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Reeves pledges to close gender pay gap 'once and for all' if Labour wins

Exclusive
Pippa Crerar
Political editor

Rachel Reeves has promised to close the gender pay gap "once and for all" and make flexible working the norm if she becomes Britain's first female chancellor.

In an interview with the Guardian, the shadow chancellor said that she wanted to shatter the "last glass ceiling in politics" and felt a "big responsibility" to use the Treasury to improve the position of women across the country, including by making sure they were properly rewarded at work.

A Labour government would make flexible working the default from day one for all workers, except where it was not reasonably feasible, while big companies with more than 250 staff would be required to publish, and then bring in, action plans to close the gender pay gap.

Reeves said she planned to pull other policy levers including creating more nursery places and free school breakfast clubs, reviewing parental leave within the first year of government, and working with business to appoint more female executives.

The gender pay gap in the UK currently stands at 14.3%, according to the TUC, and would take 20 years to wipe out if it continues to fall at the same rate. It is worse in some sectors including finance, banking, law and education.

In her interview, Reeves said she was inspired by influential Labour women including Barbara Castle, who brought in the Equal Pay Act, Harriet Harman, who introduced the Equality Act, and Ellen Wilkinson, one of the first Labour women in parliament.

> *'This will be the last big job in government a woman has never done. We've not had a woman in charge of the nation's finances'*
>
> **Rachel Reeves**
> *Shadow chancellor*

"I feel like in many ways, I'm standing on their shoulders and the same way that they have made achievements for women, I want to do the same," she said.

"In the position of chancellor, I believe the biggest

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PHOTOGRAPH: GAVRIIL GRIGOROV/SPUTNIK/KREMLIN POOL

Alarm as Kim and Putin sign mutual defence pact

Kim Jong-un and Vladimir Putin in Pyongyang yesterday, where they agreed a mutual defence pact that commits North Korea and Russia to come to each other's aid if they are attacked. **News** *Page 4* →

Protection officer for PM held in bets inquiry

Ben Quinn
Vikram Dodd

One of Rishi Sunak's close protection officers has been arrested on suspicion of misconduct in public office over alleged bets about the timing of the general election.

The news comes a week on from the Guardian's revelation that Rishi Sunak's closest parliamentary aide, Craig Williams, had placed a £100 bet on a July election three days before the prime minister named the date.

As a result of that incident, the Gambling Commission did a wider investigation and found information that led to the decision to investigate the officer. The Metropolitan police said they were contacted last Friday by the regulator, which told them it was investigating alleged bets related to the timing of an election by a constable from the Met's royalty and specialist protection command.

"The matter was immediately referred to officers in the Met's directorate of professional standards, who opened an investigation, and the officer was also

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Pressure on families 'still acute' despite fall in inflation to 2% target

Phillip Inman

The shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, has said pressure on household finances remains "acute" despite official figures showing inflation fell to 2% in May, returning to the official target rate for the first time in nearly three years.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said the consumer prices index (CPI) had eased in May, down from 2.3% in April, raising expectations of a cut in borrowing costs by the Bank of England.

Lower prices growth will give encouragement to Rishi Sunak after the prime minister made bringing inflation under control one of his main aims. The release of the inflation figures represents one of the last significant economic indicators before the election on 4 July.

Sunak said the fall in inflation was "great news" and meant consumer prices were rising at a slower rate than in Germany, France and the US. "When I became prime minister inflation was at 11%. But we took bold action. We stuck to a clear plan and that's why the economy has now turned a corner," he said.

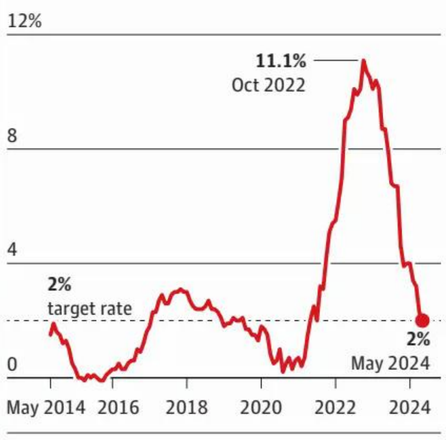
▼ *Official figures showed food and beverage price rises eased, helping to bring inflation down in May*
PHOTOGRAPH: MAJA SMIEJKOWSKA/REUTERS

However, Reeves said inflation under the Conservatives had left "working people worse off".

She told the BBC: "Of course it's welcome that inflation has returned to target for the first time in nearly three years.

"But, unlike Conservative ministers, I'm not going to claim that everything is all fine, that the cost of living crisis is over, because I know that pressures on family finances are still acute, because, while inflation is down, of course, those higher prices still remain. Prices have risen in the shops, mortgage bills are higher and taxes are at a 70-year high."

UK inflation falls back to official 2% target
Annual CPI inflation rate, %



Source: Office for National Statistics

The general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, Paul Nowak, said the fall in inflation masked three years when "UK families have suffered the highest prices rises in the G7 – with inflation going up more over that period than it usually does over an entire decade".

The decline in inflation was in line with predictions from City economists and marks the first time it has hit the Bank's 2% target since July 2021. The central bank is still expected to keep interest rates at 5.25% when it publishes its decision tomorrow.

Until recently, financial markets were betting the Bank would make its first cut in the cost of borrowing at a meeting in November. Investors now expect the first cut in September and a further cut in December.

The Bank's monetary policy committee (MPC) aims to keep inflation at about 2% but has forecast a rise later in the year back towards 3%, before a fall again next year to 2%.

Figures from the ONS showed the rise in the cost of food and beverages eased along with furniture and the price of household goods.

Analysts said the high level of core inflation, which excludes volatile items such as food and fuel, would be of concern to the central bank.

Core inflation was 3.5% in the 12 months to May, down from 3.9% in April. The rising price of services, which eased from 5.9% to 5.7%, was one of the main factors keeping core inflation elevated. Service industries have complained that they experienced increased IT and labour costs, which they were forced to pass on to consumers. Average wages excluding bonuses rose by 6% in the three months to the end of April.

Sanjay Raja, chief UK economist at Deutsche Bank Research, said services inflation was "the key gauge watched by policymakers" and there was a widening gap with the central bank's forecasts. "The wedge between the Bank's projection and actual data widened a little more, adding to concerns that services prices may be a little stickier than anticipated. It will raise the bar for an August rate cut."

However, the Confederation of British Industry said a cut in the cost of borrowing was likely in August. The business lobby group's principal economist, Martin Sartorius, said: "Today's data sets the stage for the MPC to cut interest rates in August, in line with our latest forecast's expectations."

Housing costs, which include mortgage interest payments, property transaction charges and maintenance bills, increased by 6.7% over the past year, up from 6.6% in the 12 months to April. The ONS said it was the highest annual rate since records began in 1992. Housing is not included in the CPI. An alternative index that includes owner-occupier's housing costs, the consumer prices index including housing (CPIH), also fell, from 3% in April to 2.8% in May.

In May last year, inflation rose by 8.7%, down from more than 11% in October 2022, the highest rate in more than 40 years.

Prepaying school fees to avoid VAT 'ill-advised', warn experts

Sally Weale
Richard Adams

Parents paying several years' worth of private school fees in advance to escape Labour's plans to add VAT could be "sleepwalking" into protracted tax disputes, experts have warned.

Advance payment schemes have been available for years at some independent schools. But since Labour confirmed its plans to add VAT of 20% to school fees, the uptake has increased sharply.

Tax experts are concerned schools using the schemes could face legal challenges from HMRC in the future, and be left with a huge tax bill they could then try to pass on to parents.

Dan Neidle, head of the thinktank Tax Policy Associates, said schools that in the past saw only a couple of parents each year using the prepayment schemes now have dozens signing up.

"The schemes in many cases have been around for years. They weren't used very often," said Neidle.

"They started to be used a lot more in the past couple of years and schools that didn't have them before introducing them as a way – they thought – to escape VAT on private school fees."

He said the idea behind the schemes is that by paying several years' fees in advance, the "time of supply" is now and parents can remain unaffected by the addition of VAT should Labour get into power.

Neidle warned that school advance fee schemes do not work in the same way as other advance payments. Parents paying school fees in advance are not paying an agreed sum and buying a product, they are paying a deposit with the school that is drawn on to pay each term's fees. If fees increase, and the total is used up more quickly, the parents will have to pay more.

"It's not really like a prepayment at all," he said. "The question is: at what point are fees taxable? Is it at the point of prepayment, which is what they hope, or is it actually at the start of each term?

"Some schools are encouraging parents to pay multiple years in advance. It seems very ill-advised because if this all goes wrong years in the future – and VAT disputes do take years before they go wrong – the school will have a very large bill.

"How's the school going to pay that? They can try to recover the money from the parents. Will they be able to? Will the parents still be around? Will they be in the UK? Will the parents say: 'No, you didn't tell us about the risks'?

"People are not going into this with their eyes open. They're sleepwalking into a potential dispute, doing something complicated without thinking about the risks. I think that's a bad mistake."

Prepayment or advance payment schemes are advertised by many private schools, with some schools potentially allowing prepayment of fees for 12 years, from the start of primary education to the end of sixth form.

With fees averaging £18,000 a year at traditional independent day schools, parents would need about £90,000 to pay five years in advance.

A review of prepayment schemes found that the wording allowed schools to charge parents VAT if required. The Girls' Day School Trust, which operates a chain of independent schools, warns its parents that "prepayments may not be protected from any VAT charge and may become liable for additional amounts to cover any future VAT charge".

Private school fees do not attract VAT at present because of an exemption for education services. Labour has pledged to use the estimated £1.5bn in tax revenue to fund 6,500 new teachers for state schools.

A Labour party spokesperson said: "The next Labour government will break down the barriers to opportunity by investing in our state schools and recruiting over 6,500 new teachers through ending the tax breaks for private schools.

"We will operate VAT rules in the usual way and any government would ensure that the tax owed is properly paid, and we will set out our full plans in government."

£1.5bn
Tax revenue from ending the VAT exemption for private school fees, according to Labour's estimations

▼ *Seaview depicts a home perching on a crumbling coastline, a stark reminder of our changing world*

PHOTO BY GEOFFREY SWAINE/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

A bronze cast of a plastic bag caught in a tree

Coastal erosion sculpture outside cathedral derided as a 'pile of old wood'

Steven Morris

The art installation – a depiction of a house tumbling into the sea – was created to highlight the threat posed by the climate emergency to British coastlines.

But some residents have compared the piece placed on a lawn outside Salisbury Cathedral to a pile of fly-tipped debris or an unlit bonfire and called for it to be removed, saying it is spoiling the view of one of England's most magnificent buildings.

> ***'I was waiting for the bonfire to be lit. Us residents have had no say and have to view this daily'***
>
> **William Cousins**
> *Salisbury resident*

The wooden sculpture, called Seaview, is described by its creator, the Salford-based artist Hilary Jack, as a "dramatic visual representation of the sea reclaiming homes from the coastline in Norfolk".

Another of her pieces, Turquoise Bag in a Tree, a bronze cast of a plastic bag placed in branches, is on show in the cathedral's cloisters as part of an exhibition called Our Earth. But it is Seaview that seems to be causing the most concern.

In a letter to the Salisbury Journal, one resident, Peter Darling, said: "The reaction that I had when I first saw the pile of wood stacked up in front of the cathedral was that the close had been visited by fly-tippers.

"When the many thousands of tourists entering the close from the high street for the first time get that wow factor on seeing this iconic building, they want to take photographs. But not now."

▲ *Artist Hilary Jack says she wanted to spark debate on the climate crisis*

Another, William Cousins, called the work a "pile of old wood" and said it was "incongruous and offensive". He said: "I was waiting for the bonfire to be lit. Us residents in the close have had no say in the matter and instead have to view this timber pile daily to the detriment of the cathedral facade.

"If the objective is to draw attention to the sad situation along coastlines then a better solution would be to erect some large colour photographic posters with householders' comments showing the crumbling cliffs and houses in danger of collapsing into the sea. May this monstrous debacle be removed."

On the paper's Facebook page one person called the sculpture a "mound of wood chip leftovers", another "a blot on the landscape" and a third "more like something your dad would make in the garden".

Not everyone was critical. One person said: "The cathedral has always given space to modern art in its grounds. Some you will like, some you won't. All are temporary. It doesn't interfere with your visit, you can take photos without it in view."

Another said: "It's good to see a work of art inspiring debate. Nothing will ever please everyone, people are too diverse in their influences and opinions for that to happen."

Jack said: "I'm used to the public having strong views on contemporary art. My intention for Seaview at Salisbury Cathedral was to draw attention to the impact of flooding and coastal erosion caused by climate crisis on local and global communities. However, the residents of Salisbury seem to care more about photo ops than the greatest threat to life on earth.

"I also wanted to create debate about climate crisis and the role of contemporary art. It seems that in this context Seaview has achieved my objectives."

Other pieces that form part of the exhibition include a commission by the artist Rebecca Chesney that gives cathedral visitors a chance to listen to birdsong from four continents.

Explaining the aim of the exhibition, the cathedral's art curator, Beth Hughes, said: "The cathedral really is the perfect place to discuss these issues in a spirit of hope for the future. Artists have long been engaged with the environment and through creativity they draw our eye to the overlooked stories, raising our collective appreciation."

A spokesperson for the cathedral said: "We are pleased that it has become a talking point."

Theatre audiences are 'thirsty' for black love stories, says writer

Lanre Bakare
Arts and culture correspondent

Theatre audiences are "thirsty" for romance stories told from a black perspective, according to a playwright who is only the third black British woman to have a production put on in the West End, the heartland of UK commercial theatre.

Benedict Lombe's play Shifters is transferring to the West End this summer. She said she believed the UK was entering a boom in black romance literature and plays led by authors such as Frances Mensah Williams, Dorothy Koomson and Bolu Babalola.

Lombe said: "The resounding feeling was that people came out saying: 'We needed this.' It was like a release."

Shifters sold out at the Bush theatre this year and is transferring to the Duke of York theatre for a nine-week run starting on 12 August.

Written throughout 2023, Shifters is Lombe's second play at the Bush, following her debut, Lava, which won the Susan Smith Blackburn prize in 2022. The play follows the story of a British-Nigerian called Dre, played by Tosin Cole, and Des, played by Heather Agyepong, who are reacquainted after breaking up eight years previously.

Lombe said: "I'm hoping this moment in the West End is an opportunity to shift the canon and change the idea of who gets to tell these stories on these stages."

She said she thought the dearth of black British women in the West End was linked to some of the hostility aimed at black actors and playwrights who appeared in the West End this year. Francesca Amewudah-Rivers was announced as the lead in Jamie Lloyd's adaptation of Romeo and Juliet alongside Tom Holland, and she then received "deplorable" racist abuse online. Before that Jeremy O Harris, whose production Slave Play will be on at the same time as Shifters, was heavily criticised for hosting Black Out performances, which are specifically aimed at black audiences.

▲ *Benedict Lombe's play Shifters will open in the West End in August*

"People haven't seen enough of us," Lombe said. "They haven't seen enough dark-skinned black women on the West End, they haven't seen enough stories directed and written by black British women. I see it as an invitation though – 'what are we going to do about it?'"

That attempt to create different types of stories was crucial, she said, adding: "This play says these stories are for everybody."

Putin and Kim pact raises Nato fears about North Korea's nuclear ambitions

Justin McCurry *Tokyo*
Andrew Roth

The Russian president, Vladimir Putin, and the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, have signed a pact that includes a clause requiring the countries to come to each other's aid if either is attacked, in a move that has raised western concerns about potential Russian aid for Pyongyang's missile or nuclear programmes.

The inclusion of a mutual defence clause in their strategic partnership, which Kim described as an alliance, will add to the west's alarm over growing economic and military ties between North Korea and Russia. The deal was finalised yesterday after hours of talks in the North Korean capital, Pyongyang.

The pact has also increased western concerns about potential Russian aid for North Korea's missile or nuclear programmes.

NBC News yesterday reported that US intelligence officials believe Putin is providing North Korea with nuclear submarine and ballistic missile technology in exchange for arms for his war in Ukraine. Citing six senior US officials, the US news network said the Biden administration was concerned Russia might help North Korea complete the final steps needed to field its first submarine capable of launching a nuclear-armed missile.

It was not clear whether Russian support for ballistic missiles would indicate intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of reaching mainland US, or the short-range ballistic missiles that North Korea has reportedly supplied Russia during the war and could use in the event of a large-scale conflict with South Korea.

"We are of course also concerned about the potential support that Russia provides to North Korea when it comes to supporting their missile and nuclear programmes," said the Nato secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, before the summit.

> ***'We are of course concerned about the potential support'***
>
> **Jens Stoltenberg**
> *Nato secretary general*

The top US arms control official, undersecretary of state Bonnie Jenkins, has said she believes North Korea is keen to acquire fighter aircraft, surface-to-air missiles, armoured vehicles, ballistic missile production equipment or materials, and other advanced technologies from Russia, Reuters reported.

Experts said direct aid for the North Korean regime's weapons programmes would mark a significant shift in Russian policy since the end of the cold war, driven in part by its battlefield needs in Ukraine.

James Acton, co-director of the nuclear policy programme at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said: "The big picture here is how much Russia is reevaluating its interests about a nuclear-armed North Korea."

Russia may view a nuclear-armed North Korea as a "fait accomplit", he said, and have moved from a policy of grudgingly opposing proliferation alongside the US to accepting and protecting the regime in return for material aid in its war in Ukraine.

Neither Russia nor North Korea published the text of the security agreement. It was not immediately clear what form that support might take, and few details of the agreement were made public.

Putin later described the pact as defensive, citing North Korea's right to defend itself, Tass reported. He added that Russia would not rule out developing military-technical cooperation with North Korea.

Kim, speaking after the signing ceremony, called the deal the strongest ever treaty signed between the two countries, elevating their relationship to the "higher level of an alliance".

Putin was met at Pyongyang's international airport by Kim in the early hours of yesterday before they were driven through the capital's brightly lit streets past buildings decorated with Russian flags and portraits of the Russian leader.

Hours later, they attended a welcoming ceremony in Kim Il-sung Square, where they saluted a guard of honour and walked across a red carpet to meet Kim's inner circle.

The two leaders exchanged gifts: a luxury Russian-made Aurus limousine and tea set for Kim, and items for Putin Kremlin aides said were related to his image, "including busts".

Comrades in arms? Questions for the west over mutual aid deal

Justin McCurry
Tokyo

As state visits go, Vladimir Putin's arrival in North Korea yesterday was relatively low-key. There was no long line of senior government officials waiting on the airport tarmac in Pyongyang and only a small guard of honour.

Beneath an ink-black sky, the Russian president stepped off the plane to be greeted by a handshake and a hug from Kim Jong-un before being presented with a bouquet by a woman in a traditional hanbok. But the modesty of the occasion was deceptive.

Putin arrived in the North Korean capital from Moscow via the Russian far east, his convoy making its way to the Kumsusan state guesthouse in the early hours.

Despite – or perhaps because of – the unsociable hour, the two men reportedly shared their "pent-up, inmost thoughts", according to the state-run Korean Central News Agency, but the world would have to wait for how those frustrations would feature in their two-pronged challenge to what Putin reportedly called during his visit the "hegemony and imperialism" of the west.

▲ *Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong-un during yesterday's relatively low-key welcoming ceremony in Pyongyang*
PHOTOGRAPH: GAVRIIL GRIGOROV/AP

The inclusion of a mutual aid clause in their agreement – requiring one country to offer assistance if the other were attacked – was a sign of how far Russia-North Korea ties have come since Putin's first visit to Pyongyang 24 years ago.

But the two leaders' "comprehensive strategic partnership", agreed shortly before Putin left for a two-day visit to Vietnam, was an incomplete account of the summit. And for good reason: why add flesh to the bones of agreements that, in whole or in part, are likely to violate international sanctions against both regimes?

In a repeat of their previous meeting in Vladivostok nine months ago, neither leader was expected to reveal what, if any, agreements had been reached on weaponry for Russia's war in Ukraine in return for technological knowhow or food and energy aid for North Korea.

There was nothing cryptic, though, about the mood music behind the agreement: that this was a meeting of minds built on a mutual necessity so urgent that their nemeses in Washington, Seoul and Tokyo appear powerless to apply the brakes.

When Putin was last in North Korea, his host, Kim Jong-il, was still several years away from overseeing a nuclear test that would for ever change the world's calculations when it came to the country. Almost a quarter of a century on, much of the business being conducted with Pyongyang is clandestine and confined to a small group of allies led by China and Russia. The G8 became the G7 after Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea. Kim Jong-il died more than a decade ago, his youngest – and reportedly most capricious – son now at the helm of a state on the brink of becoming a genuine nuclear power.

Just as 17 years of UN sanctions have failed to derail the younger Kim's quest for a nuclear-backed guarantee against aggression by a "hostile" US, the condemnation that prefaced this week's Pyongyang summit is unlikely to derail the Kim-Putin axis.

Their interests have aligned at a dangerous moment – in Europe, where war continues to rage in Ukraine, and in north-east Asia, where Washington and its allies must contend with a nuclear-armed North Korea and Beijing's intentions towards Taiwan and the South China Sea. But the long-term consequences of their partnership remain unclear.

The full VIP treatment for Putin arrived with daylight in Pyongyang, including a lavish ceremony in Kim Il-sung Square attended by soldiers, an orchestra and balloon-waving children.

How effective that show of hospitality proves for Putin's host remains to be seen. Much will depend on whether Russia agrees to share sensitive military technology with North Korea – something Putin did not rule out – in return for continued material support for Russian troops in Ukraine. Putin could reciprocate with food and energy assistance, as well as help with North Korea's space surveillance programme.

More worrying would be any indication the two states could rekindle their Soviet-era relationship with a Nato-style military alliance that compels Moscow and Pyongyang to come to each other's defence in the event of a conflict. As Putin prepared to leave for Vietnam, it was not clear if the vow of mutual aid if either were attacked would extend to military assistance.

"The answer to that question turns on whether the Russia-North Korea relationship is only a temporary marriage of convenience – or indicative of a deeper, more long-term alliance, akin to the relationship between the two countries during the cold war," Sue Mi Terry, a senior fellow for Korea studies at the Council on Foreign Relations thinktank, wrote on the eve of the talks.

If that latter proves to be the case, the repercussions will be felt well beyond Ukraine and the Korean peninsula.

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Walking three times a week halves risk of recurring back pain, study says

Andrew Gregory
Health editor

Walking three times a week to ease back pain almost halves the risk of recurrence, according to the first study of its kind.

About 800 million people worldwide have lower back pain, and seven in 10 who recover experience flare-ups within a year.

Researchers said the findings, published in the Lancet, show walking could have a "profound impact" on the leading cause of disability worldwide.

"You don't need to be walking 5 or 10km every day to get these benefits," said Mark Hancock, the study's senior author and a professor of physiotherapy at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia.

"Start with short walks then gradually increase the distance and intensity as your fitness increases. Walking is a low-cost, widely accessible and simple exercise that almost anyone can engage in, regardless of geographic location, age or socioeconomic status."

Hancock said people who walked three to five times a week for an average total of 130 minutes a week remained pain-free for nearly twice as long compared with those who did not receive any treatment.

Taking regular steps also improved their quality of life, and the time they had to take off work almost halved, he added.

In the world's first randomised controlled trial assessing the effectiveness of walking to prevent lower back pain recurrence, scientists followed 701 adults for three years who had recently had an episode of lower back pain.

Half were assigned to a walking scheme and received education sessions from a physiotherapist, while the rest, the control group, were not provided with specific intervention.

"The intervention group had fewer occurrences of activity-limiting pain compared to the control group, and a longer average period before they had a recurrence, with a median of 208 days compared to 112 days," said Hancock. "The risk of having a recurrence that required seeking care was nearly halved in those in the intervention group.

"We gave them a rough guide of building up to 30 minutes, five times a week, over a six-month period. After three months, most ... were walking three to five days a week for an average total of 130 minutes."

He added: "We don't know exactly why walking is so good for preventing back pain, but it is likely to include the combination of the gentle oscillatory movements, loading and strengthening the spinal structures and muscles, relaxation and stress relief, and release of 'feel-good' endorphins.

800m
The number of people worldwide with lower back pain. Seven in 10 experience flare-ups within a year

130
The average total minutes a week walked by people in the study over the course of three to five days

"And of course we also know that walking comes with many other health benefits, including cardiovascular health, bone density, healthy weight, and improved mental health."

Rory Fagan joined the trial in 2021, seeking relief from a back injury sustained playing rugby in his 20s. In the three years he has been walking three times a week, he has had just one episode of debilitating pain.

"The thing with back pain is most people's instinct is to not do anything, because even taking a step can send a jolt or spasm up your back," said Fagan. "Exercise is a path to reducing pain in the long term, so if you have a flare-up, you should keep doing what you can."

Prof Kamila Hawthorne, the chair of the Royal College of GPs, welcomed the research and said it was important the results were "taken on board as clinical guidance is developed and updated".

Dr Athalie Redwood-Brown, a senior lecturer in performance analysis in sport at Nottingham Trent University, said the findings had "the potential to transform preventive care, offering a scalable solution that could benefit millions".

Two arrested after Just Stop Oil activists spray paint on Stonehenge

Steven Morris

◀ *Police with protesters at Stonehenge yesterday. Activists urged the government to stop issuing new UK oil and gas licences*

PHOTOGRAPH: TOM BOWLES

Two people have been arrested after Just Stop Oil activists sprayed orange powder paint over the Stonehenge monument.

Rishi Sunak yesterday condemned the action, saying: "This is a disgraceful act of vandalism to one of the UK's and the world's oldest and most important monuments."

Dale Vince, the Labour donor, a past backer of Just Stop Oil, replied to a comment by Sunak that a "certain Labour party donor" should condemn the action, by saying: "Since Rishi Sunak has asked me to comment, I will. I don't support what JSO did ... But there are far worse actions we could focus on, far more harmful - like pushing two million children and their families into poverty."

Keir Starmer called the group "pathetic", adding: "Those responsible must face the full force of the law."

Members of the public attempted to stop the spraying and a visitor wrestled a spray can from a protester.

Wiltshire police said: "We have arrested two people following an incident at Stonehenge this afternoon. At around noon we responded to a report that orange paint had been sprayed on some of the stones by two suspects. Officers attended the scene and arrested two people on suspicion of damaging the ancient monument. Our inquiries are ongoing."

The protest came as thousands of druids and revellers prepared to travel to the monument for the summer solstice.

Sean Moran, a guide, said: "It was devastating. I was very angry. We were having a great time and enjoying it when it happened. There's living lichen on those stones. Biologists from around the world [come] to study it ... did they think of that?"

Paul Anderson, who was visiting the stones from Newcastle upon Tyne, said: "We were around the other side and we saw a lot of orange mist. I can't see how that's good publicity, doing something like that to an ancient monument. Coming from Newcastle, after the Sycamore Gap tree was felled, it beggars belief."

Elaine Anderson, Paul's wife, commented: "It's ruined the day, but not the holiday. I am not going to let them. How dare you? It is the last thing you'd expect."

Mike and Julie, who did not wish to give their surnames and had come from the US to visit Stonehenge, said it was a shame the path around the stones was closed after the incident. Mike said: "They're ruining it for people who've come across the world to have their moment and see it."

In a statement, JSO said that it was time for "megalithic action" and called for the next UK government to agree to a plan to stop the extraction and burning of oil, gas and coal by 2030.

It said: "Continuing to burn coal, oil and gas will result in the death of millions. We have to come together to defend humanity or we risk everything. That's why Just Stop Oil is demanding that our next government sign up to a legally binding treaty to phase out fossil fuels by 2030."

