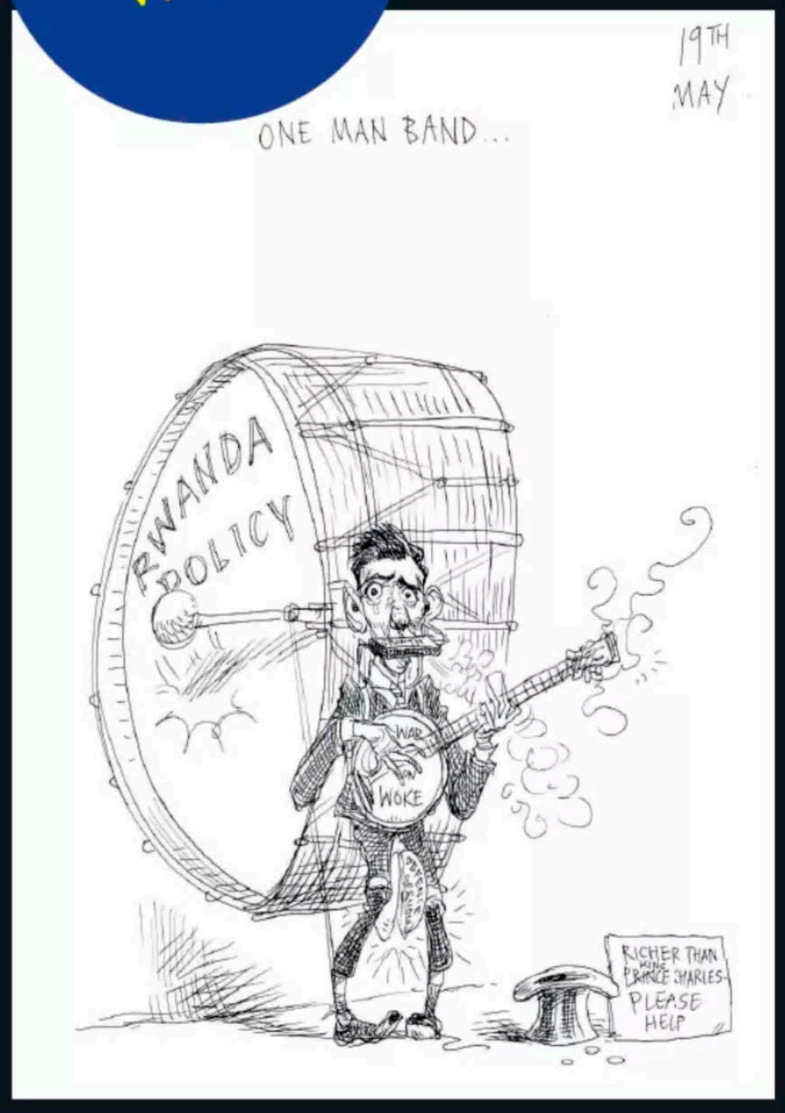


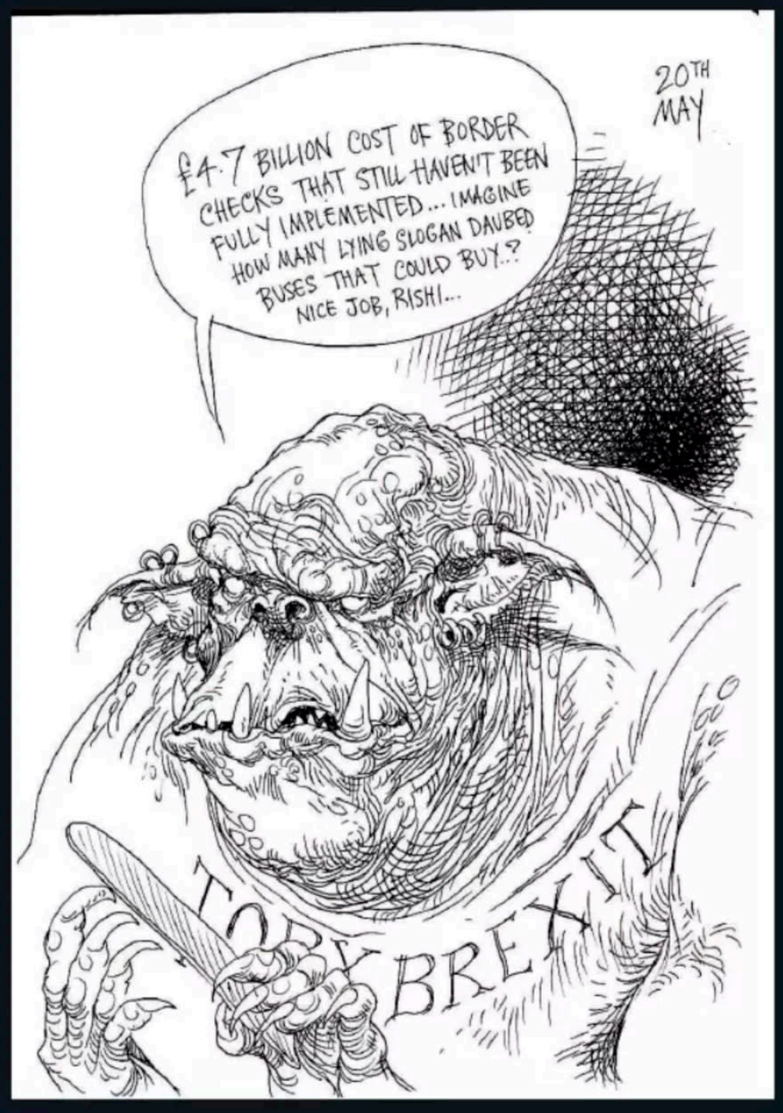


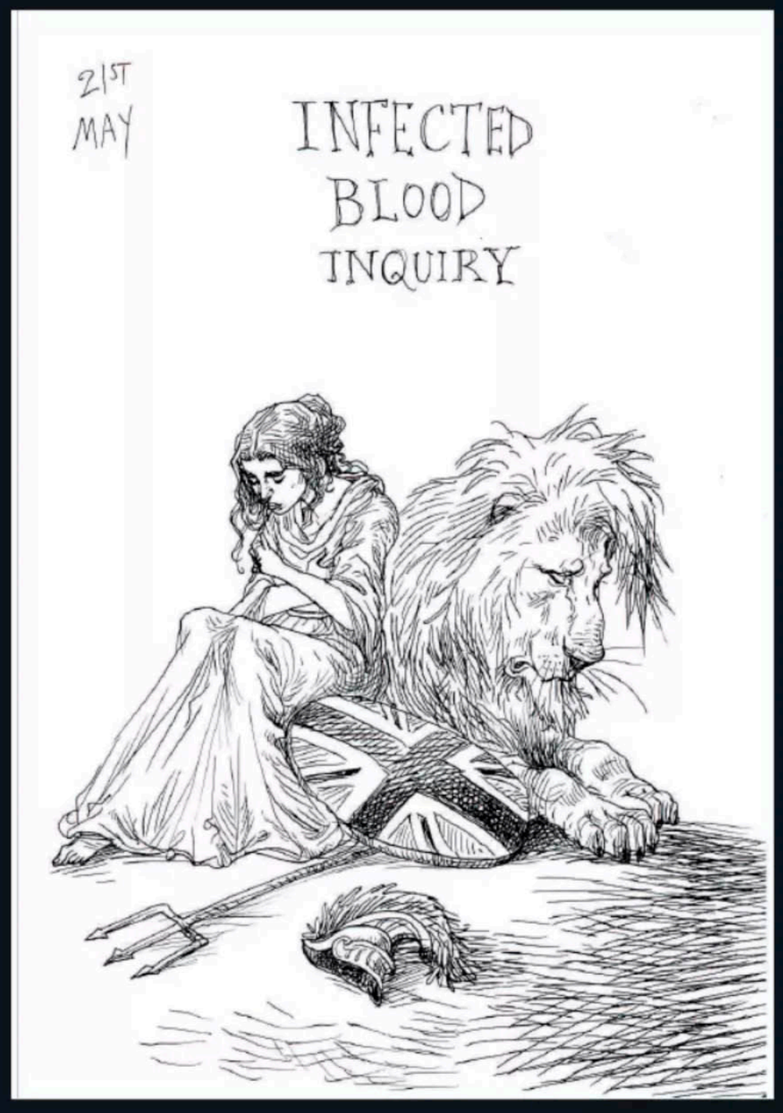
Above and right: Keir Starmer as a baby, and as a young man.

Riddell's week

The Observer cartoonist reflects on seven days when even an election announcement could not overshadow the spectres of past scandals and injustice.











Keir Starmer at a pub in Brighton watches his team, Arsenal, play Spurs. PA



Starmer at school in 1974, above left; and above, with his grandmother. *Keir Starmer*

In the absence of sparkling new policies, Starmer's speech tomorrow will describe how a Labour government would help a country coming together once again. Instead of defining himself through a self-consciously radical vision, he'll talk about sharing a set of recognisably British values rooted in real life. The speech, delivered in the kind of small southern town where he grew up, is not about some rigid ideology but about the messier, more ordinary hope that comes from a sense of public service that puts country ahead of party, and offers a sense of respect.

As for having "a plan", that's what Starmer wants to talk about most of all. The five missions he launched last year are probably the most underreported documents in recent political history. They're all personal, reflecting the range of his life experience – beginning with a working-class childhood in Surrey, where his dad tasted the poison of others' snobbery, his mother was terribly sick and his siblings were left behind in precarious lives when he went to university.

The missions are intended to provide a system of priorities and the long-term direction for a Labour government – to replace what he calls the "sticking-plaster" short-term fixes of the past couple of decades.

Indeed, aides say the first few days of the campaign show that Labour has been better at "having a plan" for this election than have the Conservatives who tried to surprise everyone by calling it.

The manifesto has long since been written. Each of the "first step" pledges that Starmer unveiled last week is designed to appeal directly to voters' lives. He has been doing debate rehearsals in a TV studio around the corner from Labour's Southwark headquarters for several weeks. Morgan McSweeney, the campaign director, had boxes of "Vote Labour" boards sitting in a regional organiser's garage near Gillingham almost a month before Starmer went there last week as he hit the election trail.

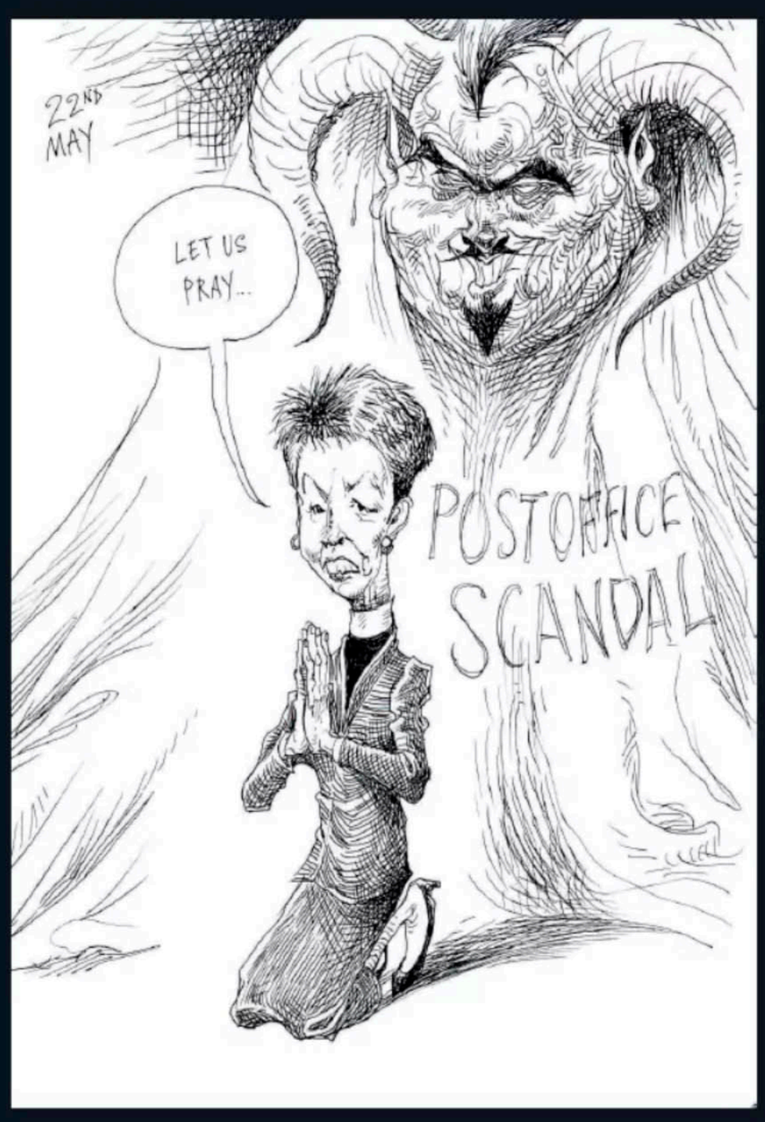
Pat McFadden, the campaign coordinator, has turned his notoriously gloomy approach to life into a virtue, with detailed preparations for the "wobble" that he believes a media bored by expectation of Labour victory will ensure happens. "They'll want to do a comeback story about the underdog Tories if polls tighten – and we must be ready for it," he says.

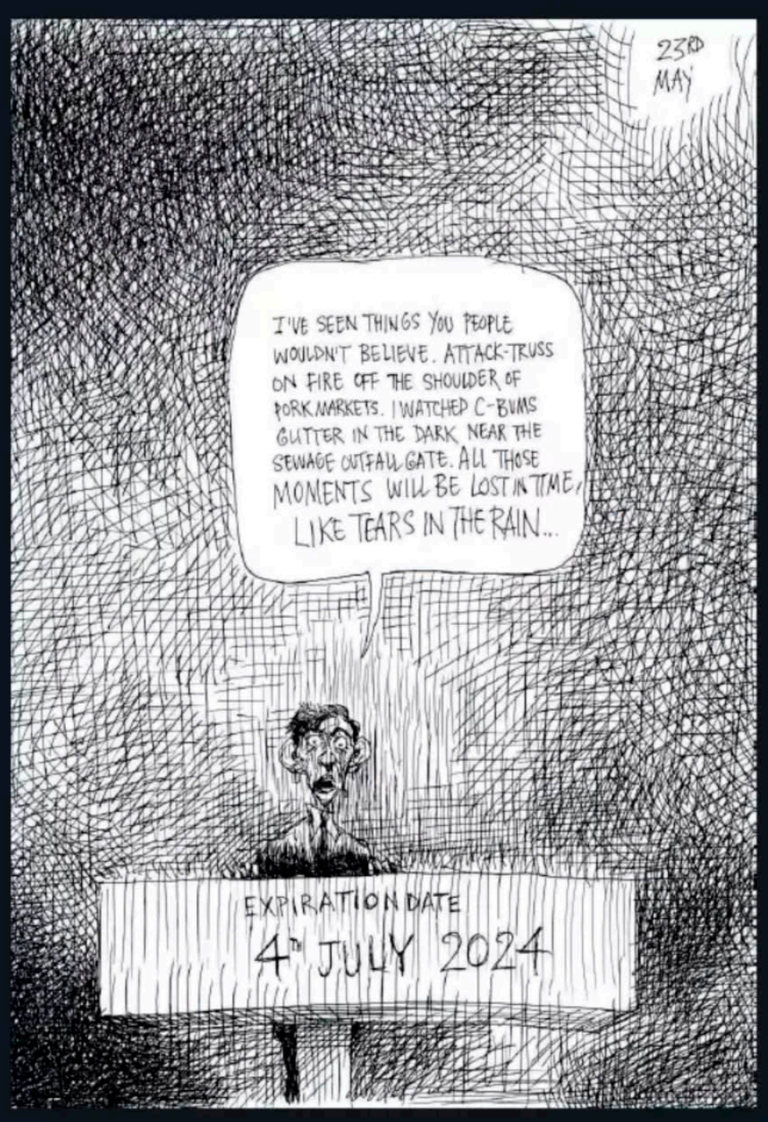
A key to this is to prevent Starmer losing touch with party HQ during the campaign. Along with a 6.30am call with his most senior advisers, responsibility for judging when to "play Keir in" on other decisions has been given to Jill Cuthbertson, his trusted gatekeeper who still has battle scars from unscripted moments in previous elections. If there are complaints from the media that events are too tightly controlled and stage-managed, it means she's doing her job. Labour will also resist any temptation for Starmer to match the hyperactivity of Sunak's regional tours. "We don't need Keir doing cartwheels from John o'Groats to Land's End to show he's fit for office," said a Labour aide.

The incredulity among Starmer's team over the Tories' disastrous start to the campaign means, according to this aide, that "no one thinks they're going to carry on being so shit".

And such recognition of the hazards ahead also serve as a reminder that Starmer, for all his reputation as a cautious man, has already taken gigantic risks over the last four years. Whether this was over the suspension of Corbyn, internal party reforms or policy changes, he

Continued on page 36 ››







Continued from page 35

has not always moved in a straight line. His progress is akin to that of someone working out how to cross a minefield who takes one step forward, then two to the left, one back, one to the right and then two forward. This can seem inelegant, even odd. But, compared to the wild rides into the Valley of Death by Labour's light brigade in recent years, it's a much better way to get to other side.

Starmer is now within touching distance of Downing Street. He has been assiduous in improving the interviews and speech-making, as well as the ritual name-calling of prime minister's questions, that are the core skills required of opposition leaders. But it still doesn't come naturally to someone who spent almost three decades arguing about facts and evidence as a lawyer while locating his identity outside politics in friends, football and family. Mark Adams, who has known him since school, says "Keir's a regular bloke who has always liked a pint or two, talking nonsense with his mates and playing far more football than is good for him. It's how he plugs himself back into his private network and recharges himself."

You can get glimpses of this when he's out campaigning because, unlike many politicians, Starmer seems to enjoy talking to ordinary people. It's just the shrillness and shallowness of politics itself he dislikes. As he gets closer to power, he will be inevitably be insulated from the outside world by ever deeper personal and political protection. He worries about what effect this will have on his children, beginning with his son's GCSE exams this summer. Starmer will also miss watching football from the stands at Arsenal or gracing his local Astroturf for eight-a-sides. His eyes briefly lit up when I suggested he could do his own expensive refurbishment of the prime ministerial flat in Downing Street by building a replica of his local pub, the Pineapple, inside. Then he shook his head sadly.

More than most leaders, Starmer needs these bridges back to what he calls "real life" to stay connected with the values that brought him into politics in the first place.

Just getting to Downing Street won't mean he's achieved much change in other people's lives. But if he's going to stick around long enough to do so, he should try to avoid making too much change in his own.



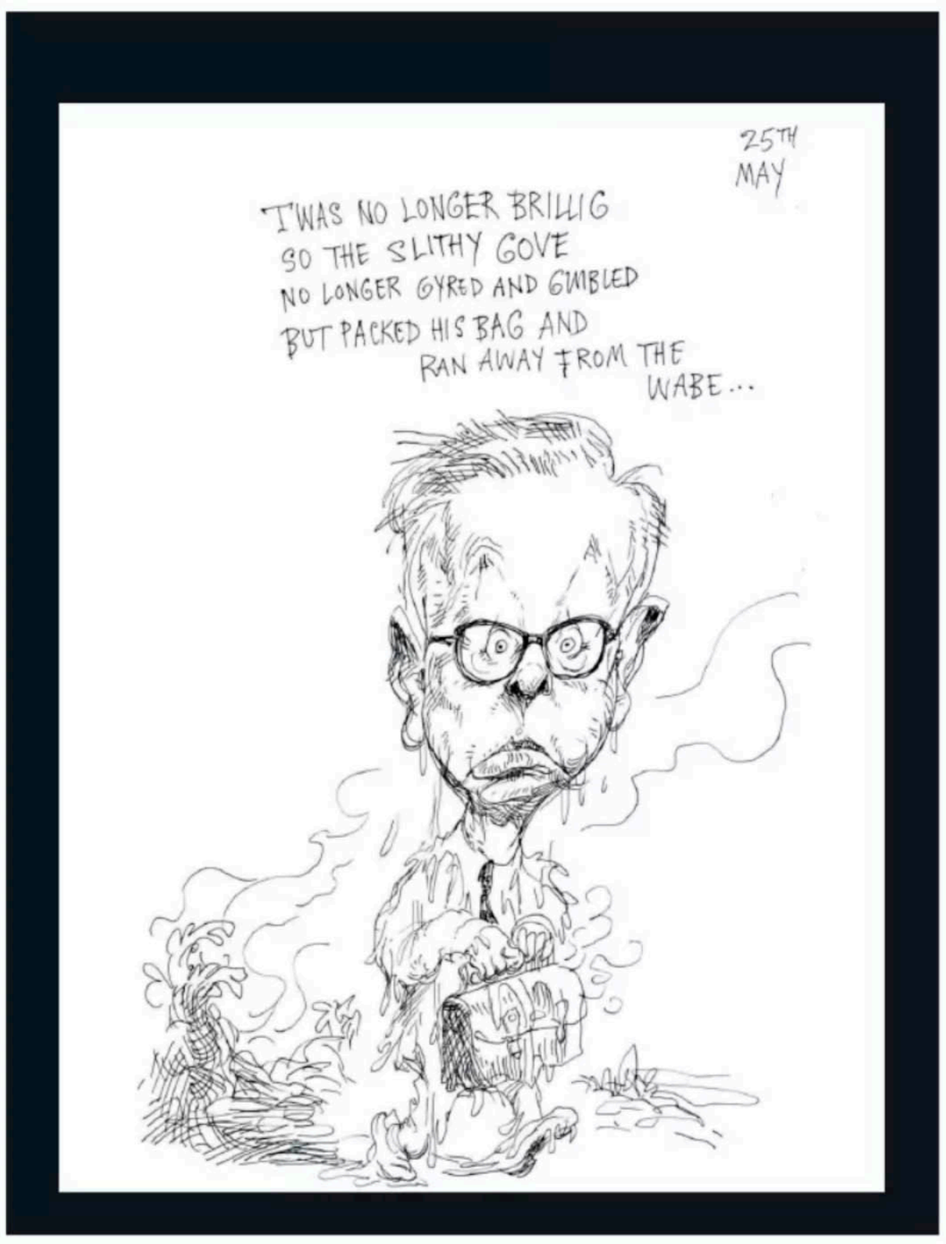
Tom Baldwin is the author of Keir Starmer: the Biography

ON OTHER PAGES

A chance to pass judgment on 14 years of misrule
Observer Comment, page 42

Rishi Sunak's summer election gamble is already backfiring
Andrew Rawnsley, page 43

It is self-indulgent for the anti-Starmer left to split Labour's vote
Sonia Sodha, page 46



Society



Downstairs, upstairs
How a life in service became a class act

Stories of the workers in great houses have long been a cultural staple. Now a series of exhibitions will shine a light on rat-catchers and ice-keepers, cooks and maids, writes *Sally Howard*

Bridget Holmes, the "necessary woman", scrubbed royal chamber pots through the reign of five Stuart monarchs. As "keeper of ice and snow" at Hampton Court Palace, Frances Talbot hewed great blocks of ice with a 6ft-long saw so palace guests could enjoy fancy iced desserts and chilled champagne through the summer of 1775.

And William Hester, a Kensington Palace rat-killer in the 1690s, chased vermin in a crimson and blue coat embroidered with depictions of wheat sheaves and rats.

Traditionally, exhibits at historic properties focus on the lives, loves and accrued material goods of the aristocrats who owned these properties and whose portraits hang in gilt frames on the walls.

Meanwhile, the identities and daily lives of the many men, women and children who kept these grand households' brasses shined, dinners served and bedpans emptied have remained obscure.

Now exhibitions at grand houses are training a spotlight on life below stairs. Untold Lives, which runs until 27 October at Kensington Palace, explores the lives and occupations of generations of rat-catchers, pages, wet nurses and seamstresses at the royal palaces.

"We see objects such as Talbot's 6ft ice saw and the rather elegant cushioned box toilet cleaned by Bridget Holmes and we get a sense of the hard physical labour as well as the extraordinary skills that went into the continuity of the royal household," said Mishka Sinha, curator for inclusive history at the



LEFT The below stairs cast of Downton Abbey, 'a reversion to honeyed attitudes of service'. ITV

LEFT A portrait of royal chamber pot scrubber Bridget Holmes by John Riley. Alamy

charity Historic Royal Palaces and co-curator of the exhibition.

Visitors are drawn to the stories of workers at the palaces, Sinha said, "because their lives feel closer to our own".

In July, a photography exhibition in London, The History of the British Nanny, will explore their role, from starched royal nannies to wartime nursery workers in the blitz.

Meanwhile, the National Trust's Life Below Stairs project illuminates the working conditions of servants at a growing number of properties across the trust's estate.

They include Uppark in West Sussex, where dairymaid Mary Ann Bullock married the elderly Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh in 1825; Cragside in Northumberland, where the servants of Victorian inventor William Armstrong gamely embraced novel labour-saving gadgets, including a hydraulic lift and an early gas stove and dishwasher; and the Blickling estate in Norfolk, where Flo Wadlow, who began her working life as kitchen maid in the 1930s, rose to become a celebrated chef.

One of the trust's most visited properties, Erddig in north Wales, features a servants' hall and corridor decorated with photographs, sketches and poems commemorating the Yorke family's generations of servants.

Elsewhere, properties are expanding their archives. Chatsworth's servants and staff database, a collaboration with Sheffield University PhD students, is a rich trove of source material on the hundreds of servants who have worked on this Derbyshire Dales country estate since the 1700s.

These include keeper of the wine cellars Reinhard Kulbach, who accompanied William Cavendish, 6th Duke of Devonshire, on his travels abroad and "fell in the sea on the journey to Capri during a storm", but was later dismissed for keeping "a house of prostitutes in Berkeley Square".

There was also Ellis Mellor, who in 1739 was "paid for killing moles"; accounts of "grumpy" German governess Fraulein von Bloem; and Elizabeth Bickell, who came into the house as a temporary maid for the 1843 visit of Queen Victoria and was later noted for managing "an outbreak of typhus among the housemaids" and "praised for her ability to generate money from tourists".

US-based modern British historian Stephanie Barczewski, author of *How the Country House Became English*, said servants' social history was a money-spinner for British stately homes as early as the 1970s.

"Domestic service was a huge employment category in Britain up until the interwar period," she said. "So tourists might remember, 'Oh, my grandmother was in service at Blenheim Palace,' or something like that, and it made them curious."

"Domestic servant" was the second most common occupation recorded in the 1851 UK census (after agricultural labourer). In 1881, it took the top spot, with a servant population of 1,237,149

Clockwise from bottom left; Gosford Park; Upstairs, Downstairs; Kensington Palace; Untold Lives textile conservator Katica Laza. Capital Films/Alamy/Historic Royal Palaces

'We get a sense of the hard physical labour and extraordinary skill that went into running households'
Mishka Sinha, curator

Lucy Lethbridge, author of *Servants: A Downstairs View of Twentieth-Century Britain*, said our cultural view of this class of worker is always mediated through the present. The Victorians, who invented the "ostentatiously servanted household" in which everyone knew their station, were "themselves reacting to a period of intense and discombobulating social change".

In the 1970s, prewar servants' memoirs, such as former kitchen maid Margaret Powell's bestsellers, were popular, and there was a burst of nostalgia for the days of the Edwardian country house (including the TV drama *Upstairs, Downstairs*, on which Powell was the consultant). "I think in periods of global anxiety we become nostalgic for eras in which we imagine a prescribed social order and happy codependence seems to prevail," said Lethbridge.

The 1980s to the 00s saw darker critiques of servant-master dynamics such as 2001's *Gosford Park*, in which valet Robert Parks thrashes against his lowly station and the squire, Sir William McCordle, seduces and rapes staff.

In the 1993 Merchant Ivory adaptation of Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, butler Mr Stevens (Anthony Hopkins) and housekeeper Miss Kenton (Emma Thompson) express the conflict between servile obedience and individual agency in their service to Lord Darlington, a first world war veteran who becomes an appeaser for Nazism.

With *Downton Abbey* and *Bridgerton*, Lethbridge notes a reversion to more honeyed depictions of dutiful servitude, while at the same time we are fascinated by the power imbalances in master-servant relations. This, she said, risks flattening historical lives into caricatures: eccentric and whimsical employers, or servants who blindly doffed their caps.

Barczewski said that the current crop of undergraduate students – generation Zs raised on *Downton Abbey* – write essays in which servants are imagined "living happy lives in a paternalistic world freed from the stresses of modern life". She added: "I gently set them straight."



A staff party in the dining hall of Chatsworth House in Derbyshire in the 1920s. Chatsworth House Trust

Commercial genealogy websites have also improved our access to details on servants' lives, including Findmypast.com's searchable database of royal household employment records, and the British Newspaper Archive, where you can find situation postings for servants as well as newspaper correspondence pages on which servants air grievances about overwork.

Despite this, records of a specific working-class life can be sparse at best, according to Untold Lives co-curator Sinha. The exhibition leans heavily on the tools of servants' trades and on uniforms such as the modest orange and cream pinafore of Ann Elizabeth Thielcke, a German wardrobe woman assigned to dress Queen Charlotte in 1786.

Amateur genealogist Faith Moulin, 74, who is based in Somerset, has discovered a long line of domestic servants in her family history, including a footman at the Longleat estate in Wiltshire and a coachman to Lord Coleridge, who records recount as having "died lifting a dead horse".

Most moving were the accounts of her great aunt Min, who died before Moulin was born, but whose Limoges porcelains and postcard collection she inherited. Min's life took her from a childhood in the workhouse to employment as a lady's maid at a vicarage and as lady's companion to the daughter of the Ashley Dodd family of Godinton House in Kent, with whom she took a grand tour of Europe in 1901.

Moulin has since stayed in tourist apartments at Godinton House, where she climbed the grand staircase Min would have climbed in her working day. "It was all very emotional, though I don't think hers was an easy life."

Sinha, whose academic work focuses on the history of empire and orientalism, said there has been a wave of inquiry into the lives of overlooked and underrepresented people, including the black servants employed by grand houses to signal their worldly refinement in the 16th and 17th centuries.

"It's exciting that more institutions are talking about these important human histories," she said.



LEFT
American D-day veteran Charles Shay stands on a dune overlooking Omaha beach in Normandy, where he landed as a 19-year-old. Kiran Ridley

RIGHT
Wounded US soldiers shelter behind a wall on Omaha beach. Getty

RIGHT
British troops land at Queen beach, Sword area. Alamy

FAR RIGHT
Veterans salute as the tide comes in on a sand artwork in Broadstairs, Kent, last week. Reuters

What last veterans can teach us as D-day fades from memory

US army medic Charles Shay was one of the first troops to land on Omaha beach 80 years ago. He tells *Andrew Anthony* of the horror and heroism he saw and his hope they will never be forgetten

Next month will see the 80th anniversary of the Allied invasion of Nazi-occupied France, when about 156,000 troops crossed the Channel to fight their way on to five Normandy beaches.

No one who took part in that day, 6 June 1944, the largest seaborne assault in history, would ever forget the experience. Indeed, many were haunted by memories of it for the rest of their lives. Yet no matter how momentous an event might be – in this case it amounted to nothing less than the securing of western Europe's liberty – a kind of societal amnesia inevitably deepens with each new generation.

Last week a survey found that less than half of adults aged 18 to 34 recognised that D-day referred to the Allied invasion. Yet, before anyone reproaches the young for their ignorance, it should be acknowledged that few people of any age know what the "D" in D-day actually stands for (it's "day", which gives us the slightly comic tautology of Day-day). Similarly, while perhaps the majority of Britons will have heard of Omaha beach – the codenamed location of the bloodiest fighting and the famously realistic opening scene in *Saving Private Ryan* – they will probably struggle to recall Gold and Sword, the two beaches assigned to British forces. Juno (Canadian-dominated) and Utah (also American) complete the five. A further blow to our collective memory is that nearly all those who braved the terrifying might of the German defences are now dead.

All of which makes the testaments of the surviving handful of veterans a precious commodity if we want to appreciate the significance of that day. Among that select number is Charles Shay, who served as a medic in the first wave of infantry to hit the five-mile-long Omaha beach near Vierville-sur-Mer. A Native American from the Penobscot Nation, Shay now resides in Bretteville-l'Orgueilluse, a Normandy village just 20 miles from where he came ashore 80 years ago as a 19-year-old.

Although he will reach his centenary in July, he can still vividly recall that first contact with the French coast. "The weather was very bad," he says, noting that the invasion had been due to take place a day earlier but was postponed because of a storm that had scarcely abated 24 hours later.

Having crossed to within a few miles of the coast on a troop-carrying ship, Shay and his fellow infantrymen had to climb down rope ladders and jump into small landing craft. The waves, he says, were two metres high, and if anyone mistimed their leap they risked breaking a leg or being crushed between the ship and the craft.

Once in the flat-bottomed craft, the effect of the high waves was dramatically increased and many soldiers were violently sick. But not

'I bandaged my friend up as best I could, but while I was treating him, he died in my arms'
Charles Shay

Shay. "I grew up by the ocean and spent a lot of time as a child on fishing boats," he explains.

If getting into the landing craft was fraught with danger, getting out of them was frighteningly more lethal. Around 6am, before the sun had come up, some of the landing craft came to a halt on hidden sand banks. Everyone assumed they had reached the shore's seabed and the soldiers were instructed to make their way to the beach. Weighed down with kit and armaments, they instead sank beneath the waves as soon as they stepped off the banks.

For those who escaped that fate, German machine guns and snipers awaited. "The minute the ramps went down some of the men standing in front were immediately wounded or killed," Shay recalls.

Others were hit in the sea. Whoever managed to wade ashore encountered a hellish vision of human suffering, with limbs blown off, heads shattered and lifeless bodies littering the sand.

Shay doesn't dwell on such gory details but talks in a matter-of-fact way about what he witnessed. Chaos reigned, bullets hissed, men screamed in excruciating pain. "It was very loud," says Shay. "There was small arms fire, artillery, mortars exploding."

The plan had been for the air force to bomb the beaches beforehand, making craters in which the invading soldiers could find protection. But not a single bomb made contact

D-day anniversary







with the beach. The soldiers from the First Infantry Division were utterly exposed. Their only choice was to dive on to the sand or run towards the machine gun fire.

For the majority of soldiers that day, including Shay, it was their first time in battle. Even with intense training, there's no guarantee how an individual might respond to machine gun fire. "Condition Black" is a military term used to describe the kind of immobilised terror that struck many soldiers who landed that morning.

Shay says he wasn't scared because he was well prepared. "You could not expect not to be wounded," is how he puts it. Soldiers, of course, are not above reimagining their feelings once the battle has passed, but that's not the impression Shay's unsensational retelling conveys. Nor is it borne out by his actions.

Once on the beach, he saw that many of the wounded were in the water and the tide was coming in. "If those men stayed there, they were going to drown," he recalls. "So I tried to drag the wounded men who could not up move up to the waterline." As he did so, German machine-gunners sought to cut him down. While countless bullets whistled past, he was able to pull a number of the injured ashore. For these deeds he was later awarded the Silver Star.

The whole invasion plan, known as Operation Overlord, had been many months, even years, in gestation. It was unprecedented in size and required great secrecy, subterfuge and meticulous preparation.

By the spring of 1944, Nazi Germany was undoubtedly in decline, as its enormous eastern front retreated from the Soviet onslaught. Nonetheless there was no certainty that the invasion would be a success. For one thing, the Germans prided themselves on the "Atlantic Wall" of defence that stretched from Norway down to the Spanish border with France. And for another, the Allies had a disastrous track record in this particular arena.

There was Dunkirk four years earlier, when British forces were hastily evacuated from northern France and a humiliating defeat was turned into a national myth of doughty improvisation. Then in August 1942 a disastrous raid on Dieppe left more than half of a largely Canadian force of 6,000 men either killed, injured or taken prisoner. Finally, only weeks before D-day, a large-scale rehearsal at Slapton Sands in Devon resulted in 749 American deaths from a mixture of friendly fire and German naval attacks.

For D-day to succeed it had to establish a foothold for a full-scale liberation of France, then the Low Countries and finally the defeat of Germany itself. And that required an element of surprise (not easy when the invasion had been expected for months), an effective plan and, ideally, a complacent German response. Perhaps more than anything, though, it called for individual instances of extraordinary bravery in those crucial early hours. Put bluntly, the invasion would have failed without a critical mass of self-sacrifice. There had to be enough men who were prepared to ignore every normal human extinct for self-preservation and charge pill boxes and gun batteries while all around them their comrades were being cut down

As with so many best-laid plans, there was no accounting for the weather. A week before D-day, it was all blue skies and temperatures of 30C. Now the cloud cover caused bombers to miss their targets, the rough seas meant that amphibious tanks upturned and sank, and vital communication links were ruined by saturated wireless systems.

On some beaches the job was made a little less daunting by the fact that the pill boxes and batteries were manned by *Osttruppen*, conscripts or volunteers from Poland and the Soviet Union. There were cases of them killing their German officers to enable their surrender.

The stiffest resistance was on Omaha. The more casualties the Germans inflicted, the more work there was for medics such as Shay and his friend Edward Morozewicz, whom he had met in training. "He came from New Jersey," says Shay, "but I didn't know this at that time."

Shay worked on the wounded from 6am through to 4pm, by which time the Americans had gained control of the beach, having suffered about 2,400 casualties. While tending to the fallen, Morozewicz was badly wounded himself.

"When I found him on the beach I knew he was dying," Shay says. "And he knew it also. I bandaged him up as best I could, but while I was treating him he died in my arms."

Fifty-six years later, Shay discovered that Morozewicz had a sister still living in New Jersey, and with a fellow veteran he travelled to visit her. "I prepared a picture frame with items that he received, including the Silver Star," he says, which he was able to give to her at a ceremony in her brother's honour. "We became good friends," he says.

It's a simple story, told again in the most artless language, and yet the fact of that six-decade gap between Morozewicz's death and Shay's visit to his sister reveals everything we need to know about the abiding legacy of that day in 1944. In *Saving Private Ryan* – a film, like all war films, Shay has avoided seeing – the dying words of Captain Miller, played by Tom Hanks, to Private Ryan (Matt Damon) are "Earn it". He means: live a life that's worthy of the sacrifice made by those sent to rescue him.

Shay had already "earned it" as a teenager. For, as a Native American living on a reservation in Maine, he did not have the right to vote (that was not gained until 1954), yet he travelled thousands of miles to risk his life for the liberty of the French.