'There are far worse actions we might focus on - like pushing two million children into poverty'

Dale Vince
Labour donor

General election 2024

Reeves promises to eradicate gender pay gap as she aims to become first ever female chancellor

Continued from page 1

impact that I can make to the lives of ordinary women, women who go out to work, is to close the gender pay gap once and for all. That's what I'm setting out to do."

However, Labour would not legally force businesses to reduce the gender pay gap, saying that it wants to work with them instead, although companies would be obliged to implement an action plan.

This would not apply to small businesses "at this stage" as they were already under a lot of pressure, Reeves said.

"This is not about naming and shaming," she added. "It's just saying we recognise there are some sectors, some firms, where historically there have been a lot more men than women, but everybody can do something to close that gender pay gap."

Reeves, who will become the first female chancellor in UK history if Labour wins the election on 4 July, conceded that while it would be an achievement, it also brought with it a significant responsibility.

"I hope that one of the things that I can do if I become the first ever female chancellor is show that there are no jobs that women can't do," she said. "This will be the last big job in government that a woman has never done. We've never had a woman in charge of the nation's finances. I think that carries with it a big responsibility … It's the last glass ceiling in politics."

Reeves wants women to occupy 50% of the seats on company boards – the figure currently stands at 42% – but said there should be more focus on increasing numbers of female executives. Just a handful of FTSE 100 firms have them.

14.3%

The gender pay gap in the UK. At the current rate of progress it will take another 20 years to wipe out

"The area where still a lot more progress needs to be made is women in executive positions … I want women on the board not just as non-execs but also as execs making the day-to-day decisions."

Labour has said it would open 3,000 new nurseries in school settings after signing up to the government's policy to offer 30 hours of free childcare a week to parents of children aged nine months and over, starting next year.

Reeves denied there was a lack of funding to recruit more staff, despite a study by the Department for Education suggesting that the government would need to recruit 40,000 more workers by next September to fulfil its pledge.

"The government has already funded the additional places but the problem is it's difficult for parents to take up those places because they don't exist," she said. "So at the moment the money is not being spent because parents can't get the places in nursery."

It would also provide fully funded breakfast clubs for every primary school in England, which Reeves

'It's the last glass ceiling in politics'

The woman with her eyes on No 11

Pippa Crerar
Political editor

After a long day out on the election campaign trail across the south of England, Rachel Reeves was heading back to her home in London to do some late-night cooking with leftovers from Sunday lunch.

"I don't like waste," she explained, when asked if she was as cautious in her own household as she has promised to be with the nation's finances, despite pressure from within the Labour party to be more ambitious.

"We had roast lamb at the weekend. I'm worried there's a lot of lamb left in the fridge so I'm going to make a curry when I get home late this evening and whack it in the freezer so it will be ready after the general election."

Reeves relishes her reputation for fiscal prudence and has promised to be the "iron chancellor" who will get the UK economy back on track. If the polls are accurate, her lamb curry will end up in the freezer at 11 Downing Street.

It would be a historic moment. In the hundreds of years that the post has existed, it has only ever been held by a man. In the last 14 years alone, there have been seven Conservative chancellors. Again, all men.

"I hope that one of the things that I can do if I become the first ever female chancellor of the exchequer is show that there are no jobs that women can't do. This will be the last big job in government that a woman has never done.

"You've had a woman defence secretary, foreign secretary, home secretary, prime minister and speaker of the House of Commons. We've never had a woman in charge of the nation's finances. I think that carries with it a big responsibility … It's the last glass ceiling in politics," said Reeves.

Sitting at a high table in the staff canteen at a Morrisons supermarket in Swindon, Reeves said the prospect of becoming chancellor made her reflect on the Labour women she admired across history.

They include Ellen Wilkinson, who as education minister in the 1940s raised the school leaving age; Barbara Castle, who as employment secretary brought in the Equal Pay Act 1970; and Harriet Harman, who introduced the Equality Act as minister for women in 2010.

But during each of the periods they were in office, their governments invested huge sums of money in public services. In contrast, Reeves has warned about the tough choices ahead, with the Institute for Fiscal Studies warning of a "conspiracy of silence" over looming spending cuts.

Despite pressure to invest more to avoid more crippling austerity, she refuses to speculate on what she would prioritise if she could loosen the public purse strings.

"I'm not going to do that. I don't want to make promises without saying where the money is going to come from. There have been so many broken promises by politicians these last few years," she said. "We know that things are bad. I know the inheritance is going to be really tough. It's why, when you say: 'Do you want to do this and that,' I have to say that we can't do everything that we might want to straight away.

"I wish the inheritance was different, I really do … Do I wish there was more money? Do I wish that public services were in a better state? Of course I do. But you don't get to choose your inheritance. But we will start to turn things round."

Labour has ruled out putting up income tax, VAT or national insurance. Reeves denied that Labour was looking at other tax-increasing measures that would raise smaller sums.

"No, what we're seeking is a mandate to grow the economy. Instead of tinkering around with taxes, with is what the Tories have been doing these last few years, we're going to go all for growth."

Yet her repeated insistence that tax and spending are not the only levers Labour can pull, suggesting instead it could secure the highest sustained growth in the G7, has attracted scepticism.

Rachel Reeves, the shadow chancellor, speaks to store workers while visiting a Morrisons supermarket in Swindon yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH: SAM FROST/ THE GUARDIAN

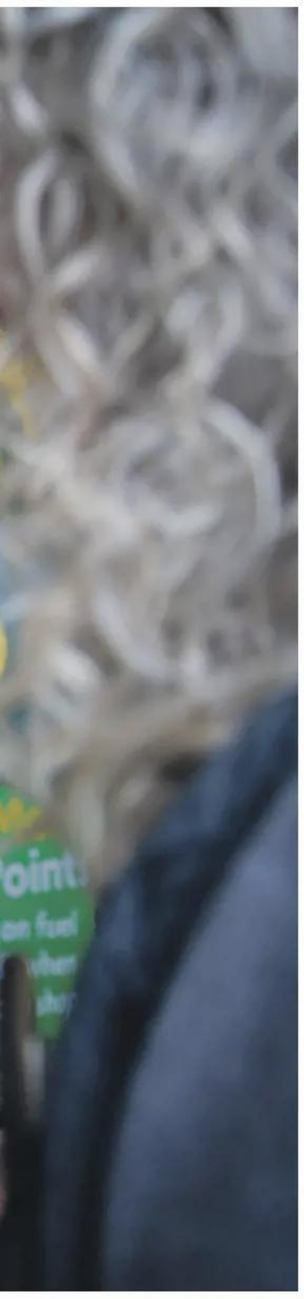
▲ *Rachel Reeves also pledged to expand nursery provision and fund breakfast clubs for every primary school in England*

said would give parents more time to get to work, to take a job farther from home or to take on extra hours, "which means more money in the pockets of working families".

Despite the UK having one of the lowest rates of statutory maternity pay in Europe, Reeves refused to make any commitment to increase it. "There's lots of things that we might like to do, but I'm not going to make any commitments around spending," she said.

Instead, the party has pledged to review parental leave, which will become a day one right, within a year of the election. Employees will also be entitled to flexible working, as long as it is "reasonably feasible" for their workplace.

"A lot of my friends when they returned to work after having children, they wanted that flexibility and if their employer wasn't able to give them that, they didn't go back or they found somewhere else to work," she said.



"We're going to crack on. We've been in opposition for long enough. There's lots of things that we are ready to go with," she insisted.

In its first six months in office, Labour would update the national planning framework and significant infrastructure list, making it easier to get planning permission for onshore windfarms plus pylons and pipelines. It would also bring back targets for housebuilding for local authorities.

Reeves, who has always been more willing than some in the party to talk about the downsides of Brexit, said Boris Johnson's deal had "sold Britain down the river", leaving many businesses, especially small ones, struggling.

"There are concrete things that we can do to improve those relationships," she said, listing a veterinary deal to make it easier for farmers and fishers to export, tackling bureaucracy for travelling artists and musicians, and mutual recognition of professional qualifications.

Reeves said that she would roll out the red carpet for foreign investors – as the French president, Emmanuel Macron, had offered to do for British financiers after Brexit – with a big investment summit in the first 100 days.

"Yes. We need that investment. If we're going to invest in our infrastructure on the scale that we need … then we need global investors," she said. "It used to be that Britain was a byword for stability … that's disappeared these last few years and we want to bring that back."

She dismissed suggestions the UK would struggle to hit growth of 1.5% in the next five years. "Why not? Under the last Labour government average growth was 2% a year. I'm confident we can get our growth back up. I'm not going to put a number on it."

Yet despite Reeves' discipline and focus on Labour winning power, she said she had no ambitions to become Labour's first female prime minister. Clearing up teacups in the canteen, she replied: "No, not really. I just want to be chancellor, you know that."

7

Number of Conservative chancellors over the past 14 years alone. A woman has never held the post in the centuries it has existed

◀ *Ellen Wilkinson, seen here speaking in 1939, led the Jarrow March – a protest against rampant poverty and unemployment – in 1936 as an elected MP*

PHOTOGRAPH: SSPL/ GETTY IMAGES

Trailblazers The Labour trio who inspired this generation

Emily Dugan

In just over two weeks Rachel Reeves could become Britain's first female chancellor of the exchequer. Reeves has named three women on whose shoulders she would stand if she got the post. These are their stories.

Ellen Wilkinson

Wilkinson's red hair, diminutive stature and energetic brand of politics earned her the nickname the "Fiery Particle". The daughter of a Manchester cotton worker, Wilkinson began her career as a women's suffrage organiser in 1913 before becoming a union official and, later, a Labour MP and minister.

As a 16-year-old she made an impression, giving a speech about women's emancipation to a crowd of jeering men who hurled stones at her. She gathered up the stones into a neat pile and turned to the men, saying: "Only women, lunatics and criminals can't vote. Yet you are the lunatics and criminals."

As the newly elected MP for Jarrow, Wilkinson led the Jarrow March in 1936 when residents of the Tyneside town walked 280 miles to Westminster in protest against rampant unemployment and poverty.

She was made education secretary in the aftermath of the second world war and was the only woman in Clement Attlee's 1945 government.

Her legacy included providing free milk and meals to deprived children, creating 400,000 classroom spaces and providing grants to 37,000 military veterans to train as teachers.

Barbara Castle

When the skilled seamstresses at Ford's car factory in Dagenham downed needles in 1968, it was Barbara Castle who ensured an end to the strike and a better future for working women.

As secretary for employment and productivity in Harold Wilson's Labour government, Castle intervened on behalf of the sewing machinists, immediately increasing their rate of pay. The intervention led to the introduction of the Equal Pay Act 1970, designed to ensure that women doing the same work as men should be paid the same.

> *'Only women, lunatics and criminals can't vote. Yet you are the lunatics and criminals'*
>
> **Ellen Wilkinson**
> *To male critics*

▶ *Harriet Harman was the Labour MP for Camberwell and Peckham in south London for 42 years; the influential Barbara Castle (below) oversaw a host of social reforms in several cabinet roles as she served as MP for Blackburn for 35 years, starting from 1945*

Serving as MP for Blackburn for 35 years from 1945, Castle is seen as one of the most influential female politicians of the 20th century and held a wide range of cabinet posts.

When she returned to the frontbenches as health secretary in 1974, she continued to fight for women, introducing the Child Benefit Act that ensured payouts for all children – and that they would be picked up directly by mothers instead of being added to men's pay.

Harriet Harman

Few MPs have done more for women in Westminster than Harriet Harman, who was mother of the house when she stood down from her south London seat last month after 42 years in post.

When she started out as MP for Camberwell and Peckham in 1982, just 3% of MPs were women and they tended to be older and without immediate caring responsibilities.

Harman is credited with initiatives including the introduction of all-women shortlists, which helped raise the proportion of female MPs within the Labour party to 45%. She consistently campaigned for parliament to become a better place for parents to work and was instrumental in putting baby leave for MPs on the agenda.

Under Tony Blair's government in 1997, she was given the newly created post of minister for women alongside her brief as secretary of state for social security. She is credited with strengthening domestic violence laws and was the orchestrator of the 2010 Equality Act, which gave public bodies a statutory duty to consider the rights of those with protected characteristics.

In her pre-Westminster career, Harman also furthered equality causes as a campaigning lawyer, taking the first cases for women under the new Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts.

General election 2024

Tories in 'red wall' feel abandoned as party shifts focus to English south

Peter Walker
Senior political correspondent

"Red wall" Conservative candidates are increasingly disillusioned with the central party for cutting them adrift, as the Tory campaign focuses on defending safer seats in the south of England.

While some say they have received central help, others complain about a lack of visits from ministers, and an apparent lack of money or volunteering from the party faithful.

"There is absolutely a sense of: you're in this on your own, it's everyone for themselves," said one candidate who in 2019 was elected in a red wall seat – the term for former Labour strongholds in the north and Midlands.

"In 2019, I was inundated with visiting ministers. This time – nothing. Silence. Every time you ask if there's any national spending available, they say no. There's clearly no central money. You've got to spend your own cash. And in 2019 there was a huge amount of national spend, getting leaflets through letterboxes."

Amid this vacuum, some red wall candidates have used their own money on digital advertising, training non-specialist staff to place them on Facebook. A number have turned to Boris Johnson, who has recorded more than 50 personal video messages for candidates, many in northern and Midland seats.

While the ex-PM has no formal role in the campaign and is believed to be spending the bulk of it on holiday, many red wall MPs say he remains popular among locals, and have asked for his endorsement.

Johnson, who liaises with Conservative headquarters over the endorsements, responds with brief, sometimes apparently self-filmed clips, usually beginning with "Hi folks, this is Boris Johnson", and urging locals to back their local Tory, warning of a Labour party intent on "wokery" and "kowtowing to the European Union".

The Conservatives' apparent retreat away from the red wall and towards defending seats in the "blue wall", more affluent, often commuter belt areas under particular threat from the Liberal Democrats, has been illustrated by Rishi Sunak's choice of campaign stops.

Since the start of the month he has ventured to the north of England just three times, one of these to visit his own Yorkshire constituency, and another for a TV debate in Grimsby.

He has spent notably more time in the south and south-west, visiting a string of constituencies with 2019 majorities of about 15,000 or above.

This retreat has not been total. About 15 red wall-type seats have been selected to receive extra election literature to be sent to voters, with national campaign messages removed in place of praise for the individual incumbent Tory MP and their local achievements.

"This is based on polling which shows that in these areas, the local candidate is significantly outperforming the party as a whole, and so they maybe stand more of a chance," one Conservative source said. "Because, in fairness, the party brand is pretty toxic.

"In these places, the candidates aren't being cut off – there is some support. That said, they are not getting volunteers in from other areas, but that's mainly because there aren't really any volunteers at all."

This lament reflects worries among grassroots Tories that the party's on-the-ground campaigning infrastructure has become severely diminished in recent years, a product of a shrinking and ageing membership, and the loss of thousands of councillors in recent local elections.

With volunteers at such a premium, it is understood that some sitting red wall Tories in seats the party thinks are now unwinnable have been told to give up entirely on local campaigning and try to help nearby seats that could be salvaged.

Such concerns are generally aired in private, but a handful of Conservatives have gone public with their assumption that the party will get a kicking from voters on 4 July.

"There's no great optimism out there," David TC Davies, the Wales secretary, who has represented Monmouth since 2005, told the Sun's Never Mind the Ballots show.

"I feel for everyone, and I think we're going to get it in the neck, all of us," he said, adding: "Keir Starmer will walk into Downing Street."

One Conservative MP said they had noted a shift in strategy during the campaign: "I think they think where they can make a difference is blue wall. Which is fine but they would have made a far bigger difference by not screwing up D-day."

▲ *Boris Johnson has been endorsing candidates through video messages*

Radioactive Rishi

Unstable PM loses energy by the hour

Marina Hyde's campaign trail

Donald Trump has famously been a drag on his own business career. He would have been richer today had he simply put his inheritance into an index tracker fund. Politically, however, you have to concede he is doing quite well for himself. Rishi Sunak is the opposite. He's a successful businessman who is now a drag on his political fortunes. He would have done better in this election had he simply stood in the rain that afternoon and announced: "I'm calling it – and it's tomorrow!" Alas, he didn't, and now his position depletes further with each passing day. Sunak is like an extremely unstable isotope, losing energy by the hour. The only way he'd poll high is with a Geiger counter.

Anyway, please don your fallout suits and proceed straight to the site of his LBC phone-in yesterday morning, guided by Nick Ferrari. You'll see a lot about Sunak promising to cut taxes now inflation has fallen to 2% and a caller telling him he was "a pound shop Nigel Farage". But it's largely just noise. Probably the most telling bit was when a chap rang up to talk to Sunak about his imminent resignation honours, and instead of remembering to say that he wasn't going to be doing any resignation honours for a while, the prime minister engaged thoughtfully with the "very interesting question" in a way that suggested he completely accepted its central premise.

And he now embodies resignation in all its definitions. For a man who says he's still fighting for this title, Sunak has an unfortunate tic when answering voters, epitomised by the reply he gave to Ellen, who felt her prospects had got measurably far worse over the past 14 years: "I'm sorry you feel that and I'm probably not going to be able to convince you."

Many, many variations were available over the course of this hour. "I'm sorry you feel like that." "I know people didn't really want to hear what I had to say." "You're sighing, but what do you expect me to say?" This. Increasingly, observers expect him to say this.

The downbeat stuff is, however, more to the general taste than Sunak's stabs at aspirational material. The chat in the YouTube stream of the interview was a stream of grimace emojis every time the PM said the likes of "unfortunately, we haven't been able to get everything done in this parliament".

We heard about the "huge untapped potential" of brownfield sites for housebuilding, a dangled promise that demanded the response: you've had 14 years to tap that. Guys – and it's just possible you've heard this before – you're never going to tap that.

Yet elsewhere the party's

Turning over a new leaflet From left, Lucia Hunt, the wife of Jeremy Hunt; Akshata Murty, Rishi Sunak's wife; the culture secretary, Lucy Frazer; and Susie Cleverly, the wife of James Cleverly, campaign in Fordham, Cambridgeshire, where Frazer is hoping to win her former seat in the general election.

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS RADBURN/PA

Protection officer for No 10 is arrested in election bets inquiry

Continued *from page 1*

removed from operational duties," the force said.

The matter has also been referred to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), the watchdog responsible for overseeing the system for handling complaints made against forces in England and Wales.

The Met added: "The Gambling Commission continues to lead the investigation into the alleged betting offences, and our investigation is running in parallel to that."

The Guardian reported last week that the commission had launched an inquiry after Williams, the prime minister's parliamentary private secretary, placed a bet with Ladbrokes on Sunday 19 May in his local constituency of Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr.

Williams said in a statement last week: "I put a flutter on the general election some weeks ago. This has resulted in some routine inquiries and I confirm I will fully cooperate with these. I don't want it to be a distraction from the campaign, I should have thought how it looks."

The Gambling Commission has asked bookmakers to trawl through all substantial bets placed on a July election after it was flagged that Williams had put the wager on the poll date just days before it was announced.

Members of the Met's specialist protection command operate in close proximity to the prime minister and his team, often sharing the same vehicle. The elite armed unit is composed of officers supposedly handpicked for their skills as well as integrity, given the sensitivities surrounding the people they guard. As well as guarding select senior ministers and the mayor of London, they provide close protection for the royal family.

▲ *Daisy Cooper, the deputy leader of the Lib Dems, called for a full inquiry into 'who knew what and when' about the timing of the election*

Asked about the police officer, a spokesperson for the Gambling Commission said: "Currently the commission is investigating the possibility of offences concerning the date of the election. This is an ongoing investigation, and the commission cannot provide any further details at this time." Downing Street declined to comment.

The Lib Dems last night called on the prime minister to launch a full inquiry. The party's deputy leader, Daisy Cooper, said: "Rishi Sunak must call a Cabinet Office inquiry into what is shaping up to be yet another scandal at the heart of government. An inquiry is needed to understand who knew what and when."

An IOPC spokesperson said: "We have received a mandatory referral from the Metropolitan police service and will make a decision on the level of IOPC involvement in due course."

Any decision on whether a criminal offence may have been committed would be made by the Crown Prosecution Service.

According to CPS guidance, misconduct in public office is a criminal offence contrary to common law rather than statute, so the elements of the offence are to be found by interpreting previously decided cases.

For an offence to have taken place the suspect needs to be a public official, with the action taking place during the course of their duties. In addition, the action needs to be wilful and amount to an abuse of public trust. The final key element is that the suspect has no reasonable excuse or justification.

fatalism feels less convincing than its optimism. The Conservatives also seem to be campaigning on a ticket of outlandish defeatism, telling voters that unless they put the cross in their box in two weeks, they will be risking "a generation under Labour".

Now come, come. If people become dissatisfied with Labour (pretty much locked on, this being the way of all things), then they will of course have the option of simply not voting for them in the elections that will pop up regularly during that notional generation. If this iteration of the Conservative party has shown us anything, it's that it is perfectly possible for a prime minister to be just another piece of throwaway fast fashion.

▼ *Rishi Sunak on a tour of the Sizewell B nuclear plant while campaigning in Suffolk yesterday*

As for other lowlights of this phone-in, I didn't love the section on the personal growth of hideous mega-donors, inspired by Frank Hester, the Tory benefactor who has been readmitted to the fold despite having been exposed as saying of Diane Abbott: "You just want to hate all black women because she's there." But, as Sunak explained of the biggest-ever donor to his party: "He's learned from it." OMG totally. And if you believe that, I've got a Conservative party manifesto to sell you. Having said that, some of Ferrari's gambits did tend toward the category "Questions to Which the Answer is Fuck Off. "You are a Hindu," began one. "I understand that one of the tenets of Hinduism is that you are to be discouraged from lying."

Dearie me. I snapped my pencil tip off at that point so my notes fail me, but I think the question to which Ferrari wanted an honest answer was: "Do you seriously feel vindicated calling this election?" Sunak explained that people like Nick had previously kept asking him why he didn't call an election, "and then you call an election and everyone's like: 'Why did you call an election?'" Mm. Well, he's still got two more of the longest weeks of his life to workshop the perfect answer.

Frank Hester Tories will not return donor's money, Sunak says

Aletha Adu
Henry Dyer

Rishi Sunak has said he will not hand back money from the Conservative party's biggest donor, who said Diane Abbott should be shot, because the businessman is "genuinely contrite".

A caller in an LBC phone-in asked the prime minister about Frank Hester's remarks about the then MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington.

The Guardian revealed Hester had said during a meeting in 2019 that Abbott made him want to "hate all black women" and that she "should be shot". After the report, Abbott made a complaint to the Metropolitan police.

Hester, who has given more than £15m to the Tories directly or through his company, is also alleged to have referred to a staff member as the "token Muslim", imitated people of Chinese descent and remarked that one person was attractive for a black woman, according to ex-employees who spoke to the Guardian.

> *'I believe if people are genuinely contrite ... that should be accepted'*
>
> **Rishi Sunak**
> *Speaking to LBC phone-in caller*

Hester issued an apology for "rude" remarks about Abbott, denying they were motivated by race or gender, and saying he "abhorred racism". All of the latest allegations were put to Hester. He did not respond to the claims.

An LBC caller yesterday told the prime minister: "Just saying he's apologised isn't going to cut it."

Sunak appeared to insinuate that there was an equivalence between Hester and some remarks Abbott has made, as he said Abbott herself had made "some comments in the past that were not appropriate but she apologised for those and was readmitted into the Labour party".

"I believe if people are genuinely contrite ... that should be accepted," Sunak told the caller.

The accusations against Hester had piled pressure on Sunak after it was confirmed that the donor had given a further £5m to the Tories through his healthcare tech company, the Phoenix Partnership .

It brings Hester's total donations to more than £15m in a year, which equates to more than 40% of the national spending limit for each party in the general election.

Sunak is yet to comment on the latest allegations.

A Conservative spokesperson said Hester had "rightly apologised for comments made in the past".

General election 2024

Independence still our goal, Swinney says at launch of SNP manifesto

Libby Brooks
Scotland correspondent

John Swinney has doubled down on the Scottish National party's core commitment to independence, telling voters that the general election is an opportunity to "intensify the pressure" on Westminster for a referendum.

Launching what the SNP leader and first minister claimed was the most leftwing manifesto of the campaign in Edinburgh yesterday morning, Swinney warned Scots to "have their eyes wide open [that] voting Labour in Scotland will get you spending cuts".

After criticism that his party had downplayed independence in the campaign so far, Swinney displayed the first page of the slim manifesto document that reads: "Vote SNP for Scotland to become an independent country", telling an audience of candidates and activists that a mandate for a second independence referendum already existed.

"In 2021 [the public] voted for a Scottish parliament with a clear majority for independence and for a referendum. That democratic choice must be respected. At this election we have the opportunity to reinforce the case for Scotland becoming an independent country," he said.

Swinney's reiteration of the SNP's founding principle comes after the party endeavoured to move way from distracting arguments about a referendum. Senior figures have acknowledged repeatedly that even those voters who support independence wanted the party to be more focused on their immediate cost of living concerns.

Asked if a mandate for a second referendum would still exist even if the party lost seats on 4 July - the SNP held 43 of Scotland's 57 seats at the last parliament but polling consistently indicates they will lose a significant number to the resurgent Labour party - Swinney responded: "People in Scotland should have their democratic wishes respected."

> ***'In 2021 [the public] voted for a parliament with a clear majority for ... a referendum. That must be respected'***
>
> **John Swinney**
> *SNP leader*

He added: "In this election if people want to intensify the pressure for a referendum on independence then their opportunity is to vote for the SNP to make that happen."

Swinney was elected leader a little over two weeks before the election was called, after his predecessor Humza Yousaf axed the governing partnership with the Greens, causing chaos at Holyrood and prompting his abrupt resignation. Swinney has sought repeatedly to differentiate his party from Labour, in a bid to woo back independence supporters who are increasingly attracted to Keir Starmer's message of change at Westminster.

"Where's the change?" Swinney asked yesterday. "We're going to carry on with two-child [benefits] limit, carry on with Tory fiscal rules, carry on with Brexit [under Labour]."

He returned again and again to the dominant theme of the SNP's campaign so far: that Labour's plans would involve an "eye-watering" £18bn worth of cuts, which he said were forecast by respected thinktanks such as the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the Institute for Government and the Nuffield Foundation.

He contrasted the SNP's "hard decisions" at Holyrood - where income tax rates and bands are devolved - "to increase tax on higher earners so we could invest more in our public services" and called on the next UK government to replicate those decisions.

The manifesto called for further devolution of tax and immigration powers, and reiterated previous calls to reverse Brexit, abolish the House of Lords and scrap nuclear weapons.

Swinney said that "sensible fiscal rules" proposed in the manifesto would "end the cuts, reverse the £1.3bn cut to Scotland's capital budget, and invest in public services, starting with the health service.

He also responded to the Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar's pledge made at his own manifesto launch on Tuesday not to raise taxes should he be elected first minister at the Holyrood elections in 2026.

"Anas Sarwar set out his determination to reverse the decisions we've taken on tax," said Swinney. "Well, people need to have their eyes wide open. The Labour party committed themselves to cut public spending in Scotland, so people need to be aware of the consequences of voting Labour ."

The manifesto also pledges that SNP MPs will press for the "deeply damaging" two-child benefit cap to be scrapped. Swinney suggested Labour was "morally lost" not to commit to doing so.

Key takeaways
Referendum, climate and the NHS

Independence

The manifesto states that if the SNP wins a majority of Scottish seats the Scottish government will be "empowered to begin immediate negotiations" with Westminster on making independence a reality.

In a realignment of the party's previous position, Swinney says that this means negotiating a second referendum - the previous policy had suggested a second vote was not necessary as the general election itself would amount to a "de facto referendum".

However, the Conservatives and Labour have consistently stated they would not grant Holyrood the requisite powers to hold a second referendum, while the Institute for Fiscal Studies thinktank warned that the SNP "ignores the potential hit to economic growth from leaving the UK and the big fiscal challenges an independent Scotland would immediately have to confront".