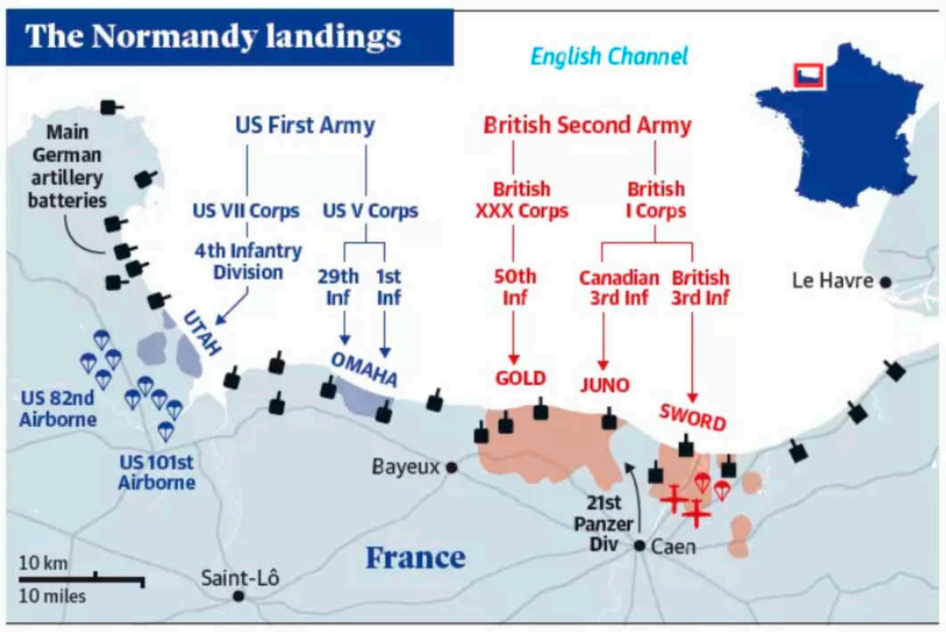
Shay took part in several more battles, including the Battle of the Bulge, before being taken prisoner by the Germans in March 1945. After the war he continued in the military and served in the Korean war.

He then worked for the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, both in Vienna. When his beloved wife Lily died, he returned to America and the Penobscot Nation, having been away for 40 years, but he suffered from loneliness and difficulty in securing good healthcare.

In 2007 he was awarded the Legion of Honour (France's highest order of merit) and for the first time he began talking openly about his experiences during the war. It is only fitting, then, that in his old age the country has provided a home for Shay and takes care of his health.

There are numerous stories of exceptional courage on D-day that are documented in the history books. It becomes ever easier as time passes to relegate these tales to another age, a different era of patriotic duty and unquestioning service.

There's no need for deliberation in recognising men like Shay as heroes. But nor should we forget that they were also just like us, people with hopes and dreams and an unquenchable desire to go on living. The difference is their actions made it far more possible for us to pursue those universal ends.



Culture



RIGHT The Etihad Stadium, where work to increase capacity and build a hotel continues. Peter Byrne/PA



FAR RIGHT Pep Guardiola, Ferran Soriano, chef Paco Perez and Txiki Begiristain at the opening of their Tast restaurant. Eric Howard

Barcelona has given Manchester so much more than Pep and fine food

While the former Barça boss lost yesterday, the use of sport as a lever to regenerate a city was pioneered in his native Catalonia, writes *Andy Spinoza*

The eyes of the world were yesterday, for the second year running, on an FA Cup final fought out between Manchester's two football clubs, their fans festooning Wembley in United red and City sky blue.

Manchester City parade through the streets today to celebrate their historic record of winning four Premier League titles in a row. But the inevitable accusation will follow that their manager, Pep Guardiola's sixth league title (although not a second league and Cup double) proves that football's underdog has become its apex predator thanks to the club's takeover by Abu Dhabi United Group.

Less well-aired will be the notion that the celebrations are a late flowering of a European civic partnership and regeneration model that began in the 1980s. Having lost 207,000 manufacturing jobs between 1972 and 1984, Manchester was forced into a global beauty parade for awareness and investment. Its campaigns to host the 1992, 1996 and 2000 Olympic Games seemed absurdly quixotic, but it shrugged off the jibes to pitch with gusto and, as expected, lose.

But a longer game was afoot. Canny civic leadership developed an extensive infrastructure of sports facilities, which staged a vibrant 2002 Commonwealth Games. A mile east of the city centre, on the site of a former coal mine, the 38,000-capacity City of Manchester Stadium was built for athletics, then converted for the new home of Manchester City in 2003. Now with 53,400 seats, its sweeping roof and slender 20m support masts mark a clear break from the club's atmospheric old Maine Road ground.

In the Olympic bid campaigns, Manchester and Barcelona, which hosted the 1992 summer Games, recognised themselves as kindred spirits. In 1845, travel writer Richard Ford stated: "Catalonia is the Lancashire of Spain and Barcelona is its Manchester." Both boasted leftwing traditions, architectural glories and a haughty disdain for their controlling capitals. Sunshine hours aside, comparisons only went so far. Manchester chafed under Conservative 1980s rate-capping but never experienced civil war. And when its teams play London clubs it can never carry the political intensity of a Barça-Real Madrid clásico.

When Guardiola, the coach-savant, adored for his talent for making football beautiful, took a city flat in 2016, he made sure he could see the Etihad Stadium from his window. Pep, a former Barça player and coach, joined City chief executive Ferran Soriano, formerly vice-president of the Catalan club, and head of football Txiki Begiristain, who was directly headhunted from the Nou Camp. They also live in town, sometimes watching matches in the pubs around Deansgate. "They like the realness," says a colleague. Adding to city life, the trio opened their Tast restaurant in 2018 to promote Catalan cuisine.

Sports agent Raül Llimós says: "Most of the Barcelona supporters think, 'What are they fucking doing there and why are they not here? What did we do wrong?'" The Barça membership structure makes it a toxic media circus which forced Soriano out. "Here in Barcelona, it is always fighting," says Llimós. "There they can work better, more quiet, more calm."

Soriano grew up in Poblenou, known locally as the Manchester of Catalonia, once the engine room of the region's economy. The 1992 Olympic village replaced its dereliction with waterfront homes and two miles of new Barceloneta beach.

> *'Here in Barcelona, it is always fighting. There they can work better, more quiet, more calm'*
> *Raül Llimós, agent*

Manchester took the same path towards sport as a lever for regeneration. The cleared brownfield site around the athletics stadium offered huge development promise for City's oil-rich owners; investing in Maine Road, hemmed in by the Victorian back-to-backs of Moss Side, would never have excited ADUG owner Sheikh Mansour.

The overlaying of the club's fortunes and Manchester's economic resurgence have provoked grumbles about the council's £22m contribution towards the stadium conversion and ongoing revenue-sharing deal, and recent denunciations of an unhealthy closeness between the local authority and ADUG's growing portfolio.

A darkening cloud hangs like the mist that wreathes the tops of the city's towers in this gloomiest of springs – yet to be resolved are the Premier League's 115 charges of financial rule-breaking against City.

In 1996, an open space in historic Castlefield was named "Catalan Square" by the city. Singer Mick Hucknall converted railway arches there into Barça, a restaurant where he celebrated Manchester United's title wins with manager Alex Ferguson, whose 13 league titles remind us of the period when foreign players spoke of Manchester as a shorthand for United.

City have risen along with Manchester. Barcelona showed how a de-industrialised centre could reprogramme its DNA. The new economy could never replace the sheer number of well-paid factory jobs, but arts festivals, sporting contests and a cosmopolitan lifestyle could attract visitors, new residents and businesses.

"We were in awe, they were everything we wanted our city to be,"

Continued on page 45 »



Manchester's United beat City 2-1 in yesterday's FA Cup final (full report, Sport, pages 1-6). Getty

Comment & Analysis

Hiring Nick Kyrgios to fill its vacant toxic male slot is an unforced error on BBC's part
Catherine Bennett, page 45

Job ads aimed at the 'benefits class' may be well-meant, but smack of contempt
Kenan Malik, page 50



Simon Tisdall
Foreign affairs commentator

Call to prosecute Netanyahu for war crimes exposes the west's moral doublethink

The US and Britain condemn Hamas and Putin, yet balk at attempts to hold Israel's leaders to account. But no one should be above the law

Indignant protests by Israeli and US leaders over last week's decision by the prosecutor of the international criminal court (ICC) to seek Benjamin Netanyahu's arrest for alleged war crimes shone new light on an old reality: for those at the top who wield decisive political power, all people are equal – but some are more equal than others.

At the heart of objections to Karim Khan's move is the unspoken implication that violence against Palestinians, a dispossessed, marginalised and largely voiceless people, is less wrong, or somehow more acceptable, than violence against Israelis, the privileged, protected citizens of an established nation state. To demur is to be accused, inanely yet inevitably, of antisemitism.

The self-reverencing fury of US and Israeli politicians, and some in Europe, is revealing – and dismaying. Hamas's massacre of about 1,200 people last October was appalling, criminal and unforgivable – and must and will be punished. It does not justify Israel's disproportionate, illegal and indiscriminately lethal response in Gaza. But they just don't get it.

How is it that western politicians so easily tolerate, ignore or defend the killing of about 35,000 people, at least 12,000 of whom were women and children (based on revised UN figures), through the bombing of homes and hospitals and the blocking and hijacking of aid?

Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, and the US president, Joe Biden, insist that arraigning Israeli and Hamas leaders at the same time implies "moral equivalence". This is nonsense. There are "reasonable grounds to believe", as Khan and his expert advisers state, that both sides have committed grave criminal offences. All those responsible must answer equally, whoever and whatever they may be.



Benjamin Netanyahu potentially faces arrest for alleged war crimes. *Abir Sultan/AP*

Netanyahu and his defence minister, Yoav Gallant, may think they are above the law, especially international law, which they contemptuously flout. Perhaps they believe, while enforcing the occupation of Palestinian areas, that Israel is, too. That is certainly the impression given by their army's reckless conduct in Gaza.

If so, they are not alone. Vladimir Putin, Russia's president, is accused of overseeing numerous crimes in Ukraine. The ICC issued an arrest warrant last year. Does this suggest "moral equivalence" with Hamas terrorists – or Netanyahu? No. It simply means that Putin, like any other individual, must answer for his alleged actions. Like them, his assumption of impunity is – and must be shown to be – false.

It's surprising how difficult western leaders find this concept of equality before the law, even as they prate about upholding the democratic, international rules-based order. Biden's reaction was illogical, bordering on bizarre. "What's happening is not genocide," he said. But the ICC is not saying it is. Biden condemned efforts to arrest the two Israelis (but not the Hamas leaders) as "outrageous". He has himself criticised Israel's starvation tactics in Gaza, a central ICC charge, and its failure to protect civilians. Yet now he balks at attempts to ensure those responsible are held accountable – while backing the ICC warrant for Putin. This is pick'n'mix justice.

As a trained lawyer, Antony Blinken, America's top diplomat, should know better. Most of the world recognises Palestinian statehood. Spain, Ireland and Norway just signed up. No matter what Blinken says, the ICC has legal jurisdiction in Gaza. Nor should Palestinians have to wait for Israel's compromised courts to investigate. On past experience, they would wait a very long time indeed.

Netanyahu and his aggressive spokesmen continue to laud the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) as "the world's most moral army". They claim, without offering evidence, that it does more than any other in history to avoid harming civilians. But the world is not blind – despite Israeli restrictions on independent investigations and reporting.

Gaza is a manmade horror, unprecedented in the modern era. Direct comparisons are problematic and inexact. But measured by deaths and displacement, Gaza appears worse than Mosul (2017), Aleppo (2016) and even Grozny (1994-1995). Palestinians are also dying in record numbers in the Occupied West Bank.

Only the codependent arrogance and ignorance of those leading Israel-friendly countries explains the tolerance afforded long-established patterns of atrocious behaviour. In Britain, Rishi Sunak called the ICC move "deeply unhelpful". What *is* he thinking? Is it "unhelpful" to try to curb lawless killing? To seek justice? This is not moral equivalence. It's total moral confusion.

Some in Israel do get it. The left-leaning *Haaretz* newspaper said a larger strategic failure had led to ICC action. "Israel embarked on a justified war... that at first had broad international support. But mismanagement of this war, the callousness and craven stupidity of this government, has transformed Israel into a global pariah."

Problems of presumed political untouchability are not confined to Israel. Yet, in Paris last week, three high-ranking officials in Bashar al-Assad's Syrian tyranny faced trial in absentia for crimes against humanity. Invoking "universal jurisdiction", France has also issued an arrest warrant for Assad. It's a principled gesture that follows similar action by other European countries.

Like Putin, Assad and another ICC indictee, Sudan's deposed dictator Omar al-Bashir, Netanyahu may calculate he will never stand in the dock in The Hague. Yet can he be sure? For, despite the Orwellian double standards of some in the west, it was, overall, a good week for international justice. In another advance, the UN's international court of justice ordered Israel to halt its offensive in southern Gaza. The gathering message is plain. Impunity cannot stand. For war criminals, there may be no lasting sanctuary. No one, however powerful, is above the law. Everyone has a right to protection.

The Observer

Established in 1791 Issue № 12129

General election

A chance to pass judgment on 14 years of misrule

As the Commons held its pre-election valedictory debate last Friday, two more senior Conservatives announced that they would be stepping down: the communities secretary, Michael Gove, and the former cabinet minister Dame Andrea Leadsom. They join 15 other current or former Tory cabinet ministers who are resigning seats, bringing the total number of Conservative MPs standing down to 78, higher than in 1997 when the party stood on the brink of a historic defeat.

This is just the latest indicator of the lack of confidence Conservative MPs have in their own party and its leadership; a party that deserves to be dealt a resounding defeat by voters in the polls on 4 July. Its 14 years in government constitute an appalling track record: the Tories have left Britain a poorer country blighted by rising inequality and falling social mobility; a less confident nation with declining influence on the global stage; and a much tougher place in which to lose your job or to fall sick. Their political choices have worsened the impact of the tough global headwinds of a pandemic and rising energy prices.

Rishi Sunak will undoubtedly get a lot of the blame over the next six weeks. And deservedly so: his hapless election campaign start has seen him claim credit for a smoking ban he did not get through parliament, and promise voters that, while he has not yet been able to fulfil his immoral pledge to send people who arrive in the UK fleeing torture and conflict to Rwanda, this will happen straight after a general election if only voters re-elect him.

But the story of Conservative failure starts long before then: with the decision by David Cameron and George Osborne to use the global financial crisis as a pretext to hack away at the welfare safety net for children in poverty and cut back on services for vulnerable older people, disabled people and the homeless. They argued this was a necessity, despite the fact the cost of borrowing was at rock-bottom and that they found the money to cut taxes in a way that disproportionately benefited better-off households in the top half of the income distribution. This disregard for the impact on child poverty – not to mention the long-term economic effects of reducing levels of service provision for people in need – has been a consistent theme for Conservatives since then; just two months ago the chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, prioritised spending £65bn over the next five years on cutting national insurance over more targeted support for children in low-income families.

Layered on top of that is the ideological pursuit of a Brexit that has made Britain more hard up – a massive own goal for an economy that has long struggled with poor productivity growth. Again the stage was set by Cameron, offering a referendum that paved the way for a Vote Leave nirvana to be pitted against the reality of remaining in the EU; the result not only led to Cameron's downfall but created Prime Minister Boris Johnson, perhaps the worst this country has seen in modern times. Johnson fought the Vote Leave and the 2019 general election campaigns on the populist promise that Brexit would fix all the UK's long-term problems, boosting growth, freeing up money to improve the NHS, and reducing immigration. Voters aren't stupid: the Conservatives' terrible performance in the latest round of local elections in large part reflects them holding the government responsible for delivering precisely none of this.

Johnson's populism has infected politics way beyond Brexit: as premier he degraded the political honour code to the extent that he thought little of misleading voters and the Commons. Standards in public life declined on his watch, with minister after minister breaking the ministerial code and Johnson himself the first prime minister to have been found to have broken the law while in Downing Street over the "partygate" scandal during the Covid pandemic.

All the while, the mounting challenges facing Britain – its crisis of low productivity growth, the fact that the social care system cannot even start to meet the challenges of an ageing society, a housing bubble that is trapping too many people in the insecurity of the private rented sector, the widening attainment gap between children from poorer and less affluent backgrounds – have been utterly neglected by a Conservative party that has consumed itself with its ideological predilections over Brexit. Sunak inherited an unenviable mess from Liz Truss, the shortest-serving prime minister in history, who managed to tank the economy and triggered chaos in the markets in just 45 days. But his obsession with his Rwanda plan – an expensive and amoral gimmick that will not work in deterring desperate people from crossing the Channel – is symptomatic of just how little meaningful stewardship he had to offer the UK.

The Tories are a spent political force and over 14 years they have caused immeasurable damage to the country. The general election cannot come soon enough, and Sunak was right to call it now rather than wait till the autumn. His problem is that the move reeks of desperation: nobody would call a general election when they were 20 or so points behind in the polls after a terrible set of local election results unless they believed things were likely to get even worse. It is an inauspicious pitch, and all the signs are that unless something drastically changes, voters will see right through it.



Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU
***Telephone** 020 3353 2000*
***email** editor@observer.co.uk*

GM food

When modified rice could save thousands of lives, it is wrong to oppose it

For a crop that was designed to save the lives of children, Golden Rice has had a disturbing, volatile history. Developed more than 20 years ago using the techniques of genetic manipulation, it provides consumers with the ability to make vitamin A, which is missing from many diets in developing countries. This is a deficit that can have grim consequences. Without vitamin A, infections among the young soar and it is estimated that the lives of more than 100,000 children are lost every year as a result.

The production of a food that could counter this deadly scourge might be expected to be greeted with global relief and gratitude. Sadly, this has not been the case. Although field trials of Golden Rice have shown it to be an effective source of vitamin A that is safe to grow and consume, the crop has yet to be grown commercially – thanks, in the main, to the green movement's vociferous opposition to its cultivation. Led by Greenpeace, campaigners have attempted to block the growing of any genetically modified crop, regardless of any potential benefit it might possess, and Golden Rice has been a particular target for their attention. The organisation claims there are other more practical solutions to improve vitamin-A deficiency and accuses corporations of overhyping its efficacy to pave the way for approval of more profitable GM crops.

Last month that opposition reached a peak in the Philippines, which was about to become the first nation to cultivate Golden Rice on a commercial basis, a development that would have been a critical step in tackling the vitamin-A deficiency that afflicts its citizens. It was not to be. The country's court of appeal was asked by a group led by Greenpeace and local farmers to revoke consent for the growing of Golden Rice in the country. The crop had not been shown to be safe, it was alleged, a claim that was eventually backed by the court. The decision was hailed as "a monumental win" by Greenpeace.

This joy has not been shared by scientists who have described the blocking of the crop's cultivation as a catastrophe that could result in the deaths of thousands of children in coming years. The Philippines government may yet overcome the court's decision in its challenge, but the harm done could still be considerable. Other nations, including Bangladesh and India, were set to follow in preparing to cultivate Golden Rice. Most will now be viewing the chaos with alarm and be carefully re-assessing their hopes for the crop.

It is a depressing scenario that stems from a blanket refusal, shared by many groups, to accept that a particular technology is capable of producing benefits of any kind, in part fuelled by fears for farmers' crops and their livelihoods. They insist that nothing of merit can ever come from genetic manipulation despite scientific evidence to the contrary. It is a dangerous mindset that risks causing widespread harm, not just in the Philippines but across the globe as scientists strive to develop crops and plants that can withstand the worst impacts of climate change, maintain food supplies in the face of global warming and protect threatened habitats across the planet.

The green movement has done much to help our world and deserves considerable credit for campaigns that have helped save threatened species and halted environmental degradation. This work should be encouraged. However, by turning its back, for ideological reasons, on technologies that can help save lives, and by refusing to consider the views of distinguished scientists, the movement is doing itself, and the planet, a disservice.

It is time for change. Ending opposition to the cultivation of a crop that could save thousands of lives would be a good place to start.



Andrew Rawnsley

@andrewrawnsley

Rishi Sunak's summer election gamble is already backfiring on the Tory leader

The defining image of the last general election was Boris Johnson driving a digger emblazoned with "Get Brexit Done" through a fake wall made of polystyrene bricks. This proved to be a presentiment that he was about to demolish a load of Labour seats before going on to do the same to standards in public life.

Rishi Sunak made an early bid to provide the enduring visual metaphor of campaign 2024 when he presented his hunched and drenched back to the cameras after making his announcement on Downing Street. I have never seen, and I've witnessed quite a lot of them, a prime minister launch their appeal for re-election in such a dismal fashion. Even incumbents who know in their bones that they are fated to lose usually manage to invest the moment with some authority and dignity. Mr Sunak resembled a drowned ferret during a speech that was rendered near inaudible because he proved unequal to the fight with pelting rain and a protester's boom box blasting out New Labour's 1997 victory anthem. Every wag at Westminster chortled: "Things can only get wetter". If your central electoral pitch is that you are the man with a plan, best to have someone on your staff who knows how to erect a covering or hold an umbrella.

Within minutes, Labour had fired out Sir Keir Starmer's well-crafted response. He went for the prime ministerial look by highlighting his party's themes – end Tory chaos, time for a change, start to rebuild Britain – from a wood-pannelled room adorned with union jacks. Team Labour hugged themselves with glee at the winning contrast between their guy and the bedraggled Tory leader. If that is a harbinger of what is going to unfold over the next six weeks, this campaign is going to be an extremely unequal fight between a hungry and well-oiled red machine and a demoralised and shambolic blue outfit.

The contest begins with the Tories languishing behind Labour by 20 points or so in the poll of polls. No governing party has ever started that far behind and gone on to win. They'll be hoping to shrink the gap between incumbent and challenger, and often this does happen, as the country gets closer to making its choice. The more optimistic Conservative strategists take encouragement from analysis of the May local elections, which suggests Labour's true advantage is not as enormous as that suggested by headline polling. They should not clutch too tightly to that straw. Sir Keir can see half his poll lead vanish and still be confident that efficient distribution of Labour support will propel him into Number 10 with a very good majority.

Were Mr Sunak to somehow contrive to keep his party in office, he will be hailed as the comeback magician of all time. In the rather more probable event that the Tories are going to spend 5 July crawling through the ruins of a heavy defeat, people are going to say that it was lunacy to call a summer election when he didn't have to. It is hard to identify anyone in his party who believes Mr Sunak to be capable of a miracle while it is easy to find people who think he has committed an act of madness. Phrases such as "death wish" and "off his head" trip from the lips of Tories. A leader wants to go into a campaign with his side cheering him on, not a chorus of colleagues chuntering that he's lost his marbles.

Most of Westminster, myself included, expected him to postpone the reckoning until he'd clocked up at least two years as prime minister. Morale on the Tory side was never likely to be high in any circumstances, but it has been further depressed by Mr Sunak springing the election on a party that thought the appointment with defeat would be delayed until later in the year. The Tory party reverberates with the furious question: why the hell did he do it? The full truth won't emerge until we've seen the diaries and memoirs, but there are plausible explanations knocking around. The case for waiting until autumn or winter in order to offer pre-election sweeteners had become flaky, because the state of the public finances made it increasingly unlikely they'd be in position to do any tax cuts. The closer we got to winter, the more likely it was there would be more bad news about the sickly condition of the NHS, sharpening the salience of one of the Conservatives' most acute areas of vulnerability. The Reform party, the menace to the Tories on their right flank, isn't fully election-ready now, but may have been had he waited. Added to which was the further damage that would be inflicted on Mr Sunak's credibility by more and more small boats crossing the Channel as the weather got sunnier. Going now is an admission that things weren't going to get brighter and may very well have been made even darker by clinging on. "He thought: why prolong the agony?" says one cabinet member.

There are credible accounts that Mr Sunak has become increasingly querulous with aides and colleagues over the past few months as nothing he has tried has moved the dial. He's looked like a man trapped by diminishing time, undermined by mutinous colleagues and almost totally ignored by the voters. Not the master of his own fate. By choosing to go earlier than anticipated, he played the last card in his hand to take the initiative and command events, albeit only fleetingly. I am also quite persuaded by those who say that it was a fit of despairing anger by someone who can no longer bear doing the job. Living under a decomposing regime is not a pleasant experience for those being ruled by it. Presiding over one must be miserable as well. It turns out that the prime minister was among those yearning to escape the purgatory of zombie government.

Whatever the blend of his motivations, the decision has dumbfounded and dismayed many more Tories than it has delighted. Some cabinet ministers openly spoke out against it at their meeting before he went out on to Downing Street. Other senior ministers seethed in silence, seeing no point in objecting when the prime minister had already done the deed by making a clandestine visit to the king. The Tory leader ignored advice to wait from the party's chief election strategist, Isaac Levido. Labour was taken by surprise, but the party Mr Sunak has most wrongfooted is his own. The Tories still lack a candidate in many seats, even some battleground ones.



'If your central electoral pitch is that you are the man with a plan, best to have someone on your staff who knows how to hold an umbrella.'

When it ought to be all hands to the pumps for their party, Michael Gove and other high-profile Tories are making like rats and scuttling from the listing ship. This does not add up to a recipe for a confident and united Conservative effort. The second full day of campaigning involved a prime ministerial visit to Belfast's Titanic Quarter, deepening suspicions that a Labour mole is organising his schedule. I think it not beyond the realms of possibility that the Tories will simply unravel under the pressure of waging a battle that looks so unwinnable. That is essentially what happened to John Major's Conservatives when they plunged into a doom spiral on their way to the landslide defeat of 1997.

Now, as then, they are up against a Labour party whose attack lines are well-practised, whose defences look well-prepared, whose discipline is honed, whose mood is buoyant and whose people are ravenous for power after a protracted stretch in the wilderness of opposition.

For sure, the campaign will be a searching stress test for Sir Keir and subject his party to intense scrutiny. Some kind of Labour wobble is likely along the way, but it is going to take an earthquake to shake expectations. There's a risk for Labour in the universality of the assumption that the result of this election is already decided before a single vote has been cast. I do not mean that the shadow cabinet will behave as if victory is in the bag. Losing four elections in a row concentrates the mind, and Sir Keir is as fiercely anti-complacency as Tony Blair was in '97. The source of danger for Labour is that it will underperform if soft supporters don't see an imperative to turn out or feel free to back other parties in constituencies where that may hand the seat to a Conservative candidate. This spectre is already troubling members of the shadow cabinet.

In one respect, both the Tory and Labour leaders have a common interest. Neither will want the outcome of this election to be seen as a foregone conclusion, even if both sense that it is.

Riddell's view



To buy this print or others by Chris Riddell for £35, go to guardianarchive.theprintspace.co.uk or email guardianprintsales@theprintspace.co.uk

Notebook
Rachel Cooke



Slugging it out

Squelch, squelch, squelch. To the RHS Chelsea flower show with my friend Sophie, where not even the "giant sponge" of a garden designed by Tom Massey and Je Ahn for WaterAid could soak up the downpour. On the night of our visit, someone had helpfully tipped a pile of wood shavings into the river that was flowing through the outdoor displays, to form a path for those who hadn't had the foresight to match their floral frocks with waders. But, to no avail. Pretty soon it, too, was under water. The only thing to do was to act out a certain kind of crazed Britishness, a performance involving drinking a large vat of Pimm's while pretending not to notice your nose is dripping and your lungs are blooming with incipient pneumonia.

In the 20 years since I last visited, Chelsea has changed a lot. It feels more corporate than of old, and rather sanitised as a result: for all its prettiness, I found it hard to connect with the Bridgerton Garden, sponsored by Netflix and inspired by Penelope Featherington, a "wallflower-like character", from the latest television series.

But some things don't change: I mean the people. Drying off in the big tent – I swear, steam was rising from both of us – I asked a man in a panama hat about his "slug-resistant" hostas. Could this possibly be true, I wondered, and if so, how was the miracle achieved? (My hostas resemble doilies.) "What would you like for dinner tonight?" barked the man. "Lamb or mutton?" With no more information forthcoming, it was left to us to work out that slugs favour hostas that are tender like lamb, not thick-leaved and chewy, like mutton. I'm not convinced. It may be very unladylike of me, but I think mutton is delicious.



Chelsea flower show fans brave the downpours. Sarah Lee/ The Guardian

Given the brush-off

While Tate Britain's new exhibition *Now You See Us: Women Artists in Britain 1520-1920* would be worth seeing for the Tudor miniatures alone, it does nothing at all for one's feminist indignation (mine rose like the delphiniums at Chelsea). The name Mary Black, a contemporary of Joshua Reynolds, whose portrait of a physician called Messenger Monsey hangs in the show, was unknown to me before I visited. But from this day forward, I'll never forget it. Black, we're told, had hoped to charge Monsey a fee for her work, and there's no doubting that she made a good fist of his puffy, complacent face and pink velvet frock coat. Monsey, though, had other ideas. He deemed the expectation of any payment at all quite "improper", and wrote to her cousin describing her as a slut.

Jürgen yearning

In our house, we're now in a gentle, extended mourning period. Jürgen Klopp, a man my husband admires so much that he wrote a 200-page love letter to him and put it between hard covers, has left Liverpool FC, and we must observe the niceties. Black arm bands are optional, but great care must be taken in the domestic arena at this sensitive time – as I found out when I sent my husband a clip I found on social media of his hero playing a musical box sent by a fan. The tune, delicately picked out on a tiny wind-up mechanism, was the Beatles' I Feel Fine. But it seems we're in more of a Ticket to Ride mood here: smiling and grateful on the outside, but tender and melancholy within.

Birthday wish list

Guess whose birthday falls on 4 July... I'd like some bubble bath, a large box of Milk Tray, and a new government, please.



Catherine Bennett

Hiring Nick Kyrgios to fill its vacant toxic male slot is an unforced error on BBC's part

Tennis pundit hoped to boost ratings but is likely to make even male sports fans recoil

The BBC's Lucy Williamson has done more than most to illustrate how much better the world would be without the contributions of Andrew Tate.

The misogynist influencer was under house arrest in his dingy Romanian man cave, awaiting trial on charges of rape, human trafficking and forming a criminal gang, when her 2023 interview indicated that his mastery over women is not as complete as advertised. He repeatedly failed – to a point that evidently upset some Tate worshippers – to frighten Williamson off.

Complaints that Williamson had been "biased" confirmed she'd made the invincible one look silly. His own resentment took the shape you'd expect: the jibe that she was erotically fixated: "When I first met Lucy it was clear I am the object of her obsession."

Somehow her colleague Matt Shea escaped a similar allegation following his subsequent contributions to the BBC's expansive Tate archive: *Andrew Tate, The Man Who Groomed the World?, The Dangerous Rise of Andrew Tate.*

At least some of the above must have been known to the BBC managers who have just hired as a Wimbledon commentator one of Tate's most famous supporters: the tennis player Nick Kyrgios.

In 2022 Kyrgios described his feelings for the yet to be arrested Andrew and Tristan Tate as "low-key love". Since then, a UK extradition warrant for both brothers has joined the Romanian charges: Bedfordshire police are investigating allegations of rape and human trafficking. Both brothers deny all allegations. And, outside the world of elite sport, Kyrgios's BBC appointment has been received about as well as you'd expect from any national venture in misogyny promotion to which female (and non-misogynists') contributions are compulsory.

In welcoming Kyrgios, BBC licence payers will also be assisting in the public rehabilitation of an abuser: last year he pleaded guilty to a single incident of assaulting his (subsequently ex-) girlfriend, but did not get a criminal conviction.

Even minus the Tate part of Kyrgios's repertoire, the pointless offensiveness of this appointment surely exceeds any self-harm its broadcasting rivals could reasonably have fantasised for the corporation, including a tennis-themed re-enactment of the judgment of Paris hosted by John Inverdale, who once said a player was "never going to be a looker".

Announcing Kyrgios's arrival, the BBC's head of content, Charlotte Moore, twinkled: "So anything could happen there!" Which was not, admittedly, something she could have said about any of the BBC presenters recently shown towards the older woman oubliette.

Since Moore could not have been alluding to Kyrgios's assault, her pleasantry presumably related to a long history of thuggish and otherwise ugly behaviour that has earned Kyrgios the title of most fined player in tennis history. Colleagues required to work alongside Kyrgios this summer will be aware that Moore's "anything" ranges from his repeated spitting, abusing umpires, lewd gestures, racket throwing/smashing and various displays of asinine petulance to, most memorably (unless you are a senior BBC content manager), a sexual slur about a rival player's girlfriend.

Maybe, assuming the episode was discussed, the BBC felt that the passage of time should be enough to reassure female colleagues and licence payers that the BBC Kyrgios will be a different person from the one who, in 2015, was recorded on court taunting another player: "Kokkinakis banged your girlfriend. Sorry to tell you that mate."

Though hiring Kyrgios may not be the obvious way to promote trust in a company code of conduct that specifies "we will always be kind and respectful", it could still be invaluable when he looks likely to spit. Colleagues could try: "To be the very best for our audiences we need to be the very best for each other."

It's less easy to comprehend Moore's confidence in the BBC hiring a man known to have assaulted his girlfriend will not repeatedly be cited by the BBC's enemies, as well as by victims of domestic attacks, as what it undeniably is: the trivialising of male violence.

Granted, acceptable sports personalities may be thin on the ground – to the point that, for Euro 24, the BBC has requisitioned Wayne Rooney, the known user of prostitutes – but were no men without a history of common assault available to commentate this Wimbledon?

Considering his wish to put the episode behind him – "I was not in good place when this happened and I reacted to a difficult situation in a way I deeply regret" – it seems unfortunate that the reformed Kyrgios was recently associating his name with that of a misogynist whose boasts about violence ("grip her by the neck") are famous.

In February, in answer to a characteristically creepy Tate tweet, "What is love if not obsession?", Kyrgios responded on X: "I agree. Speaking facts as usual." From their extensive coverage of Tate's influence over young men, BBC managers will be aware that celebrated Tate "facts" include, on women: "if you put yourself in a position to be raped, you must bare (sic) some responsibility". More recently, Kyrgios's hero aimed homophobic abuse at less prolific males: "If you are 40 with less than 5 children you're probably gay."

You could easily get the impression that, as with the late financier James Goldsmith on marrying a mistress (it "creates a vacancy"), immediately the BBC resolves one over-indulged alpha male embarrassment it is consumed by some irrational urge to replace it with another.

How else to explain that, with its ordeals relating to Martin Bashir, Russell Brand, Tim Westwood and Huw Edwards mercifully in the past, the BBC has now appointed a man so extravagantly unappealing that even male sports fans recoil?

Though maybe reputational damage was carefully weighed against the benefit of audience excitement ("anything could happen!") about Kyrgios's unsportsmanlike habits translates – providing no rival hires Tate himself – into a victory for its ratings, as well as for women-hating masculinity.

In fact, with the appointment of Kyrgios, the BBC's head of content aligns her organisation's interests with those of Tate disciples the world over. They look bad now, but a conviction could make it so much worse.



Nick Kyrgios is to be a BBC Wimbledon pundit.

» *Continued from page 40*

recalls councillor Pat Karney about informal meetings with Barcelona's leader, Pasqual Maragall, the charismatic socialist mayor who declared at the 1992 Olympics closing ceremony: "We have reinvented the city as a cultural phenomenon."

He advised Manchester's chief executive, Howard Bernstein, to unleash the creatives but deprive them of budget control. The runaway £240m cost of the giant new performance arts space Aviva Studios contradicts his advice, though it is an investment in Greater Manchester's creative industries and tourism worth £7bn a year.

Manchester's emissaries saw a utopia in the Catalan capital, and not just for its pavement cafes. They marvelled at its political autonomy from Madrid. A devolution dream stirred, but it would take 30 years for Westminster to hand some powers to an elected mayor of Greater Manchester.

Says Karney: "We were twinned with east European cities, but we did not want to be like them, or the American cities where people leave for the suburbs." The US reference may provoke the ire of those who see the steel-and-glass Godzillas bestriding Manchester as exactly that, an identikit midwest downtown. Unlike America's office districts, however, these towers are lived in. From a few hundred people in the early 1980s, today 75,000 – average age 31 – live in the central zone's tall buildings. Urban planner Simon Bedford of Deloitte says: "It's the fastest growing city in Europe. It's a real outlier."

Bedford agrees that today's Babel-like city may not be the same humanising vision that Mancunian regenerators took from their tours of Maragall's pocket parks, ball games and seating areas in Barcelona's dense, compact barrios.

Like a City academy prospect, Manchester is beefing up. A tech job surge means productivity outpaces the national average. High demand means rents are foaming, and affordability is a charged topic. Critics assert the property boom sucks profits overseas as the new cityscape eclipses the monochrome mystique of Joy Division and the Smiths.

The Etihad pitch is quiet for the summer, but work continues on a new hotel between the ground and the troubled £400m entertainment arena Co-op Live, and to extend the stadium capacity to more than 60,000. When complete, ADUG says its investment in east Manchester will top £1bn.

Two decades after the football stadium opened, it is clear "the project" – the Barcelona-inspired, ADUG-backed masterplan – was not just about the club. It was also a reinvention blueprint for the city with which its owner's interests and reputation are today so tightly interwoven.

Andy Spinoza is the author of Manchester Unspun: How a City Got High on Music



Sonia Sodha

It is foolish and self-indulgent for the anti-Starmer left to split the Labour vote

The We Deserve Better campaign is guilty of promoting an absurd narrative

All political parties face a trade-off under a first-past-the-post electoral system. Governing depends on attracting a broad coalition of voters, inevitably involving compromises that leave a party's base disgruntled.

So it is perhaps unsurprising that as we move closer to a general election, the discontent from the anti-Labour left who claim there is little to distinguish Keir Starmer from Rishi Sunak in the battle for the premiership is only getting noisier.

They have upped the ante in recent weeks. An umbrella campaign, "We Deserve Better", that aims to unseat the shadow culture secretary, Thangam Debbonaire, and the shadow health secretary, Wes Streeting, among others, is channelling donations to Green and independent candidates, including none other than the former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

The argument is threefold: there's no meaningful difference between the Conservatives and Labour; Starmer supposedly can't be trusted because he has dropped pledges he made in the 2020 leadership election to shift his party towards the centre; finally, the "Tories are toast" and Labour can't lose, so disgruntled left voters can safely vote for other parties, such as the Greens.

With Labour so far ahead in the polls, the urge to debunk these sentiments may seem like an expression of paranoia. But all three aspects of this narrative are comprehensively wrong, including the reassurance that it is safe for anyone who would prefer a Labour government to vote for another party in Labour-Tory contests.

Amid a very positive set of results for Labour in the local and mayoral elections earlier this month, the party experienced losses in some of its safer seats as a result of disaffection, including over its position on Gaza. So while it is true that there are few existing Labour seats at risk, those that are include Debbonaire's Bristol seat, where the Greens saw a breakthrough, and potentially Shabana Mahmood's in Birmingham Ladywood, where the independent candidate for West Midlands mayor is running, and Jess Phillips's seat of Birmingham Yardley if an independent were to stand against her. It would be a huge loss if any of these able and widely respected feminists were unseated.

But what this underplays is the number of Labour-Tory marginals where a relatively small vote for other left candidates could cost Labour a win. James Kanagasooriam, of the polling company Focaldata, has written about the "sandcastle" nature of Labour's likely majority; his forecast is that there will be many more marginal seats in the 2024 parliament compared with 2019. If more than predicted numbers of those who voted Green in the locals decide they can afford to do so in the general election because Labour is so far ahead in national polls, that will boost the Conservatives.

Next up is the idea that Starmer's dropping of some of his leadership pledges makes him dangerously untrustworthy. But this is the product of a system in which the tiny unrepresentative slice of the electorate that is a party membership pick their leader before voters choose their prime minister. Anyone hoping to be PM would have to shift position between a leadership selection and a general election: a Labour leader's most important job is to connect with potential voters, not to coddle members with the comfort blanket of a policy platform such as the "free broadband for all" 2019 pledge that was roundly rejected.

Jess Phillips has admitted her seat could be at risk if an independent stood.



Liz Truss provides a cautionary tale of what happens when a party leader seeks to impose a membership-endorsed platform on the country without a general election. For Starmer to have stuck to his 2020 leadership election pledges, instead of spending the past four years understanding voters, would have been fundamentally anti-democratic.

The most egregious aspect of the anti-Labour left argument is there isn't much to choose between Starmer and Sunak. Yes, Labour's "Ming vase" election strategy has seen it take a much more cautious fiscal approach than many of us would like: it has effectively adopted the Tory macroeconomic worldview and with it a set of spending constraints that no one sensible thinks either party could stick to in the wake of the election.

That is frustrating for anyone hoping this election campaign may illuminate some of the tough trade-offs facing Britain; but it would have been incredibly risky for one side to go it alone on this. The alternative is Labour walking into the trap and handing the Conservatives a "Labour tax bombshell" election campaign.

From a commitment to scrap the Rwanda plan to making clear that in an ideal world Labour would discard the two-child benefit cap, there are plenty of reasons that it is preposterous to think that a Starmer government would make the same trade-offs as successive Conservative governments that have financed billions of pounds worth of tax cuts for more affluent families by cutting tax credits and benefits for low-income parents. The six pledges Starmer launched two weeks ago may be incremental, but Labour needs voters to believe they are deliverable, and they are indicative of a very different set of priorities than those that animate Sunak.

Finally, there has as of yet been less scrutiny of the independent and Green candidates trying to appeal to Labour-sceptical voters than there has of Reform on the other side of the spectrum. It is not just Labour that has changed: the Green party has mopped up enough of the cranks expelled by Labour that it has had to acknowledge its growing problem with antisemitism.

Akhmed Yakoob, the independent who came third in the West Midlands mayoral election and who is now running against Mahmood, promoted a video that was manipulated to falsely suggest a teacher campaigning for Labour used racist language, which prompted a viral hate campaign against her. (Yakoob says he did not intend to cause distress and that the video was hard to hear.)

Starmer is not without weaknesses, as shown by the days he took to clarify an interview last October in which he gave the impression he thought Israel had the right to withhold power and food from Gaza. But there is no doubt whatsoever he would make a vastly more compassionate and competent prime minister than Sunak. To encourage people to put that outcome at risk by casting a protest vote against a Labour government that does not yet exist is perhaps the ultimate form of luxury belief campaigning.



In the Observer: 15 September 1996

Tony Blair on Labour election campaigns

Radical politics succeeds only when the enthusiasm of those wanting change is harnessed to an iron will to deliver it. Every time that this involves unpopular decisions, there will be those who, like the dutiful dogs of Pavlov, rush to the TV screen to talk of betrayal of principles.

All that is happening is that Labour is breaking the mindset of opposition and adopting the mindset of government. If we think things are wrong or can be improved, we will say so. If there are issues that concern the public we will raise them. If we don't, because we fear charges of betrayal every time we speak common sense, then we do not deserve to govern.

That is not a betrayal of Labour's history but an essential part of giving it a healthy future. Getting elected is not unprincipled. It is the only means of realising our principles. The only people who benefit from a refusal to face these questions openly and squarely are the Tories. And this is not a government that deserves to turn 18 years of government into 23.

This part of the battle, a hard slog, depresses idealists who find it lacking in romance and even dignity. It means exposing continually the Tory record, but also means avoiding traps, knowing to keep quiet as well as speak out. It attracts the criticism of caution. But we are fighting an enemy that fights without reservation. They know power is important and believe it is idle to be squeamish about how to get it... They cannot be defeated by pretending we are playing according to the rules of Sunday school.

This demoralises some radicals whose idealism is strong but somewhat other-worldly by nature. So you read of some who say, "What's the point? There's no difference between Labour and Tory"; the age-old cry of some Labour activists which is never for an instant echoed by the Tories who know perfectly well what the difference is.

People cannot see that for all the bad things government can do, there are a hundred small decisions every day that Ministers can make – from the treatment of asylum seekers to minor changes in benefits for those in poverty – which yield a difference and which are a reason for winning.



Barbara Ellen

'Bum-boosting pants' aside, I'm emotionally invested in M&S's fortunes, but can't think why

Why do we treat it like a national treasure when it's just another multinational business that wants our cash?

Last week sometimes felt like standing in the midst of a triumphant hosiery and condiment-themed ticker-tape parade. I'm referring to the deluge of reports about the success of Marks & Spencer. M&S has topped the FTSE 100 leaderboard. It's reported to be in its strongest financial health since 1997. The food is considered a treat during the cost-of-living crisis. The Zoe Gut Shot sparked a waiting list. Sienna Miller has fronted clothing campaigns, looking winsome in cable-knit. Young women are turbo-boosting the profits by buying M&S lingerie.

No wonder chief executive Stuart Machin talks of "wind in our sails". What a way to celebrate being 140 years old. You could almost forgive the disquieting "bum-boosting pants" range introduced earlier this year (effectively a padded bra for the posterior: what fresh hell is this?). Even in relatively recent times, there were concerns about M&S, but all indications show that it's out of the doldrums.

All of which made me feel glowy and happy. Hurrah for M&S! Then a sudden sacrilegious thought occurred: why? It was as if a dim lightbulb started flickering above my head. Why am I emotionally invested, and in this doting, painfully over-involved kind of way?

Why are British people so fond of certain brands (M&S, John Lewis)? Some shops somehow encapsulate our essential Britishness, as if we've almost been hypnotised into a state of heightened brand loyalty. I know we're a nation of shopkeepers, but isn't it a bit weird to care about the fortunes of a multinational business concern that just wants our cash? That, when push comes to commercial shove, simply wants us to shell out for its snazzy crewnecks or juicy sliced mango.

This isn't meant as a slur on M&S: it's a shop, it sells stuff, and it does it well. Still, it's strange how blasphemous, even taboo, it feels to even mildly party poop the celebrations. Part of me feels like I'm committing a thought crime – an act of anti-state heresy that could potentially result in the revocation of my British citizenship.

Not everyone is so enamoured. Patrick Grant, the clothing entrepreneur and presenter of TV's *The Great British Sewing Bee*, recently criticised M&S's Autograph socks, describing them as "sort of synthetic-y and flabby and bloody horrible".

Personally speaking, I could just be showing my consumer age. It's known that older people (nitpicking middle-aged miseries like myself) are less susceptible to brand messaging (though it turns out that the younger generations are also becoming ad-resistant).

For many, though, M&S is famously one of the national treasure super-brands, with a hefty dollop of subliminal patriotism thrown in. I've got past form for this kind of thing myself (call it retail sentimentality). As much as I always knew that brands weren't my "friends", if I wasn't fretting over the likes of M&S, I was lamenting the tragic collapse of Woolworths. But how far do you take it? It seems one thing to mourn Woolies (the people, the jobs, the human cost); rather different (a bit "glorious leader") to start feeling warm inside when things go well for a corporate entity.

A cynical soul may even question how truly fond the British public is of any brand, not just M&S. Is it a myth, a heartwarming story we tell ourselves when it's all hypocritical, disingenuous hot air? In truth, we're as fickle as the next nation of consumers, liable to quickly turn our backs on M&S if the cauliflower cheese doesn't pass muster or if there are too many frumpy woollens in the autumn collection. In brutal commercial terms, how far does public goodwill stretch? After all, as was exhaustively pointed out at the time, and for all the weepy public outpouring, Woolies fell because most of us hadn't walked through the doors to so much as stick a scoop in the pick'n'mix for years.

What of the fabled British brand loyalty then? Then there's the wider picture, and probably the real reason I can't help but sense shadows creeping over the sunlit retail vista. It's the cold, hard fact that M&S's well-earned success is wildly unrepresentative of how the rest of the high street (actual and figurative) continues to struggle.

Let's face it, it's still bleak out there. According to a recent Mazars report, more than 2,000 retailers have gone bust in the past year. While there's government action over "high street vacancy", it doesn't feel enough.

Brands are still buckling, including the Body Shop and Ted Baker. Even the M&S fightback was built on cutbacks, store closures (though sometimes these were relocations), job losses and restructuring.

For all my huffing, puffing and venting, and for the staff's sake, I'd hate for M&S to be in trouble: it would be like the ravens leaving the retail tower. Still, while all is bliss in its hallowed aisles, would it be possible to spread some of the affection and support around?

It serves us to remember that the M&S turnaround doesn't tell the whole story of the British high street.



Sienna Miller: helping M&S to the top of the FTSE 100 leaderboard.

Divisive, ugly, gloomy: when will the City see the light on tall towers?



Rowan Moore

St Helen's Square is a nice spot in the City of London, sometimes thronged with lunching office workers, at other times a good place to pause and catch your breath. It captures more sunshine than you'd expect, given the towers around. It is surrounded by beautiful architecture that tells the rich history of the Square Mile: medieval churches, Richard Rogers' epic Lloyd's building, the Gherkin a little further off.

It helps to make the City what it is: a rich and sociable place drawing people away from their work-at-home desks. Yet its rulers, the City of London Corporation, seem set to obliterate it. They are due to consider a planning application for 1 Undershaft, a tower that would extend over 29% of the square, while overshadowing much of the rest with a projecting tongue-shaped platform overhead. The corporation is showing every sign of supporting the scheme.

The proposal breaks new boundaries in greed. There is already an approved plan for a skyscraper on the site, which at 305m would be the tallest in the City, and would triple the floor area of the 1960s tower it would replace. The latest version would increase the bulk by a further 20%. And where the early design was graceful and dignified, the new one, although by the same architect, Eric Parry, is lumpen and crude. That tongue, propped on long sticks, looks like an embarrassing homage to Salvador Dali.

Until now, controversial towers often came with the promise that they would enhance the public realm. The Leadenhall Building, a Rogers-designed skyscraper next to St Helen's Square, won planning permission with the help of a generous open portico at its base. The radical innovation of 1 Undershaft is to take public space away. Its developers argue that they will compensate the loss of the square with "an elevated public garden" and "external office amenity garden levels". Such places, accessible only via lifts and security checks, are nothing like ground-level public spaces, the kind where anyone can wander in and out of at will. They also turn out less lush than suggested by computer-generated visuals, because plants struggle at exposed heights, and they get squeezed out by a demand for bar tables and other revenue-generating functions.

Yet the City encourages oversized developments dressed with unconvincing greenery at high levels: they recently approved plans to redevelop the Museum of London's old site, while proposals for offices and a hotel over Liverpool Street station are currently being modified. The theory put forward is that these projects address the post-pandemic world. They respond to the obvious question – why build more offices? The argument given is that these state-of-the-art places will woo valuable workers into town with the help of all that elevated greenery. But this approach creates a divided world, with those high-value Eloi above, gazing on their floating trees, and the Morlocks negotiating their reduced, darkened spaces below.

More likely, the City will be worse for everyone – uglier, more constricted, with less daylight – hardly the way to bring people back. The corporation's planning committee should refuse the 1 Undershaft plans.

This week's issue
Tackling the root causes of poverty

It is commendable of the *Observer* to highlight the crisis of child poverty, but the government – and prospective governments – should prioritise tackling *the* poverty crisis ("Britain 2024: The scandal of child poverty", Focus and Editorial, last week).

Unfortunately, Rishi Sunak did not address poverty at all when he mapped out his five "priorities" in January 2023, nor did our PM-in-waiting, Keir Starmer, feel that the issue of poverty was important enough for Labour's six "first steps". It appears that it requires a former prime minister – Gordon Brown – to become the driving force for ending child poverty, demanding a multibillion-pound package from the state.

Another political figure, who has been championing the cause of poverty prevention for decades, especially concerning the homeless, is John Bird, cofounder of the *Big Issue* magazine and now an independent, crossbench life peer. He believes that the causes of poverty can be dismantled if government creates a Ministry of Poverty Prevention that can unite government departments to solve the problem of poverty by realising that much of what is going wrong results from inequality, the unequal distribution of resources. As Bird recently said, we can examine all the data about poverty endlessly, but to end poverty "changing minds is the big issue".

Mike Hobbins
Woking, Surrey

Torsten Bell advocates five points on the route to a more equal country, which recognises the need for regulatory and redistributive market reforms to help lower-income families. There is a sixth necessary reform, to change for whose benefit the distributive economy functions in the first place. A societally purposeful sector will deliver a lower cost of living and generate ethical activity and profit for our collective benefit. The private sector connects shareholder interest to the market economy, in favour of those with pre-existing wealth. We can attach our values, and those we seek to represent to it, to benefit wider society and stakeholder interest. Our philosophy constrains our ambitions, we cannot nationalise the market economy but we can respond to today's needs and societise it.

Peter Ellis
London NW7

YOUR LETTERS

Write to us

Letters, which may be edited, should include a full name and postal address and be sent to

Letters to the Editor The Observer, Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU (to be received by noon Thursday).
Email: observer.letters@observer.co.uk
(please insert Letters to the Editor in subject field).
For conditions go to gu.com/letters-terms

A dearth of hi-tech talent

Will Hutton hits the nail on the head, but there is one more of his "multiple areas in which to act" ("We've got the talent and the tech. So why can't Britain grow its own world-beaters?", Comment, last week). That is the people who will work in the much-needed hi-tech superpowers. We can do the high-level research in our excellent universities, but we lack the technically qualified workforce to scale up our innovations. Our Further Education colleges are starved of resources, and a combination of snobbery and insufficient public investment has left them bereft of prestige and capacity. It's time for a public policy change.

Janet Whitaker
House of Lords, London SW1

Socialism's roots in religion

The antagonism of some towards religion ("Faith groups want more say in secular Britain. Labour should tell them to go to hell", Comment, 12 May) depends on whether they consider their socialism is rooted in Christian socialism and chapel, or Marx. One tends towards a totalitarian collectivism inherently hostile to religion, the other towards a dignity of the individual bound together in society and working towards the kingdom of God here on Earth. I know which I prefer.

Christine Crossley, religious studies teacher
Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire

Adults behaving badly

Martha Gill's analysis of what is happening on the internet, and how it might change us is both timely and shrewd ("Grinding bums, flashing boobs: the internet is making juveniles of us all", Comment, last week).

I think that she may be being a little unfair to children and younger people when she uses them as metaphors for just how bad the internet may be. On the contrary, I have known many in this cohort who have thoughtful minds and more generous opinions than their elders. More importantly is her wise mention of this when she says that we evolved, after all, for in-person communication, with its body language, nuance, half-meanings and potential for physical consequences.

Dr Ian Flintoff
Oxford

Give clothes a second life

How refreshing to hear the forth-right opinions of Richard Grant on the paucity of clothing peddled to the UK consumer by "high street" (mostly online) brands ("Sewing Bee host puts boot into 'bloody horrible' M&S socks", News, last week).

As a charity shop manager, I have hundreds of garments from different stores and eras pass through my hands every day. Grant is right that the good stuff often still feels great and has lots of wear to give to its next owner. We in the UK send millions of tonnes of our clothing waste to developing nations every year and decimate the local market for dressmakers and designers, seemingly without a second thought.

So next time you fancy something new to wear, head to your nearest charity store and multiply the good you are doing by spending your money wisely, ethically and with thought for the one world we all have to share.

Susan Watson
Woodbridge, Suffolk

Ukraine's chances with Nato

I share Simon Tisdall's disgust and fears ("Nato's failure to save Ukraine raises an existential question: what on earth is it for?", Comment, last week), but Robert Fico (and in all likelihood Victor Orbán) would block a Ukrainian application for membership of Nato and would refuse to help Ukraine with troops.

If Kaja Kallas, the Estonian prime minister, is right to say that the United Kingdom should have 2 million people capable of bearing arms, we are far short of that and neither Rishi Sunak nor Keir Starmer appears to be minded to reach it. Europe should be able to defend itself regardless of what Trump or Nato do.

Erik Williams
Cardiff

Telling it like it is

Do we need more Americanisations? Why use poop to describe the inflatables in "Surfers, swimmers and nature lovers paddle out to demand clean waters" (News, last week)? What's wrong with the good old Anglo-Saxon turd?

Fred Pickering
Chapel-en-le-Frith, High Peak, Derbyshire

Snipping in silence

To some of us a silent haircut is an experience to be desired. ("Demanding a silent haircut is just rude", Focus, last week) I had a friend who wasn't interested in football deciding to watch *Big Brother* so that he had something to talk to his barber about.

John Fyfe
Edinburgh

For the record

- An advice column said that roadside recovery policies, although a type of insurance, are unregulated and outside the remit of the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS). That is the case for breakdowns that occur in the UK. However, because the letter writer's breakdown happened in Europe, the claim falls under the European cover section of the breakdown policy and the FOS can consider a complaint ("Botched RAC 'rescue' put us through French ordeal", 19 May, p61).

- The pizza restaurant Sweet Thursday is in the borough of Islington, not Hackney, though it is over the road from the latter ("Lunch with Chris van Tulleken", 19 May, Food Monthly, p8).

- An article mentioned the accidental dumping of raw sewage into "Cumbria's Lake Windermere" in February this year. However, as our style guide points out, with the exception of Bassenthwaite Lake, bodies of water in the Lake District do not have "lake" in their names ("Surfers, swimmers and nature lovers paddle out to demand clean waters", 19 May, p9).

- *Write to the Readers' Editor, the* Observer, *York Way, London N1 9GU, email observer.readers@observer.co.uk, tel 020 3353 4736*

Britain's view on...

The damning verdict of the infected blood inquiry



New Statesman
'Agony'

"No amount of money can compensate for the lives blighted or the death of a loved one. What price to put on the agony of watching your seven-year-old child waste away, his body ravaged by Aids, as Jan Smith had to do with her son, Colin?... More than 3,000 people in the UK died as the direct result of this scandal. Campaigners who have been calling for compensation payments to be made more quickly estimate that a victim dies every four days. In terms of scale... and the extent of the cover-up, it is hard to disagree with Langstaff's assessment that the... scandal represents "the worst treatment disaster in the history of the NHS"."
Hannah Barnes

The Guardian
'Scurrying of feet'

"[The] misjudgments that wrecked... lives... were not the end of it. Much could have been done to help survivors... but it wasn't. Instead, we heard the scurrying of feet and the whirring of shredding machines as the establishment rushed to cover up its involvement." **Sarah Boseley**

The Telegraph
'Consequences'

"It is to be hoped that the announcement on full compensation... will at last see the Government... fulfil its obligations to those affected, some of whom have waited more than 50 years... There should be consequences, too, for [those] whose failures led to this tragedy." **Editorial**

The Scotsman
'Serious measures'

"There are... lessons to be learned. For the sake of those who died and the thousands still alive that must mean serious measures to protect whistleblowers, to impose transparency and to have a process of acknowledging and correcting inevitable errors." **Jackie Baillie**



Martha Gill

Biohazards, Putin, extremism... we'll need more than a few tins of beans

Oliver Dowden's advice on stockpiling forgets that co-operation is vital if we are to stand a chance against modern threats

At 2pm: tell citizens to stockpile batteries and bottled water. At 5pm: call general election. Who drew up that timetable? What a juxtaposition: 14 years of Conservative rule; a nation cramming its cupboards with emergency baked beans.

But then you listen to Oliver Dowden's "resilience" speech, given on Wednesday to the London Defence Conference: "biosecurity hazards... catastrophic risks... geopolitical tensions... malign online actors... cyber-attacks". And you listen to Rishi Sunak's, three hours later: "darkest of days... the Cold War... Putin's Russia... Islamist extremism... migration weaponised by hostile states". You realise there's a theme.

Dowden's boy scout advice – stock up on batteries, a radio, three days of food, 10 litres of water – is part of a wider message that fits the party's election campaign: dark days are coming, fear the worst. What if Britain could be suddenly transformed into a nation of American-style preppers: anxious, distrustful, individualistic – and, crucially, rightwing? Deep in the party's subconscious, does it still hope for some miraculous shift in group psychology?

It's a shame about the politics, the context and the timing, because this sort of policy is the kind of thing disaster experts, such as Prof Lucy Easthope, have long been campaigning for. Any effort to increase resilience is welcome, she tells me, as we lag behind that of many other countries in this respect: Finland has a "72 hours" campaign in which people are encouraged to be self-sufficient in the first stages of a crisis. Not enough of us know first aid, or where best to donate in a disaster, and this new campaign spreads some useful information, she says. But still, there are big pieces missing.

Here's the first: money. Not everyone can afford three days of spare food. Survivalists talk of necessities and essentials, but they are indulging in a luxury hobby: in the US, preppers are solidly middle class and supporting a billion-dollar industry. (At the high end, "bug out" packs can be bought for $5,000 (£3,900).) The fact that large parts of the UK are deep in a food security crisis makes Dowden look particularly cack-handed with his talk of some future disaster that might call for spare food. What about the disaster we're already in? The Food Standards Agency recently classified around 25% of British consumers as "food insecure". Mention tins in 2024 and you instantly think of food banks on which thousands of families rely. Where is the funding for this "resilience" policy?

And here's the second. State-level preparedness. A detailed to-do list for citizens (three days of food, 10 litres of water) suddenly becomes vague when it comes to what the government might do. There's only so much that bottled water can help in the face of the various "geopolitical tensions" mentioned in Dowden's speech. A focus on individual responsibility distracts from the fact that it is government-level preparation that really matters – coordination in a disaster and staving it off in the first place.

It's strange, for example, to talk of water security when a big supplier, Thames Water, is in such disarray. Is Thames Water ready for a crisis? If so, why can't it deal with the present crisis it has helped to cause? It is strange, too, to talk of food supplies without mentioning the fragility of our supply chains. Brexit border delays now create regular hiccups in the route from Europe. How resilient, exactly, are we when it comes to food and water?

Disaster response has to start at the top – but we aren't ready for most disasters. This week, for example, we heard that firefighters lack basic equipment for tackling wildfires and terror events. According to the Fire Brigades Union, "specialist hardware" first introduced after the 9/11 attacks in the US is now more than 20 years old and in need of urgent replacement.

In January, we learned that the UK is even less prepared for a pandemic than it was before the Covid crisis. Dr Clive Dix, who chaired the UK's vaccine taskforce, told a select committee that we treated vaccine manufacturers so badly at the tail end of the Covid taskforce that they have walked away, and that we have also failed to invest in a broad enough range of vaccine technologies. The coronavirus vaccine was built on years of research, but work on other pathogens lags far behind.

In December, meanwhile, the National Audit Office warned that the government is not ready for extreme weather events that will increase with climate change. It's perhaps no surprise. Each year, around November, there is a "national emergency" when part of the country floods. We could invest in proper river and coastal defences, but we don't. Forget future climate events: we aren't ready for the climate we have now.

A focus on "individual resilience" puts you in the wrong mindset for a crisis. The prepper instinct, after all, is to compete for survival: gather supplies, defend them with your life, emerge from the apocalypse as one of the chosen few.

But survival in a real emergency involves just the opposite approach: cooperation, whether at government level or between neighbours. Remember the fights over loo paper in supermarket aisles during the pandemic, the last time the idea of stocking up gripped public consciousness? It marked a rare breakdown in community spirit – a spirit responsible, when it came down to it, for keeping us all alive: neighbours fed vulnerable people, we stayed in our homes so as not to spread infection.

"To emphasise individual responsibility is to completely miss the point of collective responsibility," says Timothy Lang, a professor of food policy at City, University of London. A survivalist Britain – busy filling cupboards – might overlook the ways in which it has been failed. But would it survive?



Illustration by Dominic McKenzie.

The world's view on...

The death in a helicopter crash of Iran's president, Ebrahim Raisi



Washington Post
'Extermination'

"In a country where responsibility for failures large and small is almost always attributed to the will of God, one wonders what act of divine intervention will be required to explain this mess. Despite the calamity, many Iranians won't miss Raisi, who was an architect of the horrific extermination of thousands of domestic dissidents in the 1980s. At the same time, they know his death won't change things in any substantive way. The Iranian regime may be wobbly and sclerotic, but it's also deeply entrenched. It will take more than the death of its president – whose power is marginal, at best – to unseat it."
Jason Rezaian

Le Monde
'Obsessed with survival'

"His truncated term of office was marked mainly by the bloody crushing of the protest movement sparked by the death of the young Mahsa Amini at the hands of the morality police in September 2022. Such levels of protest accentuated the divorce between Iranian society exasperated by the confiscation of its freedoms and the imperialism of a regime obsessed with its survival, within which the Islamic Revolutionary Guard carries ever greater weight under Khamenei's command.... Unpredictability has become the norm between the two enemies, with all the risks of misreading each other's intentions." **Editorial**

CNN
'Hollowing out'

"Raisi was widely criticized for presiding over the hollowing out of what remains of Iran's institutions... Since the brutal crushing of those protests, the bridge between the regime and its young and largely disgruntled population has grown ever wider."
Tamara Qiblawi



Kenan Malik

Job ads aimed at the 'benefits class' may be well-meant, but smack of contempt

Attempts to increase social diversity echo Victorian demonisation of the 'lower orders'

Imagine the scene. It's a small organisation within the creative industry – an arts centre, perhaps, or a theatre group. Around a table sit people trying to craft a job ad for a senior management role. All recognise the need for increasing diversity, to encourage applications from social groups unrepresented within the organisation.

"One group often left out," says one of the discussants, "is the working class." "True," says another. "But I think many working-class people are not actually working. They may be unemployed or claiming benefits." "Or they may have been forced into a life of crime," observes the first. "Or perhaps they are part of the underclass." So, they craft a line to incorporate those distinct experiences: "We welcome and encourage applications from individuals who identify as working-class, benefit class, criminal class and/or underclass." "Perfect," everyone agrees.

It might sound like a parody cooked up by the *Daily Mail* or GB News to satirise "woke" organisations. In fact, while the conversation around the table is fictional, the job ad is real, placed by London's Camden People's Theatre, for a new development manager. After a media backlash last week, the theatre deleted that line from the ad.

Finding it "insulting on many levels", Anne-Marie Canning, CEO of Brilliant Club, an organisation helping students from disadvantaged backgrounds gain access to universities, tweeted: "I have never seen this expression about socioeconomic diversity before". In fact, it's a phrase that many cultural organisations, from theatre companies to cultural centres to arts consultancies, now use. There is even an anacronym, "WBCU", or "WBCU-C", for "workers who identify as working, benefit, criminal, underclass backgrounds".

While the phrasing of job ads by certain organisations may seem a relatively trivial issue, it tells us much about the way we look upon questions of class. It is striking that nobody who drew up these ads stopped to say: "Certainly, we need to provide opportunities for ex-prisoners, as Timpson laudably does, and for benefit claimants. But isn't that different from suggesting that these individuals belong to a 'criminal class' or a 'benefit class'?" Or even: "Would people really want to identify themselves as members of the 'criminal class' or of the 'benefit class'?"

There are some who insist that they would, that such labels were introduced because "people asked for [them]". Call me sceptical, but I have seen little grassroots pressure from people insisting that they should have the right to self-identify as a member of the "criminal class" or of the "benefit class". It is the kind of terminology, along with labels such as "the dangerous classes" or the "residuum", both Victorian expressions of contempt for the lower orders, that has long been imposed from the outside to demonise sections of the working class.

The Victorian social researcher and reformer Henry Mayhew, in his celebrated survey of *London Labour and the London Poor*, divided the working class into "those that will work, those that cannot work, and those that will not work". The last, he wrote, is "distinguished from the civilised man by his repugnance to regular and continuous labour – by his want of providence in laying up store for the future – by his inability to perceive consequences ever so slightly removed from immediate apprehension – by his passion for stupefying herbs and roots, and, when possible, for intoxicating fermented liquor".

More than a century later, the American political scientist Charles Murray and the psychologist Richard Herrnstein echoed those sentiments when they wrote of the underclass in their notorious and notoriously influential book *The Bell Curve* that "A lack of foresight, which is often associated with low IQ, raises the attractions of immediate gains from crime and lowers the strength of deterrents", and that such people "find it harder to understand why robbing someone is wrong".

This belief that sections of the working class are morally unfit, or dangerous, continues to shape social policy. It's the belief that undergirded Tony Blair's crusade against "problem families" and George Osborne's condemnation of "skivers... sleeping off a life on benefits". It is visible in the two-child benefit cap, which Iain Duncan Smith claimed was necessary to teach the poor that "children cost money", and in the imprisonment for public protection (IPP) scheme, under which many people committing relatively minor offences were given indefinite prison sentences on the grounds that they posed a danger to society.

This is the tradition into which fits talk of the "criminal class" or the "benefit class". Of course, few of those in the cultural sector who promote such terms would be sympathetic to that history of anti-working class sentiment. So, how did organisations that consider themselves "progressive" come to deploy such labels?

The belief that sections of the working class are morally unfit continues to shape social policy



George Osborne in 2012, when he said 'skivers' were 'sleeping off a life on benefits'.

In part, the answer lies in the way that diversity programmes have been imposed from the top within an industry often disconnected from working-class life. A recent report observed that fewer than one in 10 workers in the arts and culture sector have a working-class background. Another report on "Social Mobility in the Charity Sector" found that here, too, there are few employees from socially disadvantaged environments.

The answer lies also in changing conceptions of class over recent decades, its meaning coming to be shaped not so much by economics and politics as by culture and identity. Class has become less an assertion of collective experience and solidarity than an expression of personal identity. Many reject "working-class" as a useful label because it does not seem to encompass their own particular lived experience.

The working class has always been segmented. But, in the past, the workplace and the community served to create a greater sense of commonality, while organisations such as trade unions helped bind workers together as a social force.

Today, not only have traditional workplaces transformed, communities become dislocated, and unions shrunk in influence, but class politics – the notion of the working class as a potentially transformative social force – has largely been buried. The sense of working-class commonality has shattered into myriad distinct identities and experiences.

Out of this emerge labels such as the "criminal class" or the "benefit class" that seek to encompass the diversity of working-class experiences but end up echoing some of the most reactionary sentiments of hostility towards working-class people.



Insights
Torsten Bell

Cheer up, Tory MPs, quitting a job can help boost your wellbeing

In the aftermath of the pandemic there was much talk of a "great resignation" as people re-evaluated their lives. More columns were written about it than evidence that it was happening in the UK. Now, a great resignation is under way – of MPs. The number exiting ahead of polling day surpassed 1997's exodus of 117, Michael Gove being the highest profile to stampede out.

Economists have an unusual take on quitting: it's a good thing, indicating a strong economy with confident workers (though bad if one particular firm, or party, is haemorrhaging people).

What does economics tell us about this resignation rush? Those quitting probably found it harder to do than you might think. The "sunk cost fallacy" means people tend to stay because of the effort and time already put in to get to that point – even if the current costs outweigh the benefits.

Secondly, exits shouldn't be surprising. Being an MP has been more stressful in recent years as British politics has gone bonkers and those with stressful roles are about 10% more likely to want to quit. Plus, the prospect of being in opposition for cabinet ministers not only means diminished status, but also diminished income (a £67,505 salary drop). That can result in feelings of unfairness, which drives the decision to quit.

Research brings good news for today's quitters. Those changing jobs, on average, see their pay rise four times as fast as those staying put (note it can take a while to find the right new job: many move again soon to find a better fit). The best news? Those letting go, not just of a job but a goal that isn't achievable (like running the country), can experience a boost in wellbeing. Quitting – it's underrated.

Torsten Bell is chief executive of the Resolution Foundation and author of Great Britain? How We Get Our Future Back



Mover and shaker
Jeff Dodds, boss of Formula E
Profile, page 54

Huge payouts in prospect for 'robber barons' who won the bitter takeover battle for GKN

Agenda

Fears for what Melrose might do to the old engineering firm did not come to pass, but more anger is in store, writes *Alex Lawson*



Several of GKN's businesses were demerged by Melrose, the buyout specialist who took it over in 2018.

Snow lay thick on the ground in Westminster as demonstrators carrying a large banner reading "Stop the GKN takeover" marched on parliament. It was February 2018, and, inside, Telford MP Lucy Allan was pledging to protect jobs at the historic engineering company, in the face of its hostile takeover by buyout specialist Melrose.

Six years on from one of the most acrimonious takeover battles in recent years, old wounds are likely to be reopened this week, when 20 top Melrose executives scoop shares worth more than £300m.

The performance plan was created in 2020 and, on Friday, Melrose bosses will learn the exact value of their stock, expected to be about £320m. The staggering sum is the result of motoring share price growth, with more than £4bn added to its value over the four-year period. The payout is likely to add to controversy over executive pay, after bumper deals for bosses including AstraZeneca's Pascal Soriot and David Schwimmer of the London Stock Exchange.

The payout will also mark the end of an era for Melrose, which was set up in 2003 by Jock Miller, David Roper and Simon Peckham – two former accountants and a lawyer respectively. A series of big industrial acquisitions transformed it into a stock market heavyweight. Its motto to "buy, improve, sell" companies – including offloading assets – gave it a reputation as a public company with private-equity instincts.

But it was with the GKN deal that Melrose landed squarely on the radar of parliamentarians. GKN was a British engineering stalwart: starting life as an ironworks in south Wales in 1759, it had grown to manufacture helmets and Spitfires during the second world war and later produce components for aerospace companies and serve carmakers, including Jaguar Land Rover. By 2018, it had become a plodding also-ran, with profits under pressure and no boss when Melrose swooped.

Melrose's image as an asset stripper – keen to cut jobs, break up companies and sell them on while taking huge pay deals – riled MPs and unions, who came out to bat for GKN. The Tory MP Robert Halfon described Melrose as "robber baron capitalism at its worst", while ministers were accused of not doing enough to prevent the takeover.

The six years which followed have been partly predictable: there have been factory closures, job cuts, huge executive pay packets and a demerger of the GKN automotive, hydrogen and powder metallurgy businesses. Shares in Dowlais, the car parts business created by the demerger, have slumped 40% since listing a year ago.

Melrose has also surprised critics, however, by revamping its business model and even changing its mantra, to "design, deliver, improve". GKN has not been gutted, and Melrose refocused to become a specialist aerospace company centred on it, with operations in the US, UK, Sweden and the Netherlands.

Despite taking a hit from Covid's grounding of airlines and the woes at Boeing, it appears to be a business on the front foot – notching up profits of £390m on £3.4bn of revenue in 2023. It is now valued at £8.1bn, even outstripping the value of GKN when it was a larger group at the time of the takeover.

As a result, executives will share in a payout that equates to £16m each, but which will skew towards larger gains for the most senior bosses. Peckham, meanwhile, was the final of the founding trio to step down, in March, and launched a new dealmaking venture, Melvest.

He told the *Sunday Times* the bumper award represented a "good payout", but shareholders had received far more. "You could take a view that no one should earn more than this or that, but I would say that's capitalism working," he said.

Andrew Speke at the High Pay Centre says: "The £300m-plus Melrose is paying out to its executives is reflective of the wider issues of executive pay in the UK.

"Companies paying very high amounts to a larger number of senior employees, while paying many of their workers very modest salaries, shows the potential companies have to raise the pay of the workers, were they to realign their priorities."

Postscript

National Grid raises £7bn in rights issue

National Grid announced a near-£7bn rights issue to fund a £60bn spending programe over five years, in the biggest capital-raising of its kind by a London-listed company since the banking crisis. The company wants to upgrade its networks to cope with the switch to low-carbon energy and invest in thousands of miles of cables to connect homes with renewable energy projects.

BHP fails again in bid for Anglo American

Australian mining company BHP sweetened its offer to buy rival Anglo American, but was rebuffed for the third time. BHP has said the proposed deal would create a global player in the commodities market, producing copper, iron ore, potash and metallurgical coal, which is used for steelmaking. BHP's rejected all-share offer valued the company at £38.6bn.

Lynch gives evidence in Autonomy trial

British entrepreneur Mike Lynch took to the stand in his defence in a US courtroom. The founder of software company Autonomy faces 16 charges relating to its sale to Hewlett-Packard in 2011. He denies the allegations. Among the prosecution's claims are that Lynch artificially inflated Autonomy's sales and misled auditors. He told the trial that Autonomy was "not perfect".

April inflation figure hits hopes of rate cut

Hopes of an early cut in interest rates were dented after UK inflation fell to 2.3% in April – slightly higher than expected. Economists polled by Reuters had expected the annual increase in the cost of goods and services would fall to 2.1% – just above the Bank of England's target of 2%. April's sharp fall, from 3.2% in March, was due to falls in household energy and food costs.

Vital statistics

2.7%
Year-on-year fall in UK retail sales in April, according to the ONS, after a 0.2% fall in March.

3%
Increase in US retail and food services sales for April 2024 compared with last year, according to the US Census Bureau.



Matt Davey, a former council youth worker, now runs Head on Board, a local mental health project. Andy Hall/ the Observer

‘People tell me they’re not ready to work.’ How long-term sickness blighted a town

Hastings has the highest number of young people in England in bad health – part of a record 2.8m Britons who are economically inactive due to sickness. But there are signs of hope, writes *Hazel Sheffield*

On a Wednesday night in Hastings, a handful of under-18s gather in the back of a former newspaper building for a weekly Dungeons and Dragons night. Around the table, a teenager peers from behind a floppy fringe, telling the other players of a monster with jaws wide enough to swallow a man whole. Behind him, two boys are playing pool. For the moment, there’s not an iPhone in sight.