Focus on NHS

Swinney called on "progressive politicians south of the border" to join the SNP in pressing for greater funding for the NHS at UK level by a minimum of an extra £10bn each year - generating an additional £1bn annually for NHS Scotland.

The manifesto also demand that the next UK government invest at least £6bn in additional funding to match Scotland's most recent pay deals for NHS staff - it estimates this would delivering around £600m in consequentials which Scotland could then invest in NHS staff numbers, pay and conditions.

The manifesto also pledges to introduce a bill at Westminster to protect the health service from privatisation, which would stand as a legal guarantee to keep the NHS in public hands.

Climate and oil and gas transition

A day after the Scottish government missed another emissions target, the manifesto says a future UK government should invest £28bn annually in the green economy, the commitment dropped by the Labour party earlier this year.

After the SNP was criticised for abandoning its previous presumption against new oil and gas licences, the manifesto advocates "an evidence-based approach", which would involve new licences being considered on a "case-by-case basis, through

▼ *The SNP manifesto calls for a future UK government to invest £28bn a year in the green economy*
PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MACLEOD/THE GUARDIAN

John Swinney said an SNP majority would be 'empowered to begin immediate negotiations' on a second referendum

a robust climate compatibility assessment".

Holyrood's relationship with Westminster

Despite repeated attacks on Labour throughout the launch, the SNP also set out areas of potential cooperation with a future Keir Starmer government – for example, supporting plans to put VAT on private school fees while also reforming the tax in Scotland across the hospitality and tourism sectors.

Swinney also underlined his willingness to reset the relationship between Holyrood and Westminster, which he said had been characterised by "total and utter disrespect" under the Conservatives.

Cost of living

SNP MPs at Westminster would push for the introduction of a "social tariff" for energy bills for elderly people, those on low incomes and disabled people. It would be funded by general taxation and "an obligation" on the profits of power companies.

The manifesto calls on the next UK government to bring forward an immediate emergency budget to "reverse cuts to public spending and deliver meaningful investment in economic growth, including green energy".

It also backs an essentials guarantee, which would ensure that basics such food and utilities are affordable to all.

Libby Brooks

Sketch

John Crace

It's all a bit meh. No wonder the SNP is following the Tories into election Armageddon

Things are looking up. For so long the Tories have looked utterly bereft, cast adrift by their former supporters. Alone and friendless. It couldn't have happened to nicer people. But now they find themselves with company – albeit not the bedfellows they might have expected or even wanted – for the SNP is facing its own electoral Armageddon. The latest polls suggest the party could only win 15 seats out of a possible 57 on 4 July. Cast your mind back to 2015, when you couldn't move for Scots Nats MPs. It's not a wipe-out, but it's not far off. At the very least it's a profound existential crisis.

Not that you would have known that from its election launch event four weeks ago. It was a massive rally, rammed with activists. The SNP has traditionally been a master at marshalling its troops. But things have changed over the course of the last month. You can sense the optimism draining out of its campaign. The smiles are slightly more fixed, the conversations more terse.

It's not about the money. The SNP suddenly finds itself relatively comfortably off thanks to a bequest of £120,000 from a former supporter. In the entrance hall to the venue, the SNP laid on quite the spread. Some of the largest croissants I have ever seen.

The room itself was suitably corporate and anonymous, apart from some wall hangings. Free Child Care. Free Tuition Fees. Free Prescriptions. It feels a bit meh. The last two were achieved 10 years ago and it rather suggests the SNP hasn't actually been doing that much recently.

It's a feeling that is endorsed when the manifesto is passed round about 15 minutes before the start. It could have been just a reprint of the manifesto for the last election. And the one before that. There's the central demand for independence. The reversal of Brexit. An end to austerity.

In dribs and drabs, the great and the good of the SNP made their way into the room. MP Hannah Bardell made the introductions. "Be upstanding for John Swinney," she said. Everyone obeyed and gave him some polite applause.

The first minister took the stage and rattled through the key points of the manifesto, starting with independence. Here's how it worked – if the SNP won more than half the 57 seats, independence was there for the taking. But if they didn't, independence was still there for the taking because they had won a majority in Holyrood in 2021. The democratic mandate for 2021 would supercede the one for 2024. Go figure. Maybe Swinney isn't actually very bright.

Thereafter he mainly took aim at the Labour party. The SNP's main rival. Everyone knows the Tories are finished. He wanted an end to austerity, more money for everything. And end to the two child benefit cap. All worthy and progressive demands.

Only it turned out that the Reform manifesto was better costed than the SNP's. In that Reform had at least gone to the trouble of assembling some imaginary numbers. Nowhere in the SNP manifesto was there any mention of how things were going to be funded. Swinney seemed to think it was up to Labour to work out the costings for him. He would get a hell of a shock if Scotland gained independence.

Turns out even the Reform manifesto was better costed than the SNP's – Reform at least assembled some imaginary numbers

Birmingham Candidate joked about domestic violence

Jessica Murray
Midlands correspondent

An independent candidate standing in Birmingham said "70% of hell will be women" and joked about domestic violence on a podcast earlier this year, as polling suggests he is closing the gap with Labour.

Akhmed Yakoob, who came third in the West Midlands mayoral election in May with just over 10% of the vote share, is standing against Labour's Shabana Mahmood in Ladywood, one of the most deprived constituencies in the country.

The latest prediction from Electoral Calculus puts him on 31%, with Mahmood on 37%, and Labour is reportedly diverting resources to the seat to rally more voters.

In March, Yakoob appeared on an episode of the Minted Minds podcast, hosted by the Birmingham-based entrepreneur Abdhul Zaman.

Other guests included Shakeel Afsar, who is running as an independent candidate in Hall Green and was one of the lead protesters in the row over LGBT equality teaching in Birmingham schools in 2019; Dr Asif Munaf, a former Apprentice contestant recently suspended by the General Medical Council pending an investigation into allegedly antisemitic social media posts; and the Coventry-based restaurant owners Mohammed "Sunny" Sarnwal and Waqas "Vic" Mohammed.

The podcast episode was advertised as an "emergency meeting" of "influential voices" to talk about Palestine, but over the course of a two-hour conversation the subject turned to masculinity and women.

Munaf said that the majority of followers of Dajjaal (a false messiah in Islam who leads people astray) will be women who have been "empowered", and Yakoob agreed, saying that "70% of hell is going to be women".

Later, during a discussion about women making money by dancing on TikTok, Mohammed said: "Getting back to masculinity, I personally would give her a backhander." He added: "I'm not joking."

Shakeel responded: "We do not advocate any physical violence against anyone". Sarnwal said: "He's right though, what he's saying."

Yakoob, a criminal law solicitor since 2014, then said to Mohammed: "Brother, are you saying if she comes up in your personal space you will defend yourself?" – a reference to defence arguments employed by lawyers – prompting loud laughter from the other guests.

Off camera, one of the men quoted Yakoob's tagline, used in his YouTube videos about legal issues. "There's a defence for every offence bro," he says, prompting more laughter.

Although the comments did not make it into the final cut published by Minted Minds, a full unedited version of the conversation has been posted online.

All six of the men who appeared on the podcast were contacted for comment.

Yakoob is campaigning largely on the issue of Palestine, with his posters calling on people to "lend their vote to Gaza" and vote for him.

▲ *Akhmed Yakoob is standing as an independent in Ladywood*

Podcast transcript

Dr Asif Munaf: From a Muslim point of view, Dajjaal and all this, we know the majority of his followers will be women. If you empower women so much, when they start following him, society will start following him as well.
Akhmed Yakoob: 70% of hell is going to be women.
Speaker off camera: We don't want to get cancelled.
[…]
Yakoob: Look, as I said, I've got nothing against women, I love women, *(men laugh and Sarnwal says, "Yeah, I bet you do".)* I love my wife. But everyone has got a role in society, everyone has got a role in the household. In my household, I'm the man, I'm the king. I call the shots, and my Mrs, Alhamdulillah, listens to me and is appreciative.
Munaf: Because women want men. Women want men.
Yakoob: Women want real men who go out and provide so she can be the queen, and she can look after the children and look after our kids, the household as well.
[…]
Yakoob: How much can you lower your gaze? If any one of us was to come with our wife who is tarted up to the nines, it's natural for a male to look at her and think "she looks alright".
Munaf: And if you don't, you're not a man, you're eunuch.
Yakoob: It's natural for men to be attracted to females, so keep our queens at home.
[…]
Sarnwal: The mothers need to worry about their daughters. Because if she is dressing like a slut, your daughter is going to dress like a slut. The man needs to understand his daughter is going to be the production of his wife. So if he doesn't control his wife, how is he going to make sure his daughter is safe?
[…]
Mohammed [talking about women making money off TikTok]: Getting back to masculinity, I personally would give her a backhander. I'm not joking.
Afsar: We do not advocate any physical violence against anyone.
Sarnwal: He's right though, what he's saying.
Yakoob: Brother, are you saying if she comes up in your personal space you will defend yourself?
Sarnwal: If she throws a punch you can defend yourself.
Speaker off camera: There's a defence for every offence, bro.

General election 2024

‘We need a revolution’

From farms to food banks, Cornish voters feel the squeeze

Path to power

Damian Carrington
Environment editor

‘Farmers certainly don’t want to see food poverty – we want to see food that’s affordable,” says Ian Harvey, a dairy farmer. “But at the same time, we want to ensure there’s absolute fairness in the supply chain.” Farms are under extraordinary financial pressure, he says.

On Wiggaton Farm, near North Petherwin in the North Cornwall constituency, about 170 holstein friesian and ayrshire cows are nosing between tufts of new grass.

Harvey’s farm is at the start of the food supply chain and the beginning of a journey through the rural constituency to the small town of Camelford, where hundreds of people rely on an open-access food bank.

The dreamy impression of this beautiful corner of England taken away by tourists is a far cry from the cost of living crisis faced by local people. The Conservatives are defending a 16,000 majority, which was bloated by now-faded enthusiasm for Brexit. The bookmakers now have the Liberal Democrats odds-on to win.

Harvey’s cows provide about 3,500 litres of milk a day, sent to the UK’s biggest cheese factory nearby to produce Cathedral City and Davidstow cheddar. “The cost of living crisis has put pressure on the value of our end products. We’ve seen people trade out of brands into supermarket own brands, meaning that slight premium is not delivered back to farmers,” he says.

In addition, Harvey says, high interest rates coupled with rising fuel prices and increased costs of inputs such as fertiliser “are creating extraordinary financial pressure” on farmers. “We need long-term policies that people can shape their lives and businesses around,” Harvey says, not the current short-term politics.

In nearby Poundstock, Jill Faiers, an organic vegetable grower, is harvesting strawberries. Willow hedges and birdsong surround the crops of sweetcorn, kale, leeks, onions and apples on her five-acre patch. She believes deeply in the value of good food, but says she barely makes a living from the veg boxes she has sold for 20 years.

“Food is medicine, basically, and everybody should be able to afford good quality food,” she says. “But that’s a bit chicken and egg. If everybody wasn’t struggling on really low wages, then they would be able to afford better food, and good quality food makes good healthy folks. What is the point in almost encouraging people to eat shit, and then sending them to a totally overwhelmed NHS?”

▲ *Camelford library knitter Kirsty Ferguson, with her mother, right, says the housing shortage is acute*

▲ *Long-standing hopes for a bypass to spare central Camelford from the busy A39 have not been fulfilled*

▲ *Jill and Neil Faiers grow organic vegetables but say its benefits are beyond the pockets of many locals*

Faiers will vote for the Green party. “I can’t do tactical voting. We need a bloody revolution. But failing that, we need the Tories out and a progressive alliance.”

Twelve miles away, just outside Camelford, India and Spencer Rabey also have a vision to provide good food to more people through a community market garden on their 15-acre farm, which also hosts tourists in tents and camping pods.

They applied for levelling up funding to build a food-packing area and disabled toilets. “They said we ticked all the boxes and were definitely going to get it,” says India. “We’d actually recruited for the new jobs. Then they said, actually, we’ve been oversubscribed, and we’re not giving you anything. It really left us in the lurch. We hope we will still be able to do it, but it will take longer.”

▼ *High interest rates have left India and Spencer Rabey with nothing to invest in their community farm*

PHOTOGRAPHS: JONNY WEEKS/THE GUARDIAN

◀ *Tina McGrath, a trustee of Camelford's food bank, has seen demand rise steadily, with increasing numbers of older people using its services*

'Like many, I was sold on Brexit and voted leave, but I'm very disappointed and can't vote Tory again'

Stephen Bond
Camelford worker

The cost of living crisis has hit the Spencers, too. "Our mortgage has gone from £1,000 to £1,650," says India. "So the money we could invest in the business is just going to the bank." Spencer says: "Sadly I don't see any real benefit after 14 years of Conservative leadership. I really want to see more visionary leadership from any of the parties."

In nearby Camelford, an old stone-built town with a population of about 1,000, there are few signs of the election. A few posters for the Lib Dem candidate, Ben Maguire, are on display. The only Conservative one, for Scott Mann, on obvious view, is in the window of Camelford Conservative Club.

Food is also an issue here, with the former NatWest bank converted into a community larder. It usually opens every Wednesday enabling anyone in the local area to pick up basics such as pasta, rice, tea and hygiene and sanitary products, but is now being renovated after winning a £90,000 levelling up grant. There is also a "fresh food fill-up" on Saturday, offering short-dated food donated by supermarkets.

"I never thought we'd have to continue after the pandemic – it's disgusting," says Tina McGrath, a trustee of the Old Bank and Community Larder group. She says 200 to 300 people a week, many of whom are in work, come to get food for their families.

"We have queues up the street," she says. "Our vision is not to be needed at all. But it has increased due to the economic crisis, especially among older people."

McGrath says she is undecided on who to vote for, but adds: "Whoever takes on the role is going to struggle to turn this around – we are in a crisis. I don't think any party is strong enough for the transformational change needed."

Another problem raised by local people is that there is no supermarket in the town. "The nearest one is a 30-mile round trip," says Rob Rotchell, the mayor of Camelford and leader of the town council, all of whose members are non-political independents. "That's £10 in fuel and if you are on minimum wage or benefits, as many are, that's bad news. And the bus service is near nonexistent."

Three other issues come up repeatedly in Camelford: the failure to build a bypass, the cost of housing, and healthcare. Bronwen Hockerday, a librarian, says her elderly mother recently waited 22 hours for an ambulance after falling and breaking her hip. The nearest hospital is 40 miles away.

At the Camelford Clickers knitting group meeting in the library, Kirsty Ferguson says her flat-hunting son has recently found just 23 properties available in the entire county of Cornwall.

"They need to limit second homes: there are so many taking over our towns and villages." She is undecided on how to vote, but says the television debates have been "laughable".

Stephen Bond, who works at the Cornwall Model Boats company in the town, mentions the bypass. "We have been crying out for it for 30 years – the noise and air pollution is unbelievable." It is the only part of the 191-mile Atlantic highway route that narrows to a single lane, he says. "When [the Conservatives] cancelled HS2, they said there would be all this money for infrastructure: where did it go?"

"I, like many people, was sold on Brexit and voted leave, and voted Conservative at the last election," he says. "But I am very disappointed and I can't vote Tory again. We need a change."

North Cornwall

Changed boundaries

● **Con** (2019 modelled)

This rural constituency hosts the UK's biggest cheese factory and a long swath of tourist-friendly coastline. Residents are significantly older than in the average constituency and more households have two or more cars, while the proportion of people from ethnic minorities is much lower than the national average. It was held by the Liberal Democrats from 1992 to 2015. But it is 57th on the Lib Dem target list, as sitting MP Scott Mann had a majority of almost 16,000 in 2019

2019 vote share (modelled to new boundary)

Con 59%, Lab 30% ● **Majority 29%** (15,783)

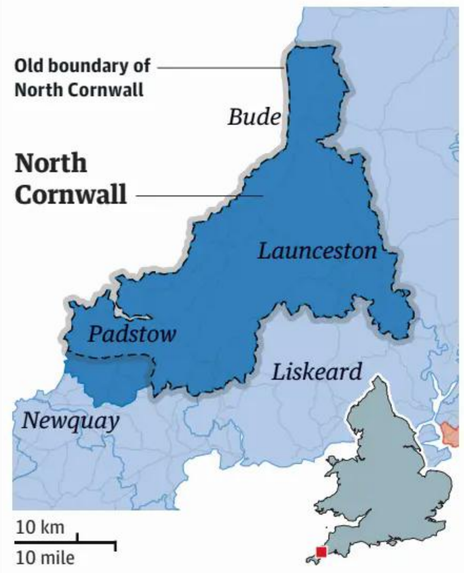
Leave vote (modelled)	**Unemployment rate**
60%	**2.2%**
Owns house outright	**Aged 65 years or older**
37%	**26%**

Deprivation rank
Ranked by the proportion of households that are deprived (1 = most deprived area), out of a total 575 constituencies in England and Wales

458/575

Source: ONS, PA, Rallings and Thrasher (modelled 2019 vote), Chris Hanretty (Leave vote). Note: modelled 2019 results to new 2024 constituency boundaries

Modelled results for 2019 Conservative Labour



Source: PA, Rallings and Thrasher, Ordnance Survey. Note: for further details on boundary changes and modelled results: find your new constituency

Private rentals Labour faces calls to be more radical about reforms

Robert Booth
Social affairs correspondent

Labour is facing pressure to deliver more radical reforms of private renting amid fears landlords would find new ways to evict tenants despite the party confirming it would end no-fault evictions and introduce time limits to fix potentially lethal mould.

In a campaign over the "rip-off private rented sector", Labour's deputy leader, Angela Rayner, and the shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, said private renters would be £250 a year better off under Labour after it forces landlords to improve energy efficiency of leaky rentals.

Private landlords would no longer be able to auction rented homes to the highest bidder and requests for upfront rent would be capped, though it is not clear at what level.

Labour reiterated its pledge to "immediately ban no-fault evictions" and said it would "crack down on unscrupulous landlords ripping off tenants". But the party's commitments to the UK's 4.5 million renting households do not provide the security many want and renters fear a back door to evictions could be left ajar. There are 15 households vying for every private rented property, according to Zoopla – twice the pre-pandemic rate.

Tom Darling, campaign manager of the Renters' Reform Coalition, said: "If this crisis is to be properly tackled we'll need to see more detail as to how Labour intends to deliver security of tenure for private renters.

"In particular, how will they prevent back doors to no-fault evictions through new eviction grounds, and how they plan to tackle evictions through unaffordable rent hikes."

Labour said it would "end rental bidding wars so landlords can no longer pit hopeful renters against each other in a fight to see who can offer up a bigger sum". The party has previously proposed forcing landlords to advertise a rent price and ban them from encouraging higher bids.

Polly Neate, chief executive of Shelter, the housing charity, welcomed Labour's commitment "to making renting fairer" but called for limits to in-tenancy rent increases and longer notice periods.

The London Renters Union also warned "none of Labour's new measures would protect tenants facing inflation-busting rent hikes and outrageous asking prices".

Labour has ruled out rent caps, but it said it would require all landlords to meet stringent energy efficiency standards by 2030.

15

The number of households chasing every rental home – twice the average before the pandemic

Healthcare NHS 'needs £38bn more a year', politicians told

Denis Campbell
Health policy editor

The NHS will need £38bn more a year than planned by the end of the next parliament to cut the care backlog and end long treatment delays, political parties have been warned.

Labour and Conservative promises on NHS funding "fall well short" of what the beleaguered health service needs to recover from years of underinvestment, according to the Health Foundation thinktank.

Politicians are not being honest about the money needed to revive an NHS that is grappling with record numbers awaiting care and inadequate access to GPs, it added.

The NHS will need such huge sums that the next government will face "difficult trade-offs" in how it allocates resources, the thinktank said. Failure to adequately fund the service would mean pledges to improve the NHS will not be delivered.

The Department of Health and Social Care's budget is due to rise by £7.6bn to £196.9bn by 2029-30 under current plans. But it will have to increase by about £38bn more than that to £235.4bn to see "sustained improvement" in its performance, the modelling found.

Anita Charlesworth, a director of the thinktank's Real Centre, said: "The main political parties have said they want to fix [the NHS]. Yet the funding they have so far promised falls well short of the level needed."

The NHS will need to get average annual budget rises of 3.8% over the next decade to keep up with the ageing, growing and increasingly sick population, the thinktank calculated. That is considerably higher than the projected rate of economic growth (1.9%) and planned rise in public services spending (1.6%) over that time.

Britons value universities more highly than the BBC, poll reveals

Richard Adams
Education editor

The British public values the UK's universities more highly than the legal system or the BBC, according to a survey of attitudes towards higher education by King's College London.

Prof Bobby Duffy, director of its policy institute, said universities came behind only the NHS, the armed forces and the royal family in a league table of UK institutions considered to be among the best in the world.

The survey of 2,600 people, conducted last month, found nearly a third put universities ahead of the civil service, newspapers or parliament among key institutions, with similar backing among Labour and Conservative supporters.

"Everyone thinks their own sector gets the worst press, and many working in universities will certainly feel they've faced tough times recently – but the public don't seem to be paying much attention. If anything, their views are much more positive than we might expect," Duffy said.

However, it also found a significant shift in attitudes towards who should pay for higher education: a similar poll in 1988 found that 68% said universities should be mainly state-funded. This year's survey found that had shrunk to just 19%.

Higher education has borne the brunt of attacks from the government, with Rishi Sunak pushing crackdowns on "rip-off" degrees. The Conservative election manifesto includes a commitment to closing "low-quality" university courses.

But the survey found that voters placed higher education very low in terms of political priorities. Just 13% said higher education was "very important" in deciding how they would vote.

There was strong support for research, with 74% agreeing that "the research happening at universities is essential for medical, technological and social innovations".

Nick Hillman, director of the Higher Education Policy Institute, said: "Universities are part of what makes life worth living, even if we sometimes take them for granted."

Acid attacks up 75% in a year but only a fraction go to court, data shows

Haroon Siddique
Legal affairs correspondent

Acid attacks and other offences involving corrosive substances in the UK have risen by 75% in a year, but only 8% of cases led to criminal charges, figures suggest.

The number of recorded offences last year based on freedom of information (FoI) requests was 1,244, up from 710 in 2022. They comprised 454 physical attacks and 790 other alleged offences, including carrying corrosives and threats of acid attack to aid other offences such as rape or robbery.

The charity Acid Survivors Trust International (Asti), which obtained the data through FoI requests, said the real figures were likely be higher owing to underreporting and the fact that Police Scotland did not respond.

Jaf Shah, the executive director of Asti, said there needed to be more focus on prevention in the same way that there was for gun and knife crime. "The incoming government should increase funding for prevention initiatives and address the drivers that facilitate acid attacks and violent crime more generally in the UK – socioeconomic inequality and deprivation, and a lack of opportunity for young people," he said.

"Additionally, while there are laws in place that restrict access to corrosive substances, the growing number of offences shows that the government and businesses must tighten the enforcement of these regulations and do more to stop corrosive substances being weaponised to cause devastating harm."

The charity said that acid attacks had historically been associated with male-on-male, often gang-related violence, but women and girls were being increasingly targeted. Where gender data was available, 50% of all victims of corrosive offences were women, rising to 59% for threats of violence.

Eighteen per cent of all physical attacks using corrosive substances were recorded by Northumbria police (81) in an area with approximately 1.5 million people, followed by the Met police with 72 but across a population about six times as large.

Francisco Figueiredo, a professor of ophthalmology at Newcastle University, said: "Over the last five years there has been a concerning rise in the incidence of acid attacks, especially in north-east England – 80% of the victims are young Caucasian males and 90% of them are not reported to Northumbria police. Ammonia is the most common chemical used in the north-east of England area.

"Using noxious chemicals to cause harm, and ocular harm in particular, is becoming a popular mode of assault in the UK, and is a serious medical and social concern which requires further investigation to be able to increase public awareness, implement stricter regulations, better surveillance and means of prevention, as well as to provide adequate support to the victims."

In February, Abdul Ezedi was found dead in the River Thames three weeks after he was believed to have attacked a woman and her daughters with a corrosive substance in Clapham, south London. Passersby and police officers were also injured as they tried to help.

Only 8% of cases led to a charge or summons and in 32% of cases the alleged victim identified a suspect but did not support further action, suggesting a fear of reprisals.

▲ *Abdul Ezedi was believed to have attacked a woman and her daughter*

8%
Proportion of offences involving acid or other corrosive substances that led to criminal charges being brought

1,244
Recorded offences involving acid or other corrosive substances in the UK in 2023, up from 710 in 2022

England expects – again

In rainy Frankfurt, fans are ready to raise the roof

Fans Sophie Sutherland and Sophie Howard

Paul MacInnes
Frankfurt

As Frankfurt prepares to host England's European Championship fixture against Denmark this evening, a piece of stern advice has been issued to supporters: don't jump in the River Main.

The idea of hurling yourself into a tributary of the Rhine is unlikely to be at the forefront of many people's thinking, especially given the dismal weather that has so for characterised the tournament in Germany. But fans did so in 2006, when England last played in the city, and authorities are leaving no stone unturned in making sure this match passes off without incident.

So far, that has been the case. After the arrest of a solitary England fan before the match with Serbia in Gelsenkirchen on Sunday, local police said that "99.7%" of England fans "had behaved exceptionally well". Yesterday Frankfurt police were reporting no further arrests, and the hope will be that things stay that way.

The Group C match with Denmark, England's opponents in the semi-finals of the last Euros (which England won 2-1, thanks to a controversial penalty), has still been categorised as high risk by police. The categorisation gives them access to greater resources and an escalating plan of action should there be trouble. But the emphasis, local police say, will be on "de-escalation and communication".

Around the city centre in Frankfurt, and in the fan park that stretches for more than a kilometre down the Main, all was calm 24 hours out from the match. With heavy rain for much of the day, public gathering was at a minimum, but the flags of St George were beginning to appear, pinned on the awnings of kebab houses and cafes. Outside Reilly's Irish bar, which served as a de facto fan HQ in 2006, there was Oasis coming from the speakers, but crowds were thin.

There are no official figures on how many England fans will travel to the match, with estimates at anything between 10,000 to 20,000. But Frankfurt, Germany's financial capital, is a very different city to Gelsenkirchen and a hub for fans from many countries travelling through to matches elsewhere in the country.

As well as English and Danish fans there has been a substantial Scottish contingent in the city, and Frankfurt's Turkish community took centre stage on Monday. After Turkey's 3-1 victory over Georgia there was a two-hour parade of cars honking their way around the business district.

Vigilance will remain the watchword when it comes to disorder, but supporter groups are also focused on making sure the experience is safe for fans.

The Football Supporters' Association is waiting for a response from Uefa to submissions it made after the nightmare experienced by fans trying to get in and out of the Veltins Arena on Sunday night. If England top their group they will return to Gelsenkirchen in the round of 16.

Insufficient public transport is unlikely to be a problem in Frankfurt, with the main train station one of the busiest in Europe.

The fact that most supporters will already be in the city and not convening on the day as in Gelsenkirchen should also make a difference. Kick-off is at a more amenable hour too, 6pm local time, meaning everything will be open as fans return from the match.

The main concern may yet be the weather, with more rain expected and reports circulating that the game could be played under a closed roof. Once all that is taken into consideration, there remains only one thing left to worry about: whether Gareth Southgate's side can earn another three points.

▼ *Flying the flag. Lesley and Amanda Davis, from Cheltenham, get in the mood for England's match against Denmark in Frankfurt*
PHOTOGRAPH: JEREMY SELWYN

Braverman's dropping of Windrush pledges ruled unlawful

Amelia Gentleman

A decision by the former home secretary Suella Braverman to drop two recommendations intended to repair some of the harm done to the Windrush generation was unlawful, the high court has ruled.