Sidney Ewing, the youth worker overseeing the programme, says the majority of young people who come to the centre feel uncertain about their future. Their most popular night is for 16-to-18s, she says, a generation who lost two critical years of their education to Covid. “A lot of them say they aren’t ready to go to university or start work because of their mental health,” she says. “You hear that a lot: ‘I need to sort myself out first.’”

Britain is suffering from an epidemic of people too ill to work. Economic inactivity due to ill health has been increasing for five years in the longest sustained rise since the 1990s, and now stands at a record high of 2.8 million. Addressing this will be one of the biggest challenges for the next government and a central economic question for parties on the election campaign trail.

There are now 700,000 more people unable to work through illness than before Covid. Nine-tenths of that rise can be accounted for by two groups: the oldest in the labour market, and the very young.

In Hastings, one in 10 young people leave school with no plans for higher education or work – almost twice the English average. The town has the joint highest number of people aged 16 to 34 who say they are in bad health, according to the 2021 census. In terms of opportunities for young people, Hastings has more in common with Blackpool than regional neighbours such as Brighton.

“The centre of Hastings has some of the highest levels of crime in the county, the local schools are constantly changing, and the biggest employer is the care industry. It forms this perfect storm for young people,” says Matt Davey, the founder of a local community interest company called Head on Board, which uses skateboarding as a way in to talking about mental health and suicide.

In 2019, East Sussex county council shut 13 youth clubs and 14 children’s centres, a pattern that has been repeated across the country. Local authorities, under pressure from austerity, slashed youth provision funding in England from more than £1bn to £408.5m between 2011 and 2021.

Davey was a council youth worker in Hastings for more than a decade, and saw firsthand the impact of the cuts. Once a young person starts to feel isolated, it can create a vicious cycle, he says: “There are common factors that keep us well and healthy: being connected to people, having a purpose. There is definitely a link between doing something, be that volunteering, part-time employment or training, and good mental health.”

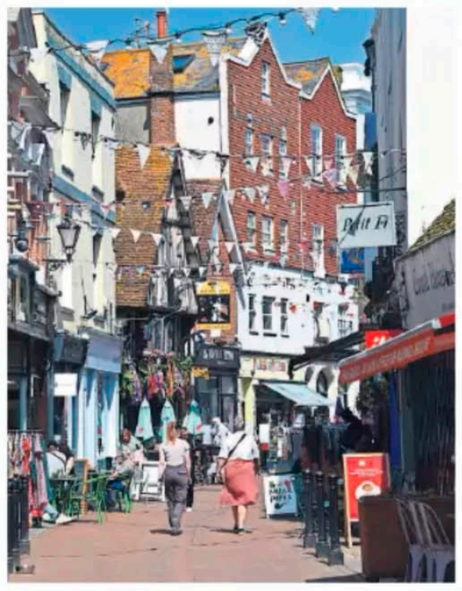
Like many seaside towns, Hastings suffers from a lack of high-quality jobs. A quarter of residents are employed in health and social care. Much of the work in hospitality is seasonal and insecure. But a growing number of tech enterprises are creating new opportunities.

The Hastings youth club, helped by a two-year grant from the Youth Investment Fund to create permanent spaces for young people, is currently run from the offices of OBX, a digital arts hub that is part of Hastings Commons – an ecosystem of community-led organisations working to renovate derelict buildings in the town centre. Around the board games and the pool table are computers, a scanner and a 3D printer.

A tiny gecko made of chocolate has been freshly 3D-printed as part of an experiment by Alex Giles. He was two



LEFT
Alex Giles got a job funded by Kickstart.



RIGHT
Hastings town centre: much of the work in the seaside town's hospitality industry is insecure.



ABOVE
Sharon Rhodes says benefits help her stay in work.

years into a diploma in games development at college when the pandemic hit. With no computer at home, Giles was forced to abandon his studies. For the next two years he was on universal credit, struggling to find work, save for a job packing boxes in a local warehouse one Christmas.

Then he was offered a job at Hastings Commons under the government's post-Covid Kickstart scheme, which provided funds to create employment for 16- to 24-year-olds on universal credit who were at risk of long-term unemployment. "Kickstart put me back on track," Giles says. "Before that, I was in a state of uncertainty. I wanted to find employment but I didn't know where to start."

At 22, Giles is now employed by OBX and experimenting with printed food for a project exploring food poverty. He supports others who come through the building on work experience or for workshops. Many of them say they would like his job.

In the 1990s, the long-term impact of job losses after rapid deindustrialisation was not persistent unemployment, but instead higher rates of economic inactivity due to long-term sickness, according to the Resolution Foundation. The thinktank says the long-term sick are now disproportionately concentrated in post-industrial and coastal areas of the country as the "hidden unemployed", challenging the narrative of government statistics that the country is operating at close to full employment.

Among working-age adults in England and Wales, new claims for the personal independence payment (Pip) have increased by two-thirds (68%) between early 2020 and early 2024. In Hastings, 6,728 people are claiming Pip for an illness, disability or mental health condition, up 52% since January 2020. The figures will be a source of alarm for politicians. According to the Office for Budget Responsibility, spending on disability benefits is set to rise by 49% in nominal terms between 2023-24 and 2028-29.

In the Hastings Commons boardroom, social media assistant Sharon Rhodes is remembering the success of a recent campaign. "I made a local historian go viral on TikTok!" she says. With her cropped grey hair and denim jacket, Rhodes is a youthful 50, putting her in the second category – older working-age adults increasingly out of work because of illness.

She was diagnosed with rapid-cycle bipolar disorder and PTSD more than 20 years ago and spent 10 years out of work before she found the courage to apply for the government's access to work scheme. This pays for a designated worker to make sure she is eating and sleeping – basic activities that still sometimes feel insurmountable.

Crucially, Rhodes's 10 hours of work do not interfere with benefits; she receives employment and support allowance alongside income support. But she says many people in Hastings are terrified to work for fear that they might lose their benefits. That culture of fear could get worse.

In his autumn statement last November, Jeremy Hunt announced changes to disability benefits to make it tougher for some people with poor mobility or mental health issues to receive additional support. That could make it harder, not easier, for some people to work. Labour has promised to improve mental health services and reduce NHS waiting lists if it gets into power. A swing of 3.4%, or 3,500 votes, is all it would take to topple the current Conservative MP in Hastings and Rye, Sally-Ann Hart.

Rhodes argues she is able to work because of her benefits payments, not despite them – and because she found the right job. "I want to show the country you can work with such a bad diagnosis if you find the right employer," she says.

'Local schools are constantly changing and the biggest employer is the care industry'
Matt Davey on life in Hastings

Why travelling on Eurostar is about to get much trickier

Requirements for face scans and fingerprints threaten delays, writes *Gwyn Topham*

In a land just 20 miles from Britain, people can catch an international train just by buying a ticket and turning up. For Eurostar travellers from London it has never been that simple. But from 6 October, when the EU's new border regime kicks in, a fresh headache of requirements will apply.

There may be some comfort in Eurostar's promise that it "won't be a shitshow". It has spent a year discussing the precise requirements of the EU entry-exit system (EES), and invested €10m in revamping St Pancras International.

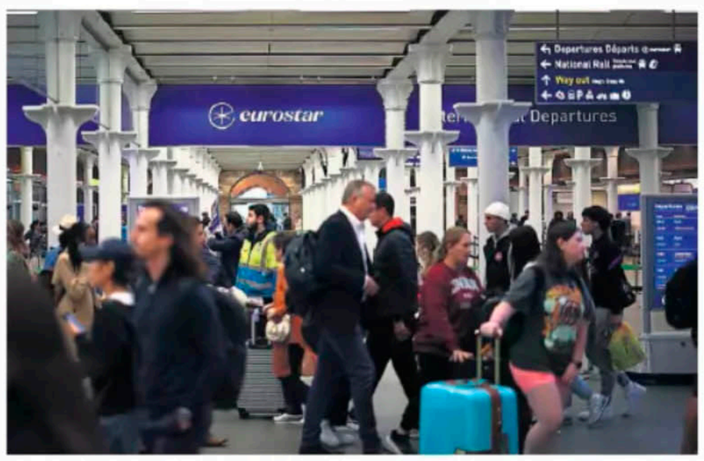
Here Benugo, an upmarket toastie purveyor, is being ejected from its prime spot to make way for rows of biometric kiosks. Passengers will have to upload their fingerprints and scan their faces, then walk – or queue – past the piano donated by Elton John to the ticket gates. Once they're through those, the baggage screening and UK passport control, French border police will take their fingerprints all over again.

Eurostar says its modelling shows passengers will be able to complete the process within the recommended 60 to 90 minutes before travel, though some reports last week claimed it would take two hours.

Eurostar's chief stations and security officer, Simon Lejeune, said: "We're confident 6 October won't be a shitshow because of the work that's going in ... we have the right set-up."

The bar for what is regarded as a "shitshow" in Britain has been raised substantially since the 2016 referendum, but these increasing hurdles will make some travellers wonder if just staying home to watch *Emily in Paris* or *Ratatouille* might be easier.

For Eurostar, the key is capacity – or how quickly passengers can pass the frontier, and it is installing 49 kiosks in three areas. The double fingerprint check is necessary because biometric data collection must be supervised by a European border officer on first entry. After registration, people will be able to use e-gates for three years. France has agreed to double the *police aux frontières* booths from nine to 18.



New kiosks are being installed at St Pancras to cope.

Brexit had already cut capacity on trains to Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam: the stamping of paper passports was taking so long that trains were not able to fill up and depart on time. Now, Eurostar hopes to cut the last part of the border process from 59 to 37 seconds.

The Port of Dover has raised the alarm over how, in a constrained space, arriving car passengers can have all their biometric details taken by EU officials. Getlink, the Channel tunnel and Shuttle operator, has announced spending of about €70m on measures to avoid a launch-day meltdown.

The scheme has been delayed by concerns over back-end computing capabilities and staffing, and the French lobbied hard to put EES back until after the Paris Olympics.

For Eurostar, Le Shuttle and the Port of Dover, the French border is "juxtaposed" – physically in Britain – which means checks and queues come before actual travel. Richard Thorp, engineering director at HS1 Ltd, which operates St Pancras station, said: "Everything will be done in London, and when you arrive, you're free to go. The challenge our airline friends will have is that all that EES process is on arrival."

Airline passengers could find themselves on 6 October at, say, a small Greek airport which has not had millions invested in staff and kiosks to process biometric data. Passport queues for non-EU travellers may not be a pretty sight.

Airports remain concerned, not least because final confirmation of the start date is not expected until 28 August. Olivier Jankovec, director general of airports trade body ACI Europe, says border processing time will rise by up to 50% and adds: "A number of unresolved issues require urgent attention." These include proper testing of the scheme; delays to a promised pre-registration app; and consideration of what border delays could mean.

What ministers call "precautionary flexibility measures" could apply for six months. They include, in Thorp's words, "mechanisms to maintain a fluid process" – potentially waving people through just on passports if the system keels over.

EES will be followed some time in 2025 by the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (Etias), which will require British and other non-EU passengers to pre-register more details and pay €7 before crossing the Channel.

Standing by the doomed Benugo with a mocked-up EES kiosk, Thorp and Lejeune concur: "We don't want to even think about that yet."

Profile

Jeff Dodds

Chief executive, Formula E

The boss of the electric motor racing series tells *Jasper Jolly* why the sport's rise in Asia, plus a global shift to battery power, could soon see his events take pole position with fans

Jeff Dodds has been a fan of Formula One "all my life", he says. That is probably a good thing because, as chief executive of electric racing series Formula E, he must find the comparison with its fossil-fuelled cousin is constant.

So he takes it head-on. Such is the growth and improvement in technology in Formula E that one day, he says, it is "realistic that a question will be asked about whether both can exist together". Talking to the *Observer* in the race company's west London headquarters, he adds that maybe one day, as Formula E develops, "they won't [both exist]".

Formula One fans' scepticism can be forgiven. The petrol-powered series claims 1.5 billion TV viewers and several hundred thousand spectators at every race (including 480,000 at Silverstone, the home of UK motorsport). Formula E claims 225 million TV viewers, attendances in the tens of thousands, and barely any coverage from traditional western media.

Yet Formula E has technology – and maybe also geography – on its side. The global shift to electric vehicles appears inevitable, and the transition is led by Asia, and particularly China, where more and more fans are embracing electric motorsport. Thousands have flocked to this weekend's Shanghai ePrix.

Dodds has led the business for the past year. Sitting in Formula E's offices wearing a race-style tracksuit emblazoned with sponsor logos, he exudes the forceful charm of a man accustomed to pressing race-paddock flesh – and persuading the world that they should want to be there too.

The electric racing series is now in its 10th season, having started in 2014 in Beijing. It was the brainchild of Alejandro Agag, a Spanish businessman, and Frenchman Jean Todt, who was then president of the FIA (Fédération International de l'Automobile), which governs global motorsport.

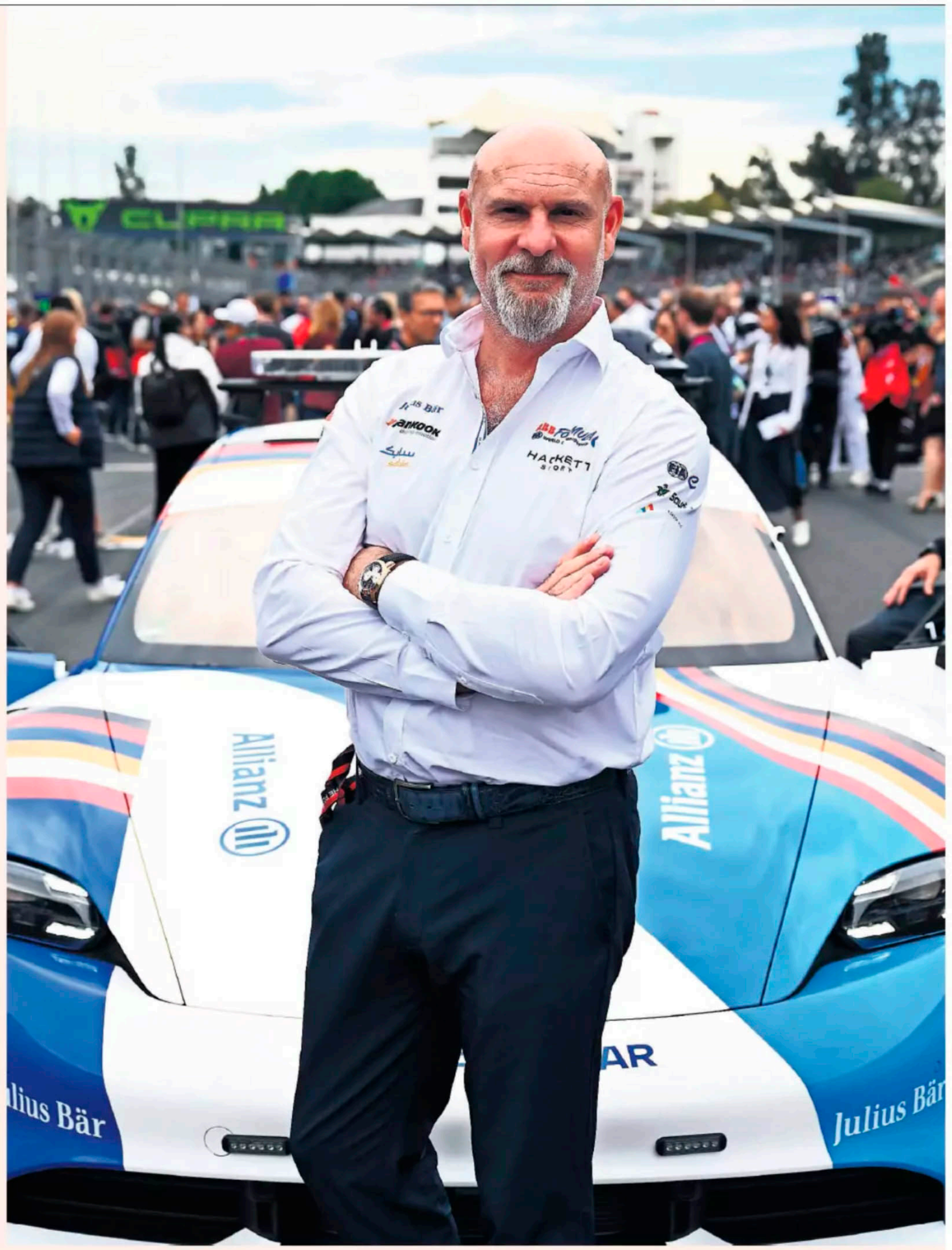
From the start, Agag and Todt emphasised the low-carbon credentials of the race, even claiming that it was carbon neutral – albeit thanks to controversial offsets.

Dodds says sustainability is "part of our DNA", but there is plenty of evidence that green credentials don't matter that much to motorsport fans of any kind. Formula E itself has a Saudi sponsorship deal, and held a race weekend in Riyadh this year.

There were teething problems with Formula E. Teams in the first series had to swap cars mid-race because their batteries could not last the course. But electric cars have come a long way since, with lighter and longer-lasting batteries. A new generation of cars will be able to go from 0-60mph in 1.8 seconds, outaccelerating Formula 1, and have a top speed of 200mph. As the tech improved, the series attracted audiences and investors: media companies Liberty Global and Warner Bros Discovery bought in in 2015.

Dodds is tasked with growing Formula E (after a hiatus during the coronavirus pandemic). But his recent jobs – as chief executive of Dutch telecoms company Tele2 and then chief operating officer of Virgin Media O2 – would not appear to make him an obvious choice to lead a motorsport series.

However, go back a bit further and the appointment makes more sense. Dodds was born in Kent to what he calls a "very working-class family" – his mother was a nurse and his father a firefighter. He was "fascinated with cars from a very early age", and chose jobs in the car industry when he left school, working in sales and marketing for Volvo and later Honda. He says he caught the motorsport bug at the Japanese company, which at the time raced Formula One cars, motorbikes and powerboats. "I think at some point they even raced on lawn mowers."



Jeff Dodds, pictured at the Mexico City ePrix earlier this year, says sustainability is part of the organisation's DNA.

A set of Phil Mickelson's clubs in his office is evidence of a stint at US golf equipment maker Callaway, but he soon moved on to telecoms, eventually leading 17,000 people at Virgin Media O2. Liberty Global had bought Virgin Media in 2013, and when Dodds told chief executive Mike Fries that he wanted to leave telecoms, the American told him to "just hang around the hoop for a bit" – a basketball metaphor.

The Formula E ball has now dropped to Dodds, with Liberty and Warner happy to bear steep losses – €242m across 2021 and 2022, according to its latest UK accounts – in pursuit of growth.

He acknowledges that "not enough people know about us", but says Formula E now has 385 million fans, while F1 has 800 million by the same survey methodology. "Across Japan, China, Indonesia, we see an incredible growth in fanbase," he says.

Making headway in Europe and the US is more of a struggle: German makers Audi and BMW both pulled out in 2021. "Before my time," Dodds says hurriedly, suggesting it may have been because of questions over the pace of the manufacturers' transition to electric cars.

Formula E now has 11 teams, including Jaguar and McLaren from the UK, Japan's Nissan, Germany's Porsche and Chinese battery maker Envision. A final grid slot is up for sale. Dodds says he would consider German "rejoiners", and drops the name of Fred Vasseur, Ferrari's F1 team principal, with a studied casualness that suggests the company is not interested. But he is particularly courting other Chinese manufacturers.

His pitch: eyeballs around the world at a fraction of the cost of Formula One. Buying a Formula One team could cost well north of $1bn, with an annual cost cap of $140m before drivers' salaries. Formula E's cost cap is $14m, and a team might cost between $25m and $30m.

Costs are lower because most elements of the racing cars – from chassis to batteries – are identical, and research is focused on the motors and the software that controls them. That upsets some racing purists, who value the battle between constructors, but it avoids Formula One's "Max Verstappen problem" – the dominance of the Red Bull team. Races are usually held in city centres, which play to the cars' strengths of impressive acceleration and relatively low noise.

This will change as the series looks for bigger circuits to match the batteries' longer ranges. Dodds says Formula E could start alternating 40-minute top-speed dashes with longer-range tactical battles.

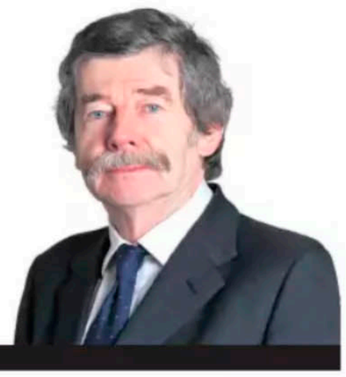
He and Formula E face a tough job winning over diehard petrolheads. But as the world's automotive centre of gravity shifts to Asia and electric cars become the global norm, he may find he doesn't need to.

Executive summary

Age 50
Family Married to Mary. Two sons and two cats.
Education Oakwood Park grammar school, Maidstone, then, while working, an MBA at Westminster Business School, an MSc in international marketing from Robert Gordon University, and an honorary doctorate from Bournemouth University.
Pay "I won't disclose specifics on this one," but equity in the business is part of it.
Last holiday An Easter break in Doha, Qatar, with family on their way back from the Tokyo ePrix.
Best advice he's been given "Usain Bolt once told me that he always got more enjoyment from winning relay races than individual events ... The feeling of winning with a team is so much better than doing it by yourself."
Word he overuses It's more of an expression: "How could we test that?"
How he relaxes Gym, golf, shooting, reading.

William Keegan

@willliamkeegan



If it wins, Labour can take a big gamble over Europe

"Things can only get better" was a Labour party slogan before the 1997 general election. The reason why Rishi Sunak has surprised the nation, and what my old colleague Alan Watkins used to call the "chattering classes", by calling for a snap election is that Sunak and his chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, have apparently decided that things can only get worse.

With low inflation figures – at last – and the possibility of a cut in interest rates, the two of them have been talking the economy up as though there were no tomorrow.

Unfortunately for them, and indeed for the rest of us, unless the thrust of economic policy changes, there *is* an unhappy tomorrow, as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have reminded us. Under current fiscal rules, the prospect is of more savage cuts in spending on essential services, or serious increases in taxes. (On a lighter note, I can't resist reporting that the racehorse Fiscal Rules has not been doing too well in Ireland recently.)

Yet this is a time when you have only to look out of the window to see that the nation's infrastructure is in pretty poor shape, and that the grim signs of poverty are not far away. I need hardly mention the funds needed to reduce the pressure on the NHS and make our rivers and water supply safe from the neglect perpetrated by the privatised water companies. As Lord Kinnock ruefully observed in a recent press interview, the British "invented clean water" in the 19th century.

Kinnock thinks Labour will win, but warns against complacency. After all, for much of the approach to the 1992 election, Labour under his leadership were ahead in the polls – with odds of 6-1 *on,* on the day before the election – yet they lost.

The Conservatives, and their captive press, made much of "Labour's tax bombshell" in that campaign. In fact, the increases promised by the shadow chancellor, John Smith, were an honest attempt to demonstrate fiscal responsibility by demonstrating that some worthy increases in public spending would be paid for.

That Tory success with the "tax bombshell" has scarred Labour's approach to elections ever since.

The general economic picture now ought to be a gift to Labour. They can campaign about 14 wasted Tory years – five years of austerity under the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition of 2010-15 and nine under the foolhardy Brexit referendum and its consequences.

The fact is that Starmer was right about Brexit and Boris Johnson and his partners in this historic political disaster were wrong. Now, in his mistaken desire to appease those Labour voters who were misled by pro-Brexit propaganda – thereby disappointing, even alienating, his natural supporters – Starmer has ruled out returning to the customs union and the single market; but he believes the answer to a prospective Labour government's problems lies in "growth". We have reached the *reductio ad absurdum* where, when asked on the BBC "would membership of the single market boost economic growth?", Starmer replied "no". As even the Conservative peer and *Times* columnist Daniel Finkelstein commented, "[it] isn't true and he doesn't believe it either".

My old friend Lord Heseltine has warned that this is going to be a most dishonest election campaign, with both major parties "trying to avoid the key issue underlying our economic malaise – Brexit".

Starmer has a big opportunity here. He will know that decisions made right at the beginning of a new parliament matter hugely. Harold Wilson is one of his heroes. Wilson's mistake was to rule out a necessary devaluation of the pound when he was elected in 1964. This error blighted his premiership, leading to forced deflationary measures and the ultimate humiliation of a market-induced devaluation in 1967.

If Starmer wins, he would have the opportunity to announce the beginning of an approach to a return to the customs union and single market, which, along with a more sensible long-term approach to fiscal rules, would give him a fair chance of boosting the now-deflated animal spirits of entrepreneurs.

I have spoken to operators in the financial markets who believe such a step would indeed be good for confidence and, yes, growth.

A more long-term approach to the fiscal problem would be essential for Labour to achieve a growth-oriented investment programme. The idea would be to build up much-needed public sector investment, which would also encourage private sector investment. As for the current restrictive fiscal rules, no less an authority than the former top Treasury official, Lord Macpherson, revealed in the *Financial Times* last Friday: "I always advised chancellors not to become mesmerised by such rules. They come and go."

Handpicked reads



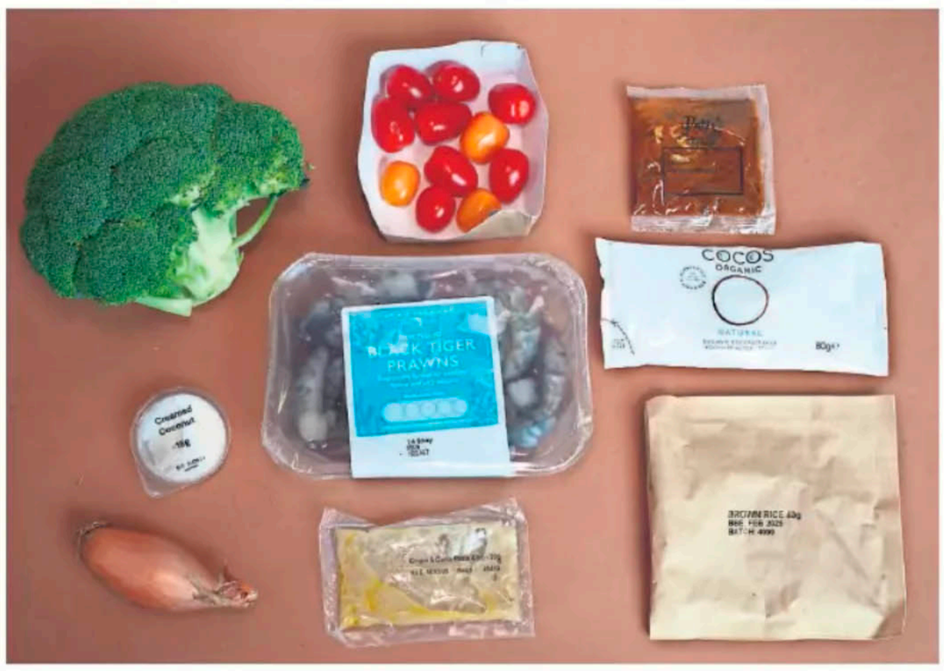
Better than half price £4.49

Whose words are they anyway?

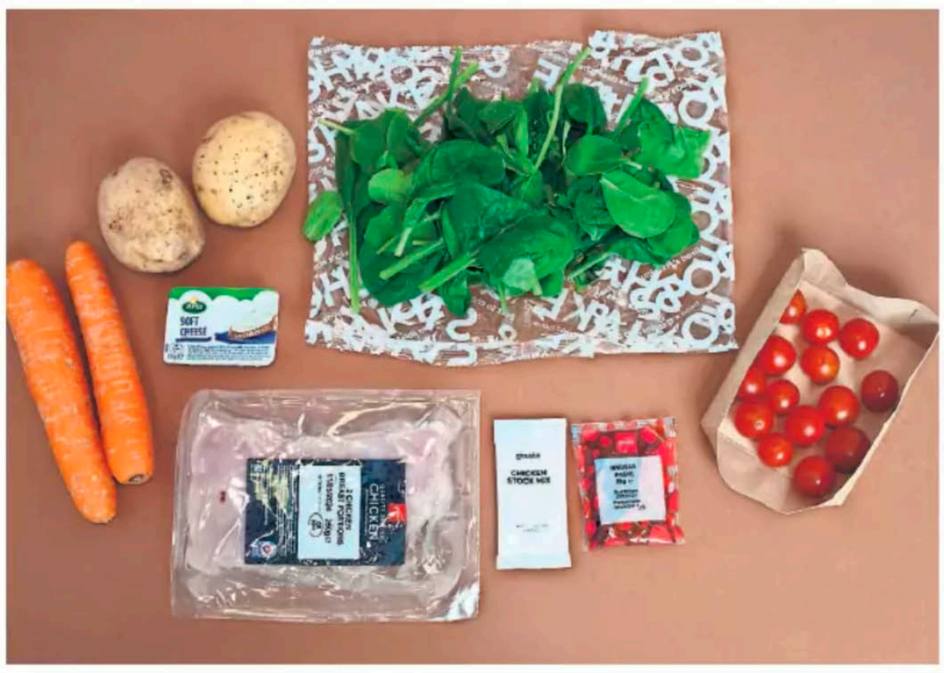
Athena Liu is a literary genius, while June Hayward is a literal nobody. But when Athena dies in a freak accident her newly-finished masterpiece falls into June's hands. Can June claim the work as her own? And how will she protect her secret? Available to Guardian readers for better than half price at £4.49 (RRP £9.99). Redeem at WHSmith using the voucher included in next Saturday's Guardian.

Only with the Guardian on Saturday 1 June

WHSmith EST · 1792 | The Guardian









Clockwise from top left, meal ingredients for Hello Fresh and Green Chef, a meal box by Mindful Chef, and a meal kit for Gousto. Sophia Evans/ Observer, Mindful Chef

Revealed: how 'convenient' recipe boxes really measure up on price

Our survey shows that buying ingredients separately for the meal kits offered by the leading suppliers can save up to 74%, as *Shane Hickey* reports

Consumers who subscribe to "recipe box" delivery services can save up to 74% of the cost of the meals by buying the ingredients separately in the supermarket, research by the *Observer* has found.

Analysis of the contents and prices of some of the most popular meal kits shows that buying the individual ingredients is far cheaper – even if you have to get whole bottles of sauce or packets of rice.

The kits, which include measured ingredients to make a dish and delivered to consumers' doors, boomed in popularity during the pandemic. Sold as a convenient way to have fresh meals, they typically contain meat, fish and vegetables and small sachets of sauce and spices, as well as recipe cards.

Our analysis was of four of the most popular kits – from Hello Fresh, Gousto, Green Chef and Mindful Chef.

We compared the cost with prices at Tesco, the country's most popular supermarket. And we looked at two things: the cost of the same quantity of ingredients – so that, if a recipe demanded 15ml of soy sauce, we portioned that out – and the upfront full cost for someone who had none of the ingredients already.

All the boxes we examined were composed of two meals for two. Consumers can add several meals, often with decreasing costs per portion.

Green Chef

Green Chef, which says its recipes are developed by nutritionists, takes orders for two or four people, for between two and five meals a week.

It describes itself as the "recipe box for healthy eating". Delivery fees vary depending on where you live, but the cost for a box for two delivered in London came in at £7.98.

We ordered pork chilli con carne and pork steak in mustard sauce for two for £33 – that's £8.25 a portion, and weighed the contents.

For the chilli, the same ingredients by weight cost just £2.13 a portion, according to our analysis – almost 75% cheaper. Even if you bought the full supermarket packages of each item – such as 220g of cheddar, even though just 60g is needed – the total cost would be £4.79. And this would leave you with more pork, passata, broccoli, spices and sour cream to use in the future.

A kit for pork steak in mustard sauce costs £8.25 a portion but came in at £3.13 after being broken down. Buying all of the ingredients costs £6.17, still a 25% saving.

Hello Fresh

Green Chef's sister brand, Hello Fresh – which distributes its boxes from the same centre – takes orders for between two and four people, for two to five meals per week.

Delivery was quoted as £4.99. Orders to Northern Ireland, the Scottish Highlands, Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man may be charged an additional fee.

Its peri-peri chicken breast traybake costs £6.75 a portion. The same ingredients by weight would be just £2.11 in Tesco.

The company also has a sticky honey beef rice bowl at £6.75 a portion. The ingredients by weight come to £2.11 in Tesco – almost 70% less. By buying in bulk, there is still a saving, but just 8p.

Gousto

Gousto takes orders for between one and five people for two to five meals. Delivery is £3.99.

It has a chicken with tomato sauce and harissa mash meal at £6.50. In Tesco, the ingredients come to £1.98 by weight – a 70% saving. And buying everything in bulk comes in at £5.71 – still a 12% saving.

The company's crispy lemon chicken with chilli rice costs £6.50 but the parts cost £2.07. And in bulk they are £6 (an 8% saving) and you will be left with enough rice, soy sauce and sesame seeds for many more dishes.

Mindful Chef

Mindful Chef, which is majority owned by Nestlé, sells kits for one, two or four people, for between two and five recipes. Delivery is £4.99.

A prawn korma is £8.87 but buying the same in Tesco – with 165g of prawns instead of the 180g in the kit box – comes in at £2.98. Full bottles and packets of all the ingredients come to £7.83, almost 12% less.

Its chicken karaage and fried rice also costs £8.87. If you could just buy what you needed at the supermarket, you would spend £4.11.

In our survey, this is the only dish where it does not make financial sense to buy the ingredients in full.

The bill comes to £11.78, but that is down to pricey jars such as white miso, garlic paste and chilli paste, which can be stored in the fridge.

All of the companies offer savings for first orders, such as free delivery or discounts. The prices we examined were for the full cost of food, excluding delivery.

Apart from the savings, consumers also have the advantage of being able to see the quality of ingredients when buying it in person (or, indeed, buying them in an online shop).

Ingredients sent to the *Observer* included a damaged chilli from Gousto and a very withered pak choi from Hello Fresh. Some ginger puree, meant for the sticky honey rice bowl, did not arrive in the Hello Fresh box.

Hello Fresh and Green Chef say prices decrease with the number of meals ordered. Five recipes for four come in at £3.15 a portion with Hello Fresh. Four meals for four people with Green Chef work out at £5.50 a portion, it says, claiming price rises have been behind inflation.

"Our customers don't only pay for the ingredients we ship. Our services provide a lot of added value besides just the physical product, and are, as such, not comparable with brick-and-mortar grocery stores.

"Our customers save time across the meal preparation process, from meal planning through to grocery shopping for all the right ingredients," it says.

Mindful Chef says there is "sometimes" a price difference compared to the supermarket, and that it operates on a zero-waste model. "Customers come to Mindful Chef to help them make healthy eating easier, with recipes designed by our chefs to particular specifications, and the pre-portioned ingredients delivered straight to their door, saving time travelling to and from the supermarket," it says.

While some "very savvy cooks" could maximise using all ingredients bought by the kilo or bottle, it says this is "unusual" for the average UK household.

Gousto also argues that measured, delivered, ingredients lead to greater convenience and less waste. "If customers were buying the whole ingredients for these recipes at the supermarkets, they would be spending lots of money to buy fresh herbs, full jars of spices, sauces etc that may not be used again for a long while, which leads to added waste," it says.

Hello Fresh customers are given compensation when ingredients are not up to standard or absent. Gousto says it gives credit when ingredients are damaged.

Your problems

Anna Tims
Consumer champion of the year



Sorry Saga of four-month delay to repair our car

My parents' car was hit by an uninsured driver. They were taken to hospital but suffered no serious injuries. The repair was being organised by their insurer, Saga, but four months later they are still waiting for the return of their damaged vehicle.

This is causing significant hardship since my mother is disabled and the car, a Volkswagen T-Roc, was recently purchased to accommodate her specialist wheelchair.

Saga initially insisted they were only entitled to a compact courtesy car because it had erroneously recorded that my father was at fault for the accident. I complained to Saga's head office but received no reply. Four days after the collision, Saga told my father that its chosen garage had refused the repair job, and that he should find another garage.

My sister rang the garage in question, which claimed it had not turned down the job, and that it was waiting for the car to be brought in.

It was another week before Saga had the car delivered for repair. It was decided that replacement airbags and seatbelts were required.

Saga eventually accepted that the courtesy car was too small for my mum's needs, and said the only other option was a 4x4 off-road vehicle which my elderly father was too nervous to drive.

It offered him £200 for the "inconvenience" he'd suffered. Since then, the return of the car has been repeatedly delayed with no communication from Saga.

We contacted the garage, which told us there were long back orders for replacement seatbelts from Volkswagen, and no known delivery date. Volkswagen UK told him it could only speak to approved dealers.

Saga advised that it could do nothing to help, and that in some instances repairs were taking so long that it was writing the car off.
AE, Exeter

A global shortage of spare parts is keeping drivers off the road for months with no end in sight. It's also driving up insurance premiums, as insurers are having to fund courtesy cars for longer and, as you were told, in some cases deem it cheaper to write the vehicle off.

Manufacturers blame the pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but the fact that they have summoned parts at will when I've questioned the delays in other cases, suggests they are prioritising stock for new vehicles, rather than repairs.

In any event, they are too big and self-important to trouble over stranded customers, or even to keep their own dealers in the loop.

It took several overtures on my part to Volkswagen before seatbelts were finally unearthed, and the car returned. By then, five months had passed since the accident and you are certain your parents would still be waiting if media pressure had not been applied.

Saga tells me that it had offered your father a larger car during the wait but he, nervous of getting acquainted with a new vehicle when a repair seemed imminent, declined.

Volkswagen has not provided a comment.

Does Checkatrade vetting check out?

Cowboy builders are a proliferating scourge which can drain a householder's savings. In response, online platforms have sprung up which list "vetted" traders in response to a postcode search. But how reliable are they?

In March, I reported how ***AF*** of Brighton was left with part of her roof missing after hiring a trader to repair a leak. To ensure that she was not scammed a second time, she sought a roofer to repair the damage on Checkatrade, which promises "guaranteed" traders, "rigorous checks" and "recommendations you can rely on".

She only discovered that the trader recommended by Checkatrade had wrought even more havoc on her roof after she had paid him £12,900.

Checkatrade told her she would be eligible for a £1,000 payment under its 12-month guarantee, subject to a survey, but refused to compensate her for the damage.