The decision to abandon a promise to establish a migrants' commissioner and to drop a pledge to increase the powers of the independent chief inspector of borders and immigration (Icibi) was found to have had a "disproportionately prejudicial effect upon Windrush victims" and indirectly discriminated against them.

Trevor Donald, 68, brought legal action against the Home Office over the decision not to proceed with all of the recommendations made to the government by a review launched in the wake of the scandal.

Donald, who was born in Jamaica in 1955 but moved to the UK aged 11, was caught up in a "dystopian nightmare" when he found himself stranded in Jamaica for nine years after travelling back to attend his mother's funeral in 2010 in the country he had left 43 years earlier.

After the Windrush debacle, in which thousands of legal UK residents were misclassified as illegal immigrants, an independent review was commissioned by the solicitor Wendy Williams to establish what had caused the scandal.

Many UK residents, mostly from the Caribbean, had been wrongly detained, deported, threatened with deportation, sacked from their jobs, evicted or denied pensions, benefits and NHS healthcare despite having the right to live in Britain.

Williams published her Windrush Lessons Learned review in 2020 and all 30 recommendations were originally accepted by the then home secretary, Priti Patel. In January 2023 it was confirmed that Braverman had dropped three of the key reform commitments.

In a judgment yesterday, Mrs Justice Heather Williams concluded that it was unlawful and "conspicuously unfair" not to appoint a migrants' commissioner and not to proceed with increasing the powers of the Icibi without consulting representatives of the Windrush community.

▲ *Trevor Donald, who brought the case, was caught up in the scandal*

Covid study sheds light on why some people can avoid infection

Hannah Devlin
Science correspondent

Scientists have discovered differences in the immune response that could explain why some people seem to reliably escape Covid infection.

The study, in which healthy adults were given a small dose of Covid virus in the nose, suggested that specialised immune cells in the nose could see off the virus at the earliest stage before full infection takes hold. People in the study who did not succumb to infection also had high levels of activity in a gene thought to help flag the presence of viruses.

"These findings shed new light on the crucial early events that either allow the virus to take hold or rapidly clear it before symptoms develop," said Dr Marko Nikolić, the senior author of the study at UCL and an honorary consultant in respiratory medicine. "We now have a much greater understanding of the full range of immune responses, which could provide a basis for developing potential treatments and vaccines that mimic these."

For the UK Covid-19 Human Challenge study, done in 2021 and published in Nature, 36 unvaccinated, healthy adult volunteers without previous history of Covid-19 were given a low dose of the virus in the nose.

The researchers monitored 16 volunteers for activity in their immune cells in the blood and nose lining to get a timeline before, during and after infection. These participants fell into three groups: six people developed sustained infection and were ill; three became transiently positive but did not develop full infection; and seven experienced an "abortive infection" – a subset who never tested positive though the tests showed they had mounted an immune response.

In both the abortive and transient group, the volunteers had high background levels of activity in the gene HLA-DQA2. This suggested they could have a more efficient immune response to Covid. However, some did later get Covid in the community.

In those who briefly tested positive there was a rapid immune response in nasal cells within a day of exposure. Those who had full infection had a much slower nasal response, starting on average five days after exposure, allowing the virus establish itself.

Use of the strongest vapes rises sharply in three years, study finds

▲ *Researchers cautioned against Rishi Sunak's proposals to tax vapes according to their nicotine strength*
PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS THOMOND/THE GUARDIAN

Tobi Thomas
Health and inequalities correspondent

The use of high-strength nicotine vapes has increased sharply in the last three years, a study has found.

Researchers found that in June 2021 only 6.6% of people were using the highest-strength vapes, defined as those near the legal limit of 20mg/ml of nicotine, yet by January 2024 that had increased to 32.5% of users.

The study, by researchers at University College London, looked at a survey of 7,314 adults who vape in England in order to assess how the use of different nicotine strength vapes had changed over the period.

The research, published in the journal Addiction and funded by Cancer Research UK, found the biggest rise was among 18- to 24-year-old vapers, up from 3.9% between July 2016 and June 2021 to 53.1% in 2024.

Despite the increase in use, the researchers cautioned against Rishi Sunak's proposals, made before parliament was dissolved, to tax vaping products according to nicotine strength.

The lead author of the study, Dr Sarah Jackson, who is based at the UCL institute of epidemiology and healthcare, said: "Nicotine may be addictive but it is not what causes the great majority of harms from smoking. For smokers trying to quit, vaping with higher-strength nicotine is likely to be more effective, as it satisfies cravings more quickly and provides better relief from withdrawal symptoms.

"Taxing higher-strength nicotine products at higher rates will make the most effective way to quit less affordable, which may drive vapers towards lower-strength e-liquids and potentially undermine smoking cessation attempts.

"Of smokers who had quit within the last year and were vaping, we found that around 40% reported using those products which would attract the highest proposed tax rate."

Deborah Arnott, the chief executive of Action on Smoking and Health and co-author of the study, said: "Curbing underage vaping can best be achieved by making all vapes less appealing and increasing the price at point of sale, whatever their nicotine content.

"Those are the policies which will be most effective in stopping children from starting to vape in the first place. However, if we are to also ensure that vapes remain an effective quitting tool for adults, smokers should not be discouraged from using higher nicotine content vapes, which are likely to be much more effective quitting aids."

32.5%
Proportion of vapers found to be using the strongest devices, near the legal nicotine limit of 20mg/ml

53.1%
Proportion of 18- to 24-year-old vapers using the highest-strength devices, up from 3.9% before 2021

Jurors in baby death trial fail to agree verdict

Caroline Davies

The jury in the trial of the aristocrat Constance Marten and her partner, Mark Gordon, over the death of their newborn baby, has been discharged after failing to reach verdicts.

Marten, 37, and Gordon, 50, were charged after their daughter, Victoria, was found dead on an allotment in Brighton, East Sussex, last March.

The pair had been arrested in Brighton last February following a high-profile police search for the missing baby.

Marten and Gordon were each charged with manslaughter by gross negligence, causing or allowing the death of a child, concealing the birth of a child, child cruelty and perverting the course of justice.

They both denied all counts and went on trial at the Old Bailey, London, on 25 January.

Jurors began deliberating on 30 April and have been discharged after more than 72 hours of deliberation. Marten and Gordon may face a retrial.

Representative Example	Duration of Device Plan	Upfront Cost	Monthly Device Payment	Credit Amount	Total Amount Payable for Device	Interest Rate	Representative APR	Cash Price	Airtime Plan	Airtime Plan April 2025 – March 2026	Airtime Plan April 2026 – March 2027
Google Pixel 8 Pro	36 months	£30	£20.25	£729	£759	0%	0%	£759	£16	£16 + RPI% announced in Feb 2024 + 3.9% = Price A	Price A + RPI% announced in Feb 2026 +3.9%

RPI rate is announced in February each year. £600 saving consists of £240 discount applied to the device plan (total cost of device was £999 now £759) and further £360 saving achieved by £10 per month discount on the 1GB, 5GB, 25GB, 30GB, 125GB, 150GB, Unlimited and Unlimited Plus Airtime Plans over 36 months. Airtime discount applies until you change tariff, leave or upgrade. Data allowances must be used within the month and cannot be carried over. Subject to availability. £36.25 Device Plan for 36 months and £16 monthly rolling Airtime Plan. £30 upfront. Your UK data allowance applies at no extra cost in our Europe Zone subject to a 25GB limit where UK data allowance is 25GB or more. Roaming then £3.50 per GB afterwards. Terms apply, see o2.co.uk/roamingterms. For terms see o2.co.uk/terms. Devices subject to availability. 0% APR. Finance subject to status and credit checks. 18+. Direct Debit. Credit provided by Telefónica UK Ltd, RG2 6UU. Telefónica UK is authorised and regulated by the FCA for consumer credit and insurance. Terms apply, see o2.co.uk/terms

Woman who sued therapist for sexual assault wins £217,000 in damages

▲ *Ella Janneh, pictured at the Royal Courts, London, after her damages award was made yesterday*
PHOTOGRAPH: LUCY NORTH/PA

Diane Taylor
Hannah Al-Othman

> *'I hope that victims take encouragement from this, that it is meaningful to fight, and to speak out'*
>
> **Ella Janneh**
> *Claimant*

A woman who claimed she was raped by a therapist who said penetration could help ease her trauma, has been awarded more than £200,000 in damages in a high court ruling after she sued him over the alleged assaults.

Ella Janneh, 37, a victim of childhood sexual abuse, who waived her right to anonymity, brought a claim against Michael Lousada, described as a "self-styled psychosexual Somatics practitioner", over a therapy session involving sexual penetration at his clinic in Belsize Park, London, in August 2016.

Lawyers for Janneh, told the court she suffered a panic attack during the session and "did not consent to the sexual acts".

Lousada, who had been an internationally renowned sex therapist and had appeared as a guest on the TV show This Morning, denied the allegations, claiming that the sexual activity was consensual and part of "legitimate" therapeutic activity.

Janneh reported the alleged rape to police after it happened and told a friend "I think I just got raped". But in 2018, the CPS decided not to proceed with a criminal prosecution, so Janneh launched a civil claim against Lousada for personal injury and negligence.

Criminal and civil cases require different standards of proof, criminal prosecutions requiring the higher standard of "beyond reasonable doubt", while civil cases are based on "the balance of probabilities".

In his judgment yesterday, Mr Justice Jeremy Baker found that Janneh became dissociative when asked to regress to her childhood state where she was abused. "Such that when the defendant suggested he would use his penis to absorb the trauma, the defendant not having asked for consent to penetrate her with his fingers, the claimant lacked capacity to consent to being penetrated with his penis." He ruled that Janneh should be paid at least £217,000 in damages.

The trial heard that Janneh, 37, first visited Lousada in 2011 and again in 2012 after suffering panic symptoms during consensual sex, which she believed stemmed from abuse as a child. No sexual activity took place during the first two sessions.

Janneh's barrister, Nina Ross, said she had returned in 2016 for a "body work" session costing £750, which she believed was similar to a physiotherapy session, coupled with talking therapy. Janneh told the court that she "never, ever, ever" would have asked Lousada to penetrate her during the session.

In court documents she said that Lousada told her: "His penis was, 'like a laser beam' and that it could 'burn up trauma', and that he should use his penis to absorb the trauma." The court heard that he did not wear a condom.

She claimed the incident caused her to suffer a panic attack, leaving her unable to communicate and "incapable of providing valid and informed consent".

In his evidence, Lousada admitted penetration occurred but said he repeatedly received "clear verbal consent" for his actions. The court heard that when challenged by his former wife Louise Mazanti about his use of sexual penetration with clients he said his sexual work comprised his "spiritual gifts" and was an "expression of his soul".

Lousada said he made notes after the session when the alleged rape took place saying Jenneh was making "a healthy and voluntary sexual response" and left the session feeling "empowered and optimistic".

However, the court heard evidence that she developed complex PTSD after the alleged incident, felt suicidal, began drinking alcohol excessively and even felt constrained to terminate a pregnancy because of her poor mental health.

"I am satisfied that the scale of his confidence in his own abilities was such that his perception of reality became clouded by his sense of self-worth," the judge said in his ruling.

"I am feeling everything all at once," Janneh said after the judgment. "I'm incredibly proud of myself, first and foremost that I got here. I have put in so much work."

But, she added: "I'm also in grief for what it means to have given up the best part of a decade to hold a man accountable."

"I was left wanting to die. I was left suicidal. I was left with the harm that I've still never recovered from, so there is grief also about an eight-year fight, and that is eight years that I'll never [get] back."

Janneh said that although her fight for justice had been long, she hoped that the judgment could be "meaningful for other victims".

She said: "I hope they can take some kind of encouragement from this, and not just because I won, but in that it is meaningful to fight, it is meaningful to speak out."

Janneh also said she felt "completely betrayed by the police and CPS" when her original criminal complaint was not taken forward, but said: "It was really important for me to finally get in that court room, to do what I needed to do."

Catriona Rubens, Janneh's solicitor from Leigh Day, said: "This judgment is a resounding victory for my client Ella Janneh, who has fought tirelessly to seek justice.

"Ella has faced many battles since the session on 18 August 2016: with the police, the Crown Prosecution Service, and now against Mr Lousada directly through the civil [court] claim. She has been unable to speak freely until now - after a full civil trial in open court."

▼ *Michael Lousada, who was sued by Janneh over accusations that he raped her at his clinic during a therapy session in 2016*

Mother of British man missing in Tenerife has 'not slept at all'

Jamie Grierson

The mother of a British teenager who has gone missing during a holiday in Tenerife has said she has "not slept at all" as the search for him continues.

Jay Slater, 19, from Oswaldtwistle, Lancashire, was last heard from on Monday morning when he told a friend he planned to walk back to his accommodation after missing a bus, a journey that would take about 11 hours on foot.

▲ *Jay Slater, 19, was last known to be in a park in a mountainous area*

Slater's mother, Debbie Duncan, flew to Tenerife, in Spain's Canary Islands, on Tuesday morning to search for him. She told the BBC: "I've not slept at all; it's like it's not real. It was his first holiday abroad with his friends and I was encouraging him to go. I said: 'You will have a great time.'

"He's not really a drinker, is Jay, but he had been drinking shorts and spirits that night. Everyone loves being in his company, and he was having a laugh with these guys.

"He wouldn't have seen the danger. He didn't have his wits about him, he just wanted to go and have fun."

Slater's friend Lucy - who had gone to the island with him to attend the NRG music festival - told the Manchester Evening News (MEN) that he had gone to stay with people he had met on the holiday after a night out.

She said she had received a call from Slater at about 8.15am on Monday after he had missed the bus and was trying to walk back. He had said he was lost, needed a drink of water, and had only 1% battery power left on his phone.

Slater's phone then cut off. His last location showed as the Rural de Teno Park, a mountainous area popular with hikers.

Lucy told the MEN that one of the people Slater had met had driven them back to his apartment in a hire car, and the missing man had not realised how far away it was.

"He's ended up out in the middle of nowhere. Jay was obviously thinking he would be able to get home from there," she said. "But then in the morning he's set off walking, using his maps on his phone, and ended up in the middle of mountains with nothing around."

Slater was last seen wearing a white T-shirt with shorts and trainers.

A Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office spokesperson said: "We are supporting the family of a British man who has been reported missing in Spain and are in contact with the local authorities."

Ex-Fujitsu executive 'aggrieved' by criticism of Horizon

Jane Croft

A former executive of Fujitsu, which developed the Post Office's Horizon IT system, has told a public inquiry he felt "aggrieved" that what he thought was a "good system" had been placed into such disrepute by the scandal.

Richard Christou said he believed that the "real issue" was the way that criminal prosecutions of post office operators had been handled by the state-owned body.

The former chief executive and executive chairman of Fujitsu Service Holdings was testifying at the inquiry, which is examining why the Post Office prosecuted and ruined hundreds of people, alleging financial shortfalls in their post office branch accounts. Despite campaigns, it took years for the Post Office to admit that faults with Horizon were behind many of the shortfalls.

Christou, who was CEO between 2000 and 2004, was asked why no Fujitsu whistleblowers had raised concerns to him about the ability of staff to remotely access Horizon and to change the branch accounts of post office operators.

Christou said he took issue with the description of "tampering" with accounts. "First of all I don't like the word tamper - that is a pejorative term," he said. "Secondly, my understanding is - and I knew nothing about this particularly at the time - these alterations were made in conjunction with the Post Office in order to correct various issues."

He said: "Why no whistleblowers? You'd have to ask potential whistleblowers in Fujitsu. No one came to me and blew any whistles."

Christou added : "I'm not mitigating that there is a gross miscarriage of justice and if you think I don't feel for the postmasters and subpostmasters, you are wrong, I do.

"I feel aggrieved that what I thought was a good system has been put into disrepute but I'm not responsible for it. I have said before the real issue is the way the prosecutions were handled and flows of information."

The inquiry continues.

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Prisons may run out of space days after July election

Rajeev Syal
Home affairs editor

Prison governors have been warned that jails will be so overcrowded by the second week of July that they will struggle to accept any more inmates, plunging an incoming government into an immediate crisis.

The heads of jails in England and Wales were informed by HM Prison and Probation Service officials this month that data pointed to an "operational capacity breaking point" just days after the 4 July general election.

The development signals a logistical headache for an incoming justice secretary. It is expected to trigger Operation Early Dawn, a crisis measure that allows offenders to be housed in police cells when jails are full and can prompt magistrates courts to delay cases.

The measures are in addition to a temporary government scheme under which prisoners can be released up to 70 days early.

Tom Wheatley, the president of the Prison Governors' Association (PGA), said: "We understand that we will no longer be able to receive prisoners from court in the second to third week of July. It is not an exact science, but it is very soon after the election.

"This position was projected some time ago. The outgoing government did not take the necessary action in a timely fashion to avoid this."

Wheatley said any attempt to cram additional offenders into prisons beyond their operational capacity could be challenged in the courts.

"If a new government arrives and says 'we want more people in', it would be challenged in court by the PGA because ministers would be placing our members at risk," he said.

> *'If a new government wants more people in prisons, it would be challenged in court'*
>
> **Tom Wheatley** *Prison Governors' Association*

Operation Early Dawn is a contingency measure that has been used for short periods - usually no longer than a week - to manage immediate, localised pressures on the prison estate.

It steps up coordination between police stations, the prison service and the courts to make sure nobody is taken to the courts until the prison service can guarantee a space for them should they be remanded.

According to the latest Ministry of Justice (MoJ) data, released last Friday, the usable capacity in prisons across England and Wales was 88,815, while the population was 87,347.

In May, Operation Early Dawn was triggered in London and the north-east amid concerns over prison overcrowding. It meant defendants in police custody remained there and were not transferred to magistrates courts for bail hearings in case there was no space in jail cells for those remanded into custody. Police were instructed to consider making fewer arrests because of the lack of space.

In a further development, officials have drawn up plans to reduce the time served by prisoners from the current halfway point in their sentences to about 43%. Modelling shows this would be the most effective medium-term solution to the overcrowding. It would replace the current ad hoc early release scheme of up to 70 days.

The Conservative party has shelved its pledge to ensure that most sentences under 12 months should be suspended and served in the community rather than in prison.

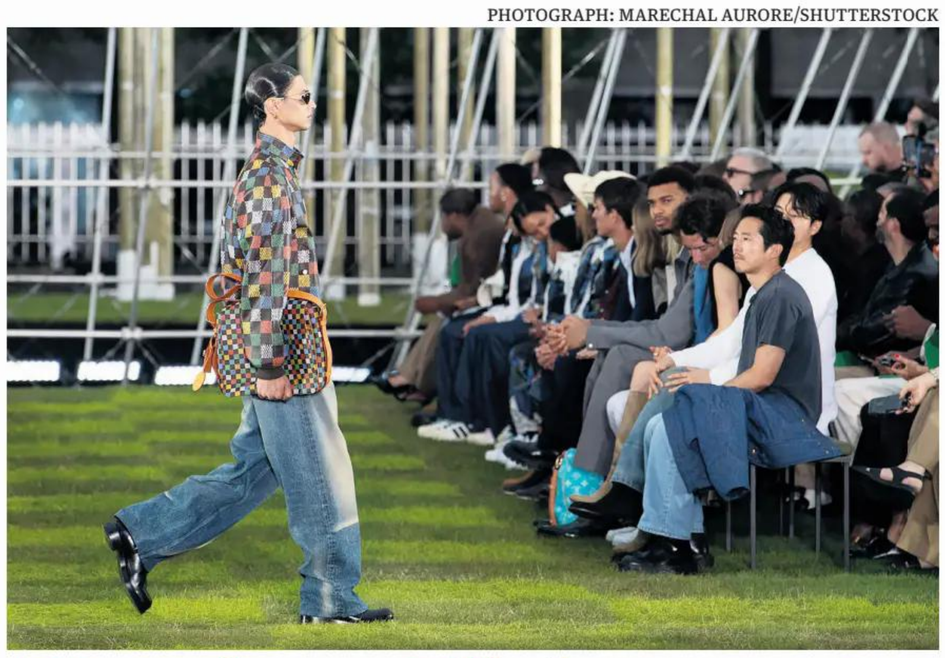
The proposal formed part of the sentencing bill introduced during the last session of parliament. The bill's progress ground to a halt when a group of rightwing Tory MPs organised in opposition to the policy.

The Conservative manifesto omitted any mention of the plan to scrap short prison sentences. It also failed to mention a second element of the sentencing bill that would have lowered the prison population - a move to extend eligibility for early release under the home detention curfew scheme for people serving sentences of more than four years.

Labour insiders said the party would force through planning permission for new prisons, but have not said how it would deal with an immediate overcrowding crisis. The sources say the party has not had access to government data, but they are aware it faces a "brutal inheritance". The party is widely expected to form the next government.

The Conservative party was approached for a comment.

PHOTOGRAPH: MARECHAL AURORE/SHUTTERSTOCK



'How beautiful we are'

Pharrell Williams' Louis Vuitton show embraces Olympic spirit in Paris

Lauren Cochrane

Pharrell Williams' fourth show as creative director of menswear at Louis Vuitton took place in the gardens of the Unesco building in Paris. A video shared on Instagram before the show emphasised the international nature of the location, and the importance of diversity. Once the show began, however, a theme emerged that is perhaps more front of mind for those in Paris - the Olympics and the Euros.

There were sporting references throughout, especially to football. Some models wore shirts with "LVFC" written across them, while one had a bag shaped like a football, covered in the famous LV monogram. Another had a jacket referencing motocross. It should be noted that LVMH, Louis Vuitton's parent company, is one of the sponsors of the Olympic Games.

While most luxury brands have phased out the use of fur, Williams has continued to use it, despite being called out by Peta. Four of the outfits here featured fur, including a knee-length, wide-shouldered fur coat, and shorter jackets.

After the show, Williams - dressed in his uniform of bootcut denim, sunglasses and cowboy hat - greeted celebrity guests including Burna Boy, Stormzy, Michael Fassbender and - on theme - the French basketball ace Victor Wembanyama.

While excited about the Olympics, Williams said the theme went beyond sport. "[It is] the celebration of human athletic prowess," he said. "[We are] just committed to that notion [to] show the world how beautiful we are as a species from the Blackest of the Black to the whitest of the white."

This came through in the casting of the show and how the models' outfits were designed to match with their different skin tones.

Ultimately, he said, the show was designed to be "about unity and the oneness of what one could look like when you just invite everybody in as a whole. We are as appreciative of this opportunity and this platform that is at Louis Vuitton."

Asked why he continued to use fur, Williams said he saw it as part of the creative process. "[We use it] for the same reason that anyone uses leather. For me, it's about the designers expressing ourselves through different textile platforms. Love and respect to anybody that has opinions and feelings about whatever. That's what democracy is all about."

Williams is perhaps one of culture's most famous multitaskers - as a designer, singer, music producer and founder of the skincare brand Humanrace. He continues to be prolific on all fronts. For a quick taste of a multihyphenate's work schedule, go to his Instagram - where a teaser of the Louis Vuitton show is preceded by a post of him in the studio as a producer, working on a song for the latest film in the Minions franchise.

This mix of culture and fashion is what sealed his appointment at Louis Vuitton last year. LVMH's sales grew 9% in the last quarter of 2023, down from 17% in the previous quarter.

While the conglomerate does not reveal figures for specific brands, it's thought that Louis Vuitton accounts for about half of the sales. If its menswear is only about 5% of that, the optics of having Williams - a huge cultural influencer - at the brand means much more.

"That's besides the point," Erwan Rambourg, the global head of consumer and retail research at HSBC, told the Financial Times last year. "The point is the halo effect."

Williams' Paris show championed his 'invite-everybody' ethos, but he was forced to defend the continued use of fur in his designs

Pharrell Williams, Louis Vuitton's tangible creative asset

Music review Triumphant return for Vegas showmen

The Killers
Co-op Live, Manchester
★★★★☆

Dave Simpson

When the Killers headlined the NME indie rock tour in 2005, singer Brandon Flowers' shocking pink jacket gave an early hint of the Las Vegas ensemble's showbiz leanings. Nineteen years later, there are lasers, ticker tape cannons, jaw-dropping lighting and graphics, and the band perform in front of huge films of the US desert and constellations. Flowers' black suit - shimmering like the sky at night - is restrained by comparison.

With guitarist Dave Keuning fully ensconced again after a hiatus, the band "from fabulous Las Vegas" set the pace with some big hitters. Somebody Told Me and Smile Like You Mean It are met with seas of swaying arms, while Flowers quips that 2008's laser-boosted Spaceman was written "before it was acceptable to believe in aliens". Still only 42, with his herculean bellow and natty stage moves, the frontman comes over like a cross between a young Elvis Presley and a fairground compere. "We didn't come here to pacify. We came here to electrify!" he yells before a relatively stripped down The Man, which brings a classy touch of Roxy Music to their anthemic XL rock.

With drummer Ronnie Vannucci Jr a complete powerhouse, this show has two gears: epic and even more epic. While more light and shade wouldn't be unwelcome, there's a touching moment when Flowers talks about the premature death of his mother and gets the 23,500-strong crowd to hold up phones for people we have lost. The show must go on, of course, but A Dustland Fairytale and Be Still are accordingly emotional.

They save the biggest singalongs - All the Things That I've Done, When You Were Young, Human and Mr Brightside - for a triumphant home run, but Flowers twice has the presence of mind to stop the show for fans to receive medical attention. Within this eye-popping Vegas extravaganza there is a human heart.

At Co-op Live tomorrow and Saturday, then touring

▲ *Brandon Flowers kept his promise to 'electrify' the Manchester audience. The Killers' frontman stopped the show twice to get medical help to fans*

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS PHELPS

Milton Keynes woman 'probably killed by convicted sex offender'

Matthew Weaver

A woman whose body was found three years after she went missing was likely to have been killed by a sex offender who later took his own life, a police officer told an inquest.

Leah Croucher, 19, who had a black belt in martial arts, was last seen walking to work in February 2019, Milton Keynes coroner's court was told yesterday. Her remains were discovered in the loft of a house in October 2022 in Furzton, Milton Keynes.

The prime suspect in the killing was Neil Maxwell, a convicted sex offender, who killed himself while on the run from police in April 2019.

Asked by the senior coroner, Tom Osborne, if on the balance of probabilities he would say Croucher was unlawfully killed by Maxwell, Det Supt Kevin Brown, of Thames Valley police, replied: "Absolutely."

Brown told the inquest: "Leah would have died very close to the day she went missing, if not on it."

Caroline Haughey KC, representing Croucher's family, asked if he believed it was "likely to be an unwarranted sexual attack and in fact because of her martial arts ability, she reacted and subsequently died".

▲ *Leah Croucher, 19, was found dead three years after going missing*

DS Brown said: "I believe she would have defended herself. That may have escalated the situation."

A murder investigation was launched in October 2022 after a maintenance worker discovered remains. Croucher was identified by her dental records.

Maxwell was a handyman and the only person with keys to the property where Croucher's body was found.

The inquest continues.

A bench.

You can find one in just about every park, bus stop and train platform in the UK. They are as functional as they are familiar, but behind their simple design lies something more. An invitation to talk. After all, a bench is made for sharing and when people come together on a bench, it becomes an opportunity for a conversation.

Today, there's a lot to talk about: energy costs, climate change, the cost of living and of course, the weather. But the one thing no one seems to be talking about is living longer and what that means for retirement. As 1 in 3 children born today have a good chance of living to 100, we need to ask ourselves, are we ready?

With a longer life comes a lot more things to think about. Over half of us aren't confident we can afford to retire by 65. It's time we started talking about that. We need to talk about it.

Let's talk about why almost 18 million people don't think they can save for the retirement they want. Let's talk about how more than 750,000 people over 50 are not working but would like to. Let's talk about the 7 million retirees who expect to rely on financial support from a partner, family or friends. It's time we started having these conversations.

Let's talk about savings.

Let's talk about pensions.

Let's talk about retirement.

Let's talk about making the most of living longer.

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Letby trial hears of doctor's fear of hospital bosses

Josh Halliday
North of England editor

A senior doctor has told a jury that a "fear of retribution" from NHS bosses was one of the reasons he did not contact police after walking in on nurse Lucy Letby allegedly trying to murder a baby.

Letby, 34, is accused of trying to kill the two-hour-old girl by dislodging her breathing tube on the neonatal unit at the Countess of Chester hospital in north-west England.

Dr Ravi Jayaram, a consultant paediatrician, told Letby's trial yesterday that he felt "very uncomfortable" leaving the nurse alone with the infant, known as Baby K, after doctors linked her to a series of "unusual incidents".

The jury has been told that Letby has been convicted of murdering five babies in the months before Baby K was born in the early hours of 17 February 2016. Letby denies attempting to murder the infant.

Jayaram told Manchester crown court that he and other senior doctors had begun to think the "unthinkable thought" that Letby was deliberately harming babies by February 2016.

He said this was "not a fixed belief" but was enough to make him "very uncomfortable" when Letby was left alone with Baby K when the infant's nurse briefly left her side at 3.31am.

◀ *Lucy Letby denies attempting to murder a baby by dislodging its breathing tube in the Countess of Chester hospital*

> ***'It was uncharted territory. There's no precedent or training to deal with this'***
>
> **Dr Ravi Jayaram**
> *Paediatrician*

Jayaram said he went in to check on Letby "to reassure myself that everything was OK". He found the nurse standing beside Baby K's incubator while the newborn's oxygen saturation levels dropped to a "life-threatening" level.

He told jurors there was no "obvious evidence" that the nurse was helping the baby or investigating the cause of collapse. An alarm that should have been sounding was silent, he said.

The court has heard that Jayaram told a hospital transfer team at the time that he believed Baby K's breathing tube had become dislodged, causing her oxygen saturation levels to plummet.

Letby's barrister, Benjamin Myers KC, pressed Jayaram on why he had not contacted the police if he suspected Letby of harming the infant.

Jayaram told the court: "There was the element of denial, an element of fear of retribution from those people above. In subsequent months we were actually told it would be inappropriate to contact the police."

He added: "We were being advised from the start the police would be the wrong route and the trouble is it's a matter of infinite regret I didn't handle it differently.

"If we'd not had faith in those who were supposed to be guiding us then we would have gone to the police."

Myers asked Jayaram why he was prepared to allow Letby to remain on the unit if he suspected he had caught her "virtually red handed" harming a baby. "None of us were prepared to do that at all," Jayaram said. "But we were in uncharted territory. There's absolutely no precedent or training to deal with this. We were meeting big resistance from people the top."

In an ITV interview that was played to the jury, Jayaram said the incident would be "in my nightmares forever".

The jury has been told that Letby was convicted last year of murdering seven babies and attempting to kill another six. The jury in that trial was unable to reach a verdict on the count of attempted murder related to Baby K, which Letby denies.

Asked by the prosecution barrister, Nick Johnson KC, whether he "received support" from management when doctors raised concerns about Letby, Jayaram told the jury: "We were told at that stage it was the wrong thing to contact the police because it would be bad for the reputation of the Trust and there would be blue and white tape everywhere."

Letby denies tampering with the newborn's breathing tube.

The trial continues.

UN finds petrostate citizens want fast track to clean energy

Damian Carrington
Environment editor

Most citizens in nations that are the world's biggest fossil fuel producers want their countries to transition quickly to clean energy to fight the climate crisis, finds the largest climate opinion poll yet, done by the UN.

Many of these states have profited heavily from fossil fuel exploitation but the 77-nation poll shows their citizens are deeply concerned about the impact of global heating on their lives. In China and India, the biggest coal producers, 80% and 76% respectively want a quick green transition.

In the US, the world's biggest oil and gas producer, 54% of people want a fast transition, as do 75% of those in Saudi Arabia, the second biggest oil producer. The poll found 69% of Australians want a quick transition from the large coal and gas sector.

The UN Development Programme said the purpose of the poll was to show political leaders what millions of people around the world felt about the climate emergency and what action they wanted.

"It is so important we let the people speak for themselves," said Achim Steiner, the UNDP head.

The poll questioned 75,000 people in countries representing almost 90% of the global population. It found a large majority (80%) wanted their countries to strengthen their climate change commitments; only 5% said action should be weakened. The percentage of people wanting to see countries set aside geopolitical differences and work together on climate change was 86%.

Steiner called this level of consensus "stunning", given the increase in conflict and the rise of nationalism around the world.

"There can be no doubt that citizens across the world are saying to their leaders, you have to act and, above all, have to act faster. This is an issue that almost everyone, everywhere, can agree on," he said.

He said some fossil fuel nations would have to make "existential shifts", adding: "There are very narrow, self-interested, agendas that maintain artificially inflated [profits] for fossil-fuel-based industries that ultimately are coming at the cost of everyone. Hundreds of billions of dollars of fossil fuel subsidies are artificially slowing down an energy transition – [it] is deliberately being held back by a distorted market.

"But we are definitely peaking on fossil fuels and we are seeing exponential growth rates in renewables. And what the public ultimately wants is unquestionably pointing in the direction of a net zero transition."

80%
The proportion of people in China – a leading coal producer – who want a quick transition to clean energy

79%
Proportion of those polled who said rich countries should do more to support poorer ones on the climate

The People's Climate Vote had contacted participants via randomly generated phone numbers, with results weighted to ensure they represented national populations. A special effort was made to reach those sometimes overlooked by polling, such as older women without any formal education.

Globally, the poll found 72% of people wanted their country to transition quickly away from fossil fuels to clean energy, with majorities in nine of 10 countries. Only 7% of people said there should be no transition at all. There were large majorities in significant fossil fuel producers, including Nigeria (89%), Brazil (81%), Iran (79%), the UK (76%) and Canada (65%). However, Russia (16%) and Iraq (43%) were exceptions.

The poll also found that 56% of people globally said they thought about climate change daily or weekly, and a similar number said they were more worried about climate change than a year ago. Almost 70% said their big decisions such as where to work were affected by climate change.

"Climate change is on people's doorsteps and they know it," said Cassie Flynn, the UNDP's global director of climate change. "Extremes are a part of our lives, from the wildfires in Canada, to drought in East Africa and flooding in UAE and Brazil."

Cop29, the UN's next international climate summit, in December, is likely to be dominated by the issue of climate finance, and the poll showed 79% of people wanting rich countries to better support poorer countries.

"The social and justice dimensions of the climate transition have become perhaps the most central variables in the way the politics will play out in the years to come," said Steiner.

Proud parents Hayley, a barbary macaque born on 13 May, sits with mother, Orcus, and father, Phil, at Drummond Safari and Adventure Park near Stirling, where they are part of a conservation programme.

PHOTOGRAPH: JANE BARLOW/PA

Baby girl dies after being bitten by family dog in Coventry

Nadeem Badshah

A seven-month-old baby girl has died in hospital from serious head injuries after being bitten by her family's pet dog, police said yesterday.

Officers were called to a property in Coventry shortly after 3pm on Sunday, West Midlands police said.

Police and ambulance service workers arrived at the home within minutes, a statement released by the force said. The girl was taken to hospital by ambulance from Shorncliffe Road but died a short time later.

Police said the dog was not classed as a dangerous breed and was removed from the home and destroyed. No further details of its breed have been disclosed.

The police statement said: "A seven-month-old baby girl had received serious injuries to her head after being bitten by the family's dog inside the home.

"She received treatment at the scene by paramedics before being rushed to hospital for further treatment. Tragically, she died a short time later. Our thoughts remain with her family at this devastating time.

"The pet dog, which isn't classed as a dangerous breed, was removed from the home on Sunday and humanely destroyed.

"We are in the early stages of our investigation and our inquiries are continuing. Anyone with any information should contact us via live chat on our website or by calling 101 quoting log 2407 of 16 June."

Warwickshire and Northamptonshire air ambulance had also been called to the scene.

Man who stabbed stranger 'had warned doctors he would kill'

Steven Morris

A man stabbed a 74-year-old stranger to death in an Exeter park three hours after telling doctors he would kill someone when they refused to section him, a jury has heard.

Cameron Davis stabbed Lorna England in the heart and neck. When he was arrested, Davis told police: "I warned you … why didn't they listen to me at the hospital?"

Davis, 31, has admitted manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility. A psychiatrist for his defence team concluded he had schizoaffective disorder, the jury at Exeter crown court heard.

But the prosecution claims drugs and alcohol abuse turned him into a "manipulative and angry man" and he should be found guilty of murder.

Joanna Martin KC, prosecuting, said England went out to buy flour on 18 February. After leaving a supermarket, England cut across Ludwell Valley park where Davis attacked her with a knife he had just bought in the same store. He slashed her across the neck and stabbed her into the chest and heart. She had cuts to a hand where she had tried to defend herself. A passerby tried to help her but she died at the scene.

Martin said Davis was known to the police and mental health services, and had been in prison and homeless.

In January 2023, he told a support worker he would kill himself or someone else. He went to a police station and was taken to the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital. Two psychiatrists examined him and said he did not need to be detained.

A few days later he told his support worker he would "bash her head in". He was seen by members of the community health team, who also said he did not need to be sectioned.

On the morning of the killing, Davis called the police and said he would burn his flat down if he wasn't arrested. When emergency services arrived, he said he would kill a "random person" if he wasn't detained. He was seen by mental health specialists and again said he was going to kill someone, but was discharged.

He left hospital at 12.49pm, bought two bottles of vodka and the kitchen knife and waited in the park, where he killed England at about 3.55pm.

When he was picked up in Exeter city centre, he told police: "I fucking warned you. None of you … listened."

The trial continues.

AI interviews preserve Holocaust testimonies for future generations

Neha Gohil
Community affairs correspondent

A groundbreaking educational programme will be launched in UK schools this month using artificial intelligence and virtual reality to "future-proof" the testimonies of Holocaust survivors.

The Holocaust Educational Trust (HET) will launch its Testimony 360 programme across schools in the UK, allowing pupils to have lifelike, face-to-face conversations with survivors through innovative technology.

The first part of the programme uses AI to enable pupils to have a question and answer session with a virtual version of a Holocaust survivor via a laptop and headphones. The second part allows pupils to explore key sites related to the survivor's testimony through a virtual reality headset, including where they lived before and the concentration camps or ghettoes they were detained in.

The chief executive of the HET, Karen Pollock, described the programme, piloted across 15 schools with 800 students taking part, as stimulating and critical owing to the recent rise in antisemitism and the reducing numbers of Holocaust survivors able to share their testimony.

"The beauty of this technology is that you can take people without having to leave their armchair or leave their classroom and learn about the Holocaust," she said. "We're at a critical juncture: survivors are dwindling in number. When the eyewitnesses are not here we have to still create these memorable moments and meaningful Holocaust education."

It is mandatory for schools in the UK to teach the Holocaust within the history curriculum, with the aim of "making sure young people are aware of the atrocities of the Holocaust", according to the government.

Holocaust survivors in their 80s and 90s visit schools across the country with the HET to share their experiences first-hand. However, as the number of survivors dwindle and those alive grow older and frailer, the programme aims to "future-proof" those testimonies to ensure interactions with survivors can still happen.

▲ *Manfred Goldberg, the first Holocaust survivor to feature in the interactive programme* PHOTOGRAPH: HOLOCAUST EDUCATIONAL TRUST/PA MEDIA

Pollock added: "We want young people to understand the individual experiences of people that managed to survive but they do need to understand about the loss and destruction and the nature of antisemitism, the nature of hate that led to this crime against humanity. When the survivors aren't here, and with Holocaust denial, it's a critical moment."

Manfred Goldberg, who survived the Stutthof concentration camp and a death march, is the first survivor to be immortalised in this technology for UK students. For the programme, Goldberg answered more than 1,000 potential questions and filmed for more than 20 hours across five days. Through AI, the survivor is able to answer a variety of questions, ranging from his own experiences of the Holocaust, moving to the UK and even his favourite football club.

> ***'I do hope that many thousands of youngsters will have the opportunity of asking me questions'***
>
> **Manfred Goldberg**
> *Holocaust survivor*

Goldberg described the technology as a "form of magic".

"The fact long after I leave this world I will able to tell them in my own words … details of my Holocaust experiences to try to educate young people. I'm coming to terms with it, but it still sort of feels a little weird," he said.

"I do hope that many thousands of youngsters will have the opportunity of asking me these various questions and will go away believing that, one way or another, hatred can lead to atrocities which have been unprecedented."

Lara, a year 10 student at the Sacred Heart Catholic school who took part in the programme, described the experience as "very emotional".

"You could really feel and see what the concentration camps were like and the conditions that they were in, and the features that they had and the rooms you could be in, for example, the barracks," she said. "It's really realistic."

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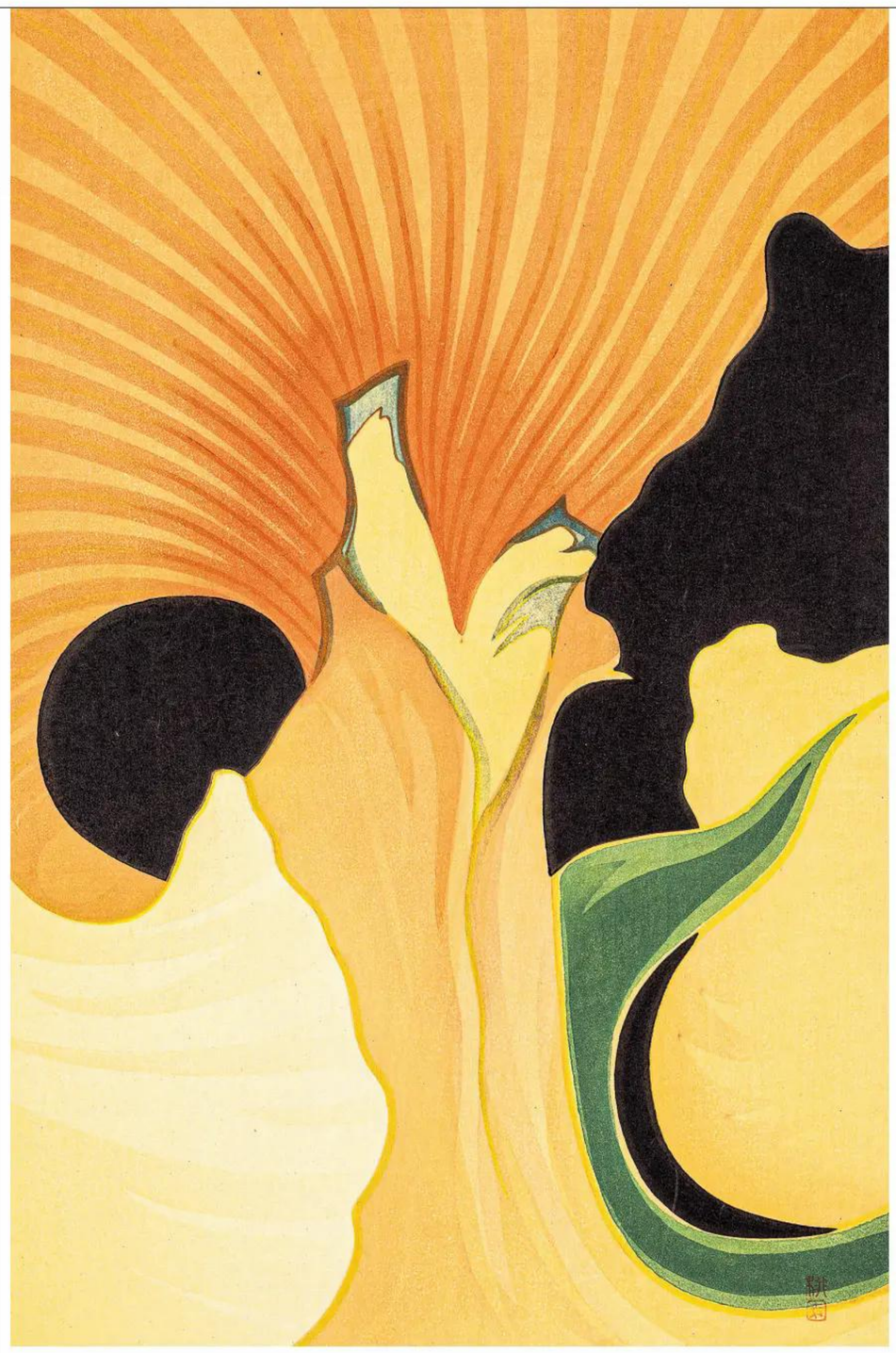


Art review

Bold woodblock prints bleached of historical colour

Yoshida Tōshi
Dulwich Picture Gallery, London
★★☆☆☆

Jonathan Jones

It's easy to see why a curator, or any art lover, might get fixated on the craft and beauty of Japanese woodblock prints, to the exclusion of any wider context. This genre, which first flourished in the 17th and 18th centuries, takes you into a bright, bold world away from cares – a "floating world" no less – and has been lovingly continued over the past century by generations of the Yoshida family. Yet a telltale mistake in a caption and catalogue entry betrays this show's dangerous disdain for the filthy mess of reality beyond art's enchanted garden.

Looking at Yoshida Tōshi's 1985 print Camouflage, in which two lethal, gorgeous tigers are almost completely hidden by a tangle of golden grass, you are cheerfully told by Dulwich Picture Gallery that it was inspired by his "travels in Africa in the 1970s and 80s". One problem: tigers don't live in Africa. A trivial mistake? Maybe. But it shows what this exhibition finds to be trivial: namely, everything outside its narrowly defined subject of one family's artistic creations and the skills they have cherished.

Camouflage itself suggests the bigger, badder "tiger" of history that this show ignores. Instead of an irrelevant trip to tiger-free Africa, the title surely points to a military meaning. The abstract jungle in which this tiger hides may make you think of the Pacific islands, where Japanese and American soldiers camouflaged themselves in forests and undergrowth in some of the bitterest battles of the second world war. Behind this pop art version of traditional Japanese printmaking – as behind Andy Warhol's camouflage paintings – may lie the trauma of 20th-century conflict.

Admitting that possibility would mean opening the floodgates to history in a way this show is determined not to. In the modern age that this exhibition covers, or rather doesn't, Japan established a powerful empire under a quasi-fascist military regime.

▲ *From top left: Kumoi Cherry Trees, 1926; Yellow Iris, 1954, and Tenryuji Garden, 1953*
PHOTOGRAPH: FUKUOKA ART MUSEUM/ MAREO SUEMASA

◀ *Profile of an Ancient Warrior was created by Yoshida Hodaka in 1958*
PHOTOGRAH: FUKUOKA ART MUSEUM

It colonised Korea in 1910, invaded Manchuria in 1931, and ruled these and other territories harshly, finally attacking Pearl Harbor in 1941 and starting a war with the US that ended in the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Out of these ruins was born the success story of today's democratic Japan. I'm not raising all this to make trouble. It's just that history would bring this fairly dull show to life. You are expected to appreciate the art in such closed terms your brain starts wandering – and asking uneasy questions.

The Yoshida family built their success on international openness. Visiting Europe and the US as a young man, Yoshida Hiroshi saw how much westerners, including Monet and Van Gogh, loved the Japanese art of observational realism called *Ukiyo-e*.

Yoshida in turn took on their discoveries. His 1925 view, Canal in Venice, turns an *Ukiyo-e* eye on the dreamy Italian city.

Starting in 17th century Edo – today's Tokyo – artists developed this style, most famously in woodblock prints, to record everyday life in the city's pleasure quarter. Yoshida looks at Venice as if it were old Edo.

These are refined pleasures, mixing the style of Hiroshige and Hokusai with the impressionists they had influenced. By the 1930s, Yoshida Hiroshi is more purely traditionalist. Instead of cities and foreigners, he depicts parks and temples. In 1940, he portrays people in kimonos visiting the Ninnaji Temple in north-west Kyoto, an ancient site associated with Japan's emperors.

The spiritual conservatism is obvious. Surely these assertions of Japanese identity, so much less alive than Yoshida Hiroshi's earlier views of the US's Yellowstone or Grand Canyon, are adapted to the ideology of the military regime then leading Japan towards destruction.

The realities of dictatorship, nationalism and war are passed over so completely here it makes you think there's something to hide. Woodblock prints helped to invent modern art and still have an amazing ability to capture modern life. Venerable craft meets raw metropolis in a vision of reality that breaks through this show's aesthetic prison.

Cow run over by police had been charging at people, watchdog says

Vikram Dodd
Police and crime correspondent

The 10-month-old cow that was filmed being run over by police had gone on a rampage, ramming a police car and charging at people, the police watchdog has said.

The incident last Friday was referred to the Independent Office for Police Conduct, which said yesterday that Surrey, the force involved, should investigate complaints.

Surrey police, who were heavily criticised after the footage was posted online, said the investigation would be overseen by a senior officer who usually deals with murders and the most serious and complex crimes.

The IOPC assessed statements from police and witnesses and studied video. It said the calf was on the loose for several hours. A spokesperson said: "Footage of the cow being struck by a police car was shared widely on social media and we have examined this along with footage and audio provided by the force from the officers' bodyworn videos. They show the animal ramming a police car, charging at members of the public and posing a risk to road users."

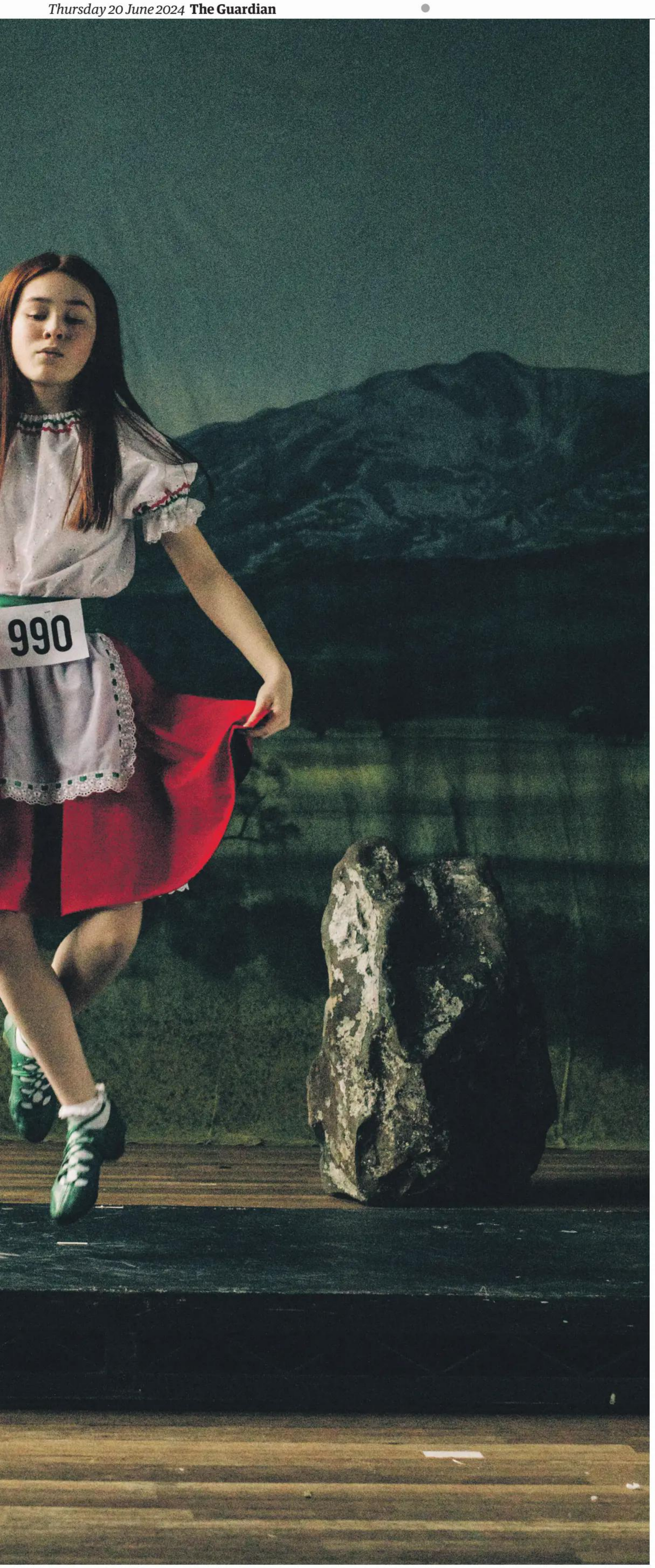
The calf, Beau Lucy, briefly became Britain's most famous animal after footage of a small part of the incident in Staines-upon-Thames surfaced. A police vehicle is seen striking the cow, which appears to go partially under the car's front bumper before getting up. The calf is said to be recovering.

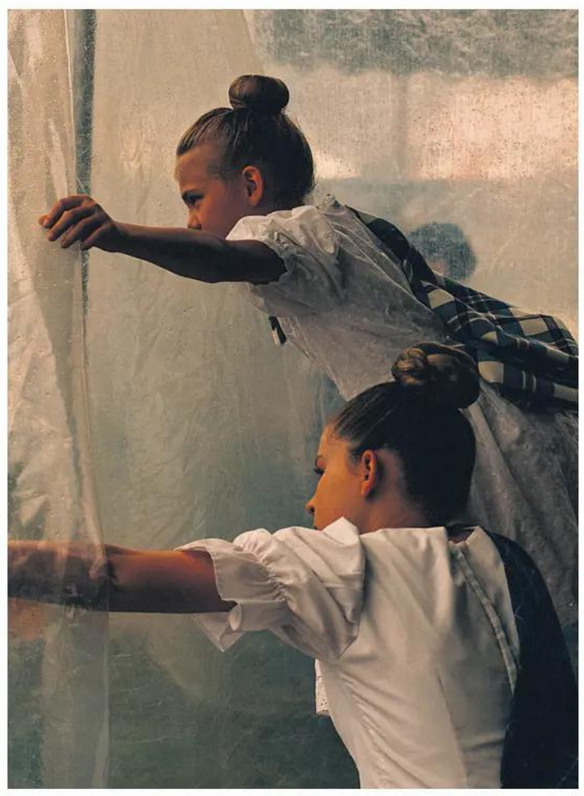
The incident triggered outrage, with the RSPCA describing the police action as "disproportionate". The cow's owner, named only as Rob, said the clip was horrific, while the wildlife presenter Chris Packham asked: "What sort of monster rams a calf?"

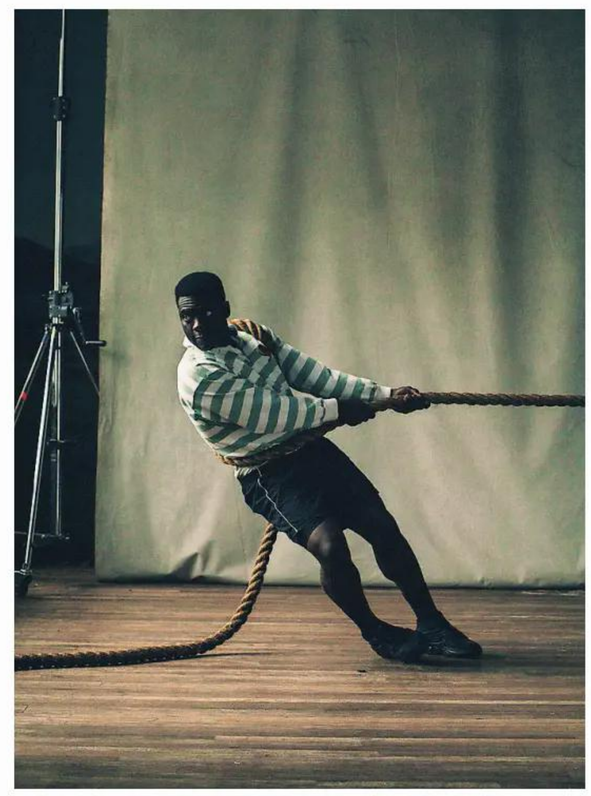
The home secretary, James Cleverly, asked for a "full, urgent explanation" as to why officers had used the car to ram the escaped animal, saying it seemed "unnecessarily heavy-handed".