I intervened, whereupon Checkatrade told AF that, following the survey (and with the prospect of publicity), it had persuaded the roofer to stump up £6,000.

It insisted that the surveyor had concluded that the roof did not need replacing. Only after she had reluctantly accepted the £6,000, was she sent a copy of the survey that stated the roof did, indeed, need replacing.

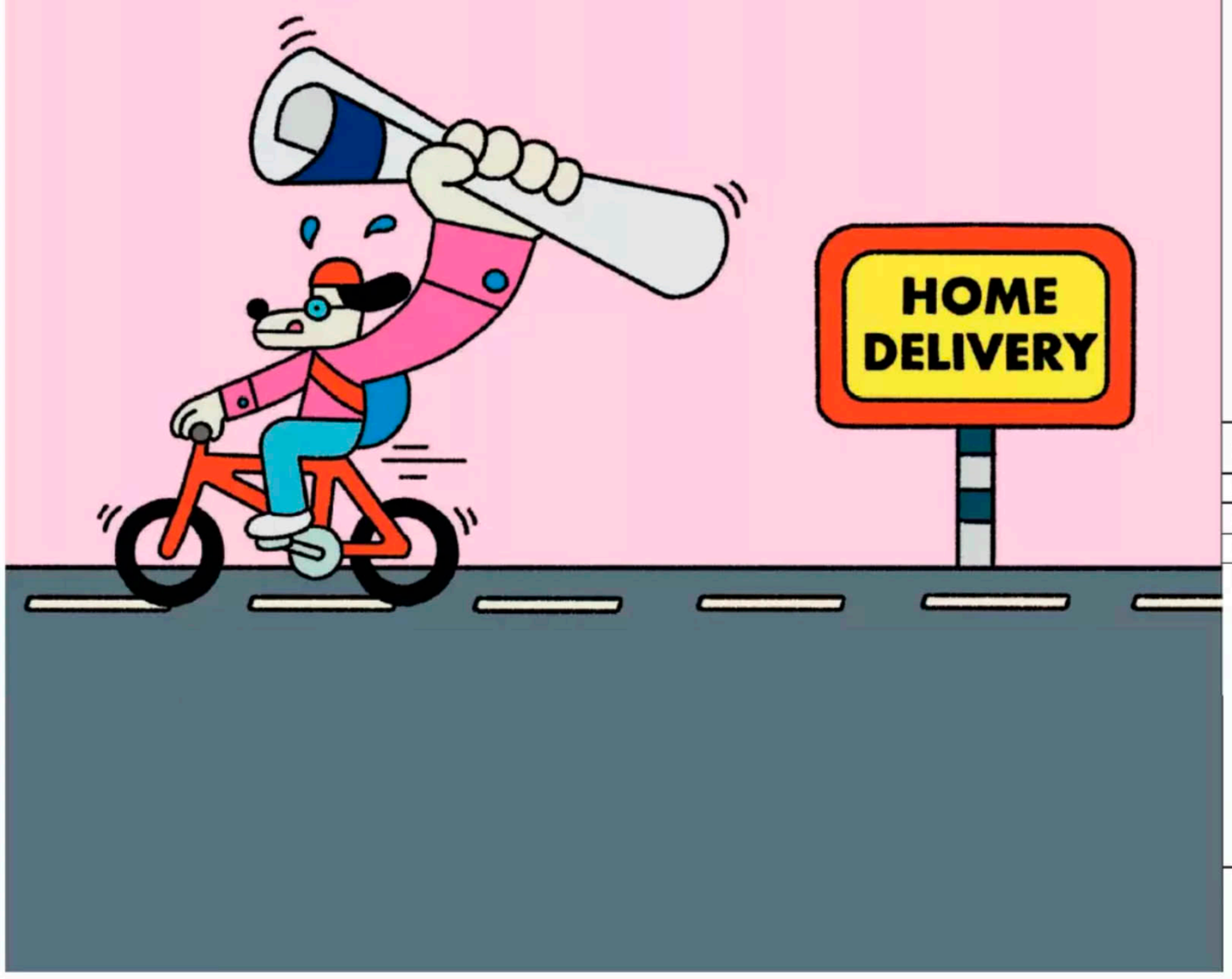
Checkatrade tells me helplessly that the trader was refusing to pay any more but that it would "continue to support" her. Now, after further media pressure, it's had a change of heart and paid £5,600 in goodwill.

"I doubt I would have had this outcome without your ongoing interest," she says.

Checkatrade did not respond to a request for a comment.

Email your.problems@observer.co.uk. Include an address and phone number. Submission and publication are subject to our terms and conditions

News travels fast, now further too



Up to 15% off

From Brighton to Edinburgh, the Guardian and Observer are going the extra mile(s) to deliver to more UK doorsteps. Every morning, feet up, kettle on and the world's news in your hands. Subscribe to a home delivery newspaper package today and get up to 15% off the cover price.

Subscribe today by scanning the QR code or visit theguardian.com/paper-subs

Package	Newsstand price per month	Subscription rate (incl delivery)	Saving
Every day	~~£99.67~~	£83.99	15% off
Six day	~~£82.33~~	£73.99	10% off
Weekend	~~£34.67~~	£33.99	1% off

Prices above are monthly. Savings calculated are savings made per month against the retail price. Delivery is included in the above pricing.

The Guardian | The Observer

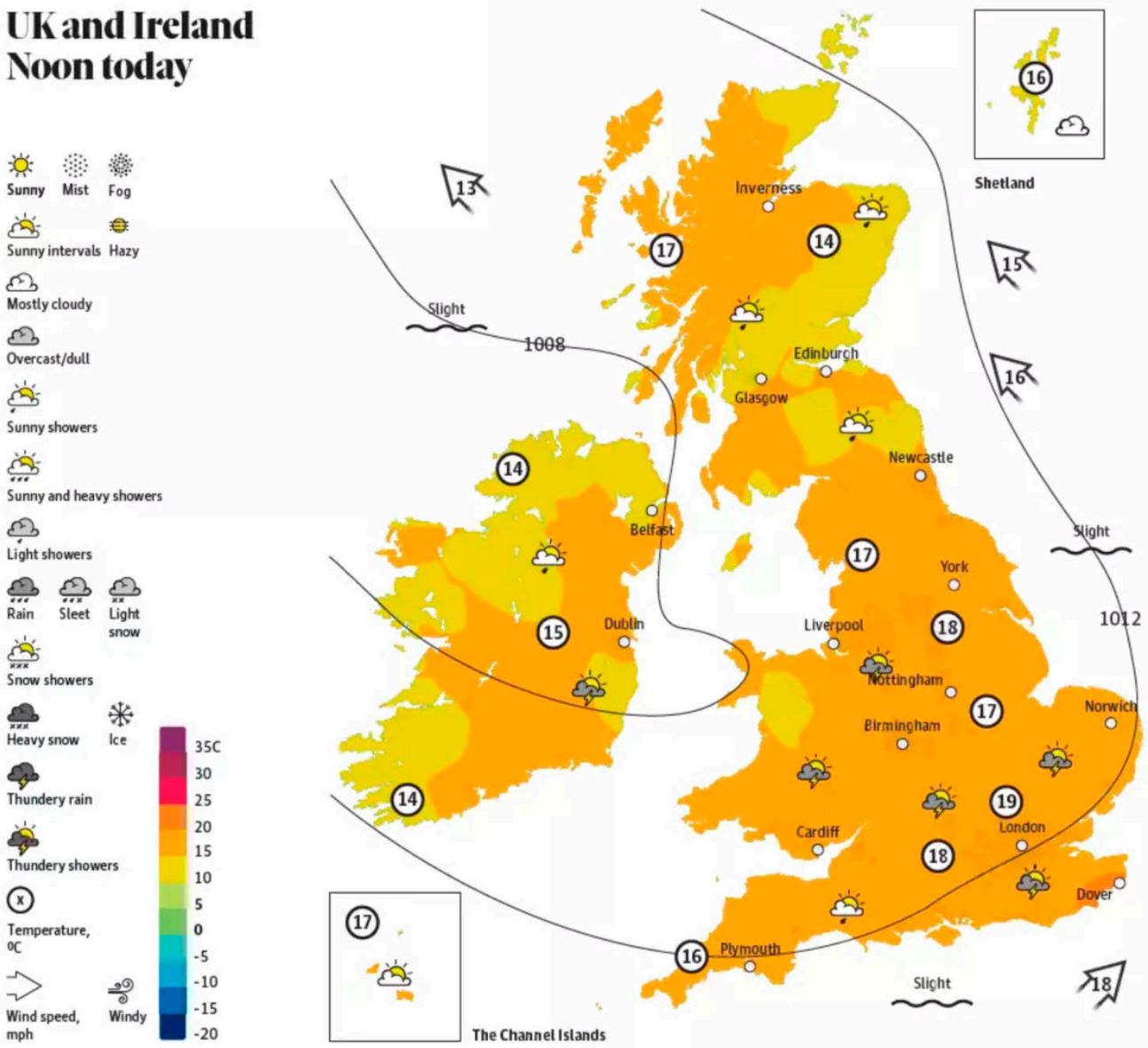
T&Cs: Open to UK mainland and NI residents aged 18+. The savings calculation is based upon the saving made per month against the retail price of all products included in the subscription package. The Guardian and Observer reserve the right to end this offer at any time. Details correct at the time of printing. For full subscription terms and conditions visit theguardian.com/subscription/terms.

Weather

Your forecast for the week ahead

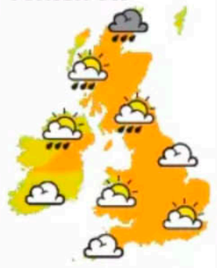
AccuWeather.com Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather, Inc © 2024

UK and Ireland Noon today



Two-day forecast

Low 10 High 15
Tomorrow

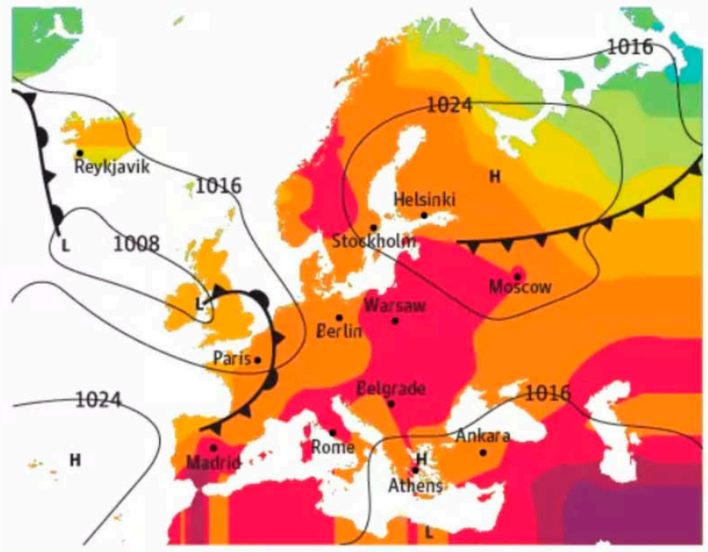


Low 8 High 17
Tuesday



Showers, some thundery, will fall across the UK on Monday. A storm moves across the UK on Tuesday with showers.

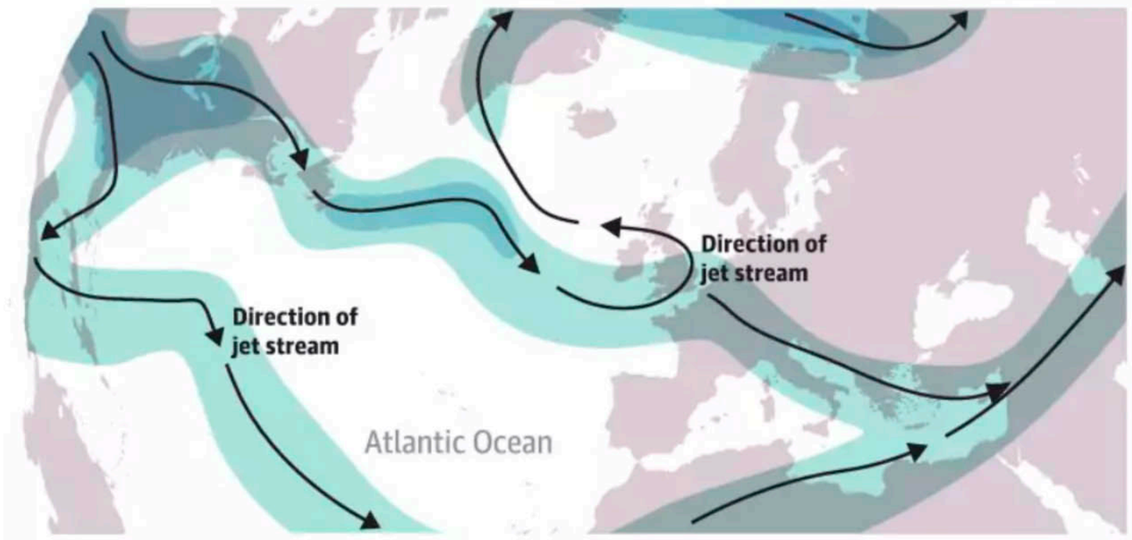
Europe today



An area of low pressure in the Irish Sea will bring showers to the UK on Sunday. Some of these showers will be thundery across Wales and the Midlands. Scattered to widespread showers will be across France and Germany into Poland and southern Norway. Some of these showers could be thundery and produce damaging wind gusts. Thunderstorms will be on the move across the western Balkans, especially across the Dinaric Alps. It will be mainly dry elsewhere.

Jet stream

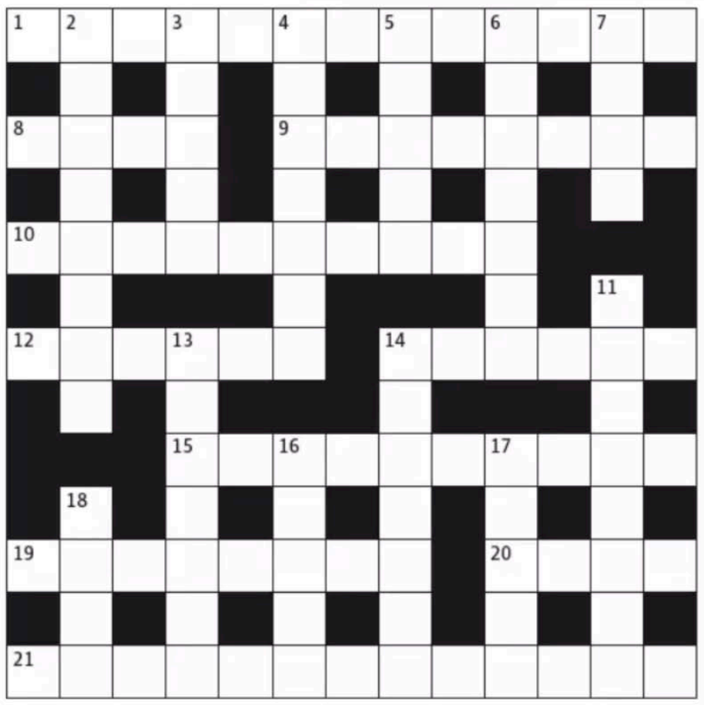
With the dip in the jet stream over the UK, widespread showers are expected.



Around the world

Algiers	30	Corfu	25	Lagos	32	Perth	23
Ams'dam	20	Dakar	30	Lima	20	Prague	22
Athens	25	Dhaka	31	Lisbon	23	Reykjavik	14
Auckland	16	Dublin	15	Madrid	30	Rio de J	22
B Aires	12	Florence	26	Malaga	26	Rome	25
Bangkok	33	Gibraltar	24	Melb'rne	17	Singapore	31
Barcelona	23	H Kong	31	Mexico C	32	Stockh'm	23
Basra	43	Harare	24	Miami	33	Sydney	20
Beijing	28	Helsinki	23	Milan	25	Tel Aviv	28
Berlin	23	Istanbul	22	Mombasa	30	Tenerife	25
Bermuda	26	Jo'burg	22	Moscow	24	Tokyo	23
Brussels	20	K Lumpur	32	Mumbai	33	Toronto	22
Budapest	25	K'mandu	33	N Orleans	32	Vancouv'r	13
C'hagen	20	Kabul	28	Nairobi	25	Warsaw	28
Cairo	36	Kingston	33	New Delhi	45	Wash'ton	30
Cape Town	20	Kolkata	28	New York	27	Well'ton	11
Chicago	23	L Angeles	22	Paris	21	Zurich	23

Speedy crossword No. 1,494



Across

1 Front bench of the Opposition (6,7)
8 Swear, assert (4)
9 Athletics contests (8)
10 Cured Italian ham (10)
12 Conclusion (6)
14 Summary (6)
15 Detention, imprisonment (10)
19 Infrequent, casual (employment) (4–4)
20 Diplomacy (4)
21 Metal guard on the hand in fighting (7,6)

Down

2 Hanging in the air (8)
3 Indoor (pub) sport (5)
4 American state (7)
5 Till now (2,3)
6 Collapse inwards (7)
7 Engrave with acid (4)
11 Housing for a ship's compass (8)
13 Very stupid (7)
14 Presage, foreshadow (7)
16 Heavy suiting fabric (5)
17 Science of numbers (5)
18 Farm building (4)

Solution No. 1,493

J	I	N	X	■	V	E	R	A	N	D	A	H	
E	■	I	■	■	■	G	■	C	■	R	■	E	
R	I	G	A	■	W	R	E	C	K	A	G	E	
O	■	H	■	M	■	E	■	O	■	B	■	D	
B	O	T	H	E	R	S	O	M	E	■	■	■	
O	■	C	■	T	■	S	■	P	■	F	■	C	
A	P	A	T	H	Y	■	G	L	O	R	I	A	
M	■	P	■	U	■	T	■	I	■	E	■	R	
■	■	■	O	S	T	R	A	C	I	S	E	D	
V	■	A	■	E	■	A	■	E	■	H	■	I	
A	C	C	O	L	A	D	E	■	■	S	M	U	G
M	■	R	■	A	■	E	■	■	■	A	■	A	
P	L	E	T	H	O	R	A	■	A	N	O	N	

NOTES

☎ **Stuck?** For help call **0906 200 83 83**. Calls cost £1.10 a minute, plus your telephone company's access charge. Service supplied by ATS. Call 0330 333 6946 for customer service (charged at standard rate).

Extra special Leinster's final jinx strikes again as 14-man Toulouse lift Champions Cup Page 12

Jofra joy Archer snares two wickets on T20 return to help England beat Pakistan by 23 runs Page 18

The Observer
Sport
26.05.24



Erik ten Hag embraces his match winners Kobbie Mainoo and Alejandro Garnacho

EDDIE KEOGH/ THE FA/GETTY IMAGES

Erik's final glory

Defiant Ten Hag shrugs off headlines about his Manchester United future as Garnacho and Mainoo conjure shock 2-1 FA Cup triumph over rivals City

Pages 2-6

Football
Emirates FA Cup final



Alejandro Garnacho takes advantage of a mix-up on the edge of the City penalty area to pounce on a loose ball and score into an empty net

TOM JENKINS/ THE OBSERVER

United's teenage kicks crash Guardiola's double Double party



Pep Guardiola contemplates bitter defeat after his league champions flopped on the big occasion

TOM JENKINS/ THE OBSERVER

David Hytner
Wembley



Manager may be on his way out but all talk of his impending sacking is cast aside as first-half goals from Garnacho and Mainoo end a poor season on a high and a place in Europe

1	2
MAN CITY	MAN UTD
Doku 87	*Garnacho 30, Mainoo 39*

75%	Possession	25%
4	Shots on Target	5
19	Total Attempts	11

It was, quite simply, the finest Manchester United result since the retirement of Sir Alex Ferguson in 2013. The bar has been lowered, the trophies drying up but this was a day for their fans to celebrate wildly – and not only because they stopped Manchester City from making yet more history.

Another Premier League and FA Cup Double had been on for Pep Guardiola and his all-conquering team to follow the one from last season and nobody gave United a prayer. The bookmakers had them at 8-1 to win. Erik ten Hag's time as manager is up after the most traumatic of seasons; eighth in the league their lowest finish since 1989-90, chaos at virtually every turn. And yet United refused to yield.

It was the young stars, Alejandro Garnacho and Kobbie Mainoo, who scored their goals during a golden first half. But this was a triumph of the collective resolve, exemplified by the central defenders, Raphaël Varane and Lisandro Martínez. And the captain, Bruno Fernandes, whose sumptuous pass for Mainoo's goal will live long in the memory. It was the first time since 1 February Ten Hag was able to start Varane and Martínez together; what a difference they made.

City laboured uncharacteristically in the first half but it was a different story after the interval when they were dominant, creating plenty only to lack the killer touch. It looked as though United had plotted a course through the storm. And yet their addiction to drama saw André Onana throw City a lifeline, the goalkeeper caught out at his near post on a low long-ranger from the substitute Jérémy Doku.

It was a horrible moment for Onana and it was nerve-shredding for everyone connected to United as the board showed seven additional minutes. But United did not let it slip and when the final whistle blew it was possible in those moments of delirium to forget – however temporarily – much of what had gone before. This stood in glorious isolation, the end of a wild cup run that had been ignited by the epic quarter-final win over Liverpool.

Minor miracles

2 *This was the first FA Cup final when two teenagers scored. Kobbie Mainoo is the first English teenager to score in an FA Cup final since Steve MacKenzie for Manchester City against Tottenham in 1981. Alejandro Garnacho is the first Argentinian to score since Ricky Villa for Spurs in the same game.*



Kobbie Mainoo doubles United's lead, connecting with Bruno Fernandes's pass to tuck the ball into the corner

BEN HOSKINS/ THE FA/GETTY IMAGES

There would also be the bonus of Europa League qualification.

City did not do enough, not a sentence that has been written too often in recent times. They hogged 75% of possession but they could not pull United apart with the regularity they wanted. When they had their chances in the second period, they were profligate.

City had scored inside 13 seconds through Ilkay Gündogan in this showpiece against United last season – step two of their march towards the Treble – but yesterday they sought to draw their rivals' sting with patient possession.

United's concentration, though, was on point and their supporters were in dreamland by the interval; two goals to the good and with Onana having not been threatened.

Fernandes's assist was the highlight. He had seen the picture as Garnacho drove in from the right and when the ball came to him, he diverted it with the deftest of touches for Mainoo, who had run off Kyle Walker. Mainoo was progressive and courageous in possession throughout. He finished with breathtaking assurance.

United brought the hustle, at times, in the first half as City tried to play out from the back and the breakthrough goal had been all about the persistence of Garnacho, who harried Josko Gvardiol as they chased a high Diogo Dalot punt forward.

Cue a disastrous mix-up between the City defender and Stefan Ortega. After the ball had bounced, Gvardiol went to head back to Ortega except the goalkeeper was not there; he was out of position. Garnacho reacted the quickest to run on to the loose ball and tap into the empty net.

City's reset at half-time was comprehensive, Guardiola's big move being Doku for Mateo Kovacic with Phil Foden moving into central midfield on a permanent basis.

Previously, he had roamed from a starting position on the left. Ten Hag's big tactical move at the outset had been to continue without a pure No 9, Rasmus Højlund among the substitutes. It was Fernandes as the false nine; Scott McTominay in support.



Bruno Fernandes lifts the FA Cup flanked by jubilant teammates

TOM JENKINS/ THE OBSERVER

City pushed and it was clear United would live or die by their defensive work. Doku crossed low for Foden but City's main man could not sort out his feet. From another Doku cross, Erling Haaland spun and rattled the crossbar. Walker also detonated a long-range blast Onana did well to turn around the post.

Foden was at the heart of everything, his status further enhanced when Guardiola hooked the out-of-sorts Kevin De Bruyne and introduced Julián Álvarez. United wanted to chalk off blocks of time. And City misses. Álvarez provided two more of those, lifting one chance high and dragging another wide of the far post after a Foden pass. He had to do better.

United struggled to get out of their half in the second period but it was only about keeping City out, the mission complicated when Martínez succumbed to cramp. On came Jonny Evans. What did City have left? The Doku goal that hinted at redemption. And nothing more.

ON OTHER PAGES

Barcelona has given Manchester more than just Pep
Main section, page 40

Man City	Man Utd
4-2-3-1	4-2-3-1
Ortega; Walker, Stones, Aké (Akanji ht), Gvardiol; Rodri, Kovacic (Doku ht); Silva, De Bruyne (Álvarez 56), Foden; Haaland	Onana; Wan-Bissaka, Varane, Martínez (Evans 73), Dalot; Amrabat, Mainoo; Garnacho (Lindelöf 90), McTominay (Mount 90), Rashford (Højlund 74); Fernandes
Subs not used Carson, Dias, Grealish, Nunes, Bobb, Lewis	**Subs not used** Bayindir, Eriksen, Amad, Kambwala, Antony

Referee Andrew Madley **Attendance** 84,814

'If they don't want me any more I will go – to win trophies'

Manager revels in latest success and says: 'When I took over club was a mess'

Jacob Steinberg
Wembley

Erik ten Hag says he will join another club and keep winning trophies if Manchester United press ahead with plans to sack him after their shock 2-1 triumph over Manchester City in the FA Cup final.

Along with delivering what may be viewed as a final parting shot before he learns of his fate, Ten Hag was unable to offer any clarity on what the future holds for him. Sir Jim Ratcliffe, the minority owner who controls United's football policy, had earlier refused to say whether the victory over City would be enough for the Dutchman to stay.

United have already identified candidates to replace Ten Hag, who won the Carabao Cup final last season, and are ready to make a change after finishing eighth in the Premier League, despite the FA Cup triumph delivering European football next season.

"I don't think about this," Ten Hag said. "I am in a project. We are exactly where we want to be. We are constructing a team. When I took over it was a mess. The team is developing and winning. It is about winning trophies. The team plays to an identity. You need a strong squad.

"You need players available and there is a lot of work to do. The team is progressing and we are winning trophies. Two trophies in two years is not bad. I am not satisfied. If they don't want me any more I will go [somewhere else] to win trophies because that is what I do in my whole career."

United, who implemented Ten Hag's tactics to perfection and won thanks to first-half goals from the teenagers Alejandro Garnacho and Kobbie Mainoo, secured Europa League qualification after ending City's hopes of completing a double Double.

'We were not in the right position. It was my mistake. The gameplan was not good'
Pep Guardiola

Yet the conversation was dominated by Ten Hag's position. Before the final he had said to Dutch media that the club told him they want him to stay. But the 54-year-old was evasive when pressed on whether that message was relayed to him during a review with the United hierarchy last week.

"How many times do I have to tell you this?" Ten Hag said. "Do I have to repeat myself 10 times? Twenty times? They don't have to tell me every week. I was in some clubs where every day they tell you: 'You are the best.' If they tell me they don't want me any more then I will hear it."

Notably, Ratcliffe did not single Ten Hag out for praise. "It is a glorious feeling to win the FA Cup final at Wembley," the Ineos magnate said. "Manchester United clearly were not the favourites to win today but they played with total commitment and skill and overcame one of the great teams in football. We are all very proud of the players and the staff who work tirelessly to support them."

Ten Hag, who has repeatedly claimed his team's poor form is down to injuries, was asked if United need stability. "I don't have to think about this," he said. "When you see the last decade, there were not so many finals for this club, not so many trophies, not so many young talents coming through. We strengthened the squad by our coaching. We also need transfer windows to bring players in and players who are always available."

United are monitoring Thomas Tuchel, Mauricio Pochettino, Graham Potter, Kieran McKenna, Thomas Frank and Gareth Southgate. Ten Hag was asked if it was disrespectful that the club have been speaking to candidates. "I don't know if they did this," he said. "I can't answer this question."

Responding to Ten Hag's claim that "we are exactly where we want to be", it was suggested that the injury crisis did not excuse United finishing eighth and ending with a negative goal difference. "When you make it like this you don't have any knowledge about managing a football team," Ten Hag replied. "If that is the opinion I will go anywhere else. I will stay winning trophies."

Pep Guardiola admitted his tactics were wrong after City, who looked jaded after winning the league title last Sunday, failed to defend their trophy. They improved when Jérémy Doku came on at half-time but the winger's goal came too late. "We were not in the right position," Guardiola said. "It was my mistake. The gameplan was not good."

Football
Emirates FA Cup final

Will Haaland's big-stage fright prompt Pep to ring the changes?

Barney Ronay
Wembley



It's strange but after a host of medals and cups, the big striker falls short in finals

Before kick-off at a lovely soft sunlit Wembley Stadium, Manchester City's fans turned their backs and engaged in a mass Cup final Poznan. At the final whistle there was a strange, optical echo of that moment. Here we had an anti-Poznan, the Poznan of departures, as the backs of the blue shirts were once again turned, this time heading towards the stairs and out along the gloomy grey Wembley concourses.

Fans never stick around at the end of a losing final. Many did so here just long enough to applaud the City players after what is still a champion season. And this always was a weird, through-the-looking-glass FA Cup final. It ended with the leaky-roof billion-dollar underdogs beating the remarkably efficient government outreach project, which is some way short of culture clubs and crazy gangs but we work with what we have.

En route it gave us Erik ten Hag's last stand, or perhaps not last stand. There he was dancing happily at the end in dark suit, no socks and trainers, an outfit that said: "I've just had PE and it's final period, somebody give me a chicken box."

It gave us Steve McClaren's Wembley redemption, out there in the full June sun turning a little puce, un-wallied. It gave us familiar United noise and heat in the days before the game, the manager shemozzle overshadowing City's own shot at an unprecedented double Double.

But then this has been United's sole achievement in the Sky Blue glory years, to somehow become a bigger, more endlessly recycled story than all that success. Behold instead the greatest deeply weird self-immolating show on earth.

In the end defeat for City almost feels like a bigger City story. Where does a Cup final loss, fed by a slow-burn, hungover performance, leave these serial champions? What is the lesson from Manchester City: anatomy of an entirely unexpected minor chord? City's players looked genuinely devastated at the end.

Pep Guardiola stood away to one side for a long time, lost in thought. He will feel very keenly that was a chance missed to do something remarkable, albeit less remarkable than basic numbers would suggest.

It would be incredible to win a double Double in 1974. In 2024 it's entirely credible, even logical that it should happen such is the power at the top end. More importantly Guardiola will be aware that this was also that rarest of things, a bad game for him, and a game that adds a note of slight unease to the trajectory of this team. Have they improved? Are they as good as they should be?

Guardiola picked an odd XI here. John Stones was back out of the blue, and duly looked rusty. Pep played Mateo Kovacic in midfield, took him off, saw Jérémy Doku improve his team instantly. It was a limp City performance but also a very prosaic City team, the meat-and-potatoes version. Guardiola has entered his own under-thinking period of late, going for power and reliable defenders. Was this an under thinking too far? Kevin De Bruyne had a dreadful game. There is clearly an issue here. How will it resolve itself?

It would be incredible to win a double Double in 1974. In 2024 it's credible, even logical



Erling Haaland was man-marked out of the closing stages of the game by Jonny Evans

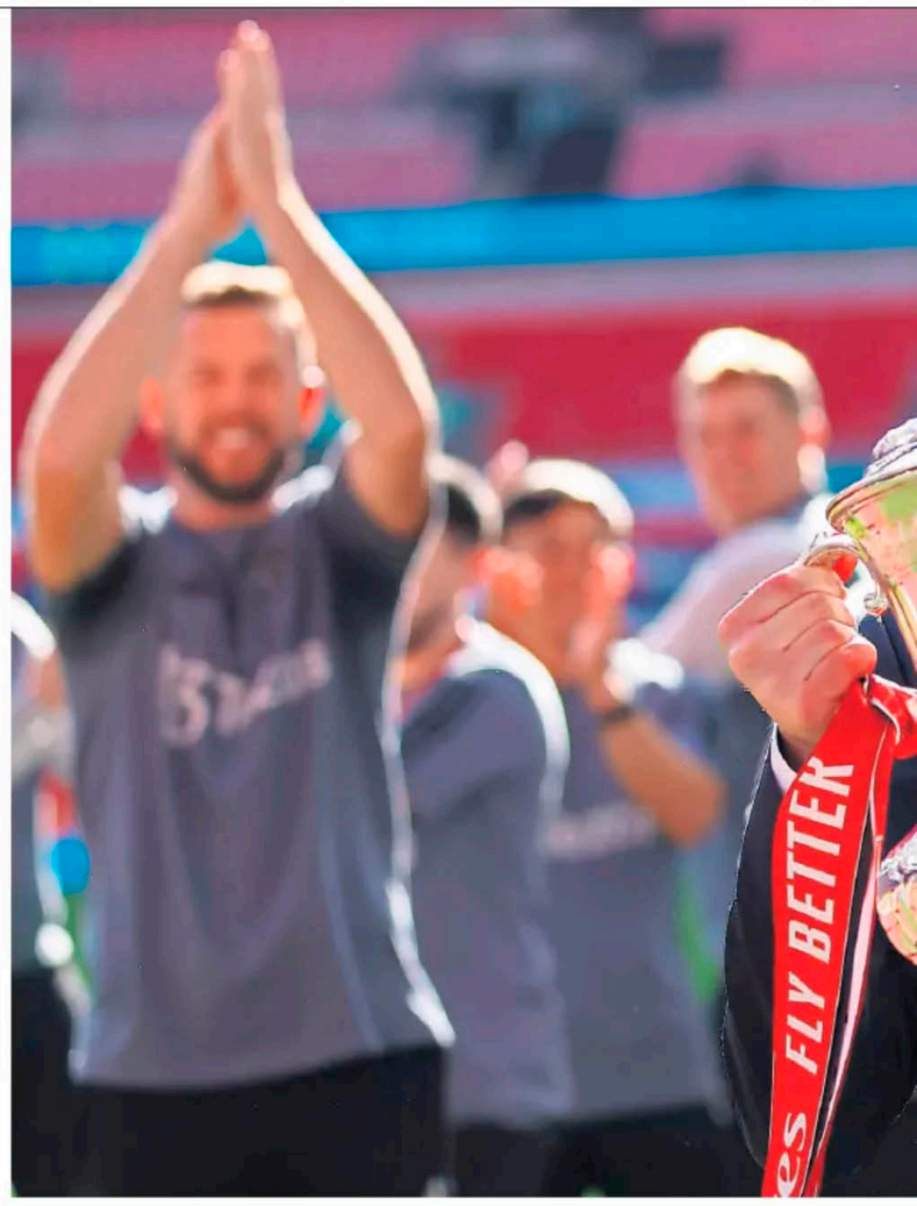
ALEX PANTLING/GETTY IMAGES

After a hungover first half, and already 2-0 down at the break, City improved with three substitutes on the pitch. Doku pulled a late goal back. They could easily have snatched an equaliser. But Guardiola will feel this. Here is a manager who was once all about process, beauty, light, a way of doing things, at least in public. He has now become a numbers guy. It was odd to hear him boasting after the title win about how nobody has done this before. If you set yourself up like that, then lose a final 2-1 to the eighth-best team in the country, on the verge of sacking their manager, well, it looks like a low.

Motivating this group has been part of Guardiola's brilliance. The urge to keep going forward, never stop, keep winning. This is his mantra. It helps, of course when you have better players. But there is a vague sense City have begun to enjoy that persona a little. Rodri has talked a lot about his own champion mentality in recent weeks. In the final analysis the most powerful footballing entity of the age lost to a team with Sofyan Amrabat in midfield, to goals scored by a pair of teenagers, and somehow never really looked like doing anything else.

Is this a problem? Is Erling Haaland a problem? He was routinely poor here, routine because he often is poor against well-organised teams in big games. Has he made this team more efficient when they're winning. Absolutely. Has he made them better when they're fighting hard? Absolutely not. It is such a strange interlude, 63 league goals in 67 games, a succession of medals and cups, but no real contribution to knockout games and finals, and no real sense of affecting his teammates, of making them better. He was man-marked out of the last 15 minutes of this final by Jonny Evans, who is basically an accident.

Defeat notwithstanding, City still have a claim to be the greatest team that ever kicked a ball in England, even if such things mean less and less as the game changes. But Guardiola will ponder all of this. Defeat is usually a lever for some kind of change, and he will feel this one.



Red Devils' final redemption owes as much to the many as the boss

Jonathan Liew
Wembley



Given its sense of occasion and sheer surprise value, this was one of the great United performances

They were still out there an hour later, catching the last few rays of evening sunshine, wringing out this moment for every last drop of joy in it. Everyone wanted a go with the trophy. Some simply hoisted it like a kettlebell. Some hugged it close like a child. There was a time when Manchester United would win these finals, pose for photos and disappear back up the M6. Not now. Everyone knows how precious these moments are, how rarely they can come along, how closely they need to be treasured.

And at the end of this Red Devil redemption, Erik ten Hag sought out the two men responsible. In fact many men had authored this triumph, from the brutal Bruno Fernandes to the indomitable Lisandro Martínez to the inspired André Onana. But Ten Hag wanted a few moments alone with Alejandro Garnacho and Kobbie Mainoo. Ballers; cup final scorers; Wembley heroes; teenagers. Ten Hag clasped them around the ears, ruffled their hair, beamed at them like a proud dad about to go off to war.

Perhaps in retrospect, this was the moment when United's presents and futures diverged. And amid the elation there was a dissonantly valedictory quality to all this too, the sense of an ending. According to reports, Ten Hag may be about to get the sack. This could well be his final act as United manager. Which of course raises a couple of related but also contradictory questions.

The first: how can you possibly end it like this? For this was not just



Erik ten Hag shows off the trophy, his second major prize in two seasons at Old Trafford

TOM JENKINS/ THE OBSERVER

a great United victory but a great United performance, perhaps even – given its stirring sense of occasion and sheer surprise value – one of *the* great United performances. It had flair and verve and pace and resolve, a performance that felt like the kind of football a club like United should be aspiring to in 2024.

In recent days we have been told that it would be ridiculous for the new United regime to make a judgment on Ten Hag based on one knockout game. Counterpoint: is this not how most of football, from World Cups to Champions Leagues, is decided? The very nature of sport is that there are some moments when everything is on the line: not just trophies and medals but careers and legacies. Winning these moments is not the be-all and end-all. But it's ridiculous to argue that they don't count.

The second question: why can't United play like this every week? All season Ten Hag has blamed the injuries to Martínez, Raphaël Varane, Luke Shaw, and he did so again here. "When the players are fit, we can play good football," he said. But injuries happen, and in any case this barely explains on its own why United have so often looked mentally as well as technically deficient, out-matched not just in terms of tactics but desire.