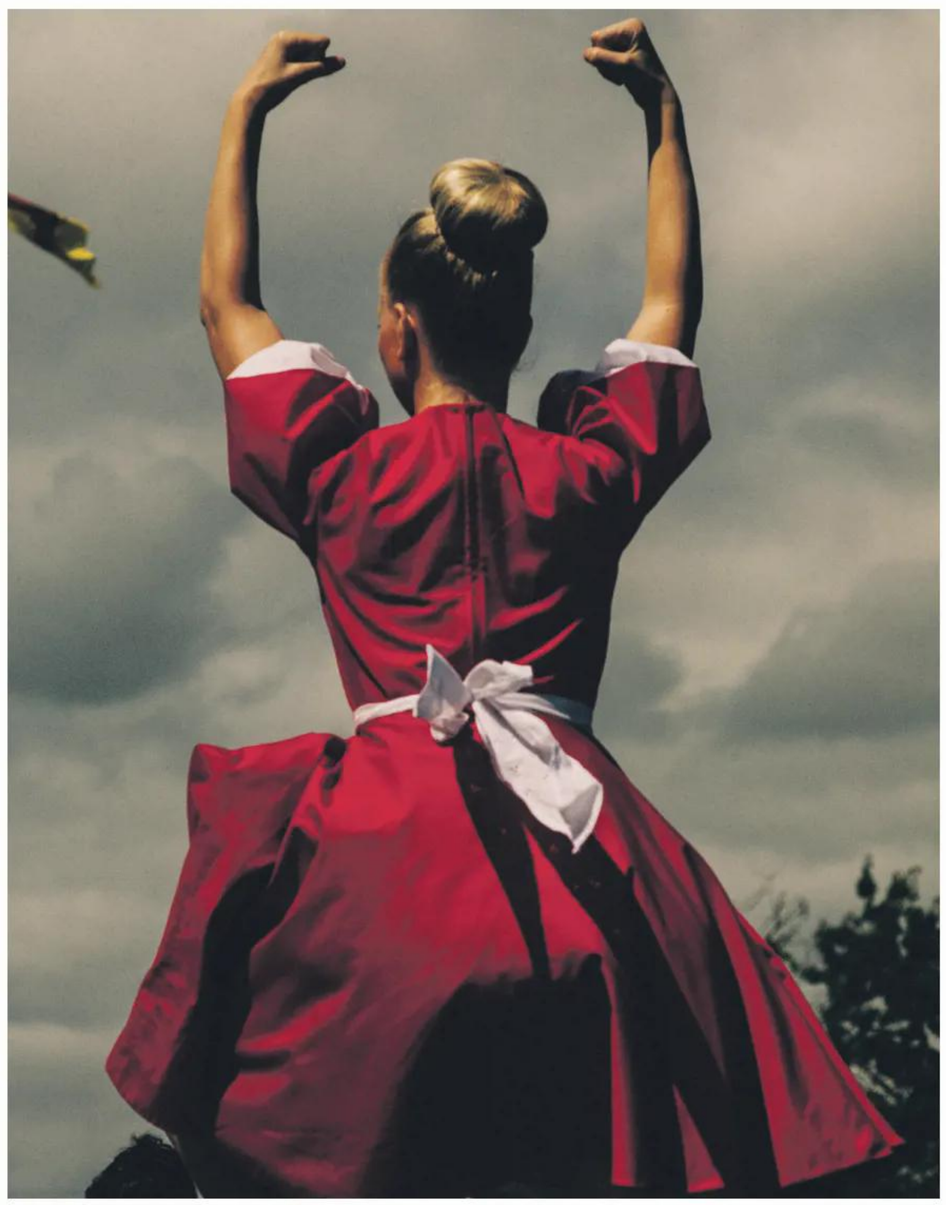
The IOPC had to wait for someone directly affected by the incident to formally complain. The cow's owner did not but it is understood that two witnesses to the incident did lodge complaints.

The officer who rammed the cow has been removed from frontline duties pending investigation.









A fling for tradition

For five years Robbie Lawrence travelled in Scotland and the US photographing Highland games. His book, Long Walk Home, examines their cultural significance. He sees the games "as a vehicle for considering how we as Scots allow history to inform our modern identity".

World

Hezbollah's leader warns of 'war without rules' if Israel launches Lebanon offensive

Peter Beaumont *Jerusalem*
Helena Smith *Athens*

The leader of Hezbollah, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, warned yesterday of a war "without rules or ceilings" in the event of a full-scale Israeli offensive against the Lebanese militia, as he threatened that Cyprus could become a target if it allowed Israel to use its territory in any conflict.

Cyprus and Israel have a bilateral defence cooperation agreement under which the countries have conducted joint exercises.

"Opening Cypriot airports and bases to the Israeli enemy to target Lebanon would mean the Cypriot government is part of the war, and the resistance will deal with it as part of the war," the Hezbollah chief said.

Nikos Christodoulides, the eastern Mediterranean island's leader, said in response last night: "Cyprus remains uninvolved in any military conflicts and positions itself as part of the solution rather the problem."

He sought to emphasise the humanitarian role the EU's easternmost state had played in the Middle East, facilitating the opening of a sea corridor to transport aid to Gaza.

"Our humanitarian corridor is a testament to our commitment to peace and stability," he told reporters at a University of Cyprus graduation ceremony. He added: "Such statements are not pleasant, but they do not reflect reality. Cyprus is not participating in any military engagements."

Christodoulides said the threat would be raised through diplomatic channels.

Nasrallah's remarks came a day after Israeli generals said they had signed off on planning for a wider offensive against Hezbollah, and Israel's foreign minister, Israel Katz, said the country was on the brink of deciding whether to expand the war.

▲ *Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah issues his warning in a televised speech*

Speaking at a memorial for Taleb Sami Abdallah, the most senior Hezbollah commander to be killed by Israel since the two sides began cross-border exchanges on 8 October, Nasrallah said that Hezbollah's role was to support Hamas fighting in Gaza and it had succeeded in tying up Israeli forces in the country's north.

Nasrallah spoke about a strategy aimed at a ceasefire in Gaza, but the rhetoric appeared more heated as he said nowhere in Israel would be safe from Hezbollah's attacks. "We have more than 100,000 fighters, and even more, even in the worst-case scenario," he added. "We have prepared for the worst- case scenario and Israel knows it."

Describing Hezbollah's intelligence-gathering operations, which were highlighted by the broadcast of drone surveillance footage of Haifa on Tuesday, Nasrallah said: "Since 8 October, the enemy has understood that certain places would be targeted," adding that the group had hours of surveillance footage. "It knows we have information about these locations," he said.

"In 2006, [during the second Lebanese war] we had the ambition to bomb the Israeli base on Mount Meron. Today we just tell the fighters to do it, and they do it immediately.

"Whatever our intentions, whether we want all-out war or not, the enemy is obliged to remain ready in the north of the country."

He added that Israeli threats had "no impact" on Hezbollah's calculations.

Yesterday, before Nasrallah's speech, Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon killed three Hezbollah fighters, the militant group said, as a US envoy tasked with avoiding a devastating regional war returned to Israel after meeting officials in Lebanon.

One Israeli airstrike landed near the southern coastal city of Tyre, 20 miles from the frontier, which is sheltering many Lebanese people displaced from the immediate border area.

On the Israeli side of the Blue Line, which divides Israel and Lebanon, Hezbollah said it had fired rockets at an army base near the town of Kiryat Shmona, starting several fires.

Fears of a wider war between Israel and Hezbollah have intensified since Israel's killing last week of Abdallah, to which Hezbollah responded by launching hundreds of munitions, including drones and rockets, against Israel in the heaviest barrage of the latest conflict.

Hopes that the violence may be subsiding, at least temporarily, were shattered by Hezbollah's release of the surveillance drone footage that was filmed over Haifa, prompting threats of "all-out war" from Israel's foreign minister and the announcement that Israel Defense Forces generals had signed off on plans for a Lebanon offensive.

Meanwhile, satellite images and data collected by regional officials in southern Lebanon showed widespread and growing devastation from the conflict that has resulted in 1,700 houses destroyed and 14,000 others damaged.

Nasrallah spoke as Amos Hochstein, a senior adviser to the US president, Joe Biden, was back in Israel after holding meetings in Lebanon on Tuesday.

There was no indication of any progress in his efforts to defuse the conflict amid warnings that an escalation to full-scale war could lead to a regional conflict.

▼ *Smoke billows from the village of Khiam in southern Lebanon after an Israeli bombardment yesterday*
PHOTOGRAPH: RABIH DAHER/AFP

Analysis Both sides know the perils of all-out conflict

Dan Sabbagh
Defence and security editor

A warning from Israel's foreign minister, Israel Katz, that a decision on "all-out war" with Hezbollah in southern Lebanon is coming soon is almost certainly a fresh attempt at deterrence - not least because both sides understand how devastating full hostilities would be.

The reality is that Hezbollah, an ally of Iran, is a more powerful adversary than Hamas in Gaza, estimated to have between 30,000 and 50,000 fighters available and a similar number in reserve - plus between 120,000 and 200,000 unguided missiles and rockets plus attack and reconnaissance drones.

Assaf Orion, a former Israel Defence Forces (IDF) brigadier general and now a senior researcher at the INSS thinktank, estimates that Hezbollah has "ten times the arsenal of Hamas", and implies that any conflict would be a similar order of magnitude greater than the grisly battle in Gaza after 7 October.

Katz, speaking on Tuesday, was responding to a nine-minute video of drone footage released by Hezbollah, showing details of military and residential sites in Haifa, 25 to 30 miles away from the border, at least some of which was shot "during the past 72 hours" according to one Israeli assessment.

A key concern is the risk of miscalculation that leads into a sudden conflict. Hezbollah and Israel have been trading blows since Hamas's October attack, with Hezbollah insisting it will not stop unless there is a ceasefire in Gaza. But as the campaign in the south

Ancient beach
Buried Vesuvius site reopened to public
Page 29

'Cheap fakes'
Edited videos paint Joe Biden as senile
Page 31

People in Rafah run from an Israeli airstrike in Gaza. Hezbollah's forces in Lebanon dwarf those of Hamas
PHOTOGRAPH: BASHAR TALEB/GETTY

reaches what the IDF says are its final stages, violence in the north has been stepping up.

Last week an Israeli airstrike killed Taleb Abdullah, the most senior Hezbollah commander to die in an attack since October, prompting the Lebanese militant group to fire 215 rockets into northern Israel last Wednesday and another 100 the day after, the heaviest barrages in eight months. Two IDF soldiers were injured by an anti-tank missile.

The last all-out war between the two in 2006 escalated from an incident when Hezbollah guerrillas killed three IDF soldiers, injured two more and captured two others following a cross-border raid. A devastating air campaign into Lebanon failed to suppress rocket attacks from Hezbollah and a brief ground invasion followed in a conflict that lasted a month.

Already an estimated 155,000 civilians have been displaced on both sides of the border. Israel evacuated 60,000 citizens living within 3 miles, while a further 20,000 have abandoned homes farther away voluntarily. Another 75,000 have been forced to leave the villages of southern Lebanon.

> *'There is already a war up there [in Galilee, northern Israel] on a low scale'*
>
> **Sarit Zehavi**
> *security expert*

Sarit Zehavi, the founder of Alma, an education centre that focuses on the security of Israel's northern border, said this position was unsustainable: "There is already a second front. Galilee [northern Israel] is under daily attack from UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles], rockets and missiles. The average now is 90 every week, there is already a war up there on a low scale. The question is how it will be solved – through a full-scale war or some kind of ceasefire."

Orion says a military solution would require aerial bombing and a ground invasion that would need "the whole of the IDF's available forces", allowing for a limited presence in Gaza and a security presence in the West Bank. Moving quickly would also come at a time when the IDF is fatigued by eight months of fighting in the south.

Any conflict would prompt a diplomatic crisis, raising questions of whether Iran would seek to support Hezbollah and the spectre of a wider Middle East conflict that the US has been desperate to avoid.

Search for missing hajj pilgrims in Mecca after hundreds die in 51C heat

Agence France-Presse

Friends and family of missing hajj pilgrims searched hospitals and pleaded online for news, fearing the worst after hundreds died during the annual rites in Saudi Arabia.

Arab diplomats told Agence France-Presse on Tuesday that at least 550 pilgrims had died this year, the majority due to heat-related illnesses after temperatures reached 51.8C (125F) in Mecca.

The number of people reported dead was 645, according to an AFP tally figures released by various countries. About 1.8 million people attended the pilgrimage.

Mabrouka bint Salem Shushana, from Tunisia and in her early 70s, had been missing since the climax of the pilgrimage on Saturday at Mount Arafat, her husband, Mohammed, told AFP yesterday.

Because she was unregistered and did not have an official hajj permit, she was unable to access the air-conditioned facilities that allow pilgrims to cool off after hours of outdoor prayers, Mohammed said. "She was tired. She was feeling so hot, and had no place to sleep. I looked for her in all the hospitals."

Facebook and other social media networks have been flooded with pictures of the missing and requests for information.

The searchers included the family and friends of Ghada Mahmoud Ahmed Dawood, an Egyptian pilgrim unaccounted for since last Saturday. "I received a call from her daughter in Egypt begging me to put any post on Facebook that can help track her or find her," said a family friend in Saudi Arabia. "The good news is that until now we did not find her on the list of the dead people, which gives us hope she is still alive."

The hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and all Muslims with the means must complete it at least once. Its timing is determined by the Islamic lunar calendar, shifting forward each year in the Gregorian calendar. For the past few years, the mainly outdoor rituals have fallen during the sweltering Saudi summer.

According to a Saudi study that was published in May, temperatures in the area are rising 0.4 degrees celsius (0.72F) each decade.

The figure of 550 dead provided by diplomats on Tuesday came from the hospital morgue in the Al-Muaisem neighbourhood, one of the biggest in Mecca. The total included 323 Egyptians and 60 Jordanians, according to the Arab diplomats who briefed AFP on the figures, one of whom noted that nearly all the Egyptians had died "because of heat".

Deaths have also been confirmed by Indonesia, Iran, Senegal, Tunisia and Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region, although in many cases the authorities had not, at the time, specified the cause.

Yesterday, an Asian diplomat told AFP there were "around 68 dead" from India and that others were missing. Some died "because of natural causes and we had many old-age pilgrims. And some are due to the weather conditions, that's what we assume," he said.

Saudi Arabia has not provided information on deaths, though it reported that there were more than 2,700 cases of heat exhaustion on Sunday alone. Last year, more than 200 pilgrims were reported dead, most of them from Indonesia.

Each year, tens of thousands of pilgrims attempt to perform the hajj through irregular channels as they cannot afford the often costly official permits. Attendance has become easier since 2019 when Saudi Arabia introduced a general tourism visa, said Umer Karim, an expert on Saudi politics based at the University of Birmingham.

"Before, the only people who could have done that were residents of the kingdom, and they know the situation," Karim said. "For these tourist visa guys, it's like being on the migrant route without any idea of what to expect."

Hajj attendees on Tuesday walking around the shrine at the Grand Mosque, Mecca. Pilgrims lacking permits for the ritual miss out on the air-conditioned facilities

Far-right candidate will only take prime minister post with 'absolute majority'

Jon Henley
Jennifer Rankin

Jordan Bardella, the leader of the National Rally (RN), has said he will not accept the job of prime minister unless his far right party wins an absolute majority in parliament because he would not have the freedom to act "in the daily lives of French people" as he sees fit.

Polls suggest the RN is on course to win the snap parliamentary elections called by Emmanuel Macron following the eurosceptic, anti-immigration party's crushing victory in European parliament elections earlier this month.

An absolute majority in the 577-seat national assembly, however – which would in principle allow the RN to pass laws and govern without the help of potential allies from the centre-right Les Républicains (LR) – appears out of the party's reach.

The RN's likely presidential candidate in 2027, Marine Le Pen, has said Bardella, 28, would be the party's choice for prime minister after the two-round vote on 30 June and 7 July.

But yesterday Bardella said he would only take the job after an outright victory.

"If tomorrow I'm in a position to be appointed to the Matignon [the prime minister's office] and I do not have an absolute majority because the French have not given me an absolute majority, then I will refuse to be appointed," Bardella told public TV.

"I tell the French people that to act, I need an absolute majority," he said yesterday. "A prime minister … with a relative majority cannot change things, I would not be able to act in the daily lives of French people, on the country's policies."

Some polls suggest Macron's centrist Renaissance party, which lost its parliamentary majority in 2022, could be squeezed to a small rump of between 70 and 100 MPs, with RN on 195-245 and the left-green New Popular Front (NFP) alliance on 190-235.

The president is free to appoint any prime minister he or she chooses, but in practice, to avoid the incoming government being overturned by a no confidence vote, they invariably nominate someone who enjoys majority support in parliament.

If RN refuses, Macron could offer the post to the second-biggest party, or try to build a coalition of mainstream parties – a process likely to prove difficult, if not impossible. Despite the possibility of stalemate, new parliamentary elections cannot take place for another year.

Visiting a defence show yesterday, Bardella insisted he did "not plan to question the commitments France has made on the international stage" on defence, adding: "Our credibility towards our European partners and Nato allies is at stake."

Le Pen has previously said that if she were elected France would leave Nato's integrated command for national "independence". RN's Moscow-friendly history – including a 2014 Russian bank loan – has sparked alarm in European defence circles.

Macron has said he has "confidence in the French" to back the centre. "They see well what is on offer," the president said.

The European Commission yesterday issued a reprimand to France for breaking EU fiscal rules with a deficit well above the EU threshold.

As well as being a blow to Macron, the EU executive's decision to launch "the excessive deficit procedure" against France sets up a collision course with a post-election government potentially dominated by the far-right or the left coalition, with both groups making lavish spending promises.

The current finance minister, Bruno Le Maire, warned that "a Liz Truss scenario was possible", if National Rally implemented its economic programme. He has made similar warnings about the spending plans of the left.

France's deficit – the difference between government spending and revenues – was 5.5% of economic output in 2023 and is forecast to remain at 5% in 2025, well above the EU threshold of 3%.

Under new rules agreed last year, rule-breaking countries must reduce "excessive" deficits by 0.5% a year. But the rules allow more flexibility for spending on defence, green and digital policies.

In theory, repeat rule breakers could be fined, but no country has ever faced this sanction.

▲ *Bardella appears to have softened RN's hostility to Nato membership*

> ***'I would not be able to act in the daily lives of French people, on the country's policies'***
>
> **Jordan Bardella**
> *National Rally leader*

▲ *An anti-far-right rally at the Place de la Nation, Paris, last Saturday, ahead of France's snap elections*
PHOTOGRAPH: SAMEER AL-DOUMY/AFP/GETTY

En masse Left and greens unite to make a stand against National Rally

Jon Henley
European affairs correspondent

France's four main green and left-leaning parties, aiming to block the advance of the far right, have formed an alliance, the New Popular Front (NFP), to run a single list of candidates in the snap elections called by Emmanuel Macron for later this month.

Why has the left united?

Voting in French presidential and parliamentary elections takes place over two rounds. A candidate can win in the first round if they garner more than 50% of the total ballots cast, representing at least 25% of registered voters, but this is rare. In the majority of France's 577 constituencies the two leading candidates from the first round, plus any others who collected at least 12.5% of registered voters, go through to the second. Joining forces hugely increases the chances of leftist candidates advancing.

Which parties are involved?

The largest party in the NFP is **France Unbowed (LFI)**, led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon. Founded in 2016, it is far-left and populist, believing traditional parties no longer serve democracy. It had 75 MPs in the outgoing parliament. LFI wants constitutional reform, 100% renewable energy by 2050, withdrawal from free-trade agreements, a "democratic refounding" of the EU, separation of retail and investment banking, price caps on basic food and energy and a higher minimum wage.

The **Socialist party (PS)** is a mainstream centre-left party. Pro-European, it was for decades the largest party of the French left but scored less than 2% in the 2022 election and had 31 MPs.

The French **Communist party** (PCF) was long the main force on the postwar French left and was in government with the PS from 1997 to 2002. It aims to "overcome" capitalism, but is pragmatic. It had 22 deputies in the last parliament.

The French **Green party** (EELV) wants a 40% cut in CO_2 emissions, nuclear phase-out, plus greener jobs, housing, public transport, and agriculture. Pro-EU, it has a leftwing economic agenda, including tax increases for higher earners. It had 21 MPs.

Under the agreement, of the 546 candidates being fielded by the new alliance in the first round of the elections on 30 June, 229 will be backed by LFI, compared with 175 for the PS, 92 for the Greens and 50 for the PCF.

What is the NFP programme?

NFP's plan is influenced by that of the hard-left LFI, including pledges that would hugely increase public spending. France's debt ratio, at 110%, is currently the third-highest in the Eurozone.

The plan promises to reverse Macron's controversial pension reforms, raise public sector wages, link salaries to inflation, boost housing and youth benefits, cut income tax and social security for lower earners, and introduce a wealth tax for the rich.

It also aims to boost green measures, including legislating for carbon neutrality by 2050, and to reform the EU's common agriculture policy. On foreign affairs the alliance said it would demand an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, recognise the state of Palestine, "halt Moscow's war of aggression", keep supplying arms to Kyiv and "unfailingly defend the sovereignty and freedom of the Ukrainian people".

How solid is the alliance?

The same four parties formed a comparable pact, known as the Nupes, in the aftermath of the 2022 presidential elections and before the subsequent parliamentary ballot, returned just over 150 deputies between them to the national assembly. While never formally dissolved, that alliance effectively collapsed last year due in part to Mélenchon's domineering character and radical stances, but also due to deep policy differences over support for Ukraine, the war in Gaza, and the EU.

The parties seem determined to make this alliance work, winning the backing of Mélenchon's critic Raphaël Glucksmann, who led a moderate socialist list to third place in the European parliamentary elections, and of the former PS president François Hollande. It is unclear who will lead NFP.

How well will NFP do?

Polls put NFP at about 28% to 30% of the national vote, against an estimated 33% for the far-right National Rally (RN) of Marine Le Pen, and barely 19% for Macron's centrist coalition. Most experts say they do not expect the leftist alliance to win.

However, on current polling, the president's candidates could be squeezed out of the second round of voting altogether in hundreds of constituencies. If that happens, moderate leftwing voters are likely to find themselves the deciding factor. Faced with a choice between NFP and RN, it is unclear how many will back an alliance that includes LFI, or prefer to abstain.

German conservatives call for Ukrainians' benefits to be cut

Kate Connolly
Berlin

Ukrainian refugees in Germany should have their access to welfare payments cut and should be processed through the asylum system, a number of leading German politicians are insisting, arguing that the current situation is becoming "difficult to communicate" to voters.

The calls have come before a meeting of the interior ministers of the country's 16 states and the federal interior minister, with some saying that Germany is in effect too attractive for Ukrainian citizens because it pays them more than neighbouring countries.

About 1.1 million Ukrainians have found refuge in Germany since Russia's full-blown invasion of their country in February 2022.

They are entitled to a welfare payment, known as *Bürgergeld* (citizen's income), of €563 (£476) a month. Couples receive €506 per person and children are eligible for payments of between €357 and €471 a month, depending on their age. The German state also covers costs such as rent, heating and healthcare.

This year the German state will pay between €5.5bn and €6bn to finance Ukrainians, according to the finance ministry.

Thomas Strobl, the interior minister for Baden-Württemberg in southern Germany, said before the meeting that he hoped to drum up support for a change in policy.

"It is quite possible that the reason we have a particularly high number of Ukrainians in Germany, in contrast to other neighbours like France, for example, is that we have these high social welfare payments, which no one else in Europe has," he said.

Critics have accused Strobl, a member of the conservative Christian Democrats, and others including politicians from the pro-business FDP, of populism before key elections in three eastern German states where the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) is expected to make strong gains, and after recent European parliamentary elections in which AfD came second.

Refugees arriving in Germany from Ukraine have been entitled to citizen's income, considered to be a payment that covers basic living costs, since June 2022, and have not had to apply for asylum. This is in accordance with an EU directive known as the mass influx rule under which, as displaced persons, Ukrainians are offered immediate protection and a clear legal status.

This allows them immediate access to the job market, unlike asylum applicants for whom the rules are more complicated, whose status takes much longer to clarify and who receive less money.

Critics such as Strobl and the interior ministers of Brandenburg and Bavaria, Michael Stübgen and Joachim Herrmann, who are also members of the conservative alliance, claim the incentive for Ukrainians to find a job is low owing to the level of the payments.

> ***'It's quite possible the reason we have so many Ukrainians is these high payments'***
>
> **Thomas Strobl**
> *Christian Democrat*

The government has so far rejected demands to reduce social welfare payments to Ukrainians and has said it has no plans to review the rules.

Herrmann has also led calls for males fit for military service to be sent back to Ukraine, arguing this would be in Germany's interests as well as Kyiv's. Authorities have reported a higher rate of arrivals of young Ukrainian men to Germany, in particular since Kyiv reduced the age for deployment from 27 to 26.

"Why the German population should be supporting Ukrainians who are fit for military service is becoming increasingly difficult to communicate to people," Herrmann said, referring also to the large amount of military aid Germany is sending to Ukraine.

Jobcentres in Germany are responsible for finding Ukrainians suitable positions in the job market.

According to the national employment agency, as of January this year just under 520,000 Ukrainians were registered as employable, about half of whom had been found full-time positions.

Ukrainians themselves cite challenges in Germany on issues such as language and childcare.

▲ *Italian lawmakers brawl during a debate over the legislation last week*

Meloni accused of 'splitting' Italy over bill giving regions more power

Angela Giuffrida
Rome

Italy's far-right prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, was accused yesterday of "splitting the country" after parliament approved a bill granting regions more power, which critics say will increase poverty in the south.

The change, approved by the lower house after a fiery debate that lasted all night, is part of the government's overhaul of the Italian state, including a bill approved by the upper house on Tuesday that would allow for the direct election of a prime minister.

The "differentiated autonomy" bill, sought by the wealthy, right-wing-led Lombardy and Veneto as well as the leftwing Emilia-Romagna, gives regions more power over how their tax revenues are collected and spent, and over public services such as health and education.

The approval of the bill, which passed with 172 votes in favour and 99 against, was hailed by Matteo Salvini, the leader of the League party, the ruling coalition member that for years has championed the change, as "a victory for all Italians". Meloni said the bill was "a step forward towards building a stronger and fairer Italy".

The measure was so bitterly contested it led to a brawl in parliament last week, with a politician from the opposition Five Star Movement needing medical assistance.

The bill allowing the direct election of a prime minister is a significant constitutional overhaul that Meloni has promoted, calling it "the mother of all reforms". Under the plan, the prime minister would be elected to a five year-term and the coalition supporting the winning candidate would be given at least 55% of seats, a law Meloni argues would help end Italy's revolving door governments.

Critics fear the bill, reminiscent of a constitutional change made by the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini more than a century ago, could lead the country towards authoritarianism.

However, any change to the constitution must be approved by both houses of parliament with a two-thirds majority. The upper house vote fell short, a result expected to be repeated in the lower house, meaning the bill would most certainly be put to a referendum, which could be held in 2025.

Beach buried by Vesuvius reopens after restoration

Angela Giuffrida
Rome

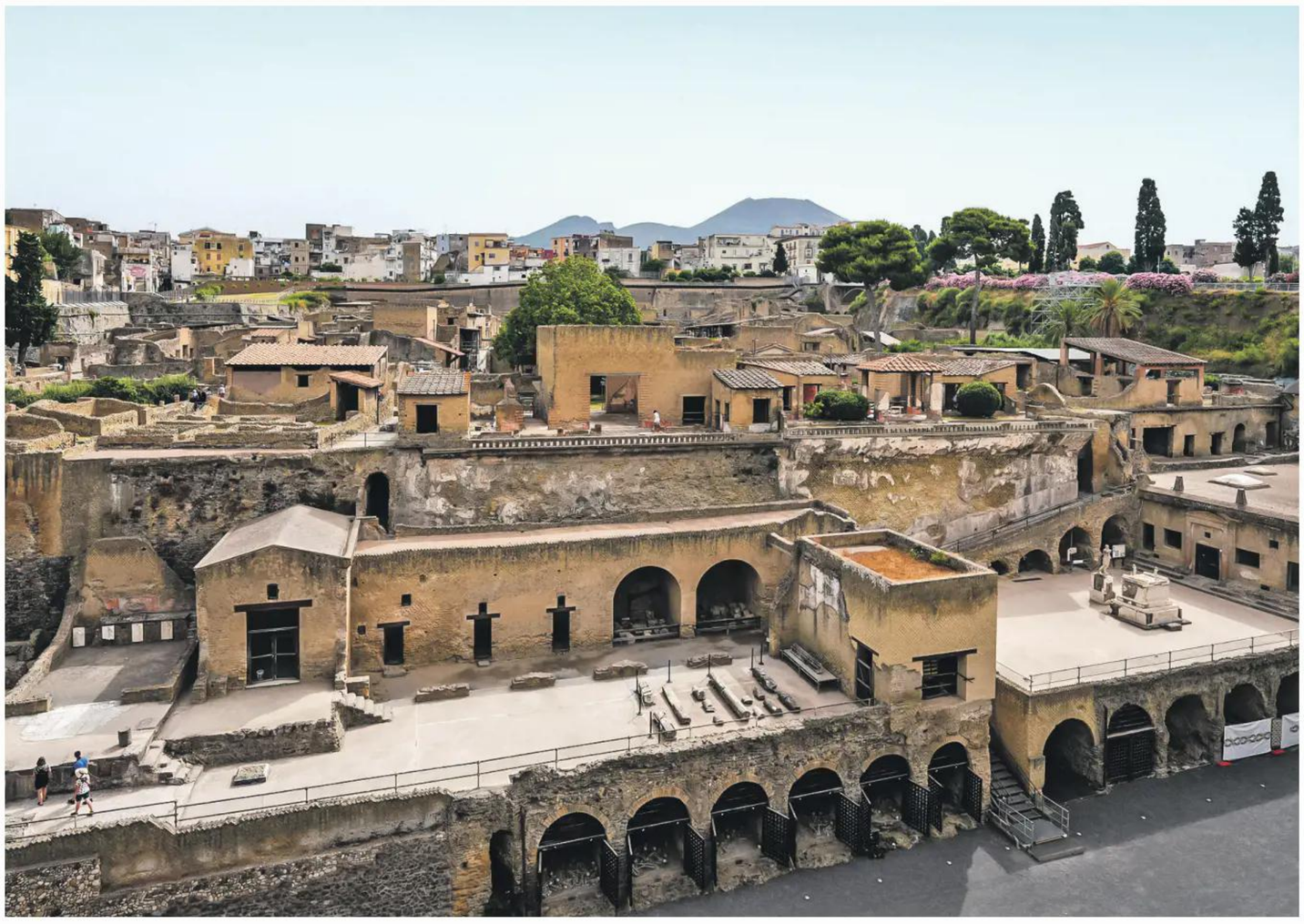
An ancient Roman beach that was buried by the AD79 eruption of Mount Vesuvius has reopened to the public at Herculaneum archaeological park in southern Italy.

The beach has sprung back to life after conservation work in recent years, which included bringing back sand to give visitors the experience of walking along the beach almost as it was before the eruption.

Herculaneum is a much smaller and less well-known site than nearby Pompeii and, unlike its neighbour, the first victims were only found during excavations in the 1980s and 90s. More than 300 people were found in several boat sheds, where they were believed to have been sheltering while they waited to be rescued.

The remains of a man killed just steps away from the shoreline, which today is a few hundred metres away, were found during excavations in 2021, the first dig at the site in almost 30 years.

"The ancient beach is an extraordinary and unique place in the world," said Francesco Sirano, the director of Herculaneum archaeological park. "If we look towards where the sea once was, we become modern explorers of the immense blanket of volcanic flow that covered the city in a few hours, almost sharing the sense of total annihilation."

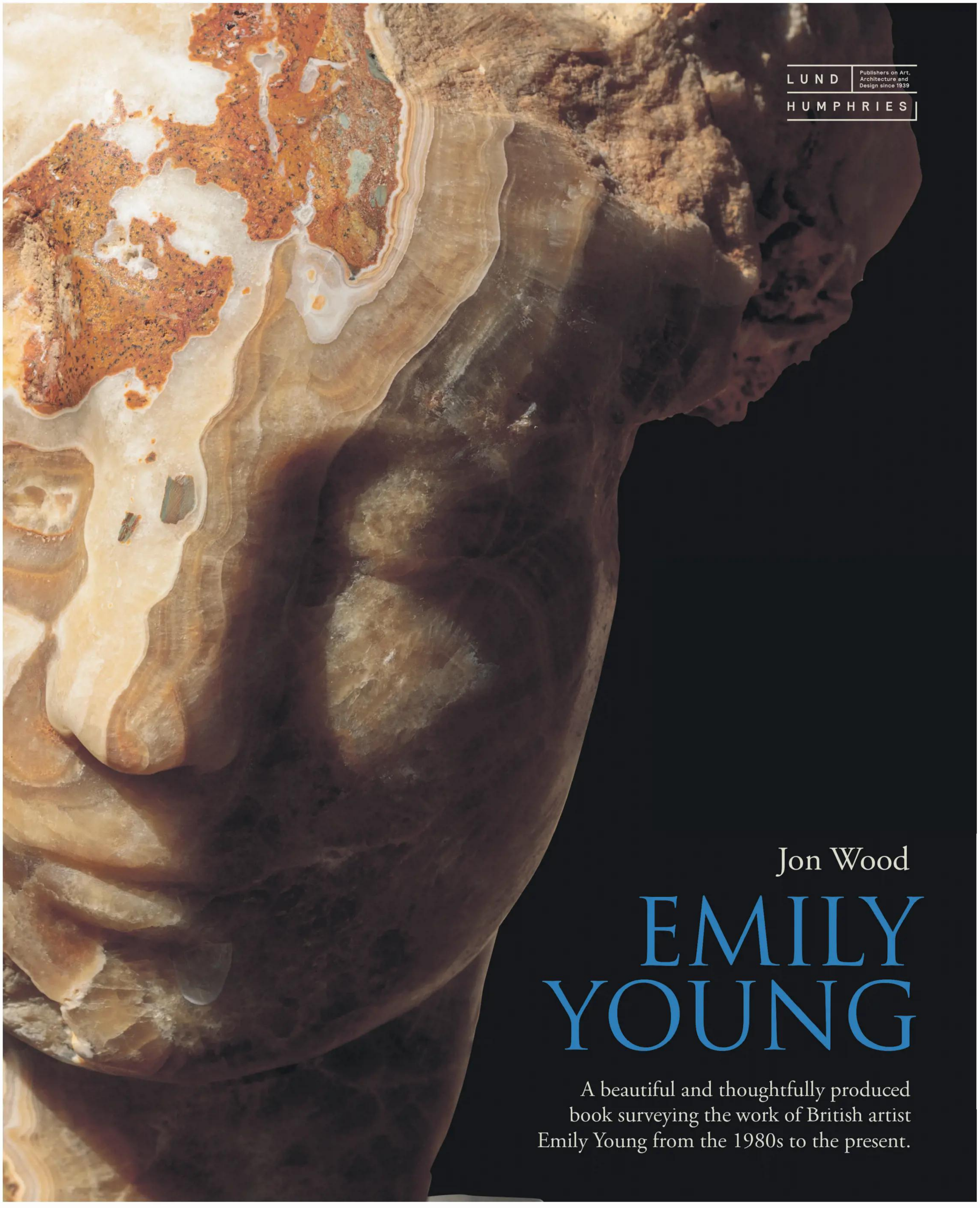


▲ *The restored Hercaluaneum. More than 300 skeletons were found in boat sheds, left, where people were sheltering*

EMANUELE ANTONIO MINERVA/MINISTERO DELLA CULTURA

Herculaneum, which was rediscovered in the early 18th century, is said to have been wealthier than Pompeii, and lavish villas decorated with frescoes and mosaic floors have been excavated.

Other discoveries have included organic matter, wooden furniture and hundreds of charred papyrus scrolls. In April, researchers said they had deciphered passages from a papyrus scroll that shed light on the final hours of Plato, a key figure in the history of western philosophy.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Viral 'cheap fakes'

Edited videos posted to question Biden's mental competence

Rachel Leingang
Minneapolis

Joe Biden wandered off. Standing among the west's leaders in Italy last week, the US president turned away, seemingly in confusion, and had to be alerted back to the group to take a photo – at least, that's what rightwing media showed.

"WHAT IS BIDEN DOING?" the Republican National Committee's research Twitter account wrote.

In actuality, it was nothing strange at all. Biden had turned toward skydivers and given them a thumbs up, a broader view of the video showed.

It happened again at a fundraiser with the former president Barack Obama. Biden "appears to freeze up" on stage, the New York Post wrote, saying Obama had to lead Biden off the stage in the latest example of the president being "dazed or confused". A zoomed-out video of the incident showed Biden waving and taking in applause from the crowd.

For viewers of rightwing media or social media feeds tailored toward conservatives, these videos of Biden surface near-daily in an attempt to underscore one of the president's key liabilities: his age.

They're often selectively edited to make Biden look, well, old. They kick off a series of headlines about how his age or senility is showing, then another about how the videos are created to mislead voters.

The videos, and the subsequent handwringing over them, show how bifurcated today's political and social media ecosystems are. Few watch a full speech or a full newscast, instead getting a quick example of what they missed from an account they align with. Your view of a given event is coloured by the way it's presented by the people you follow.

An NBC News editor referred to these video news cycles as a reflection of the online media ecosystem this election, calling them "a bizarre Rorschach test in which some people see one thing and most everyone else sees something else".

They also show that the looming threat of deepfakes – AI-generated content that makes people say or do things they haven't actually done – doesn't hold a candle to the much more common, and easier to create, cheap fakes – videos edited specifically to mislead.

"This old-fashioned, sort of low-level kind of manipulation has been perfectly capable of misleading and manipulating people for quite a long time," said Bret Schafer, a senior fellow for media and digital disinformation for the Alliance for Securing Democracy.

While deepfakes or other AI-generated content would probably be flagged and potentially removed from social media channels for going against their policies, these selectively edited videos typically don't break rules because, to some degree, all content is edited in some way, Schafer said.

The left isn't immune from posting misleading images about Donald Trump, either. One photo showing Trump holding his son's hand claims the former president needed help walking off a stage, while a video showed he was actually shaking his son's hand.

There are often similar videos of the former president waxing on about sharks and electricity, or wandering away, or holding someone's hand while walking. He notably got the name of his own doctor wrong in a speech over the weekend while challenging Biden to take a cognitive test.

In reality, both presidential candidates are old, a fact that doesn't change. Trump is 78; Biden is 81. Whether you view them as prone to senior moments, incoherent and rambling, or slow on their feet, relates mostly to your views on who they are – and the content you're seeing about it.

Although not new, these separate media ecosystems create alternative realities for their viewers.

"It is highly problematic when we talk about having a shared sense of reality because that's what the real function of democracy should be," Schafer said. "We have an agreed-upon set of facts, and then there's a lot of interpretation of those facts."

▲ *A cropped still appears to show Joe Biden wandering off, but a wider angle reveals he had turned towards skydivers*

▲ *A Rupert Murdoch-owned tabloid echoed the line from a Republican Twitter account*

PHOTOGRAPHS: NEW YORK POST/X; MICHAEL KAPPELER/DPA

Survivor of shark attack in California tells of fight with predator

Ramon Antonio Vargas

A man who survived being bitten several times by a shark while taking a dip off the coast of California says he fought so hard that he may have hit the animal inside its mouth before he then swam through his own blood to reach safety.

"I'm very thankful," 46-year-old Caleb Adams said in an emotional interview with NBC News on the network's Today show.

Few people are likely to go through what Adams did on 2 June. In 2023, there were just 69 shark bites worldwide – 10 of which were fatal – that were considered to be unprovoked, according to the University of Florida's International Shark Attack File.

But such attacks dominated news headlines globally after Adams became one of at least four people in the US to be bitten by sharks in three different encounters only days apart, with the other cases occurring in Walton county, Florida.

As Adams told it, he and 18 other members of his open-water swimming group were off the shore of Del Mar, California, when he felt "a strong hit" to his body that he instinctively knew was a shark.

"I tussled with the animal for what was seconds," said Adams, who punched the predator as best he could. "The second I struck the animal … I felt a softer tissue. I am going to speculate that was inside the shark's mouth. And I had several cuts on my hand and wrist."

At that point, Adams said, he realised he would not be able to make it out of the water alive on his own. He told NBC that he yelled "just two clear words" – "help" and "shark".

Another member of the swimming group, Kevin Barrett, heard what he knew was "a real scream" and headed to Adams as quickly as possible. The shark was gone, but Adams was bleeding profusely from his chest.

Barrett told NBC that he helped Adams swim back to shore, where "the traumatic extent" of the injuries became obvious. "It was not pretty," Barrett added.

Adams emerged from the water only about 100 metres from a beach safety centre, Del Mar city officials said. Adams was taken to a local hospital to be treated for bites to his left hand and arm as well as his torso. Officials closed the beach temporarily.

According to NBC, Adams described feeling physically strong despite his wounds, which left him with stitches and scars.

Adams said he was grateful for having a "beautiful community to lean on" as he focused on recovering, but when he returned to the Del Mar beach for his interview with NBC, he said: "It's emotional being here – without question."

Willie Mays, one of baseball's greatest ever players, dies at 93

Associated Press

Willie Mays, the electrifying "Say Hey Kid" whose combination of talent, drive and exuberance made him one of baseball's greatest and most beloved players, has died aged 93.

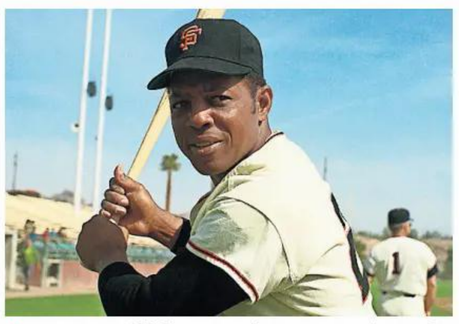
Mays' family and the San Francisco Giants jointly announced on Tuesday night that he had died.

"My father has passed away peacefully and among loved ones," Mays' son Michael said in a statement released by the club. "I want to thank you all from the bottom of my broken heart for the unwavering love you have shown him over the years. You have been his life's blood."

The American centre fielder was baseball's oldest living Hall of Famer. His signature basket catch and his dashes around the bases with his cap flying off personified the joy of the game. His over-the-shoulder catch in the 1954 World Series is baseball's most celebrated defensive feat.

His death comes two days before a game between the Giants and the St Louis Cardinals to honour the Negro Leagues at Rickwood Field in Birmingham, Alabama.

"All of Major League Baseball is in mourning today as we are gathered at the very ballpark where a career and a legacy like no other began," MLB commissioner Rob Manfred said. "His incredible achievements and statistics do not begin to describe the awe that came with watching Willie Mays dominate the game in every way imaginable. We will never forget this true Giant on and off the field."



▲ *Mays will forever be remembered for his catch in the 1954 World Series*

For millions in the 1950s and 60s and after, the smiling player with the friendly, high-pitched voice was a star athlete and showman in an era when baseball was still the signature pastime. Awarded the Medal of Freedom by Barack Obama in 2015, Mays left his fans with countless memories. But that single feat in 1954 served to capture his magic – one so famous it was simply called "The Catch."

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Business

Loans to the Barclays family push Telegraph group into red

Jane Croft

The media group that owns the Daily Telegraph newspaper tumbled into the red last year after it set aside nearly £280m to cover loans to the Barclay family that may not be repaid.

Telegraph Media Group (TMG) said yesterday that despite a resilient financial performance it had made losses of £244.6m in 2023 – against profits of £33.3m in the previous year – because of the provision.

TMG accounts show a £277.6m provision taken against amounts due from parent company undertakings "with the ongoing corporate transaction casting doubt over the recoverability of this balance". The Telegraph website reported the provision had come as a result of "loans extracted by the Barclay family which are unlikely ever to be repaid".

The future ownership of the Telegraph titles and the Spectator magazine has been uncertain since last June, when the titles were seized by Lloyds bank after the Barclay family failed to repay £1.16bn in debts. The debts were later repaid by a UAE-backed consortium that had hoped to buy the group but was forced to walk away under political pressure.

Yesterday TMG said in its 2023 accounts that a detailed review of historical transactions had been undertaken in relation to amounts paid to and received from group companies and related parties.

It said the review had "identified potential irregularities in the recording of such transactions" and that though there had been no changes to assets and liabilities there was "a potential risk of future possible repayment claims against the company and group in respect of such transactions".

The 2023 losses came as the group reported it had surpassed 1m subscriptions last August, with numbers across TMG titles increasing from 734,000 in December 2022 to 1.03m in December 2023. The subscription boost was helped by the £13m acquisition last year of Chelsea Magazine Company, a publisher of consumer titles including Classic Boat.

Turnover increased to £268m in 2023 against £254.2m in 2022, largely because of the growth in digital advertising and partnerships as well as digital subscriptions, it said.

Anna Jones, the TMG chief executive, said 2023 had "reinforced the strength and resilience of Telegraph Media Group as a business", adding: "The substantial growth in our operating profit pre-exceptional items last year was driven by significant advances in both digital advertising and digital subscription revenue."

The Barclay family, who bought the Daily Telegraph in 2004, said: "The Barclay family is proud of its track record of investment in Telegraph Media Group, which under its ownership has been transformed into a successful digital and print media brand, with over 1 million subscribers. Throughout the family's ownership the business has been managed responsibly and within all legal frameworks, with all accounts approved by auditors."

The group is up for sale after the UAE-backed consortium walked away from a £600m deal in May, saying new legislation that blocked foreign government-backed entities from owning British media groups meant it was "no longer feasible."

The decision in May by RedBird IMI, a partnership backed by Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed al-Nahyan, the UAE's vice-president, and the US investment firm RedBird Capital, fired the starting gun on an auction process for the newspaper group.

Pulling a profit
Strong sales of Guinness helped Young and Co's Brewery to record profits of £49.4m last year, up 9.3%. The pubs group is also upbeat about the outlook, thanks to the Euros and the Olympics.

PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL FOLEY/ ALAMY

Union begins ballot process to be recognised at Amazon warehouse

Heather Stewart

Officials from the GMB union are urging staff at Amazon's Coventry warehouse to "together, vote yes", at the start of a month-long ballot process that could lead to a historic union recognition deal.

GMB officials began visiting the West Midlands site yesterday after the union was granted the right to hold the legally binding ballot by the independent Central Arbitration Committee. Amazon had rejected a request for voluntary recognition.

If staff vote to support recognition, GMB would be given the right to represent them in negotiations over pay and conditions. It would mark the first time Amazon has recognised a union in the UK.

From yesterday, more than 3,000 staff began attending a series of 45-minute meetings with union representatives – and separate gatherings with the company – at which the two sides will make their case. Voting will then take place in the workplace from 8 July, with the result announced after 15 July.

"It's quite a steep hill that we've got to climb, but we're feeling positive," said Amanda Gearing, a senior GMB organiser.

A spokesperson for Amazon said: "Our employees have the choice of whether or not to join a union. They always have."

Nobel prize winners back Labour's plan for economy

Larry Elliott
Economics editor

Labour's plans for ending Britain's long-term economic stagnation have been backed by a group of leading economists, including three Nobel prize winners and a former Bank of England deputy governor.

In a boost to the shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, the 16 economists said change was "desperately needed" after the policy mistakes and failures of the past 14 years under the Conservatives.

Reeves and the Labour leader, Keir Starmer, have been accused by the Conservatives of having no plan for the economy but, in a letter to the Guardian, the economists say Labour offers a "credible alternative".

The letter's signatories include the Nobel prize winners Joe Stiglitz, Sir Christopher Pissarides and Sir Angus Deaton, as well as Sir Charles Bean, a former deputy governor of the Bank.

The economy has featured heavily in the election campaign, with Rishi Sunak saying the latest fall in the annual inflation rate to its 2% target shows the UK has "turned a corner".

Labour has said "Tory chaos" has been responsible for weak growth and higher taxes – a view shared by the economists.

"Britain has suffered a long period of economic stagnation over the last 14 years, with low growth in productivity, real wages and living standards," the letter says.

"Not only is this record poor by historical standards, but the UK has also underperformed compared to its international peers. We invest too little and too inefficiently – especially in skills, infrastructure and innovation."

While Starmer and Reeves have been criticised for mirroring Conservative fiscal plans, the letter identifies four areas where it says Labour would make a difference.

A key problem, it says, has been the number of policy mistakes, U-turns and changes of leadership, which have helped create "huge investment-sapping uncertainty". Since 2010, Britain has had five prime ministers and seven chancellors.

The economists say structural reforms are needed to improve the UK's public infrastructure and housing, especially around the planning system, which Labour has pledged to speed up.

They also support the commitment to improving the post-Brexit trade relationship with the EU and say fresh urgency is needed to speed up the transition to net zero.

Policing minister's wife in legal row over claims of corporate espionage

▼ *Elizabeth Philp with her husband, Chris, the minister for policing. He is seeking re-election in Croydon South*

PHOTOGRAPH: STUART CLARKE/SHUTTERSTOCK

Daniel Boffey
Chief reporter

A leading businesswoman who is married to the policing minister, Chris Philp, has been reported to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) by a former employer and is being sued in the high court over allegations of corporate espionage.

Elizabeth Philp, 40, whose husband has called for "zero tolerance" to all crime, is accused of data handling offences and unlawfully using "confidential information" from her former employer to set up a rival business.

She denies the allegations and is countersuing her former employer, which she accuses of cyber-attacking the website of the company she subsequently founded.

The legal tussle centres on the departure of Philp from the London Specialist Pharmacy Group (LSPG), where she was chief executive until 2017, and the founding of her own company, Roseway Labs. Her former employer has accused her of having stored and retained "trade secrets" on a Dell XPS laptop computer that was not wiped before she left the company.

It is further claimed that, with three other former LSPG employees, Philp conspired to poach her former employer's client lists for their new firm, leading to losses amounting to about £1.5m.

In Philp's defence and counterclaim, she denies the allegations and says a delay in carrying out a factory reset of her laptop was the result of being "fully involved in supporting her husband's campaign as part of the 8 June 2017 general election".

"To the best of her recollection, [Elizabeth Philp] did not access the laptop at any time following her cessation of work for the claimants prior to the performance of the factory reset," the defence says.

The LSPG has also detailed a number of occasions when Philp's alleged co-conspirators are said to have downloaded confidential information or sent it to personal email addresses.

In response, it is claimed that the information was not confidential and had been sent as part of the normal course of work. The General Pharmaceutical Council rejected a complaint last October relating to one of the employees.

The claimants, Gluck Health Limited and its subsidiary, the London Specialist Pharmacy, are seeking the return of a £10,000 termination payment to Philp along with hundreds of thousands of pounds in damages.

In a letter to the CPS, lawyers acting for the London Specialist Pharmacy also claim that Philp and the other former employees committed offences under section 170 of the Data Protection Act 2018.

Philp said she had not been contacted by the CPS or the police. She now describes herself as the co-founder and chief executive of Roseway Labs, a pharmacy founded in 2018 to work with private doctors to offer personalised medicine.

The legal action is the latest twist in a bitter rivalry between Dr Marion Gluck, 74, who founded Gluck Health Limited, and Philp's company. Gluck was suspended from medical practice for four months in September after she was found to have accessed restricted parts of Roseway's website after borrowing the login details.

The data breach was discovered and reported by Philp in 2022. Gluck had denied personally accessing the details but accepted that she "facilitated" the use of the login address for her staff. Lawyers for Roseway are seeking damages.

Philp said: "Roseway Labs was the victim of a deliberate and sustained cyber-attack by the Specialist Pharmacy, which only raised allegations against Roseway Labs once it was clear that their activities had been discovered. This was four years after Roseway Labs had started trading. Nothing of substance has been raised. Roseway Labs reported the attack to the Information Commissioner's Office, which suggested that we report it to the police …

"We chose not to do so at that time and, instead, reported it to the relevant regulators. At no point has Roseway Labs received any contact from the police or the Crown Prosecution Service and [Roseway Labs] has not committed any offence."

Philp's husband is standing to be re-elected as the MP for Croydon South. In February he called for a significant increase in the number of arrests, arguing there was no such thing as a minor crime. "I want to see zero tolerance towards all crime from the police," he said.

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Towering figure The man who built Canary Wharf steps down

Jack Simpson

One of the main players behind the transformation of London Docklands into a powerful financial centre is stepping back after nearly four decades. George Iacobescu is retiring as the chair of Canary Wharf Group next month, to be replaced by the former L&G chief executive Nigel Wilson.

The move comes as a number of high-profile tenants plan to leave the area, but Iacobescu said it was still "a thriving community in the heart of the old East End". He added: "With the continuing growth of the tech sector, health and life sciences, new leisure activities and the greening of the Wharf, there are exciting times ahead for the estate."

Born in Romania in 1945, Iacobescu grew up, like many Romanians at the time, with very little money under the ruling communist government.

He once said his mother-in-law had to bring her own lightbulb to a medical operation. This was the only bulb in her home, and meant her flat was left in the dark for the day. He initially wanted to be a doctor like his father, but was pushed to take up engineering after the latter told him to get into construction because "the world will never stop building".

Taking his father's words to heart, he studied civil engineering in Bucharest. After working as a structural engineer in Romania between 1969 and 1975, he was able to leave the country for Canada after getting help from a relative in North America.

George Iacobescu, left, is being succeeded by L&G's ex-CEO Nigel Wilson

While in Canada, he got a job with the developer Olympia & York (O&Y) and was heavily involved in building Chicago's Olympia Centre skyscraper and the vast World Financial Centre in New York.

His relationship with what would become London's new financial district began in 1987, when he was sent to London from Toronto by the O&Y founder Paul Reichmann to investigate whether it was feasible to build on the abandoned docklands site.

The site had been designated an enterprise zone by Margaret Thatcher, with her government offering generous tax breaks to investors and promising to extend London Underground lines to the site. On visiting the site that had been derelict for years, he got lost for more than two hours, and concluded when he got back to Canada that O&Y "shouldn't touch the site". Reichmann ignored him, pushed ahead with the project, and Iacobescu was made its construction director.

> *'With the growth of the tech sector, there are exciting times ahead for the estate'*
>
> **George Iacobescu**
> *Canary Wharf chair*

After four years, his initial misgivings were nearly proved right. Delays to the promised Jubilee line and Docklands Light Railway left Canary Wharf without important transport links, which stymied investment.

After a property crash in 1992, banks refused O&Y credit and it had to file for bankruptcy, placing Canary Wharf into administration.

Reichmann was able to persuade investors to support him to buy back Canary Wharf in 1995 for £800m. By 1997, Iacobescu had become the chief executive, a role he would hold until 2021, while also taking on the chair role in 2011.