And so to play like this every week would, in a way, be the very antithesis of how United operate. This is a club built for peaks and troughs, a commercial entertainment vehicle in skintight sportswear, and sometimes you beat the four-time champions of England and sometimes you collapse in a heap against Crystal Palace. Ten Hag implicitly recognised this when he laid out his intention to turn United into the world's best transition team. It tends to work best when you have space to transition into. Not every game is going to be against Manchester City with 27% possession.

Even if the Glazers are still stinking out the joint there is at least a sense of renewal



For all this, when Ten Hag talked about "playing to our identity", you finally understood what he meant. If Garnacho's first goal was a slice of luck, Mainoo's second – a stunning lacework of passes working the ball long and short, right and left, Marcus Rashford to Garnacho to Fernandes to Mainoo – was the blueprint. Even the late siege – the saves by Onana, the desperate blocks, the close shaves – felt authentically United, a masterclass in resolve and self-belief and simply doing the thing that is required.

What next? There is a new footballing regime in place, a new European campaign to fight, and even if the Glazers are still stinking out the joint, draining the balance sheet and draining the joy, there is at least the sensation of renewal. New faces behind the scenes, new signings in the summer, perhaps even the return of Jadon Sancho (but please, for the love of all holy things, not Mason Greenwood).

And of course it remains to be seen whether this bright future has a place for Ten Hag in it. But either way, he has left an inheritance of hope: a legible playing style, a pair of 19-year-olds who would walk into most clubs in the world, golden memories and a trophy-winning know-how that might otherwise have been mislaid for a decade. It may not be enough to save his job. But Ten Hag has given United back a piece of themselves.

How they rated

Jacob Steinberg

Manchester City		Manchester Utd	
4	**Stefan Ortega** Ederson's deputy looked shaky and bad communication resulted in the holders falling behind. No chance with the decisive second goal.	7	**André Onana** Two important stops from Walker in the second half. But he was shaky at crosses and should have saved Doku's goal.
6	**Kyle Walker** The captain dominated the early duels with Rashford but he was out of position when Mainoo's finish left City up against it.	8	**Aaron Wan-Bissaka** He had far more to worry about once Doku was on. Wan-Bissaka battled to stop the Belgian from changing the game.
4	**John Stones** The defender started after a long spell on the margins but he was off the boil. Uncomfortable against United's counterattack.	8	**Raphaël Varane** His experience of winning World Cup and Champions League finals helped. Varane rolled back the years in his final appearance for United.
5	**Nathan Aké** Pep Guardiola will wonder if he should have started Manuel Akanji or Rúben Dias instead of the Dutchman. Aké looked nervy.	8	**Lisandro Martínez** Having the Argentinian fit made a huge difference. United were far more secure at the back. Martínez would exit with cramp.
4	**Josko Gvardiol** The Croatian struggled against Garnacho's speed, offered little in the final third and was badly at fault for the opening goal.	8	**Diogo Dalot** His hopeful up-and-under made the opener. Defensively assured. Repelled everything that City threw at him and was also tenacious in attack.
5	**Rodri** Normally the man for the big occasion, the Spaniard lacked his usual authority in midfield. Tried to score from the halfway line.	8	**Sofyan Amrabat** The Moroccan's best game for United? He snapped into challenges, held his positioning and denied City room. Casemiro? Not missed.
4	**Mateo Kovacic** The selection of the Croatian midfielder was a mistake by Guardiola, who brought him off at half-time. It made City too slow.	9 Man of the match	**Kobbie Mainoo** The teenager rescued United with a crucial saving challenge when the game was goalless. Stayed composed to make it 2-0.
6	**Bernardo Silva** The Portuguese could not find space on the right side for the holders. Wanted to move inside but when he did left City short of width.	8	**Alejandro Garnacho** A constant threat on the right. Shot at Ortega early on and persistence brought him his goal. Involved in United's second.
4	**Kevin De Bruyne** Final act was an overhit cross. He was swiftly replaced after a strangely muted display. Nothing came off for the Belgian.	8	**Scott McTominay** The Scot was not the most technical player on the pitch. But he was energetic in his advanced role. Erik ten Hag's plan worked.
6	**Phil Foden** The England international moved all over the pitch and kept trying to force the issue but could not produce a telling final ball.	7	**Marcus Rashford** Omitted from England's Euro 2024 squad, he was frustrating at first. But he played a key role in the second goal and his speed unnerved City.
6	**Erling Haaland** The Premier League top scorer was underwhelming. Hit the bar as City attempted to fight back. But United's defenders dealt with him well.	9	**Bruno Fernandes** United's captain caused problems in his role as a false 9. Dropped deep to elude his markers and made Mainoo's goal with a deft pass.
Substitutes		**Substitutes**	
Jérémy Doku The winger was dangerous after his half-time introduction. Deserved his goal but it came too late. 8		**Jonny Evans** Came on to hold the fort after Martínez's withdrawal. 6	
Manuel Akanji City looked more settled at the back with him on for Aké. 6		**Rasmus Højlund** Eager after replacing Rashford as the minutes ticked away. 6	
Julián Álvarez Bright after replacing De Bruyne but missed two great chances. 6		**Mason Mount** N/A	
		Victor Lindelöf N/A	

Ten Hag summons up a result that says 'sack me if you dare'

Time seems to be up but victory may leave Ratcliffe sheepish, writes *Jamie Jackson*

Erik ten Hag: the manager Manchester United are poised to sack despite the same record of two trophies in two seasons as Pep Guardiola had at the start of his Manchester City tenure.

Football, bloody hell, or football, the quaintest of old games, because with a squad near to full fitness for the first time in an age, Ten Hag showed what he can do, which was a Roy of the Rovers-esque 2-1 defeat that broke Manchester City hearts, claimed the FA Cup for United, and was the sweetest of ripostes to the 54-year-old's naysayers.

At the close he walked to the United end and bowed as he was regaled by the jubilant support with simple volleys of "Ten Hag, Ten Hag, Ten Hag". The triumph ensured Europa League football and Sir Jim Ratcliffe, who plans to remove the manager, would not be human if he did not doubt his wisdom.

As the account Ten Hag Gambit tweeted at the break: "Win or lose from here, they're mad to sack him. Only one half, but he has yet again shown what he can do with a fit squad. I'm so sad."

At this juncture United were in the dreamland of a 2-0 lead but the final began with the loneliness of Ten Hag at pitchside stark, chewing gum and pensive, robed in a suit with trademark ankle-hugging trousers. The first relief was to pass 13 seconds without City scoring, as they did against his men in the final of 12 months ago.

If the Dutchman does feel the stab of bitter disappointment of being culled by Ratcliffe he may, in time, experience some solace, as the incessant scrutiny of fans, media and the pundit class will switch to the next guy, a sixth permanent manager in 12 years and the latest patsy in the line of fire unless the club does, at last, reset.

Ten Hag had written in the Wembley programme notes: "This afternoon's game gives us an opportunity to get another taste of the winning habit and give ourselves something more to build on." Defiant to the end, Ten Hag remained cool in the face of a relentless inquisition. From social media platforms to fan forums to the radio and TV airwaves came copious and mixed opinion on the man from Haaksbergen.

"5 years backwards we go!! @manchesterunited no loyalty!! Shambles of a club. Owners and board have killed everything United was" wrote justinduque on Instagram, underneath the *Guardian*'s exclusive of the 53-year-old's planned sacking.

"I've been Ten Hag out for a while now but I'm actually quite gutted to see him go," wrote Vedder on a United message board.

Below, Believe posited: "So we're going into a cup final against the best team in the country, with a manager who knows he's out of a job and half a team who probably know they're leaving. Should be a walk in the park."

"Erik will stay, most of United fans know he deserves to stay," wrote farja frank on Instagram.

After half an hour a loose Josko Gvardiol header played in Alejandro Garnacho, who gave United a 1-0 lead. Then, even better. In the kind of back-to-front hypnotic sequence



United have lacked under Ten Hag, Marcus Rashford hit Garnacho with a left-right diagonal, he crossed, Bruno Fernandes slickly relayed the ball on, and Kobbie Mainoo stroked home.

Cue the in-stadium United congregation, the hardcore support, going delirious, as Ten Hag was a picture of fist-pumping delight that could be read as: "Sack me now, Sir Jim, if you dare."

United had ended their season with two wins – over Newcastle, at Old Trafford, and at Brighton – yet still finished eighth, a record low position in the Premier League era. Yet on taking his seat in the Jimmy Murphy

Shift to grey men in suits puts premium on wise old heads

Clubs desperate for a new manager are finding there is no young Ancelotti, Klopp or Guardiola on the market, writes *John Brewin*

For an elite club, what constitutes the ideal candidate for a managerial vacancy? The checklist includes the following: progressive football, preferably the pressing approach; adaptability to different cultures; previous elite experience with silverware favoured; HR expertise within an organisational structure where managing upwards is key. And in English football at least, a charismatic carnival-barker act with the media is still favoured while the increasingly powerful sporting director class remain publicly silent.

That Arne Slot will carry the title of head coach at Anfield is pertinent; Jürgen Klopp was – definitively – Liverpool's manager. But now the club's football operations are headed by Michael Edwards, assisted by Julian Ward, successive former sporting directors who both returned once the German's departure was announced.

If Pep Guardiola is Manchester City's maestro, the club structure bespoke to the genius's aristo-technocratic specifications, Klopp, though diplomatic in public, occasionally strained against Fenway Sports Group's hierarchy. He turned out to be so irreplaceable his job title was retired and he may well be among the last of the giants.

January's announcement of Klopp's departure, and Slot being selected, preceded a glut of vacancies becoming available across Europe. As it stands, six of this season's Premier League clubs will kick off next season under new management.

That is not including Manchester United, where Erik ten Hag's future is uncertain at very best. On Friday, Xavi was removed by Barcelona, while Stefano Pioli was signing off after Milan's game against Salernitana yesterday. That came the week after Juventus sacked Massimiliano Allegri.

So there are plenty of opportunities but who are the candidates in what looks a seller's market? It turns out there aren't many to fit the aforementioned criteria. There was a point when Xabi Alonso had the choice of Liverpool, Barcelona, Bayern Munich and perhaps even Real Madrid. He then decided to remain at Bayer Leverkusen. Were he suddenly to re-enter the market, Barcelona remains a possibility and that impending vacancy at United joins Chelsea and three Italian clubs.

Alonso fits the above checklist to a tee, even if Bayer's pressing game, with its collective of talented youngsters and refreshed journeymen, was picked apart by the 66-year-old Gian Piero Gasperini's Atalanta in Wednesday's Europa League final. That Dublin success is a reminder that eccentric yet clear-minded greybeards still have their place in the game. Carlo Ancelotti, who has negotiated the egos and power structures in all five of Europe's top leagues over the past three decades, can collect his fifth Champions League winner's medal as a coach next Saturday at Wembley.

The problem for those clubs increasingly desperate for a new manager/head coach is there is no young Ancelotti, Klopp or Guardiola on the market. The corporate and financial element that now subsumes elite football makes finding top coaches more challenging.

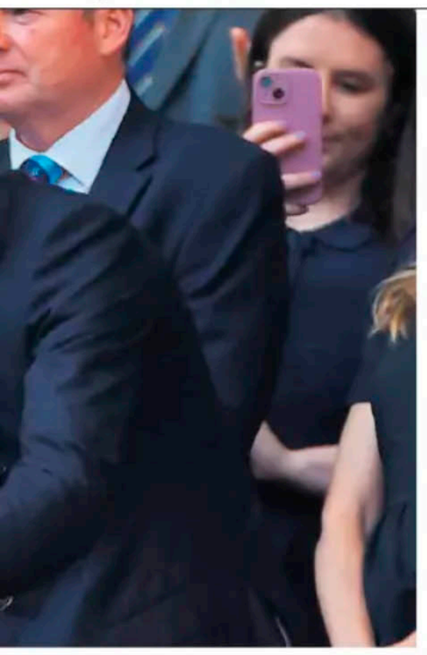
It has led to a curious set of equations, including the strange cases of Kieran McKenna and Enzo Maresca, who have never overseen a top-division game between them but are linked with some of the continent's biggest clubs.

Vincent Kompany, meanwhile, after Burnley won five Premier League matches, while collecting 24 points and always looking unlikely to avoid relegation, is headed for Bayern Munich. That checklist again: Kompany has charisma, in Belgium



Bayern agree £10.2m fee for Kompany

Bayern Munich have agreed a compensation fee of £10.2m with Burnley for Vincent Kompany to become their new manager. The Bundesliga giants have endured frustration in trying to find a replacement for Thomas Tuchel, but have switched focus to Kompany, despite Burnley's relegation from the Premier League.



Sir Jim Ratcliffe shakes Erik ten Hag's hand after Manchester United's victory – but how long will their working relationship last?

TOM JENKINS/THE OBSERVER

Centre for Thursday's media conference to preview the final, there was a Ten Hag smile and an acknowledgement for one reporter as his perma-calm endured.

Then his latest grilling started, with more questions about his job security, before, 24 hours later, the *Guardian* broke the story of the intention to removed him as the club's fifth manager since Sir Alex Ferguson retired in May 2013, the axe to fall as it previously did on David Moyes, Louis van Gaal, José Mourinho and Ole Gunnar Solskjær. Ten Hag's predecessors had all swept into the club teeming with optimism before being disabused of their dreams of reviving a slumbering leviathan.

Against this City team for the ages, managers of all stripes have struggled, of course. And when Jérémy Doku scored towards the end and seven added minutes were signalled, Ten Hag stared down the barrel of the bitterest of disappointments.

But no. That is expected to come in the coming days. Except, after a triumph unreal even by schoolboy comic-book fantasy stuff, Ratcliffe could not have a rethink, could he?



Thomas Tuchel, Roberto De Zerbi, Kieran McKenna and Enzo Maresca (clockwise from left) could all be taking up new managerial roles this summer

GETTY IMAGES/PA/THE OBSERVER

he is known as *"Le President"*; Burnley did at least play attacking football; with an MBA and as a German speaker from his time at Hamburg, he speaks the local language and the business lingua franca of the suits. All he lacks is any evidence – from either Anderlecht or Turf Moor – that he is anything like an elite coach.

He replaces Thomas Tuchel, who failed the test of maintaining relations with Bayern's power-broking legends and thrusting executives but could now end up working for Sir Jim Ratcliffe. Tuchel is the master tactician who lacks tact, as shown by exits from Dortmund, Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea and now Bayern.

Manchester United's further flirtations with more corporate-adjacent types such as Gareth Southgate and Graham Potter have the look of Ratcliffe seeking holistic operators to work within a structure in which the billionaire calls the shots, having already brought Ineos values to Old Trafford's offices.

Brighton scouted the talents of Roberto De Zerbi, but their refusal to bend the structure put in place by the owner, Tony Bloom, and the chief executive, Paul Barber, resulted in the Italian walking away with two years on his contract, and with their blessing. De Zerbi wanted to add more players of peak 25-30 age but was denied.

Chelsea, a club taking much from Brighton, including plentiful on-field and backroom talent, would seem a poor fit for De Zerbi considering Mauricio Pochettino looked miserable while working for the consortium that owns the club. The mavericks will just have to forge their own way.

Where Liverpool and Klopp became indivisible, football's corporate direction means the model where the manager is a club's most important operative is being discontinued, even if that comes at the price of success, continuity and, as this summer proves, viable candidates.

Scottish Gas Scottish Cup final Butland blunder hands Idah the late goal that helps send tearful but happy Hart into retirement



Joe Hart and captain Callum McGregor (right, obscured) lift the Scottish Cup for Celtic

IAN MACNICOL/GETTY IMAGES

Idah pounces to seal victory and complete double success for Celtic

1	0
CELTIC	RANGERS
Idah 90	

65%	Possession	35%
4	Shots on Target	4
8	Total Attempts	11

Ewan Murray
Hampden Park

This dramatic conclusion to the Scottish season was to prove a tale of two former England goalkeepers. For Joe Hart, glory in his last match as a professional. Hart cried tears of joy as the whistle blew. Jack Butland had little to occupy him over 98 minutes; the Rangers custodian's error in the dying seconds of regulation time afforded Celtic the sole opportunity they needed to claim the Scottish Cup. Butland was the most despondent figure of all as Celtic partied.

This felt cruel for Butland, who has been Rangers' stand-out performer in this campaign. His form led to talk of an international recall. But there is no denying the 31-year-old was at fault when only parrying Paulo Bernardo's drive to the feet of Adam Idah. The Norwich loanee etched his name into Celtic folklore by returning the ball past Butland with interest. Brendan Rodgers has secured a domestic double in the first season of his second Celtic tenure.

Philippe Clement understandably defended Butland. The Rangers manager believes swerve on the ball made the Bernardo drive tricky for his goalkeeper. "It was a really difficult shot," he said. "That was an unlucky moment."

In truth, Butland had little else to do. Rangers had the better of what was a taut, tense battle. It must be galling for Clement that his team still fell short when Celtic looked so jaded.

Rodgers will take time to revel in this one. "The will and desire of the players was immense," he said. "We lacked a little bit of energy. I'm so proud of the team for showing that resilience. The Scottish Cup and the history of this club with it means it is so, so important."

Rodgers is due credit for this nod to what matters in football beyond the riches bestowed on clubs like Celtic for turning up and ticking a box in the Champions League.

Strangely, Hart has enjoyed the finest form of his Celtic career since announcing his retirement in late February. The spell in Glasgow has resulted in seven medals of the winning variety. Only in recent months, though, has a connection between player and supporters been properly solidified. Rodgers had worked out that the 37-year-old has taken part in more than 4000 training sessions over his career. "Every day is like his first," Rodgers said. "His enthusiasm, his love of the game, his leadership ... everything about the man is top class.

"What a way for him to finish; a double winner at a club that will idolise him for rest of his life."

Hart joined the Celtic captain, Callum McGregor, to raise the Cup.

There was, as ever, the whiff of cordite. Celtic felt they should been awarded a first-half penalty after Kyogo Furuhashi's header hit the arm of Ben Davies. Spot kicks have been given for far less in Scotland all season.

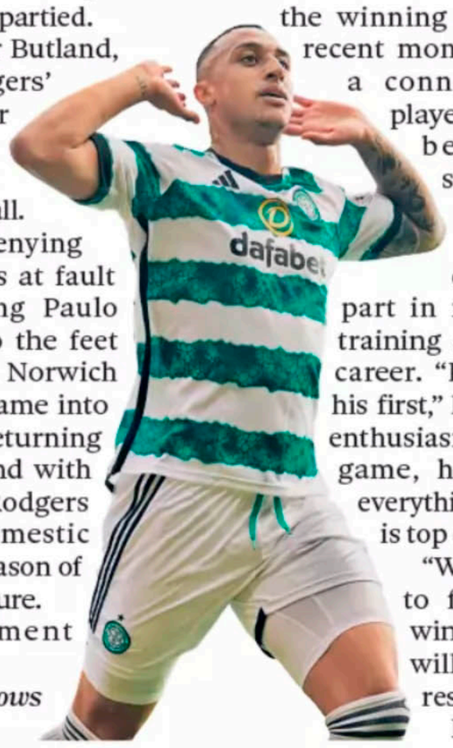
Rangers had the ball in the net on the hour mark, only for the VAR to divert Nick Walsh's attention to a push by Nico Raskin on Hart. Walsh agreed Raskin was guilty of a foul, which ruled out Abdallah Sima's close-range effort.

Clement was unconvinced. "All the Celtic defenders were grabbing my players," he said. "It was a really big call to disallow that goal. It is a grey area, that one."

The obvious retort is that had Raskin left Hart alone there would have been no decision to make. Hart looked in trouble from James Tavernier's menacing corner before Raskin got involved.

Extra-time appeared inevitable before Bernardo marauded, Butland blundered and Idah notched his ninth goal of a successful loan spell. Rodgers is keen to keep the striker in Glasgow permanently, for a fee reportedly set at £5m. There is logic behind that desire, given Idah's scope to improve. "He is a brilliant team player," said Rodgers.

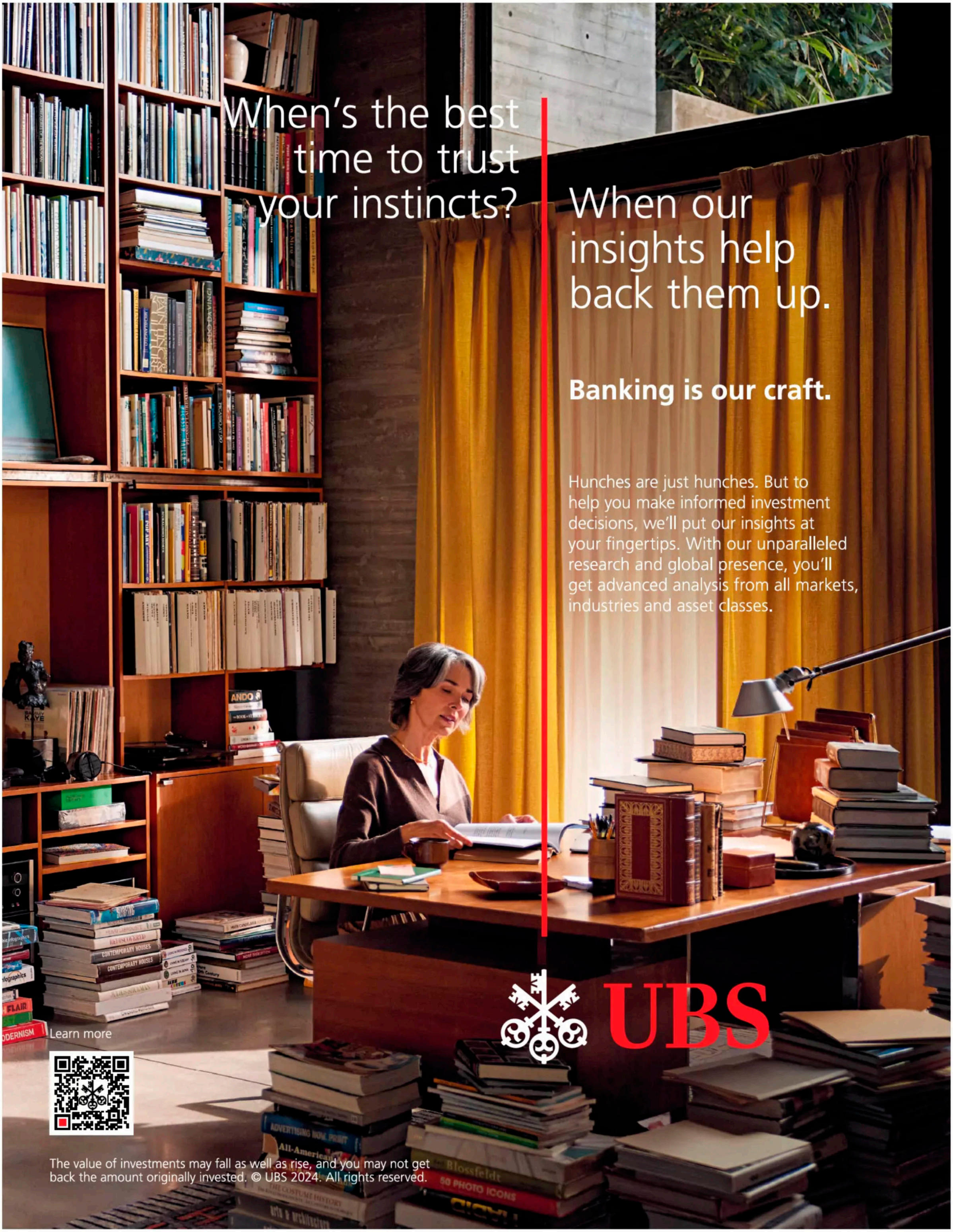
Rodgers and his Celtic squad, much maligned over the early months of the season, continue to dominate in Scotland. Rangers will spend a summer break licking wounds. Again.



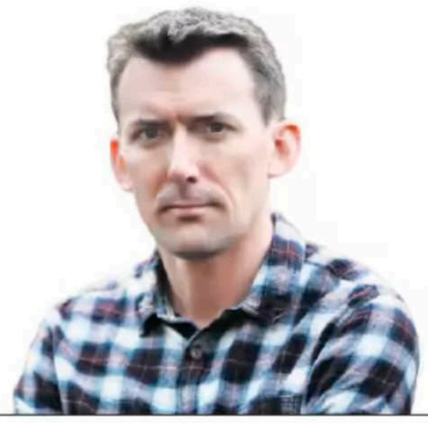
Celtic's Adam Idah shows his joy at scoring

Celtic	Rangers
4-3-3	**4-2-3-1**
Hart; Johnston, Carter-Vickers, Scales, Taylor; O'Riley, McGregor, Hatate (Bernardo 78); Forrest (Kühn 71), Furuhashi (Idah 62), Maeda **Subs not used** Bain, Palma, Nawrocki, Iwata, Ralston, Welsh	Butland; Tavernier, Balogun, Davies, Yilmaz; Raskin (Lundstram 90), Diomandé; Sterling (McCausland 81), Cantwell (Wright 74), Silva (Matondo 74); Dessers (Sima ht) **Subs not used** Jack, Dowell, McCrorie, McKinnon

Referee Nick Walsh


When's the best time to trust your instincts?
When our insights help back them up.
Banking is our craft.
Hunches are just hunches. But to help you make informed investment decisions, we'll put our insights at your fingertips. With our unparalleled research and global presence, you'll get advanced analysis from all markets, industries and asset classes.
UBS
Learn more
The value of investments may fall as well as rise, and you may not get back the amount originally invested. © UBS 2024. All rights reserved.

Jonathan Wilson
Inside football



Cold, hard cash has whittled potential Champions League winners to a rich few


ALEX LIVESEY/GETTY IMAGES

When Porto beat Monaco to win the Champions League in 2004, it felt like the start of a new era. And for José Mourinho, it was. He had won the Uefa Cup the previous season, but that success in Gelsenkirchen was his springboard to points records at Chelsea, a treble with Internazionale and his titanic struggles with Pep Guardiola when he was at Real Madrid. For two decades he has sulked and pouted his way around Europe, and for at least half of that time he was remarkably successful. But for European football as a whole that final marked the end of something.

In the previous 20 years, the competition had been a genuinely pan-European affair, with winners coming from nine different countries; in the 20 years since, there has been only one finalist from outside the big four of Spain, England, Germany and Italy – and that was Paris Saint-Germain, whose financial clout has very little to do with the general position of French football.

In part that is the result of the familiar capitalist cycle. A club wins games so generates more interest so generates more revenue so can afford better players and so wins more games. The advent of the Champions League and its gradual expansion to include first two, then three, then four and from next season five or even six teams from certain countries has created the conditions in which that spiral is almost certain to take hold. When the competition was a straight unseeded knockout, even the very best sides were occasionally eliminated after playing only two games. And in part it's been about the increasing attractiveness of the game to oligarchs and states with a reputation to launder.

But there has also been a thumb on the scales. Using the threat of a breakaway super league to apply pressure on Uefa, the elite clubs have forced concessions that have increased their revenues and so helped shore up their hegemony.

Michel Platini, for all his faults, at least seemed genuinely to understand there was an issue with competitive balance in European football. When he resigned as Uefa's president in 2016, Real Madrid and Bayern Munich took advantage of the power vacuum to force through a measure that distributed 30% of Champions League revenues based on performances in the competition over the previous 10 years.

That means that insurgent clubs, as well as being disadvantaged by the coefficient – Newcastle, for instance, were in pot four of seeds for last season's group stage – were also guaranteed only about £2m from those historic payments, whereas Manchester City were guaranteed £30m. Without playing particularly badly, Newcastle finished fourth in the group and went out, improving their coefficient and historical ranking only slightly. City, in a far easier group, finished top, and so improved their position for next season and beyond.

Leicester found themselves in a similar position and Aston Villa will too, despite the changed format next season. But before anyone feels too sorry for them, it should be borne in mind that from 2018-19 teams finishing fourth in the major leagues were given automatic entry into the group stage rather than having to go through a playoff round. But still that wasn't enough for Europe's rapacious elite. Still they wanted more. They demanded a rejig of the Champions League format to remove even the sliver of jeopardy that exists in the group stage. The result is the Swiss system that begins next season: even more games, even more money, even less jeopardy.

The consequence of that concentration of wealth at one end of the game can be seen in the way competition in the countries who dominate the Champions League has been obliterated over the past 20 years. In each of those big four leagues, the biggest clubs have come increasingly to dominate: Bayern had won 11 Bundesliga titles in a row before Bayer Leverkusen took their crown. Juventus won nine in a row in Italy. Real Madrid – who face Borussia Dortmund in next Saturday's final – and Barcelona have won all but two of the past 20 La Liga titles. Even in the Premier League, where the domestic broadcast rights deal ensured a degree of parity for a time, Manchester City have won six of the past seven.

It is 20 years since José Mourinho's Porto won the Champions League - the landscape of European football since that final has changed dramatically

The Swiss system that begins next season means even more games, even more money, even less jeopardy

That in turn has had knock-on effects. Football itself has become more attacking. The elite dominate domestically to the extent they barely have to bother defending, and turn out to be ill-equipped to do so in the later rounds of the Champions League when they face other elite clubs and a rare serious challenge.

That's why dramatic three-goal swings have become at least semi-familiar in recent seasons. Mourinho, the herald of the new age, now seems a relic. In this modern world of football as entertainment commodity, who now would focus on spoiling and defending?

In that sense, the content has improved. Football has never been so popular. But the benefits of that are disproportionately felt at that elite level as a global audience across the world effectively chooses one of the handful of super clubs, which in turn become increasingly detached from the communities they initially served.

Whether that matters is very much an issue of perspective. If football is a business, then perhaps it makes sense to gather the best players and coaches at a small number of clubs and have them face each other regularly (that, certainly, is the logic behind franchised Twenty20 leagues in cricket).

Perhaps only doomed nostalgists care that the sense of a club as something more than a commercial vehicle, as a social institution with responsibilities whose actions have cultural resonance, feel uneasy at that – although it's worth asking also how players will develop without a thriving pyramid, and also exactly what the product is; matches, after all, are not exhibitions by one side, but contests between two.

That's why Wednesday's Europa League final felt so refreshing. It was, as Atalanta's Gian Piero Gasperini said, a game that showed "there is still scope for ideas and it doesn't have to come down to cold, hard money". But at the elite level, football is increasingly about cold, hard money.

Greed has whittled potential winners of the Champions League to a small handful. The only question is how far that process will go.

Football
Sky Bet Championship playoff final

Martin and Farke hope for moment of magic but fear a slice of bad luck

Managers who were Norwich colleagues have had strong seasons but £135m prize must elude one, writes *Louise Taylor*

When Daniel Farke moved into the manager's office at Leeds last summer one particular piece of advice soon started echoing in his ears. "Everyone told me: 'You can't rely on the playoffs for promotion because we never win,'" he said, grimacing slightly. "I didn't know about the bad record when I signed my contract."

Given that five previous involvements in Football League playoffs ended in five failures for Leeds, he would have preferred to avoid meeting Southampton in today's Championship final at Wembley. It possibly explained why he grinned through gritted teeth on Friday as he was told his amplified image had been projected on to the glass domed roof of the Trinity retail centre in Leeds city centre.

While Farke admitted that, should his team stumble, shoppers will probably "throw tomatoes at it", his Southampton counterpart, Russell Martin, expects to be labelled "a huge failure" if the Saints lose. A match dubbed football's richest – worth, according to Deloitte, at least £135m to the winner – is further spiced by the renewal of old managerial acquaintances.

In 2017-18, Farke ended Martin's lengthy career as a Norwich defender, making him train with the under-23s before loaning him to Rangers. Although the latter acknowledges he did not like the decision, the pair emphasise their relationship is now so cordial they enjoyed post-match drinks after Southampton's two league victories over the Yorkshire side this season.

Leeds finished third on 90 points, three in front of rivals who also dropped out of the Premier League last season. The similarities do not end there. Quite apart from both clubs being the subject of fairly recent takeovers, their managers are no strangers to promotion. While Farke twice led Norwich out of the Championship, Martin earlier played for two top tier-bound Carrow Road sides, on the second occasion captaining them to a 2015 playoff final triumph against Middlesbrough.

At the time, Patrick Bamford was Boro's star forward but that year's Championship player of the season was nursing an ankle problem at Wembley and struggled as the gamble on starting him backfired. Nine years on, Farke will not repeat that mistake and has reluctantly ruled the striker out of contention because of a knee injury. "I would have preferred to have had Patrick," he said. "But we have to face reality."

Without Bamford's excellent off-the-ball movement dragging defenders out of position, Crysencio Summerville – the Championship player of the season – may have to work even harder, alongwith his fellow winger Wilfried Gnonto and the gifted French No 10 Georginio Rutter.

They and their often high-pressing teammates will need to beware getting caught on the counterattack by a sweet passing Southampton XI featuring not merely a form striker in Adam Armstrong but Will Smallbone's midfield talent. Perhaps significantly, three of Armstrong's 23 goals this season came against Leeds.

Martin said: "It's been a really unique Championship season and this is two really good teams going toe to toe on the biggest stage. It's going to be an exciting, tough, tight and interesting contest. Both teams have top performers that can create magical moments out of nowhere. In finals you have to hope for that."

'It's going to be a really exciting, tough and tight contest. Both teams have top performers'
Russell Martin

'Making mistakes is the best way to learn, you get better,' says Meslier

Leeds keeper has bounced back after last year's woes, writes *Louise Taylor*

Leeds's goalkeeper was once regarded as so outrageously good that France fans joked about Hugo Lloris supposedly seeking inspiration by sleeping in Illan Meslier pyjamas. Rewind the clock to the summer of 2020 and the 20-year-old Meslier had not only just helped Leeds win promotion to the Premier League but was about to play a pivotal part in securing a ninth-placed finish.

For quite a while the 6ft 6in Breton seemed a shoo-in to succeed Lloris as his country's first-choice keeper. Decent judges likened him to Belgium's Thibaut Courtois and Italy's Gianluigi Donnarumma. "It was a very good and important time in my life," Meslier says as he prepares to start against Southampton in today's Championship playoff final.

"At that moment, at such a young age, you don't realise what's happening. It's only later that you start to realise it was something very great. I'm very grateful to have received this opportunity. To play in goal for Leeds at 20 is something very rare."

Perfection is a flame touched by many but held by very few and, perhaps inevitably, the £5m signing from Lorient in 2019 struggled in a team consigned to relegation last season. As managers came and went and the defence in front of him disintegrated, Meslier became a scapegoat. He conceded 22 goals in seven games last April and the memories of the eight promotion-clinching matches four years ago, after replacing the suspended Kiko Casilla became increasingly distant.

Meslier, though, is nothing if not resilient and one year on the 24-year-old is Leeds's first-choice goalkeeper, even if the experience of 12 months ago when Sam Allardyce dropped him for the season's final four matches remain raw.

"It wasn't easy – there was a lot of change at the club," says Meslier. "It was hard but you have to deal with these things. You have to be strong enough to take a break and then jump again. I think that's what I've done.

"But the difficulty of this position is that, every week, you have to be perfect. Usually, if you make a mistake you concede a goal. You can be 10 out of 10 and then the last moments change everything. You have to be fully focused."

The bad news for Southampton is that his concentration has been honed by first Lorient, the local club he joined from school in Brittany, and then a certain Argentinian coach. "Marcelo Bielsa didn't speak a lot," says Meslier. "But in training there was always a little bit of pressure. Mentally, the discipline was always kept at a high level; it helped my mind to be very good, especially at distribution.

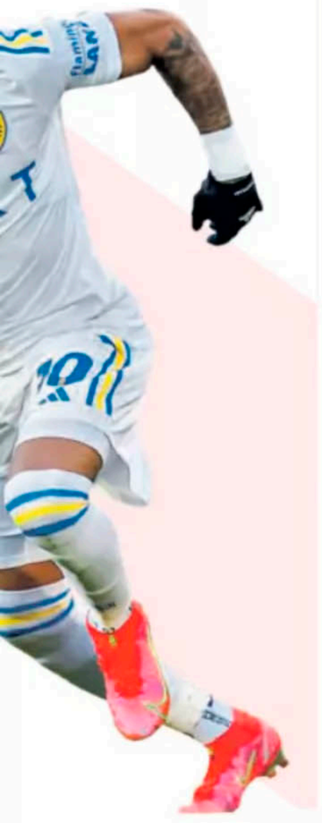
Bielsa likes goalkeepers to be as adept with their feet as their hands and Meslier, having played in assorted outfield positions before deputising in goal as a supposedly emergency measure for Lorient at a youth tournament, proved ideal sweeper-keeper material.

Significantly, he had also been toughened up by a Lorient regimen involving frequent boxing. It not merely compensated for his enduring lankiness but equipped him for the "high discipline" of life under Bielsa.

"The mentality Lorient taught us and the maturity they gave us in the academy made it easy to adapt," he says. "When I came here the hardest thing was the language. I didn't speak English at all. Not even the basic words. And I was far from my family and friends."

Once he had acquired impressive fluency, Meslier sought specialist assistance. "I'm not ashamed to say I work with a psychologist," he says. "I think I need it." Their sessions have helped the former France Under-21 international to place his initial labelling as "the new Lloris" in context.

"It's always like this when a young keeper starts," he says. "People expect him to be one of the best in a couple of years and play for France or Spain or wherever. But it's not like this. Ability comes with experience. You won't always keep making the right decisions. But when you make mistakes you become better.



Adam Armstrong, Daniel Farke, Wilfried Gnonto, Crysencio Summerville, Will Smallbone and Russell Martin (clockwise from far left)

Not to mention crave sheer luck. Farke smiled when he was asked if good fortune is an underrated footballing commodity. "That's a difficult and even philosophical question," said the 47-year-old. "I believe you can't always wait for luck but football is more or less the only sport in the world where the much better team can lose. It's because it's so difficult to score a goal.

"We all remember one team just parking the bus and the other team is all over them and hitting the crossbar 10 or 12 times but still loses to one deflected strike or one piece of good fortune because maybe the referee made a little mistake. So, yes, sometimes football can be the most unfair sport in the world. But we're concentrating on trying to force the luck."

Defeat today may place Leeds in peril of breaching English Football League spending rules and necessitate the sale of gifted individuals including Summerville and the 18-year-old midfielder Archie Gray this summer.

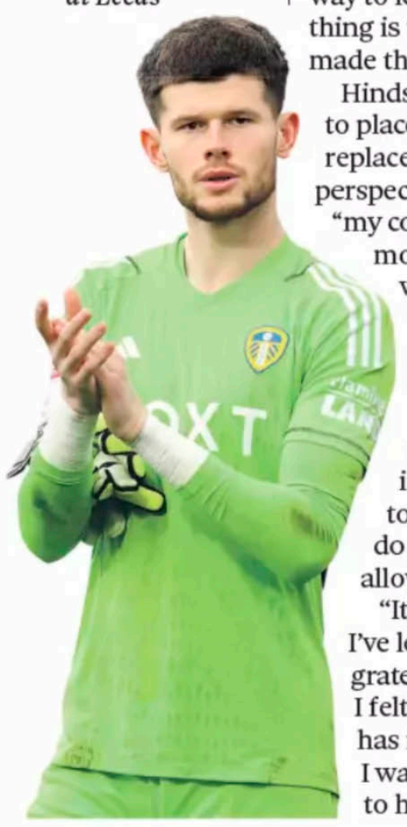
Similarly, Martin accepts that the £87m losses posted by Southampton in March and the job's attendant "weight and responsibility" have contributed to his waking up unfailingly "early" during recent mornings. A 38-year-old looking forward to "sleeping properly again" post Wembley knows his club's owners and Dragan Solak, their Serbian investor, have spent heavily since taking over in early 2022. Small wonder he is striving to secure them "a beautiful moment".

As Farke conceded the only problem is that there can be only one winner. "Believe me, we're all very motivated to write some history," he said. "A lot is lined up on this game."

3pm *Sky Sports Football*

Leeds v Southampton

Illan Meslier saw his stock rise swiftly under Marcelo Bielsa at Leeds



"It's difficult for the fans to understand that, for goalkeepers, it's years of process. Unfortunately, making mistakes is the best way to learn; the important thing is understanding why you made them."

Hindsight has enabled him to place Allardyce's decision to replace him with Joel Robles in perspective. "With Sam," he says, "my confidence went down. In the moment I would have said it was unfair. But it's not easy in this situation.

"One year later I can see I was very exposed. I tried to help the team more than I should. When you're in this situation you have to understand you cannot do more than your position allows you.

"It was a dark moment. But I've learned a lot and I'm very grateful that, from the first day, I felt a huge trust Daniel [Farke] has in me. I felt very happy. Now I want to give something back to him."

'Perfect next step': Rooney confirmed as Argyle manager

Wayne Rooney has said accepting the Plymouth job is the "perfect next step" in his management career, with the former England captain thought to have signed a three-year contract as head coach of the Championship club.

Rooney returns to coaching after a chastening spell in charge of Birmingham, who were relegated to League One this month. The 38-year-old endured a difficult 83-day reign at St Andrews, losing nine of his 15 league matches in charge.

Plymouth finished 21st in the second tier this season and avoided relegation at Birmingham's expense on the final day. Plymouth is his fourth managerial job, after Derby, DC United and Birmingham.

Plymouth's chairman, Simon Hallett, said Rooney contacted the club about the vacancy soon after they began their search for Ian Foster's successor.

"Throughout the interview process, Wayne showed himself to be a passionate, intelligent, and knowledgeable candidate with an appetite to prove himself and develop his managerial career," said Hallett, adding Rooney has been tasked with delivering an "exciting and attacking brand of football".

Plymouth have not disclosed the length of Rooney's contract but their chief executive, Andrew Parkinson, said the former striker is determined to kick-start his managerial career.



"As conversations advanced, it was clear there was a natural alignment in our footballing ideals and the best way to take the club forward," Parkinson said.

The analyst Pete Shuttleworth, who worked with Rooney at Derby, DC United and Birmingham, is expected to join the backroom staff. Coaches Kevin Nancekivell and Simon Ireland, as well as the goalkeeping coach Darryl Flahavan will remain in post. Ben Fisher

Women's Champions League final



Third time lucky for Barcelona as Bonmatí and Putellas sink Lyon

2	0
BARCELONA *Bonmatí 63, Putellas 90+5*	LYON

Barcelona scorer Aitana Bonmatí (front) helps lift Caroline Graham Hansen in the post-match celebrations

ALEX CAPARROS/ UEFA/GETTY IMAGES

Suzanne Wrack
San Mamés

Bilbao is used to being decorated in stripes, the flags of their beloved Athletic Club hang from every other window, but yesterday the city found itself swamped in less familiar colours, Barcelona's red and blue filling every bar and populating every square as travelling fans celebrated beating Lyon in a Champions League final at the third time of asking.

It was their talismanic duo, the playmaker Aitana Bonmatí and their superstar Alexia Putellas, who delivered in front of 50,827 fans. Bonmatí's effort took a deflection off Vanessa Gilles to take it past Christiane Endler shortly after the hour mark, before Putellas added the second three minutes after coming on deep into added time. It was deserved, the French champions were unable to handle the guile of the world's best passers of the ball who secured a historic quadruple.

This was never going to be as emphatic as the two previous finals between these sides. In Budapest, in 2019, the French champions were four goals up within 30 minutes, going on to win 4-1. In Turin, three years later, it was a familiar story, with Lyon three up inside 33 minutes, going on to win 3-1.

Since that first meeting, the *Blaugrana* had lifted the trophy twice, prior to their third victory in Bilbao. Lyon have been the thorn in the side of the Liga F champions but the tide is turning in European women's football. Barcelona, stacked with World Cup winners, are now in the ascendancy. Both managers are set to depart their clubs, with Jonatan Giráldez already committed to Washington Spirit (the team owned by the Lyon owner, Michele Kang) and Sonia Bompastor expected to be unveiled as the new Chelsea manager imminently.

"My press officer is threatening me, I'm not going to say anything," said Bompastor of her future.

Barça's dominance was on display, 66.3% of possession in the first half a testament to the style of football that looks set to rule for decades. They had nothing to show for it though, their best chance coming 29 minutes in. Lyon handed them possession on the edge of their own area, allowing Mariona Caldentey to break into the box only to send her effort straight at Endler.

Lyon would arguably have their best chance to take the lead early in the second half, but Gilles was unable to steer her header from Selma Bacha's free-kick past Catalina Coll.

"It's obviously a big disappointment [to lose the final]," said Bompastor. "They're a great team, we would have needed to play a perfect game but, above all, we should have been more efficient in attack."

The French club would be made to pay for their profligacy on their rare forays forward just past the hour mark when, taking the game by the scruff of the neck, Bonmatí collected the ball on the overlap before firing in from the tightest of angles, a deflection off Gilles taking the ball past a well-placed Endler.

Lyon brought on the competition's record goalscorer, Ada Hegerberg, as they sought an equaliser, but they could not land their punches and the substitute Putellas would put them to the sword, powering in before ripping her shirt off in celebration – mirroring the famous celebrations of Brandi Chastain and Chloe Kelly.

Project Barcelona marches on, physicality and street smarts added to their fluid style to secure a third Champions League title.

"It's one of the best days of my life," said Giráldez. "We did an amazing job, with the ball and without ... When I decided in December to leave at the end of the season, people thought the team's performances might dip. We showed that wasn't the case today. An amazing performance and a deserved victory."

Barcelona	Lyon
4-3-3	**4-3-3**
Coll; Bronze, Paredes, Engen, Rolfö (Batlle 67); Bonmatí, Walsh (Putellas 90), Guijarro; Graham Hansen, Paralluello (Brugts 85), Caldentey (Pina 90) **Subs not used** Paños, Font, León, J Fernández, Torrejón, Vilamala, López, M Fernández	Endler; Carpenter, Renard, Gilles (Bècho 80), Bacha; Horan, Egurrola, Van de Donk (Hegerberg 81); Diani, Durmornay; Cascarino (Majri 64) **Subs not used** Belhadj, Benkarth, Morroni, Marozsán, Sombath, Marques, Mbock Bathy

Referee Rebecca Welch (Eng) **Attendance** 50,827

Rugby union
Investec Champions Cup final

In brief



Grayson Murray won the Sony Open in Hawaii in January this year

Golf

Grayson Murray, PGA Tour winner, dies at 30

The US golfer Grayson Murray has died at the age of 30, a day after he withdrew from the Charles Schwab Challenge in Fort Worth, Texas, citing an illness. There were no immediate details released on the circumstances of his death. "I am at a loss for words," said the PGA tour commissioner, Jay Monahan about the two-time Tour winner. "We mourn Grayson and pray for comfort for his loved ones." Murray's management company, GSE Worldwide, confirmed the news, saying: "Our hearts ache for his family, his friends and all who loved him." Monahan said he spoke with Murray's parents to offer condolences, and they asked that the tournament continue. Murray, who had dealt with alcohol and mental health issues in the past, made a turnaround this year and won the Sony Open. His first PGA title victory came in 2017. Agencies

Athletics

Kerr beats Ingebrigtsen – and Cram's record

Britain's Josh Kerr beat arch-rival Jakob Ingebrigtsen in the mile race at the Eugene Diamond League meet, taking almost a second off Steve Cram's 1985 personal best. Kerr, facing the Norwegian for the first time since he stunned the Olympic champion to win the 1,500m world title in Budapest, pulled away from the pack with 600m to go but had Ingebrigtsen hot on his heels through the final stretch. Ingebrigtsen tried to find another gear but could not get past Kerr who crossed the line in a time of 3:45.34. Reuters

Racing

Rosallion takes Irish 2,000 Guineas crown

Rosallion led home stablemate Haatem to give Richard Hannon a Classic one-two in the Tattersalls Irish 2,000 Guineas at the Curragh. Sean Levey took the ride on Rosallion, the 10-11 favourite, but in the closing stages Haatem looked to be cruising home under Jamie Spencer. A swift turn of foot from the favourite changed the race in the final strides. PA Media



Dupont drives Toulouse to title in gladiatorial extra-time thriller

Ramos's kicks for 14 men leave Frawley to reflect on missed drop goal in normal time after Irish side suffer third successive final loss

22	31
LEINSTER	TOULOUSE

Robert Kitson
Tottenham Hotspur Stadium



Blair Kinghorn kicked four penalties for Toulouse

There are plenty of decent teams out there but, at club level, the force is unquestionably with Toulouse. By winning a dramatic sixth Champions Cup title they have propelled themselves another giant step beyond their biggest European rivals and remain a formidable side in anybody's language.

Club rugby occasions do not come bigger or more tense and nothing was remotely guaranteed with the scores tied at 15-15 at the end of normal time and the atmosphere increasingly gladiatorial. Cometh the hour, cometh *les hommes*. Three minutes into the first period of extra time, with James Lowe in the sin-bin, the French giants stretched Leinster's depleted defence wide on the left and Matthis Lebel scorched over for the game-breaking try.

Despite having the lock Richie Arnold sent off for a dangerous clear-out on Cian Healy, a 14-man Toulouse subsequently kicked on, the accurate right boot of Thomas Ramos providing four vital penalties to secure a fourth successive French victory in four years. This was the third Champions Cup final to go to extra time and Toulouse, remarkably, have won all of them.

It was a brutal way for Leinster to lose a third consecutive final, particularly given how hard they had battled throughout the regular 80 minutes. Ultimately, though, they did not have tactical architects of the calibre of Antoine Dupont and Romain Ntamack and their Jacques Nienaber-inspired defensive excellence was not quite matched by their attacking 'red zone' ruthlessness.

What an epic contest this was, regardless of the ultimate outcome. If the award of seven penalties against Leinster at the breakdown in the first half hinted at an unsatisfactory stop-start affair it was nothing of the sort. There have been less thunderous Test matches and, once the dust finally settles, it will be remembered among the most absorbing finales this tournament has seen.

To cast it as a battle between Leinster's defensive excellence and Toulouse's offloading majesty would be an over-simplification but both elements were very much on show. Dupont's brilliance was also evident from first to last and he was crowned man of the match and the tournament's player of the year.

Leinster, for their parts, will regret turning down a number of kickable penalties that, in a tight game, might have made a significant difference. Then again, Toulouse had the look of a team who would have found a way regardless, with the unstinting work of England's Jack Willis another key factor.

Where to start. Two penalties from the excellent Blair Kinghorn gave the French side an early 6-0 lead and Leinster, despite one prolonged period of territorial pressure, ultimately came away with only a Ross Byrne penalty to show for it.

Byrne was always going to be a prominent figure, purely by dint of the fact he is wearing Johnny Sexton's old jersey. He can look a little upright and mechanical by comparison and, at this level, nothing less than masterful tends to be good enough. It was a welcome relief for all Leinster fans, then, when he put Robbie Henshaw away for a scything midfield break to show why Leinster's coaches have kept faith in him.

On these kind of intense days, though, even the best can make the occasional misjudgment. A fractional knock-on from Dupont briefly interrupted his side's rhythm before a momentary lapse of defensive concentration allowed Dan Sheehan

Captain Antoine Dupont lifts Toulouse's sixth Champions Cup title after their gripping triumph against Leinster

ANDREW BOYERS/ ACTION IMAGES/REUTERS

Ramos settles thunderous final to decorate remarkable era

Michael Aylwin
Tottenham Hotspur Stadium



For the third time in nigh on 30 years, a European final goes to extra time. For a third time in four years a final features a red card. For the third time in a row Leinster lose in the final. And, for the sixth time, Toulouse win.

There was a feeling before this match that we might be witnessing two of the great club sides of modern times. That feeling was no less palpable by the end of another breathtaking event to decorate this remarkable era of exhilarating rugby.

Antoine Dupont, widely touted as the best player in the world, some claiming the best in history, won player of the match and player of the season, official gongs to make more compelling his case for that unofficial title. His contest with Jamison Gibson-Park was billed as one between the world's best scrum-halfs. Dupont shaded it, but more for his less heralded attributes in defence.

A red card for Richie Arnold after a clear-out on Cian Healy made the second half of extra-time a little harder than it already was for Toulouse, but a yellow shown to James Lowe a few minutes earlier for a deliberate knock-on, in the second minute of extra time, is what finally served to blow open the game. Matthis Lebel streaked down an unattended wing for a beauty of a try, fit for the occasion.

Leinster would reply with a more nuggety effort by Josh van der Flier, shortly after Arnold's red card, but by then their discipline was deserting them. The penalties of Thomas Ramos, who started on the bench, kept Toulouse, finally, beyond the reach of grasping Leinster hands.

Tries? Who needs them? In this era of the try-fest, how refreshing to be reminded that rugby can thrill without them. For 80 minutes, no player could find his way to the hallowed tryline. Good. Such an event is supposed to be hard to come by, and, boy, these teams know how to make it hard.

In only the second minute, we were treated to a vignette that hinted at the pyrotechnics to come – and it featured those two No 9s. Toulouse opened with a display of bewitching power and deftness, Emmanuel Meafou in particular showing off those contrasting qualities. He combined with Juan Cruz Mallía down the right, and soon Dupont was on the ball in the corner. His outrageous offload seemed to have put Mallía over for what would have been a stunning try, but Gibson-Park had made it across to thwart his arch-rival's claim to the early plaudits. His tackle managed – just – to force Dupont's toe into touch.

The tone was set. This fabulous stadium was packed, a gleaming temple to the 21st century seething like a coliseum. Which inspired which, the febrility of the crowd or the physicality of the players? Both were intense to international standards.

Leinster it was who came closest to scoring the game's first try after that early exchange. Dan Sheehan, as much the embodiment as anyone of a sport of such remarkable specimens, ripped the ball (from Dupont, no less), stepped inside Romain Ntamack and, then as if that were not enough for a front-row forward, proceeded to gallop 50 yards towards the tryline. Blair Kinghorn managed to run him down, rangy full-back against barrelling hooker, these days a far fairer contest in the wide open spaces than it ever used to be.

If the maestros at No 9 are contesting best in the world in their position, Kinghorn is quietly moving up the rankings of the world's premier full-backs. Having relieved Ramos, France's full-back, of the Toulouse No 15 shirt, Kinghorn has taken over his goal-kicking duties too. His penalties in the first half kept Toulouse ahead, despite their predominantly defensive remit. Dupont was as remarkable on the other side of the ball as he is when, as is normal, he bewitches the best in the world with the ball in his hands.

Jack Willis, the Englishman thriving in the south of France, kept him company in this defensive masterclass, while Caelan Doris led Leinster with an extraordinary display of lusty ball-carrying. But this is a different level of club rugby, and Leinster's finger-tip, multi-phase game could make no progress, the ball too often finding the turf in the face of Toulouse's ferocious breakdown work.

Toulouse still had the clearest-cut opportunities, for all the defending they had to work through. Lebel thought he had scored in the second half, leaping spectacularly into the corner. But Jordan Larmour's tackle, much like Gibson-Park's in the first half, had his opposite number's foot grazing the line.

These were the margins. Finger tips, toenails, handfuls of points. Until Toulouse, with the thunder of Tottenham rolling all around, pulled clear, long after normal matches have been put to bed. We are blessed to be witnessing these times.

Matthis Lebel evades Josh van der Flier to score the first try of the game and set Toulouse on course for victory

DAN MULLAN/GETTY



to race from inside his own half to within five metres of the Toulouse line. Leinster collapsed the ensuing maul to concede a penalty the other way and allow their opponents off the hook.

It was all becoming a touch helter-skelter until Dupont drilled a 50-22 to establish the position from which his pack won a scrum penalty and Kinghorn slotted another vital three points. Had the full-back not missed a fourth penalty a minute before the interval, Toulouse really would have marched confidently in at half-time.

Instead, it was Leinster who struck back just before the break, Byrne kicking his second penalty after a flurry of action during which James Lowe momentarily thought he had scored in the left corner only to discover the referee, Matthew Carley, had already blown his whistle.

The absorbing game of muscular cat and alert mouse continued in the second half, Byrne levelling the scores at 9-9 after 47 minutes and Nienaber's fight-for-everything Springbok mentality evident in its new blue form.

At 12-12, though, who would blink first? For a split second it seemed a leaping Lebel had scored a brilliant try but replays showed Jordan Larmour had intervened in the nick of time. After Ramos and Frawley had swapped further penalties, however, the latter narrowly missed a chance to settle things with a late drop goal attempt.

Extra time simply added to the excruciating tension. True, this tournament has its imperfections, structurally and logistically. But sitting beneath Tottenham Hotspur's striking golden cockerel, watching some of the world's best players chasing an egg-shaped ball it is equally true that big-time rugby can refresh parts not every other sport can reach.

Where else, for example, would you come across supporters en route to the ground clad in an unusual combo of Toulouse replica jerseys and kilts. It turned out they had attended the previous dozen finals, dressed in contrasting national dress each time. "It's what sport's all about," said my new Scottish friend, loving every second of his annual day out.

On and off the field this year's final will live long in the memory.

Leinster	Toulouse
Keenan; Larmour, Henshaw, Osborne, Lowe; R Byrne (Frawley 69), Gibson-Park; Porter, Sheehan (Kelleher 69), Furlong (Ala'alatoa 69), McCarthy, Jenkins (Ryan ht), Baird (Conan 59), Connors (Van der Flier 44), Doris (capt)	Kinghorn; Mallia (Graou 92), Costes (Ramos 58), Ahki (Chocobares 22), Lebel; Ntamack, Dupont (capt); Baille (Neti 58), Mauvaka (Marchand 54; Mauvaka 96), Aldegheri (Merkler 54), Flament, Meafou (Arnold 54), Willis, Cros (Brennan 68), Roumat
Sin-bin Lowe 82	**Red card** Arnold 89
Try Van der Flier	**Try** Lebel
Con Byrne	**Con** Ramos
Pens Byrne 4, Frawley	**Pens** Kinghorn 4, Ramos 4

Referee Matthew Carley (Eng) **Attendance** 61,531

Results

Football

EMIRATES FA CUP
Final
Manchester City (0) 1 — **Manchester United** (2) 2
Doku 87 — Garnacho 30, Mainoo 39
84,814

SCOTTISH GAS SCOTTISH CUP
Final
Celtic (0) 1 — **Rangers** (0) 0
Idah 90 — 48,556

UEFA WOMEN'S CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
Final
Barcelona (0) 2 — **Lyon** (0) 0
Bonmatí 63, Putellas 90+5 — 50,827

DFB POLKA
Final Kaiserslautern 0 Bayer Leverkusen 1

COUPE DE FRANCE
Final Lyon 1 Paris Saint-Germain 2

LA LIGA
Almería 6 Cádiz 1; Rayo Vallecano 0 Athletic Bilbao 1; Real Madrid 0 Real Betis 0; Real Sociedad 0 Atlético Madrid 2; Osasuna 1 Villarreal 1

SERIE A
Juventus 2 Monza 0; Milan L Salernitana L

Rugby union

INVESTEC EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS CUP
Final Leinster 22 Toulouse 31 (aet; 15-15 at full-time)

RFU CHAMPIONSHIP
Cambridge 28 Ampthill 37; Ealing 59 Bedford 12; Hartpury 43 Doncaster 14; London Scottish 27 Cornish Pirates 38

ALLIANZ WOMEN'S PREMIERSHIP
Harlequins 25 Bristol 47; Leicester 21 Sale 36; Saracens 33 Gloucester-Hartpury 31; Ealing 18 Loughborough 19

Rugby league

BETFRED SUPER LEAGUE
Catalans Dragons 8 Warrington 16

BETFRED CHAMPIONSHIP
Toulouse 28 Widnes 20

BETFRED WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE
Warrington 4 Wigan 48

Tennis

ATP GONET GENEVA OPEN (Switzerland)
Semi-final: C Ruud (Nor) bt F Cobolli (It) 1-6 6-1 7-6 (4)
Final: C Ruud (Nor) bt T Machac (Cz) 7-5 6-3

ATP PARC AUVERGNE-RHONES-ALPES OPEN (Lyon)
Final: G Mpetshi Perricard (Fr) bt T Etcheverry (Arg) 6-4 1-6 7-6 (7)

WTA INTERNATIONAUX DE STRASBOURG (France)
Final: M Keys (US) bt D Collins (US) 6-1 6-2

WTA GP DE LA PRINCESSE LALLA MERYEM (Morocco)
Final: P Stearns (US) bt M Sherif (Egy) 6-2 6-1.

Golf

SOUDAL OPEN (Antwerp, Belgium)
Leading third-round scores (GB/Ire unless stated)
195 I Elvira (Sp) 64 64 67. **199** R Langasque (Fr) 64 67 68; N Nørgaard Møller (Den) 64 68 67; R Fisher 66 63 70; J Dean 68 65 66. **200** A Wilson 64 68 68. **201** T Pieters (Bel) 67 66 68; S Garcia (Sp) 70 64 67. **202** G Migliozzi (It) 70 66 66; L Donald 68 69 65; R Mansell 67 68 67; A Cockerill (Can) 66 66 70; P Waring 68 66 68; M Lorenzo-Vera (Fr) 69 65 68; S Bairstow 74 65 63; S Jones (Nzl) 62 70 70; L Canter 69 67 66

JABRA LADIES OPEN (Evian-les-Bains, France)
Leading third-round scores (GB/Ire unless stated)
203 M Métraux (Swi) 67 64 72. **206** A Sauzon (Fr) 66 71 69; A Tamburlini (Swi) 69 70 67. **209** L Walsh 69 70 70. **210** M Kobori (NZ) 72 71 67; A Krauter (Ger) 71 69 70; L Spikova (Cz) 73 70 67. **211** M Folke (Swe) 70 69 72; J Gustavsson (Swe) 68 71 72

Cycling

GIRO D'ITALIA
Stage 20 (Alpago-Bassano del Grappa, 184km): **1** T Pogacar (Svn) UAE Team Emirates 5hr 0min 36sec; **2** V Paret-Peintre (Fr) Decathlon AG2R LMT; **3** D Martínez (Col) Bora-Hansgrohe both at same time. **Selected others:** 7 G Thomas (GB) Ineos Grenadiers at same time.
Overall standings: **1** T Pogacar (Svn) 76hr 22min 13sec; **2** D Martínez (Col) +9:56; **3** G Thomas (GB) +10:24

RIDELONDON CLASSIQUE
Stage two (Maldon-Maldon, 146.2km): **1** L Wiebes (Fr) SD Worx-Protime 3hr 33min 26sec; **2** C Kool (Fr) DSM-PostNL; **3** L Kopecky (Bel) SD Worx-Protime all at same time.
Overall standings: **1** L Wiebes (Fr) 7hr 39min 26sec; **2** L Kopecky (Bel) +20sec; **3** L Paternoster (It) Jayco-AlUla +21sec; **4** C Kool (Fr) +21sec.

Greg Wood's tips

UTTOXETER **1.50** Dameofthecotswolds **2.25** Native Moon **3.00** Big Blue Moon **3.35** Royale Margaux **4.10** Next Left (nap) **4.45** Forget The Way **5.20** Asa
KELSO **2.15** Blueberry Wine **2.50** Five Dollar Fine **3.25** Mack The Man (nb) **4.00** Mistral Nell **4.35** Toucan Sam **5.10** Yippee Ki Yay **5.45** Beau Della
FONTWELL **2.39** Fine Margin **3.14** Shaw's Cross **3.50** Midnight Gold **4.25** William Ewart **5.00** Celtic Fortune **5.35** Cawthorne Banker

Formula One
Monaco Grand Prix

Leclerc holds nerve for pole in quest to end home curse

Monégasque driver at front of grid for Ferrari after getting the better of Piastri

Giles Richards
Monte Carlo

Charles Leclerc once more held his nerve on his home circuit to claim pole for the Monaco Grand Prix despite the pressure and an intensity of competition that made the outcome impossible to predict.

Theoretically qualifying is the hardest part of the weekend in Monte Carlo but Leclerc knows only too well he and his Ferrari team must now execute with absolute precision today if the 26-year-old is finally to see off his Monaco curse.

This is Leclerc's third pole here, the principality where he was born at the meeting he wants to win over all others but one where he has still not managed to finish on the podium in his five previous appearances.

In 2021, he was on pole but a crash in qualifying damaged his driveshaft and the car was retired before the race began. Then in 2022, once more starting from the front of the grid, Ferrari blew his chances with a miscalled strategy. Fickle mistress fortune it seemed has repeatedly abandoned him on his very doorstep.

Third time lucky might be the charm but Leclerc was not willing to so much as consider fate a factor in the events set to unfold today. Asked if he might do something different to previous Saturday nights when he had claimed pole here, he laughed it off.

"No, no, no, nothing different," he said. "You do the job on the Saturday and then you try and focus on the Sunday race and do the best we can do as a team. In the past there was mistakes, the team has got a lot stronger since then."

He had indeed done the job but was pushed hard. He had been on top on the circuit all weekend but the margins were tiny and the pressure intense. By the end of Q2 less than a tenth of a second separated the top six as they entered the decisive laps.

Leclerc set the pace on the opening runs with a 1min 10.418sec lap, followed by McLaren's Oscar Piastri, just two-hundredths down, while Max Verstappen, on his run of eight consecutive poles, continued to struggle with his Red Bull and could manage only third but just one tenth back.

As the track reached the peak of its grip on the final runs Leclerc went quicker still, while Verstappen touched the wall, his lap had to be aborted leaving him flailing in sixth, while Piastri could not improve, finishing second as the Monégasque driver brought it home more than a tenth clear with a 1min 10.270sec lap.

In so doing he had successfully conquered what he considered the hardest qualifying session of the season and it left him calm about the task to come today, even given his hometown hoodoo.

"The peak of the tension of the whole season is qualifying in Monaco," he said. "Then for the race you are relaxed, because in the race you are focused on the start, the laps around the pit stop. Qualifying in Monaco is a big part of the job. It is true in the past we did not have the success we wanted but I am not thinking about that anymore."

While this is the first time Verstappen has been denied the top spot this season, struggling with the car's handling all weekend, he was disappointed but remained unconcerned that even a difficult afternoon today would prove a serious dent in his title ambitions while he still enjoys a 48-point lead over Leclerc in the championship.

As has been repeatedly noted this weekend, with the current generation of F1 cars so wide and heavy, overtaking at Monaco has become all but a distant dream. Qualifying has assumed absolutely vital importance and Leclerc had it nailed yesterday, threading the needle in Monte Carlo with extraordinary verve. That place is sealed then and with it the genuine advantage that should be converted to victory today but he knows only too well nothing is a given in Monaco.



Charles Leclerc has a big chance of first win at Monaco

Today's grid

Monaco Grand Prix
Monte Carlo, 2pm, Live on SS F1

1 C Leclerc (Mon)	Ferrari	1:10.270
2 O Piastri (Aus)	McLaren	1:10.424
3 C Sainz (Sp)	Ferrari	1:10.518
4 L Norris (GB)	McLaren	1:10.542
5 G Russell (GB)	Mercedes	1:10.543
6 M Verstappen (Neth)	Red Bull	1:10.567
7 L Hamilton (GB)	Mercedes	1:10.621
8 Y Tsunoda (Jpn)	RB	1:10.858
9 A Albon (Tha)	Williams	1:10.948
10 P Gasly (Fr)	Alpine	1:11.311
11 E Ocon (Fr)	Alpine	1:11.285
12 D Ricciardo (Aus)	RB	1:11.482
13 L Stroll (Can)	Aston Martin	1:11.563
14 F Alonso (Sp)	Aston Martin	1:12.019
15 L Sargeant (US)	Williams	1:12.020
16 S Pérez (Mex)	Red Bull	1:12.060
17 V Bottas (Fin)	Sauber	1:12.512
18 Zhou G (Chn)	Sauber	1:13.028
*19 N Hülkenberg (Ger)	Haas	DQ
*20 K Magnussen (Dan)	Haas	DQ

*disqualified for car breaching regulations

Drivers' standings
1 M Verstappen (Red Bull) 5 wins 161pts;
2 C Leclerc (Ferrari) 0 wins 113pts;
3 S Pérez (Red Bull) 0 wins 107pts;
4 L Norris (McLaren) 1 win 101pts



Mansell v Senna '92

'I should have just nudged him on one of Monaco's corners'

The British former world champion tells *Giles Richards* how he could have claimed that elusive GP win at Monte Carlo against the brilliant Brazilian

The Monaco Grand Prix is the race many Formula One drivers want to win most but for Nigel Mansell it was always the one that got away. The former world champion has no regrets, however: well, perhaps that he didn't quite go far enough during his magnificent battle with Ayrton Senna on the streets of Monte Carlo in 1992.

"We got so close and he blocked so well, and badly," Mansell recalls. "I think perhaps I should have just nudged him up the back at one of the corners. If we had switched sides and Ayrton had been following me I feel sure he would have knocked me at one of the corners, but it was still a fantastic race."

Mansell won the title that year but alongside his achievements of becoming an F1 and IndyCar champion, the 70-year-old remains the driver with the most grand prix wins – 31 – without having taken the chequered flag in Monaco.

In his pomp he was irrepressible, but few may know that nowadays he likes to use a spot of magic to make a difference in children's lives. Mansell is president of the charity UK Youth, dedicated to helping disadvantaged young people, and when he meets the kids involved he makes a connection not by playing on his past but with sleight of hand. "I get a pack of cards and do tricks, making cards appear and all the rest of it," he says.

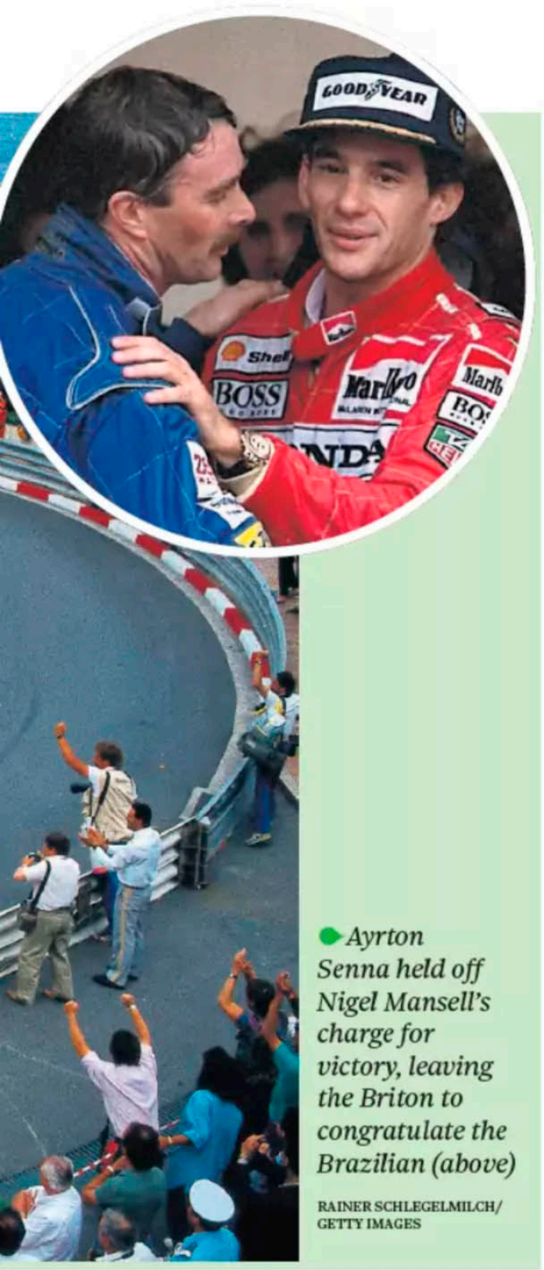
"Doing a little bit of magic for them gets them engaged and you have to engage young people because they all have stories. Someone might say: 'You used to drive cars didn't you?' I say: 'Occasionally, it's a bit like a taxi, it's just like a fast taxi,' and they laugh and all of a sudden you're one of their mates."

Yet he could tell them some mighty tales and the driver the Ferrari fans proclaimed as *Il Leone* – the Lion – happily relives one of Monaco's greatest finales. Mansell had been all conquering with five wins on the trot, optimistic of a sixth to end his Monaco hoodoo.

In qualifying he was a full second quicker than his Williams teammate, Riccardo Patrese, with Senna in the McLaren in third but without the pace to match. Done and dusted it seemed, even with Senna the master in Monaco. By 1992 he had four wins from five and would, before his untimely death 30 years ago, take a record six victories.

Senna burst past Patrese at the start to be in the right place to take advantage should Mansell falter. But his efforts appeared to have been in vain, with the British driver 30 seconds clear by lap 71. Then it fell apart. Going through the tunnel Mansell felt something go in the rear, a puncture perhaps, but it was also suspected to be a loose wheel nut, either way he had to pit.

Senna took the lead and Mansell set off after him like a man possessed. "I knew it wasn't going to be easy but I could catch him with the fresh rubber," he says. The gap was 5.1sec but with three laps to go he had caught Senna and was climbing all over the rear wing.



Ayrton Senna held off Nigel Mansell's charge for victory, leaving the Briton to congratulate the Brazilian (above)

RAINER SCHLEGELMILCH/ GETTY IMAGES

Mansell charged, dived and pulled every trick in the book, but to no avail. Senna drove a brilliant defensive line and, as is so often the case in Monaco, there was no way past. Mansell congratulated Senna but he believes nowadays it would be a different story. "With the rules as they were, Ayrton could block like a double-decker bus," he says. "But today he would have got 10 stop-go penalties.

"The thing to be taken away from it is how two incredible champions can race together within inches on a circuit like Monaco and not hit one another. Even with the blocking and brake-testing we still didn't hit one another and we put on a hell of a show for those last few laps."

That hell of a show concluded with images of an exhausted Mansell, barely able to stand, having to be physically supported up to the podium. He is, however, having none of suggestions that it was theatrics, explaining he drove that season with three broken toes and insists Monaco was punishing.

"The pain I had in my leg and foot after that race was the worst pain I had in any race that year, it was incredible. So yes it was exhaustion. The nervous energy driving under those rigours is mind-blowing. I never told anybody the pain I was in. All I wanted to do was collapse."

It had been an immense fight but considering it now, it is Senna's death Mansell still finds it hard to come to terms with. "There is still a part of me that thinks he is around, everybody thought Ayrton was bulletproof," he says. "Even 30 years on for part of me it still feels like a bit of a shock.

"Ayrton was an icon of the sport, what he was able to do inside and outside the car was incredible, I am proud to have known and raced so hard with him."

Cycling

Pogacar's place among the greats assured as Giro milestones tumble

The Slovenian has matched Anquetil's 1960 achievement and will now chase a Grand Tour double

William Fotheringham

Since Tadej Pogacar's stage win on day two at the Oropa sanctuary three weeks ago, the only suspense in this year's Giro d'Italia centred on the Slovenian's eventual winning margin, and which stage-winning records he would match along the way.

Three and a half kilometres from the summit of Monte Grappa, tackled twice yesterday afternoon, it became clear: once again he had left the field trailing, his sixth stage win beckoned, along with a substantial increase in his overall winning margin, towards 10 minutes.

By the finish in Bassano del Grappa, Pogacar had equalled the standard set for absolute domination in the Giro in the past half-century, Eddy Merckx's 1973 win, with half a dozen stages along the way. Pogacar had matched Jacques Anquetil's feat of 1960, wearing the pink leader's jersey for 18 days.

In recent years, the Giro has often been decided by mere seconds as it has in minutes; Pogacar rides into Rome today nine minutes and 56 seconds clear of the Colombian Dani Martínez, the biggest winning margin in the Giro since 1965. He is set to push his total of wins for the year to 14, in 30 race days, a success rate approaching that of Merckx at his best.

One vignette sums up this Giro, at the Passo Brocon finish on Wednesday. Approaching the final kilometre, with the group of overall contenders closing on the lone breakaway Georg Steinhauser, Geraint Thomas's Ineos teammates set a fierce pace to dislodge one of Thomas's rivals for second place, the Australian Ben O'Connor. When Martinez accelerated, Pogacar responded almost apologetically and drifted off the front of the group seemingly without meaning to.

He did not need to go deep to open a gap; having taken the two previous mountain stages he had no particular need to win the stage. He was effectively controlling the race with his immediate rivals trailing a few hundred metres behind, all of them completely incapable of closing the gap.

This Giro reinforces an unsettling truth. Along with Remco Evenepoel, Mathieu van der Poel, Primoz Roglic and – assuming he recovers from his horrendous crash in April – Jonas Vingegaard, "Pogi" is one of a small group of stars who are light years ahead of the rest of the peloton. Unless another of the "fantastic five" is present, they can be expected to win whenever they pull on a race number. At times it is enthralling, on other occasions, such as this Giro, it is a matter of statistics and record books.

'Pogi' is one of a small group of stars who are light years ahead of the rest of the peloton

In Italy, Thomas performed surprisingly well for a 38-year-old who rode his first Tour de France when Pogacar was barely off riding a bike with stabilisers, Martínez has ridden his best Grand Tour, and the young Italian Antonio Tiberi has visibly progressed, but none of them has been anywhere near good enough to shake Pogacar for a single second.

The double world champion Julian Alaphilippe has returned to his best with a stage win and some epic escapes and Italy has discovered a new sprinter in Jonathan Milan, but in terms of making the mighty Slovenian tremble, they have barely been a distraction.

Until a few close encounters with over-enthusiastic *tifosi* on the climb, Pogacar had endured one minor hiccup: stage two's minor pratfall after attempting to take a bend on a flat front tyre. There is a sportswriters' cliche about the greats making their sport look shockingly easy; this is where Pogacar has been for the past three weeks.

At times it was easy to forget Pogacar had not won a Grand Tour for almost three years. Since his defeat at the 2022 Tour de France he has been rampant in one-day Classics, building an all-round record unparalleled since Bernard Hinault in the early 1980s. However, his struggles in the past two Tours underline that, however seamless a rider's domination in a Grand Tour may look, the adjective "easy" is never appropriate.

At their best, cycling's non-pareils such as Merckx, Hinault and Miguel Induráin seemed to function in a dimension where time and space were their own compared to the mere mortals. Pogacar has entered that place and the question now is whether he can back it up at the Tour de France, something no one has done since the drug-fuelled super-climber Marco Pantani in 1998.

The Slovenian will find stiffer competition there with Roglic, Evenepoel and probably Vingegaard on the start line and will face the challenge of retaining his form – or something close to it – until late July. But after the last three seamless weeks, few would bet against it.



Tadej Pogacar lifts his bike in the air after winning his sixth stage of the Giro d'Italia at Bassano del Grappa

GETTY IMAGES

Slovenian goes solo to stay in the pink

Tadej Pogacar of UAE Team Emirates showed his absolute domination of the Giro d'Italia, riding away solo to win stage 20, his sixth stage victory as he extended his overall lead going into today's triumphal ride into Rome.

Pogacar could afford to wave to the crowd in the final stages of the 184km route from Alpago to Bassano del Grappa as he powered home to put almost 10 minutes between himself and his closest rivals in the general classification. The Slovenian already had a lead of 7min 42sec over Daniel Felipe Martínez and when he made his move on the day's second climb of Monte Grappa nobody could keep pace.

Valentin Paret-Peintre (Decathlon-AG2R La Mondiale) came in second as he outsprinted Martínez who finished third, more than two minutes behind Pogacar. Geraint Thomas remains third overall for Ineos. **Reuters**

Tennis
French Open

Jannik Sinner
‘I like to dance in the pressure storm’



Donald McRae
Paris

Tennis’s rising star on attitude change that helped win his first grand slam as he strives for more glory at Roland Garros

Jannik Sinner is still only 22 but he strolls in with the serene conviction of a grand slam winner who seems far older than he looks. He is also as friendly as he is serious in a mix that suits the fact that Sinner is an Italian who grew up speaking German and now models for Gucci while sometimes being cheered on by a quirky group of fans who dress like carrots and call themselves the Carota Boys. The carrots honour Sinner’s red hair and the fading memory that he once ate the humble vegetable during a match in Vienna.

It makes sense to meet Sinner at Roland Garros for it was here, a year ago, that a surprise defeat changed his erratic mentality and set him on a new path of clarity. Sinner’s uncluttered purpose since then has meant he has beaten Novak Djokovic in three out of their past four matches, lift the Davis Cup for Italy, win the Australian Open in January and rise to No 2 in the world.

But we start with the painful loss that unfolded over five hours and 26 minutes against the unheralded Daniel Altmaier in the second round of last year’s French Open. Altmaier exposed psychological flaws that shocked Sinner into the changes that have transformed him.

“I’m always trying to learn from my losses and that was a tough one,” he says. “My mindset was not great and I promised myself this attitude won’t happen again. It was time to try my best with a smile. There is pressure, obviously, but pressure is a privilege.”

Sinner shrugs wryly as he recalls a tumultuous match he led by two sets to one before being unhinged by frustration. “There were too many ups and downs, emotionally. It can happen – you play one set good, one set bad – especially on clay. But I was not happy on court and without reason. My team said: ‘Why do you have this attitude?’ They were right and I’ve always believed that if you want to improve you have to accept what you’ve done wrong.”

He praises his coaches, Simone Vagnozzi and Darren Cahill, both of whom he appointed in 2022. The Italian has instilled crucial technical changes while the steely Australian has strengthened his mentality. “After that match I worked out a lot,” Sinner says. “It’s OK to miss shots, even to lose. But you have to be happy to be on court.

“Tennis started off as my hobby and now it’s my job. But it’s important I still play like it’s my hobby. It’s impossible to always be positive. You have so many moments where you have negatives, but you have to find a way to get out of it. The more you play, the easier it is.”

There have been more scarring defeats. In 2022, Sinner had a match point against Carlos Alcaraz in their US Open semi-final before losing an epic battle that lasted more than five hours. At Wimbledon last year, he lost in straight sets to Djokovic, again in the semi-finals. But, since then, he recovered from triple match point down to defeat the seemingly indestructible Djokovic in the Davis Cup before sweeping him aside at this year’s Australian Open.

His new composure was tested in his first grand slam final when, in Melbourne, Daniil Medvedev cruised to a two-sets-to-love lead. But, rather than crumbling, Sinner grew stronger.

“It helped in the second set when I broke him the first time at 5-1 down. It gave me confidence that I can break him. I tried to stay focused and saw him going a little down physically. He had a tough two weeks playing very long matches. I tried to stay there as long as possible and get the momentum.”

Sinner has a curious phrase – “I like to dance in the pressure storm” – and he smiles. “You have to enjoy the pressure because it’s not like we are doctors doing surgery. You make a mistake as a doctor and it can cost a life. We just win or lose and next week you have another chance.”

On the night he became a grand slam champion, Sinner resolved to work even harder. “The work gave me this satisfaction of holding a big trophy. If you want to hold it again you have to keep working. There is no luck in the game. I have to improve physically and mentally and mix up my game because my opponents know me better now. It’s fun to find the solution.”

Did he allow himself to savour his achievement? “The best time I had was flying back with my team. I usually sleep on the flight – but not that night. The plane had a bar and we went there and talked. It’s what I like, sharing the victory with people who helped me get to this point.”



‘You have to enjoy the pressure because it’s not like we are doctors doing surgery. We win or lose then play next week’

Sinner shakes his head cheerfully when asked if he sank a couple of beers. “My celebrations are different. If I have a good week, I always eat a hamburger with french fries, one Coke and tiramisu or ice cream. In Melbourne, I had everything. That’s my guilty pleasure.”

He looks very young as he laughs. But he carries a resilience forged when he left home at 14. Even a year earlier tennis had still been Sinner’s third-favourite sport behind football and skiing, where he was a national junior champion in giant slalom. He grew up in South Tirol in northern Italy, close to the Austrian border, where German is the local language. Sinner’s father was a chef and his mother a waitress at the ski lodge where they lived.

His parents allowed him to move 400 miles away to Riccardo Piatti’s



Jannik Sinner has climbed to No 2 in the world and won three of his past four matches with Novak Djokovic

TOBY MELVILLE/REUTERS

tennis academy in Bordighera, on the coast near the French border. "It was tough, leaving home," Sinner says, "but for them it was tougher, allowing their son to go away when he was so young. But they gave me that freedom."

Sinner spoke little Italian when he arrived in Bordighera but he was lucky to move into the family home of the Croatian coach Luka Cvjetkovic. "I would do it all again," he says, "because it helped me grow. You go to the supermarket, do your washing, clean up after cooking. These small things were important because, at 14, they mature you.

"I went through a tough time, leaving my home, my family, my friends, skiing and football. There were many things I gave up but it was good for me.

"It helped that, with Luka, I felt safe. His daughter was five years younger than me and the son a bit smaller. I was like their older brother and they had a dog. I love animals and we never had a dog because my parents were working. The only problem was the communication because my Italian was not good and Luka's wife and me used hand signs instead of talking. They were amazing and I don't know where I'd be without them."

He remains close to his parents, but as they are still working they won't be in France. Sinner, however, appears to have recovered from the hip injury he suffered last month in Madrid. His record this year is an impressive 28-2 and tomorrow he plays the American Christopher Eubanks, who is No 43 in the world and not a natural on clay.

Sinner won their only previous encounter in straight sets at the 2022 US Open but he says of Eubanks: "He's very aggressive, a huge server, so hopefully I can return as many balls as possible and find a way from the back of the court. The hip feels good but I had nearly three weeks without touching the rackets. I lost weight but hopefully getting through the first round gives me time on the court and lots of confidence."

If Sinner finds his ferocious rhythm, where he hits the ball as hard and with sweeter precision than anyone, he will be a serious contender for his second grand slam. His friendly rivalry with Alcaraz has emerged at just the right time as Rafa Nadal plays his final French Open and Djokovic struggles to regain his supremacy.

Sinner and Alcaraz, whose head-to-head record is locked at 4-4, are seeded to meet in the semi-finals. "When I play against him you know that's a very important match," Sinner says. "But we are so young and cannot be compared to [Nadal and Djokovic] yet. We have a long way to go and need consistency."

He smiles when I ask whether he has worked out where he might find the best burger in town if he has another memorable tournament. "I haven't reached that point in Paris," Sinner says, "but I will try."

Sinner lifts the Australian Open trophy after a five-set thriller against Daniil Medvedev

ELOISA LOPEZ/REUTERS



Rafael Nadal, who has won the French Open a record 14 times, could be making his last appearance at Roland Garros

FREY/TPN/GETTY IMAGES

'Maybe, maybe not' Roland Garros farewell on hold for coy Nadal

Tumaini Carayol
Paris



The 37-year-old is part of an open men's draw, while Swiatek has few serious rivals for the women's title

As Rafael Nadal expressed his satisfaction at being able to return to Roland Garros once again, a flurry of laughter circled the room. This coming fortnight could be a truly significant moment, the 14-time champion's final appearance in Paris and one that could well end with his first-round meeting against Alexander Zverev tomorrow. In reality, though, not even Nadal has a clue if this is the end.

"Maybe the last one, maybe not," he said, smiling. "I hope to be clear. I don't want to create a big confusion, but I'm enjoying what I am doing. Sorry, but I am feeling competitive in the practices."

Nadal had been moved to explain why he could not be certain this would be his final appearance at the French Open, despite his own comments this year. After his farewell ceremony at the Madrid Open, Italian Open organisers had planned their own surprise event, but Nadal quickly left the court after his dire loss to Hubert Hurkacz and did not return.

Later, he noted he was not sure it would be his last appearance there. The French Tennis Federation may be well served to temper any plans for a grand farewell.

A month ago in Barcelona, Nadal's future seemed grim. The 37-year-old had competed in one tournament in the previous 15 months and he was still struggling physically in the days before the Madrid Open, unsure if his body would let him perform properly. Since then, he has been able to train and compete for four weeks without any significant problems.

With many hours spent on the court, Nadal has felt himself progressing. He said he is competitive with top players in practice matches and, as of this past week, has finally been able to move with freedom. "In some way I don't want to close 100% the door, because of a very simple thing," he said.

"First, I am enjoying playing. Second, I am travelling with the family. They are enjoying. I am enjoying sharing all this process with them. And third, I was not able to explore yet the proper way how I will be able to play being in more or less healthy conditions again, playing without limitation."



In a perfect world, this process would have happened a few months earlier, allowing Nadal an opportunity to find his feet throughout the clay season before Roland Garros. But time is not on his side and Zverev, the fourth seed, awaits.

"It's a super-tough first round," said Nadal. "Maybe I repeat the disaster of Rome. It's a possibility. I don't want to hide that. But in my mind is to do something different and play much better and give myself a chance to play competitively."

'I don't want to close the door because of a very simple thing ... I am enjoying playing'
Rafael Nadal

Beyond Nadal, the men's draw is the most open grand slam in years. While Novak Djokovic, the top seed, is struggling badly with motivation and form, Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz, seeded second and third respectively, arrived recovering from injuries. Among the rest of the field, whoever is healthy, bold and ready to produce their best may be rewarded with the tournament of their life.

After years of order with the men and unpredictability with the women, the roles have reversed. Iga Swiatek returns as the overwhelming favourite, seeking her third consecutive French Open title and a fourth in her past five appearances. Swiatek has dominated the clay season, becoming the first player to win the Madrid-Rome double as a four-week format.

In both finals, Swiatek (left) had to hold off Aryna Sabalenka, the world No 2 and clear second favourite, and their rivalry continues to grow. While the Madrid Open final was an instant classic, decided on a final-set tiebreak after Sabalenka missed three match points, Rome was perhaps a better example of how difficult it is to hang with Swiatek in slower clay-court conditions.

Elena Rybakina, the fourth seed, is clearly another contender after defeating Swiatek in the semi-finals of Stuttgart and narrowly losing a spectacular battle with Sabalenka in Madrid, but she appears to be struggling with her immune system as she has been unable to remain healthy.

Coco Gauff, seeded third, has found her form in recent weeks but her 1-10 record against Swiatek is a monumental obstacle now she has been drawn in the Pole's half.

Beyond the top four, the Americans Danielle Collins and Madison Keys stand as more peripheral contenders after recent performances. Still, while there are numerous players performing at an extremely high level, it remains to be seen if anyone can slow down this era of dominance Swiatek continues to establish.

‘Test cricket’s future is complex – the Ashes could become like the Ryder Cup’

Ali Martin



Cricket is changing fast and the modern player sees the bigger picture, says the outgoing union chief Rob Lynch

‘I have never seen a more engaged playing group than we have right now,” says Rob Lynch, the departing chief executive of the Professional Cricketers’ Association. “They want to understand the value of broadcast deals, crowd figures and viewerships. They get the economics and they get their value. That’s the real difference these days.”

After four and a half years at the players’ union, the 41-year-old Lynch is about to move on, a role as director of cricket operations at the MCC too enticing to turn down. It is also a return of sorts, the former New Zealand Under-19s batter having been part of the young cricketers scheme at Lord’s back in the day when their first choice, a certain Brendon McCullum, was in two minds about a rugby career.

Over a coffee, Lynch admits the timing of his move is suboptimal given 2024 features six big negotiations between the PCA and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) that will shape the next five years. Still, his insight into how the modern player thinks underlines how the rise of Twenty20 franchise leagues has altered the traditional career path of simply county cricket and, if good enough, England.

“It’s now a global employment landscape,” says Lynch. “The modern cricketer has more opportunities than ever. The massive growth area that is not accepted as much as it should be is players who are just below the England team and the life they can live through playing in private competitions. I have seen uncapped players jump from five-figure wages to six pretty rapidly in my time.

“If we as a game don’t get this next phase of the sport right I believe we will have English-developed players who see July and August as the time to lie on a beach in Spain because, right now, the Hundred and the Blast are some of the lower-earning opportunities. We had 79 male players playing overseas last winter and the question is: how do we maintain their interest in English cricket?”

It is a question that is becoming increasingly acute, with the PCA seeking a “small” reduction in the volume of county cricket and the Hundred on the verge of private investment. The Pakistan Super League (PSL) is also due to coincide with the Indian Premier League from next year – and thus the first two months of the County Championship – potentially pulling away more talent.

“The PSL could fast-forward things,” Lynch says. “In 10 years, the game will look very different. At the top end, I can see players becoming more like tennis pros or golfers, with their own physios, coaches and managers, servicing themselves to be self-sustainable.

“Every year, the PCA holds rookie camps and we ask players where they focus their skills. I was convinced initially it would be white-ball or both formats, but it’s still red-ball or both. I’d urge the PCA to ask again down the line, because when the 18-year-old on a minimum contract starts to do well and can earn six figures playing around the world, they may well see things differently.”

Those negotiations reflect the start of a new broadcast deal from 2025 and cover memorandums of understanding for England’s men and women, the standard contract for county men and tier one women’s players, commercial rights and the continuing relationship between the ECB and PCA. While the Sky deal was renewed with only a small inflationary increase, it is clear the players want a greater slice of the pie.

“The starting point is: what is the value of the England men’s and women’s programme to English cricket?” says Lynch. “We believe the current percentage is not reflective of the true value that those two teams bring to the game. We are openly saying we want to work with you [the ECB] to understand how you have come to this figure, because we need to get this right.”

It was notable that when England handed out multi-year central contracts last October, Ben Stokes signed on for only 12 months. Lynch cites the Test captain as a prime example of a player who knows his value and sees the bigger picture.

“Ben is very, very engaged,” says Lynch. “And he has some strong views. The same goes for [the England Women’s captain] Heather Knight. Equally, the players also know their responsibility to the growth of the whole game; it’s a delicate balance. We love it, because there is nothing worse than not having that engagement.”

Lynch is “in awe” of what Stokes and McCullum are doing to invigorate Test cricket through their attacking play. “The future of Test cricket is a complex question to answer but also *the* question. The ECB will tell you India and Australia are committed to it but broaden it out to the other boards, I’m not sure they’ll say the same, purely because of the economics. I don’t know if I’m excited or scared. In time the Ashes could become a standalone event, like the Ryder Cup.”

When Covid struck in 2020, it was Test cricket that the English game rushed to save first because the truth – sometimes wilfully ignored by a sport in thrall to T20 – is that the longest format still pays the bulk of the bills in this country. The pandemic also coincided with Lynch’s arrival at the PCA, first as commercial director before a jump to chief executive within months.

“The isolation and the hotel lockdowns were brutal,” he says. “Being away from families, testing, the mental and emotional impact of it. It feels like a dream now. But I’m proud the PCA didn’t make any redundancies and also the players saved the game £17.5m in pay cuts and by waiving prize money.”

While Lynch now heads to Lord’s, the new role’s appeal partly down to MCC potentially becoming team owners in the Hundred, those robust conversations will only continue.



‘Ben Stokes is very, very engaged in the game’s future. He has some strong views on it all’
PCA head Rob Lynch



Archer quick off the mark on return to set up victory

Fast bowler clocks 90mph on the speed gun on his comeback from injury as Buttler leads the way to put England 1-0 up against Pakistan

Ali Martin
Edgbaston

On a day when Jos Buttler crackled with the bat and regular wickets derailed Pakistan’s run chase, the biggest plus for England at the start of their T20 World Cup buildup was an unscathed return for Jofra Archer, 62 weeks since his last cap.

It has been a tortured road back for Archer, a long-standing battle with elbow stress fractures leading him to question whether another setback could be overcome. Playing a full part on the field was the first box to be ticked and, as England defended their 183 for seven for a 23-run win and a 1-0 lead, the Sharpie could come out of the pot.

If there were nerves, they were not obvious. Rustiness was probably inevitable and Archer’s first over taken for 15 runs amid an incendiary 21-ball 45 from Fakhar Zaman. But come the end, the figures read two for 28 from four overs and, perhaps just as encouragingly, 90mph had been breached on the speed gun.

Buttler said of him: “I thought



Jofra Archer unleashes a delivery during an encouraging first appearance for England in more than a year

ED SYKES/REUTERS

he was brilliant. You can see the emotion, taking wickets again. He's not just going to be the Jofra Archer of old straight away, but it was a really positive performance ... I thought the whole bowling group was brilliant."

Given the margin of victory, Archer's cameo with bat was also handy. Buttler had been at his clinical best up top, a 51-ball 84 taking his side to 144 for two in the 15th over before a collapse of five for 39 followed. Among this wobble came an unbeaten 12 from Archer, skewing his first ball for four before properly middling Mohammad Amir over long-on for six.

The acid test was always going to be with the ball, however, Archer offering a reminder of the threat last seen at home in 2020 – and a year earlier with supporters in the stands. After a tricky first set of six he returned for the 12th over, Azam Khan chipping to cover off the first ball to make it 91 for five; Imad Wasim later holed out during the final rites. Solid work, with the promise of more to follow.

Overall, and beyond the result, England could perhaps have taken a touch more out of this match six days before the flight to Barbados. Pakistan fought back well with the ball and in the field, Imad's left-arm darts picking up figures of two for 19. But a slightly ponderous start to the run chase, while corrected by Fakhar's bristling emergence at No 4, exposed a possible lack of firepower lower down.

The fall of Fakhar in the 13th over to make it 100 for six was the clincher. The former naval officer had stepped out on deck at 14 for two and in a murderous mood, sending the largely pro-Pakistan crowd into delirium. But when attempting to smoke a fourth six off Liam Livingstone, he was undone by a smart bit of extra width from the all-rounder.

This was a reminder of Buttler's options with the ball, Livingstone the sixth man used and all six among the wickets here. Given the likelihood of spin playing a big role in the Caribbean, two wickets for Moeen Ali – including Babar Azam lbw for 32 – and Adil Rashid looking smooth after a 15-week break augurs well. Chris Jordan, it almost goes without saying, held a couple of sublime catches.

Perhaps the biggest curio was Babar opting to bowl at a ground where all seven previous T20 internationals had been won by the side batting first. England's strategy is slightly easier to comprehend, the aggression of Phil Salt (13 from nine) and Will Jacks (37 from 23) allowing Buttler the breathing space to construct an innings.

If the form witnessed from Buttler here rolls over into the T20 World Cup – he looks in a far better place than in India last winter – captains will think twice before sticking England in. That said, while Buttler purred in 360-degree fashion – not least one audacious reverse-sweep six off the slightly bereft Shadab Khan – the middle-order collapse that followed the end of Jonny Bairstow's stop-start 21 was suboptimal.

Still, given the significance of Archer's return and all 10 wickets claimed by his attack, the reasons to grumble were far outweighed by the upside.

Scoreboard

Edgbaston England beat Pakistan by 23 runs

England innings

PD Salt c Afridi b Imad Wasim	13
***†JC Buttler** c Shadab Khan b Rauf	84
WG Jacks c Shadab Khan b Rauf	37
JM Bairstow c Ahmed b Afridi	21
HC Brook b Imad Wasim	1
Moeen Ali c Rizwan b Afridi	4
LS Livingstone not out	2
CJ Jordan c Rauf b Afridi	3
JC Archer not out	12
Extras (lb5, w1)	6
Total (for 7, 20 overs)	183

Fall 25, 96, 144, 147, 164, 165, 169.
Did not bat Adil Rashid, RJW Topley.
Bowling Afridi 4-0-36-3; Mohammd Amir 4-0-34-0; Imad Wasim 4-0-19-2; Rauf 4-0-34-2; Shadab Khan 4-0-55-0.

Pakistan innings

Muhammad Rizwan c Livingstone b Moeen	0
Saim Ayub c Salt b Topley	2
***Babar Azam** lbw b Moeen	32
Fakhar Zaman c Brook b Livingstone	45
Shadab Khan c Jordan b Rashid	3
†Azam Khan c Moeen b Archer	11
Iftikhar Ahmed c Jordan b Topley	23
Imad Wasim c Livingstone b Archer	22
Shaheen Afridi c Salt b Topley	9
Mohammd Amir b Jordan	5
Haris Rauf not out	3
Extras (w4, nb1)	5
Total (19.2 overs)	160

Fall 0, 14, 67, 78, 91, 100, 140, 147, 154.
Bowling Moeen 4-0-26-2; Topley 3.2-0-41-3; Archer 4-0-28-2; Jordan 4-0-31-1; Rashid 3-0-25-1; Livingstone 1-0-9-1.
Toss Pakistan elected to field
Umpires MJ Saggers and M Burns.

County roundup

Stokes in rude health to roll out sickly Somerset

Tanya Aldred
Emirates Old Trafford

While Jofra Archer flamed at Edgbaston, Ben Stokes eased into full throttle at Chester-le-Street, bowling 10 overs on the bounce in a match-winning spell of four for 23; eight for 77 in the match.

Durham's innings victory, in less than five sessions, came after they had shimmied a first-innings lead of 94, thanks to a last-wicket partnership of 66 between Ben Raine and Peter Siddle. This was particularly frustrating for **Somerset**, who had reduced Durham to within touching distance at 199 for nine. Downhearted, and hampered by sickness, they then disintegrated for 88.

At Old Trafford, the former **Lancashire** batter Alex Davies carried his bat, his 127 taking **Warwickshire** to a batting point. Lancashire lost three wickets in reply; though Keaton Jennings remains.

Hampshire continued to grind **Surrey** into the dust at Southampton, building up a lead of 368 thanks to a maiden century from Toby Albert and 103 for Nick Gubbins. Ben Brown was stranded on 99 at stumps.



Jordan Cox (left) had a happy return to Canterbury, thrashing 207 in 255 balls against **Kent** as **Essex** made 591 for seven. At New Road, **Worcestershire** suffered a sobering day, bowled out for 80 against **Nottinghamshire**. Matt Lamb hit 207 for **Gloucestershire** against **Derbyshire**; John Simpson and Cheteshwar Pujara picked up centuries for **Sussex** at Lord's, Peter Handscomb knocked up his second ton of the season for **Leicestershire** and Luke Procter his first in almost two years for **Northamptonshire**.

Scoreboards

VITALITY COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP
Division one (second day of four)

Durham v Somerset

Riverside Durham (20pts) beat Somerset (3) by an innings and six runs

Somerset First innings 171 (M Pretorious 53; BA Stokes 4-54)
Durham First innings (overnight 177-6)

DG Bedingham c Rew b Ball	101
CF Parkinson c Rew b Ball	15
P Coughlin c Lammonby b Overton	2
BA Raine c Rew b Gregory	46
PM Siddle not out	31
Extras (lb6, nb4)	10
Total (61.5 overs)	265

Fall 3, 12, 19, 133, 145, 161, 180, 183, 199.
Bowling Overton 22-4-84-3; Davey 9-1-44-0; Ball 20-3-62-5; Gregory 6.5-0-49-1; Leach 4-0-20-0.

Somerset Second innings

TB Abell c Robinson b Raine	2
MT Renshaw b Siddle	6
TA Lammonby c Robinson b Stokes	14
ARI Umeed c Ackermann b Stokes	16
JH Davey c Ackermann b Coughlin	7
†JEK Rew c Robinson b Stokes	7
***L Gregory** lbw b Raine	7
C Overton c Ackermann b Stokes	6
MJ Leach b Raine	13
JT Ball not out	2
T Banton absent	0
Extras (b4, lb4)	8
Total (33.4 overs)	88

Fall 8, 12, 34, 45, 57, 61, 69, 77, 88.
Did not bat M Pretorius.
Bowling Raine 8.4-1-26-3; Siddle 9-1-15-1; Stokes 10-2-23-4; Coughlin 6-1-16-1.

Hampshire v Surrey

Rose Bowl Hampshire (5pts) lead Surrey (1) by 368 runs with six first-innings wickets remaining
Surrey First innings 127 (KJ Abbott 5-24)
Hampshire First innings (overnight 102-1)

TE Albert c Atkinson b Abbott	114
NRT Gubbins c Pope b Worrall	103
***JM Vince** c Smith b Worrall	52
†BC Brown not out	99
LA Dawson not out	74
Extras (b4, lb3, nb6, w5)	18
Total (for 4, 143 overs)	495

Fall 51, 252, 303, 338.
To bat FS Organ, JK Fuller, KHD Barker, MG Neser, KJ Abbott.
Bowling Worrall 27-8-53-2; Clark 20-5-50-0; Lawrence 30-0-126-1; Abbott 17-4-41-1; Atkinson 22-1-77-0; C Steel 27-0-141-0

Kent v Essex

Canterbury Kent (1pt) trail Essex (3) by 473 runs with six first-innings wickets remaining
Essex First innings (overnight 287-4)

JM Cox b O'Riordan	207
†MKS Pepper c Sub b Bhuiyan	82
SR Harmer c Denly b Parkinson	6
S Snater not out	83
Extras (b15, lb5, w5, nb12)	37
Total (for 7 dec, 142.4 overs)	591

Fall 146, 170, 194, 225, 391, 398, 591.
Did not bat AP Beard, SJ Cook, JA Porter.
Bowling Agar 7-1-21-0; Stewart 26-2-91-0; Bhuiyan 26-5-114-2; Evison 29-5-93-2; O'Riordan 11.4-3-36-1; Parkinson 32-0-151-2; Denly 11-0-65-0.

Kent First innings

BG Compton lbw b Critchley	41
Z Crawley c Elgar b Cook	16
***DJ Bell-Drummond** c Pepper b Beard	16
MK O'Riordan lbw b Critchley	30
JL Denly not out	4
MW Parkinson not out	10
Extras (lb1)	1
Total (for 4, 47 overs)	118

Fall 24, 48, 96, 105.
To bat †HZ Finch, JDM Evison, G Stewart, WA Agar, A Bhuiyan
Bowling Porter 10-4-21-0; Cook 6-1-19-1; Snater 2-0-13-0; Beard 10-3-15-1; Harmer 12-5-30-0; Critchley 7-1-19-2.

Lancashire v Warwickshire

Old Trafford Lancashire (3pts) trail Warwickshire (1) by 218 runs with seven first-innings wickets remaining
Warwickshire First innings (overnight 89-3)

RM Yates b Bailey	19
***AL Davies** not out	127
WMH Rhodes c Hurst b Bailey	14
E Barnard c Hurst b Bailey	2
DR Mousley c Jennings b Balderson	2
J Bethell lbw b Morley	40
†MGK Burgess lbw b Balderson	24
JB Lintott c Hurst b Lyon	9
Hasan Ali c Bruce b Wells	29
MD Rae lbw b Wells	0
OJ Hannon-Dalby lbw b Morley	0
Extras (b1, lb5, nb12)	18
Total (110.5 overs)	284

Fall 38, 74, 82, 93, 167, 209, 231, 271, 275.
Bowling Bailey 24-9-49-3; Balderson 23-5-65-2; Lyon 34-9-75-1; Aspinwall 11-2-41-0; Morley 14.5-1-34-2; Wells 4-1-14-2.

Lancashire First innings

LWP Wells c Yates b Hannon-Dalby	0
***KK Jennings** not out	12
JJ Bohannon c Yates b Hannon-Dalby	12
G Bell c Hannon-Dalby b Lintott	40
Extras (b1, w1)	2
Total (for 3, 29.1 overs)	66

Fall 0, 12, 66.
To bat GP Balderson, TC Bruce, †M Hurst, T Aspinwall, TE Bailey, J Morley, NM Lyon.
Bowling Hannon-Dalby 7-2-19-2; Rae 5-4-8-0; Yates 7-0-16-0; Hasan Ali 3-0-17-0; Bethell 5-4-1-0; Lintott 2.1-0-4-1.

Worcestershire v Nottinghamshire

New Road Nottinghamshire (3pts) lead Worcestershire (0) by 154 runs with seven first-innings wickets remaining
Worcestershire First innings

EJ Pollock b Pennington	1
JD Libby c Harrison b Fletcher	2
†GH Roderick c Harrison b Fletcher	2
RP Jones c Moores b Fletcher	19
AJ Hose c & b Pennington	11
***BL D'Oliveira** lbw b James	2
MJ Waite c Moores b James	16
NG Smith lbw b Paterson	1
J Leach c Slater b Paterson	3
AW Finch c Moores b Pennington	9
BJ Gibbon not out	5
Extras (w1, nb8)	9
Total (31.1 overs)	80

Fall 3, 3, 16, 29, 34, 56, 61, 61, 66.
Bowling Fletcher 9-5-18-3; Pennington 10.1-3-25-3; James 5-0-22-2; Paterson 7-3-15-2.

Nottinghamshire First innings

***H Hameed** lbw b Waite	100
BT Slater c Gibbon b Smith	41
WA Young b Smith	2
JM Clarke not out	73
LJ Fletcher not out	1
Extras (lb5, nb12)	17
Total (for 3, 72 overs)	234

Fall 77, 85, 232.
To bat †TJ Moores, JA Haynes, LW James, CG Harrison, D Pennington, D Paterson.
Bowling Leach 13-3-42-0; Smith 14-4-31-2; Waite 12-4-27-1; Finch 13-0-61-0; D'Oliveira 5-0-21-0; Gibbon 13-3-45-0; Libby 2-0-2-0.

Division two (second day of four)

Gloucestershire v Derbyshire

Bristol Gloucestershire (1pt) trail Derbyshire (5) by 283 runs with six first-innings wickets remaining
Derbyshire First innings (overnight 434-5)

M Lamb c Bracey b Dale	207
AK Dal c Bracey b Dale	62
AT Thomson lbw b Webster	2
Z Chappell c Hammond b Webster	7
S Conners b Webster	0
DM Dupavillon not out	4
Extras (b2, lb11, nb14)	27
Total (125.4 overs)	526

Fall 51, 60, 69, 296, 409, 487, 492, 520, 520.
Bowling Taylor 23-5-93-0; Dale 22.4-3-84-2; Webster 26-4-100-6; De Lange 26-2-95-2; Middleton 11-0-46-0; Price 13-0-70-0; Van Buuren 4-0-25-0.

Gloucestershire First innings

CT Bancroft b Conners	9
B Charlesworth c Guest b Chappell	40
OJ Price c Reece b Chappell	3
MAH Hammond b Dal	18
†JR Bracey not out	87
***GL van Buuren** not out	61
Extras (b5, lb10, nb10)	25
Total (for 4, 66 overs)	243

Fall 15, 34, 63, 131.
To bat BJ Webster, E Middleton, M de Lange, MD Taylor, AS Dale
Bowling Dupavillon 12-1-57-0; Conners 14-4-45-1; Chappell 10-3-23-2; Dal 10-2-39-1; Thomson 11-2-36-0; Reece 8-0-23-0; Lloyd 1-0-5-0.

Leicestershire v Glamorgan

Grace Road Leicestershire (3pts) trail Glamorgan (3) by 107 runs with five first-innings wickets remaining
Glamorgan First innings (overnight 352-8)

SA Northeast c Cox b Currie	61
JAR Harris c Cox b Mike	18
Mir Hamza not out	24
Extras (b3, lb4, nb14)	21
Total (104.5 overs)	387

Fall 90, 107, 190, 246, 251, 254, 277, 339, 352.
Bowling Salisbury 21-3-98-1; Holland 25-5-75-0; Scriven 4-0-17-0; Currie 26-5-64-5; Mike 21.5-2-105-3; Kimber 7-1-21-1.

Leicestershire First innings

RK Patel c Cooke b van der Gugten	27
MS Harris lbw b Hamza	14
L Kimber c Cooke b van der Gugten	1
***LJ Hill** c Root b Harris	92
PSP Handscomb not out	102
IG Holland c Cooke b Harris	16
SW Currie not out	13
Extras (lb9, nb2, b4)	15
Total (for 5, 85 overs)	280

Fall 37, 38, 65, 206, 255.
To bat †OB Cox, BWM Mike, TAR Scriven, MET Salisbury.
Bowling Hamza 12-3-41-1; Van der Gugten 13-2-31-2; Ul-Hassan 12-2-24-0; Harris 11-2-41-0; Crane 4-0-15-0; Carlson 1-0-1-0.

Middlesex v Sussex

Lord's Middlesex (1pt) trail Sussex (3) by 492 runs with nine first-innings wickets remaining
Sussex First innings (overnight 295-4)

CA Pujara c Stoneman b Fernandes	129
***†JA Simpson** b Bamber	167
FJ Hudson-Prentice c Davies b Hollman	28
DJ Lamb c&b Hollman	49
JJ Carson c Higgins b Brookes	14
OE Robinson not out	22
Extras (b5, lb6, nb18)	29
Total (for 9 dec, 164.3overs)	554

Fall 66, 80, 92, 164, 387, 432, 490.
To bat NT Seales.
Bowling Bamber 36-7-114-3; Helm 28-6-82-0; Higgins 25-6-57-1; Brookes 27-2-120-2; Fernandes 13-0-53-1; Hollman 35.3-1-117-2.

Middlesex First innings

SD Robson not out	40
MD Stoneman c Clark b Robinson	4
MDE Holden not out	18
Extras	0
Total (for 1, 19 overs)	62

Fall 13.
To bat *JL du Plooy; RF Higgins; N Fernandes; †JLB Davies; LBK Hollman; TG Helm; HJH Brookes; ER Bamber.
Bowling Robinson 8-3-15-1; Seales 6-0-19-0; Lamb 2-0-14-0; Coles 3-0-14-0

Northamptonshire v Yorkshire

Northampton Yorkshire (6pts) trail Northamptonshire (5) by 61 runs with nine second-innings wickets remaining
Yorkshire First innings (overnight 312-7)

ML Revis lbw b Sanderson	27
JA Thompson lbw b Sanderson	53
D Leech b Keogh	0
MVT Fernando not out	0
Extras (b15, lb17, nb8)	40
Total (104.1 overs)	362

Fall 86, 202, 229, 239, 249, 268, 281, 361, 362.
Bowling Sanderson 24.1-9-63-2; White 22-8-56-0; Kaul 16-1-81-2; Procter 21-5-63-3; Broad 11-0-38-1; Keogh 10-0-29-2.

Northamptonshire First innings

R Vasconcelos c Tattersall b Fernando	34
EN Gay c Lyth b Hill	32
***L Procter** not out	116
KK Nair c Hill b Revis	8
GA Bartlett c Bean b Revis	0
RI Keogh c Sub b Leech	28
†LD McManus c Thompson b Lyth	10
J Broad c Hill b Thompson	0
BW Sanderson lbw b Fernando	25
S Kaul c Bean b Fernando	5
CJ White c Leech b Fernando	21
Extras (b5, lb13, nb4)	22
Total (82 overs)	301

Fall 56, 93, 116, 116, 154, 176, 181, 231, 243.
Bowling Fernando 19-4-48-4; Thompson 17-5-68-1; Leech 11-5-62-1; Hill 17-2-60-1; Lyth 3-1-5-1; Revis 15-4-40-2

Yorkshire Second innings

DJ Leech c Broad b Sanderson	0
A Lyth not out	0
Extras	0
Total (for 1, 0.3 overs)	0

Fall 0.
To bat FJ Bean, *Shan Masood, JH Wharton, WA Luxton, GCH Hill, †JA Tattersall, JA Thompson, ML Revis, MVT Fernando
Bowling Sanderson 0.3-0-0-1

TUDOR

BORN TO DARE

What is it that drives someone to greatness? To take on the unknown, venture into the unseen and dare all? This is the spirit that gave birth to TUDOR, a spirit carried forward by every woman and man who wears this watch. Without it, there is no story, no legend and no victory. This is the spirit that drives the **TUDOR Pro Cycling Team** every single day. This is the spirit embodied by every TUDOR Watch. Some are born to follow. Others are born to dare.



PELAGOS FXD CHRONO