During that time, Canary Wharf has grown to become one of the largest urban regeneration projects in Europe, now containing 16m sq ft (1,5m²) of office and retail space, and was the main workplace for 120,000 workers before the Covid pandemic. His services were rewarded with a knighthood in 2012, becoming the only Romanian-born British citizen to receive the honour.

However, his tenure has not been without its challenges.

He was at the helm when Canary Wharf Group floated in 1999 and was also in charge in 2004, when an 11-month bidding war led to Morgan Stanley taking control of it from the investment fund Brascan, which had the backing of Reichmann. He also led Canary Wharf Group when it was bought by Qatar's Sovereign Wealth fund and Canadian Brookfield Properties for £2.6bn in 2015.

The deal would take it private again. His biggest hurdle in recent times has been the pandemic and the increase in working from home, which has hit the office market. This has prompted announcements by the likes of HSBC, which had occupied its own tower since 2002, and Clifford Chance that they would leave the area.

Berkeley launches build-to-rent arm focused on London and south-east

Jack Simpson

The housebuilder Berkeley is to go back into the private rental market for the first time in a decade by launching a build-to-rent arm to tackle the "severe shortage" of properties in and around London.

The company, which built 3,500 private-sale homes last year, will establish the build-to-rent business, which aims to create 4,000 homes in London and the south-east over the next decade.

Berkeley plans to develop the properties across 17 brownfield sites and launch a dedicated online platform to manage them.

Yesterday Berkeley reported a pre-tax profit of £557m for the year to 30 April 2024, down from £604m last year. However, it has increased its pre-tax profit guidance for 2025 by 5% to £525m.

The company, founded in 1976 by the late Tony Pidgley, has established itself as one of the country's largest housebuilders, focusing on developments in London, the south of England and Birmingham.

Berkeley built and managed a portfolio of 900 rental homes between 2011 and 2014. It said the move back into the private rental market was a natural extension of its strategy and recognised the "severe shortage of high-quality rental accommodation".

A shortage of rental homes in the capital has caused average rents to soar. The property website Zoopla recorded average rents in London of £2,122 a month as of April, up 3.7% in the last year. The real estate firm JLL forecasts rents could rise by nearly 19% in Greater London by 2028.

Berkeley said it would finance the new portfolio through internal sources, debt secured against the rental properties, and third-party capital funding.

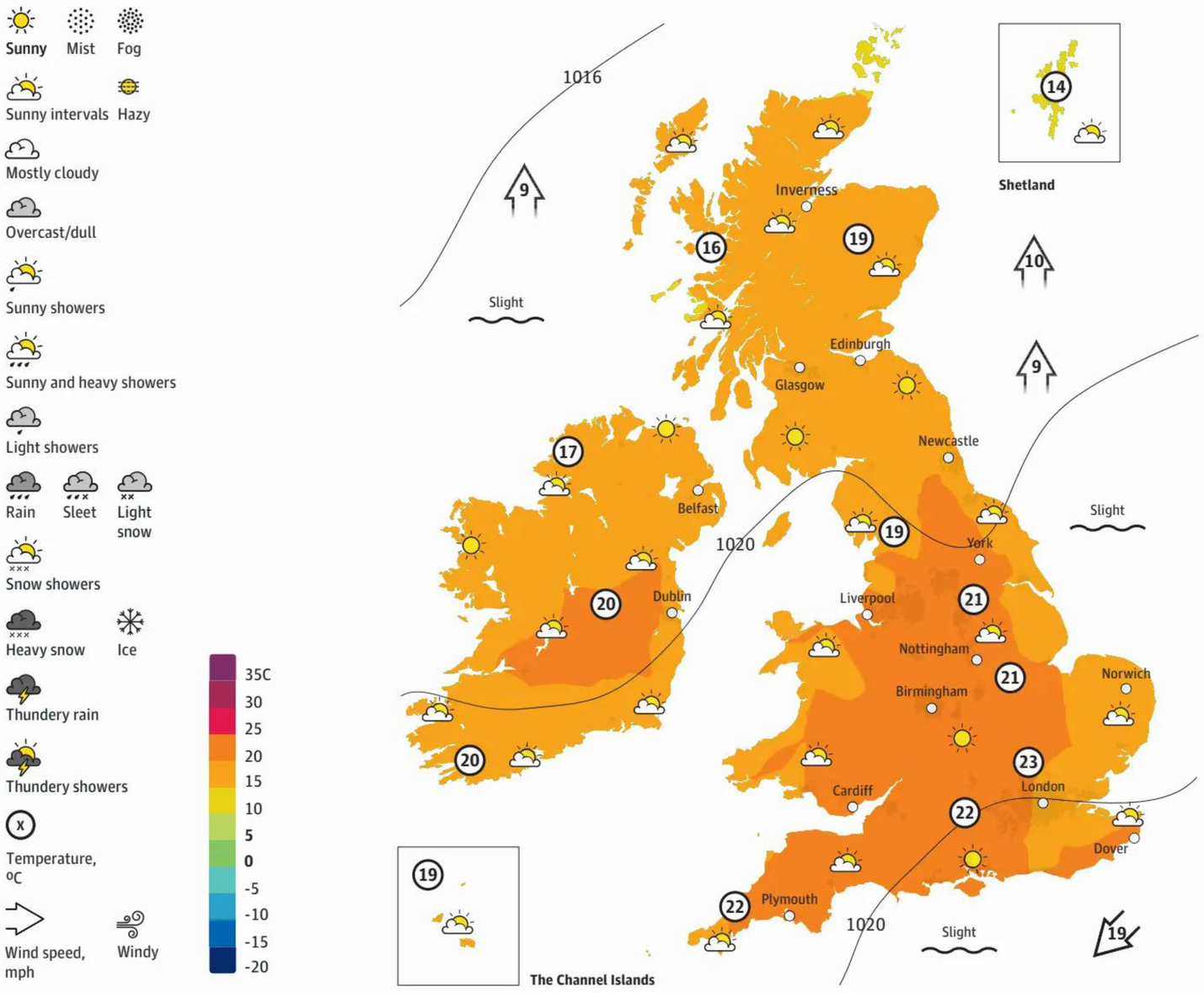
Rob Perrins, the group's chief executive, said: "Recognising the strong occupational and institutional investment demand for high-quality, well-managed rental homes in London and the south-east, Berkeley is establishing its own build-to-rent platform to maximise returns in today's market conditions."

Commenting on the results, Perrins said: "This is a strong performance in a challenging and volatile operating environment."

The trading update listed a series of requests for the next government to improve conditions for housebuilders. These included greater resources for stretched local authority planning teams and refinancing of housing associations so they could concentrate on providing more homes.

Weather
Thursday 20 June 2024

UK and Ireland Noon today



Forecast

Low 11 High 22
Tomorrow

Low 12 High 20
Saturday

Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

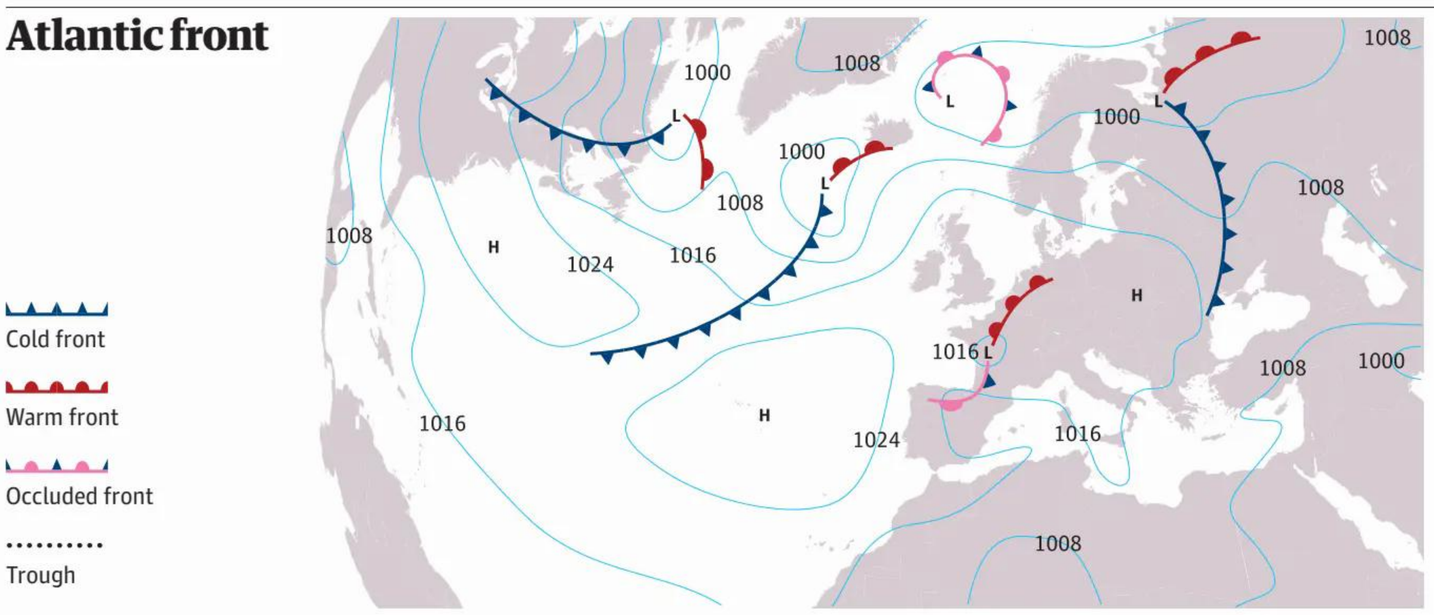
Latest	
17 Jun 2024	426.83
Weekly average	
09 Jun 2024	427.33
19 Jun 2023	424.24
19 Jun 2014	401.73
Pre-industrial base	*280*
Safe level	*350*

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

	Lows and highs	Precipitation	Air pollution
London	12 – 23	0%	Moderate
Manchester	11 – 21	20%	Moderate
Edinburgh	10 – 18	25%	Low
Belfast	13 – 19	20%	Low
Glasgow	11 – 18	25%	Low
Inverness	12 – 19	5%	Low
Leeds	12 – 21	20%	Moderate
Liverpool	11 – 22	45%	Moderate
Newcastle	9 – 20	85%	Low
Sheffield	12 – 21	20%	Low

Atlantic front



Weatherwatch

The proverb "one swallow doesn't make a summer", first attributed to Aristotle, sums up our love of this elegant bird. Swallows visit us for roughly half the year, between April and September, before travelling about 6,000 miles to South Africa, where they enjoy a second spring and summer.

But unpredictable weather patterns now affect swallows throughout their life cycle: in Africa, on their journeys south in autumn and north in spring, and during the UK breeding season.

Wet springs and summer droughts have led to big falls in the numbers of the flying insects on which they feed, reducing the swallow's breeding population by almost a quarter in the past 25 years.

Many of my farming neighbours in Somerset tell me they have far fewer nesting swallows than before; some have lost them altogether.

Once again, our changing climate is to blame, but this comes on top of the huge loss of insects caused by modern industrial agriculture. This is ironic, given that the swallow's success over the past few millennia began when it adapted to living alongside farmers, nesting in their barns and feeding on insects attracted by their livestock.

Stephen Moss

Around the world

Algiers	27	Lisbon	21
Ams'dam	20	Madrid	22
Athens	35	Malaga	30
Auckland	15	Melb'rne	12
B Aires	15	Mexico C	25
Bangkok	37	Miami	31
Barcelona	24	Milan	30
Basra	50	Mombasa	29
Beijing	34	Moscow	19
Berlin	23	Mumbai	31
Bermuda	26	N Orleans	30
Brussels	21	Nairobi	20
Budapest	32	New Delhi	41
C'hagen	20	New York	33
Cairo	38	Oslo	24
Cape Town	18	Paris	23
Chicago	31	Perth	18
Corfu	36	Prague	25
Dakar	29	Reykjavik	11
Dhaka	32	Rio de J	28
Dublin	19	Rome	32
Florence	36	Shanghai	28
Gibraltar	25	Singapore	30
H Kong	32	Stockh'm	22
Harare	24	Strasb'g	25
Helsinki	20	Sydney	16
Istanbul	31	Tel Aviv	31
Jo'burg	20	Tenerife	25
K Lumpur	31	Tokyo	28
K'mandu	30	Toronto	30
Kabul	27	Vancouv'r	23
Kingston	32	Vienna	26
Kolkata	35	Warsaw	22
L Angeles	27	Wash'ton	32
Lagos	30	Well'ton	13
Lima	19	Zurich	25

High tides

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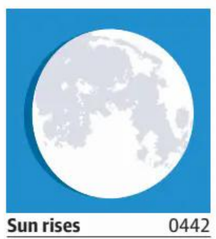
Aberdeen	**0053**	3.7m	**1314**	3.7m	**London Bridge**	**0110**	6.5m	**1336**	6.4m
Avonmouth	**0636**	11.4m	**1903**	11.8m	**Lossiemouth**	**1136**	3.5m	**2355**	3.7m
Barrow	**1107**	8.0m	**2326**	8.4m	**Milford Haven**	**0541**	6.0m	**1804**	6.2m
Belfast	**1046**	3.2m	**2308**	3.2m	**Newquay**	**0434**	6.1m	**1657**	6.3m
Cobh	**0453**	3.6m	**1717**	3.7m	**North Shields**	**0259**	4.4m	**1518**	4.4m
Cromer	**0608**	4.4m	**1827**	4.4m	**Oban**	**0520**	3.4m	**1747**	3.5m
Dover	**1042**	5.9m	**2255**	6.0m	**Penzance**	**0407**	4.8m	**1631**	5.0m
Dublin	**1122**	3.6m	**2330**	3.7m	**Plymouth**	**0512**	4.8m	**1736**	5.0m
Galway	**0446**	4.4m	**1700**	4.7m	**Portsmouth**	**1122**	4.2m	**2332**	4.4m
Greenock	**--**	--	**1149**	3.0m	**Southport**	**1012**	7.8m	**2240**	8.1m
Harwich	**1121**	3.6m	**2342**	3.6m	**Stornoway**	**0630**	4.0m	**1853**	4.3m
Holyhead	**1000**	4.9m	**2222**	5.1m	**Weymouth**	**0522**	0.9m	**1748**	1.0m
Hull	**0548**	6.7m	**1809**	6.5m	**Whitby**	**0331**	4.9m	**1550**	4.9m
Leith	**0202**	4.9m	**1430**	4.9m	**Wick**	**1102**	3.0m	**2321**	3.1m
Liverpool	**1044**	8.1m	**2305**	8.4m	**Workington**	**1109**	7.2m	**2330**	7.5m

Sun & Moon



Sun rises	0442
Sun sets	2121
Moon rises	2033
Moon sets	0249
Full Moon	22 June

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2024

Lighting up

Belfast	2205 to 0448
Birm'ham	2133 to 0444
Brighton	2118 to 0447
Bristol	2131 to 0454
Carlisle	2154 to 0432
Cork	2157 to 0515
Dublin	2157 to 0456
Glasgow	2207 to 0432
Harlech	2145 to 0451
Inverness	2219 to 0417
London	2121 to 0443
M'chester	2141 to 0441
Newcastle	2150 to 0427
Norwich	2123 to 0431
Penzance	2136 to 0512

Sport

Royal Ascot

Kyprios looks good for repeat Gold Cup success

Greg Wood, page 39 →

Cricket

Akeal Hosein: 'I lost friends to the gang lifestyle'

Page 38 →

▲ *England and Italy line up in front of 7,181 fans at Vale Park in 2017 – two years later 77,768 people watched them play at Wembley*
MATT LEWIS/THE FA/GETTY

Dig deeper

Covering women's football is a joy and a privilege, but there is so much left to do

Tom Garry

The first time I reported on an England women's international fixture from a stadium's press box rather than from the distant vantage point of a desk in a far-away office next to a television, the Lionesses were playing a friendly against Italy in April 2017 at Port Vale's Vale Park, a ground which – please forgive me, any Vale fans reading this – I think it's fair to say could have benefited from a little TLC, compared to the facilities the European champions have become accustomed to more recently.

Such was the relative informality of the occasion, I found a parking spot down a rather poorly lit side road in Burslem behind some rusting garages and quickly realised a member of an England player's family was reversing into the small space immediately behind me. After the match – a rather forgettable yet interesting 1-1 draw attended by 7,181 fans – half a dozen reporters sat around a small table with chairs hastily arranged for an impromptu post-match chat with the coach then, Mark Sampson. The BBC's women's sports reporter Jo Currie conducted broadcast interviews, but that aside, it was a quiet press room. All of these things felt perfectly normal at the time, for the level of media attention the national squad were receiving.

I could not have cared less about the spiders in the toilets because of the natural pride and excitement that came with the privilege of reporting on an international fixture. And frankly I'd be lying somewhat if I said I did not miss those quieter nights where there was minimal risk of pre-match traffic, higher chances of grabbing yourself a Bovril, and players were comfortable having a relaxed chat with reporters. But the women's game deserved better than so many empty seats, not only on the terraces, but crucially within the media seating zone. England deserved better. Italy deserved better. Women deserved better.

Memories like that were why, when two and a half quick years later after England's runs to the semi-finals of both Euro 2017 and the 2019 World Cup in France, as Phil Neville's side ran out at Wembley for a friendly against Germany in front of 77,768 fans, I remember taking a moment to simply drink the scene in. How utterly wonderful it was to see the place so busy.

Row upon row of journalists sat in a press box that was so bustling compared to Vale Park it would have been tricky to spot even Currie's trademark bright-coloured trousers among the cram of people in the mixed zone afterwards. Seeing more widespread coverage like that has since become the norm, thankfully.

Across the modern era, there have been numerous watershed or gamechanging moments for women's football where a key trigger has helped elevate the sport and ultimately create more opportunities for women and girls, whether that be the move to a full-time Women's Super League, groundbreaking broadcast deals to provide more exposure on television, or moments in time that engaged the nation such as Team GB beating Brazil at the London 2012 Olympics. Transformations in media coverage have been crucial too but rather more subtle.

Which is why, when I heard the Guardian were expanding their women's football coverage and hiring another women's football writer, I was so impressed by that decision and happy to hear that news for the industry, regardless of whoever was going to get the job. Then, for it to end up being me that is the lucky one who has the honour of serving you in this role, well, naturally, I am absolutely delighted. Think back to the smiles on the England players' faces when they knocked Australia out of the World Cup semi-finals last summer and then imagine that scene again but instead it's me, my wife and our greyhound Blake bouncing around the kitchen in celebration.

Imagine me, my wife and our greyhound bouncing around the kitchen

More importantly, though, and most crucially perhaps, one of the things that expanding the team does is gives us the opportunity to dig deeper into more vital stories that readers of women's football news deserve, and that those involved in the sport deserve to hear raised, because this sport still has a very long way to go and a lot of deep-rooted problems that need to be discussed, exposed or called out.

The perfect example sadly emerged on my second day in the job this week with one of the first stories that we wrote together here: Fears are mounting that Reading may no longer be able to play in the Women's Championship owing to financial concerns.

It's a situation causing immense stress and anxiety for staff, players and parents of the academy youngsters, with youth teams understood to be at serious risk of being disbanded altogether. It's just one example of the relative fragility of the women's game, once you dip below the joyous clouds of international success and the glitz and glamour of live matches on national television. Another of the first few articles we have written this week, published off the back of a survey by the group Women in Football whose data recorded another depressing rise in incidents of discrimination against women in the game, highlights again how much more hard work must be done.

I have a bias in saying this but only with more journalists covering the game, more investigations and with an increase in the detail of reporting on problems like this, can there be real hope for change.

Online now West Indies v England
Read Ali Martin's report on this morning's early encounter *theguardian.com/sport*

'West Indies is still the ultimate goal for any young cricketer'

Akeal Hosein on tough times, the legend David Rudder and why he feels confident about the team's future

Ali Martin
St Lucia

This men's T20 World Cup has seen some fine performances but none more powerful than in Trinidad last week. To a packed house under lights, players and supporters misty eyed in a pin-drop atmosphere, David Rudder delivered a live rendition of Rally 'Round the West Indies, the calypso he wrote in the early 1990s that still serves as the region's cricket anthem.

Rudder, 71, has scaled back this past year after being diagnosed with Parkinson's but his spirit utterly prevailed on the night, West Indies and their supporters transfixed by the words and then living them out in a rousing comeback win against New Zealand.

For Akeal Hosein, a fellow Trini who sung the words and was then central to the cause, there are still goosebumps about it now. "It was just breathtaking, to stand there and witness him live," says Hosein, sitting down for a chat at the team hotel a day out from the Super Eight opener with England in the early hours of this morning.

"To have him come down and give his 100%, to make the fans happy and do exactly what the song said, was just fantastic. I had to go across to him afterwards and pay my respects. I was lost for words, so I just said: 'Thank you, legend' and hugged him for about 10 seconds."

With four wins from four after the group stage (before the England match), West Indies have been leaning into the anthem under Rovman Powell's captaincy, his squad from seven different countries sharing the lyrics in their WhatsApp group before the tournament and united by its sentiment. The buzz on the islands visited these past two weeks has been pretty palpable, too; a sense something could be stirring.

"The West Indies is still the ultimate goal for any young cricketer," says Hosein. "Yes, there are franchise leagues and all of that. But the feeling of putting on the maroon, I don't think there is a more special feeling than that. Once selected, everyone comes together, it's just a great feeling. Comrades. Yeah, we're from different countries but that's what makes us more special. We all piece together the puzzle. And we have our home crowd behind us."

Aged 31 but only three years an international, Hosein's own journey has come into focus after an excellent profile on ESPNCricinfo by the freelance journalist Cameron Ponsonby. It charts Hosein's rise from Laventille, the eastern suburb in Port-of-Spain that features in Rudder's music and has long experienced gang violence and an alarming murder rate. As Hosein puts it himself: "It is always in the public eye for the wrong things.

"It is good to see some good light shed on that area. There are people from my area with aspirations and dreams, all they need is a little push. Yes, there is bit of a negative side but that's not the community. There were times [growing up] when it was difficult and kinda messy, but you try to be on the safe side. There were times of peace and it was beautiful. Being in that area, it's not always going to be good … but there were good times.

"I had one or two friends who were lost to that [gang] lifestyle, and friends that I saved also. Sometimes people feel lost and it's right there in front of them, it might seem the easiest path, some do stray."

◀ *Akeal Hosein has risen into the top 10 bowlers in T20 international cricket*
DARRIAN TRAYNOR/ICC/GETTY

'Once selected everyone comes together, it's just a great feeling. Comrades'

Hosein went "all in" on cricket. He was spotted playing for Success Laventille aged 13 and offered a place at Fatima College and later Queen's Park Cricket Club, two prestigious places, not least for someone from his postcode. At the latter he was mentored by Kieron Pollard and Sunil Narine, the pair offering guidance beyond cricket and even financial support.

Pollard, currently with England, has been and remains a "father" in cricket, while Narine, 552 Twenty20 wickets and counting, recently called for his apprentice to deploy a couple of new mystery deliveries in this World T20. "He's told me: 'It's time, be brave'," says Hosein.

Not that the current tools are too shabby, Hosein having climbed into the top 10 bowlers in T20 international cricket. As well as the orthodox finger spin and smart use of the crease, Hosein has an old-school, classical arm ball. A cantered seam that rotates perfectly as it curves through the soupy Caribbean air and drifts in with the breeze, it is a chef's kiss of a delivery that means he challenges both edges of the bat.

"I don't know if it's 'old school' because I haven't seen many people do it," laughs Hosein, nine wickets to the good after the first four games. "I started out bowling left-arm [wrist-spin] and medium pace. My first ball for West Indies Under-19s was medium. As a wrist-spinner I had an injury and during rehab my coach asked me to try out orthodox. It clicked but I knew as a finger spinner I had to discover new variations so I was always trying new things.

"There's been analysis [of the arm ball] in the media recently but I'm not worried about that. I think it's who is in front of you and what is best suited to getting them out."

One area Hosein feels he "deserves more credit" for is for doing it in the powerplay, when only two fielders are allowed outside the circle. "A lot of people don't see how hard it is," he adds.

Along with Narine, Dwayne Bravo has been a third Trini mentor here, helping to instil a seamer's mentality. Given the way Hosein surveys conditions - sniffing the air's potential for lateral movement and hatching a plan with the new ball - in many ways he is one.

The confidence is there; during our 20-minute conversation Hosein used the phrase "when we win the World Cup" - as opposed to "if" - more than once. There is pride at overcoming a financial landscape tilted against West Indies. It is allied with a belief it is now payback time after being bundled out of the first round of the last men's T20 World Cup and then missing out on last year's 50-over World Cup.

"For us it is a case of 'when'," he says. "After some of the senior guys moved on, we took some serious beatings. We have been heartbroken, and embarrassed. Man, we have been through it all. It's time we distribute some of that feeling on to other teams. I think we deserve it."

T20 may be a fickle format but West Indies are rallying, all right.

Rugby union

'We needed to be braver': Slade sold on new England mindset

Robert Kitson
Tokyo

As recently as four months ago England were caught between two stools. Their desire to play a different brand of rugby was not being matched by their on-field execution and they had just been beaten 30-21 in Scotland. It had the feel of a genuine sliding-doors moment and a clear-the-air meeting was duly convened.

The bottom line was simple. There was significant talent in the backline which was not being utilised. A collective change of mindset was required if England were going to fulfil their attacking potential, as one of the team's new vice-captains Henry Slade recalled this week.

"After the Scotland game we had a chat as a squad, coaches and players. We decided we needed to be braver, call for the ball more and get the ball to the outside channels because we have such dangerous players out there. We wanted to get the ball in their hands more. The best way to do that is to be playing a more expansive game."

Since then England have beaten this year's Six Nations champions, Ireland, and lost to France in the closing seconds of a thrilling game in Lyon. Their self-belief is rising again and good players whose ability had been stifled by unambitious gameplans have been reinvigorated.

For the likes of Slade, painfully omitted from last year's World Cup squad, and his midfield partner Ollie Lawrence, dropped from a great height under Eddie Jones, international rugby is suddenly fun again.

Of course there still needs to be defensive rigour and tactical shape but, after 62 caps, the 31-year-old Slade sounds as if a weight has been lifted from his shoulders.

"I mean, I've had a great career for England and been part of some really great squads. I've had some great experiences but, overall, there is probably a little bit of frustration in terms of how we have played sometimes, how I've played and how many opportunities I've had to get on the ball.

"I do think the way we've tried to progress now is a much more enjoyable way to play. I can put myself in the game a lot more and feel a lot more excited every time I come into camp and get to represent England."

For Lawrence it is also a far cry from the day against Scotland in 2021 when an hour had elapsed before the centre finally touched the ball. Jones, who will be guiding Japan against England on Saturday, was also less than complimentary about the then 21-year-old in a book published later that same year. "The way that some of the media raves about him you would think he's already assured of becoming one of the best players in the world," wrote Jones. "He might do that, one day, but his attitude was not hungry or disciplined enough."

▲ *Henry Slade (left) admits feeling frustration in past England games*

Lawrence, now 25 and loving his rugby again for Bath, will not be rushing to lob any grenades back at Jones. "He gave me my first opportunity in international rugby. He was a coach who challenged me and, looking back, that was a good thing for me. I needed that. Later on in my career I will look back and be thankful it wasn't as easy as I may have wanted it to be. He was honest with me and that's what you need sometimes."

In brief

Olympic Games

Swimmer's celebration leads to shoulder injury

Rafael Fente-Damers booked his ticket to the Paris Olympics with a second-placed finish in the 100m freestyle final at the French trials, but the teenager's exuberant celebrations came at a cost as he injured a shoulder. Immediately after the race, the 17-year-old excitedly slapped the water before clutching his left shoulder in pain. He was later pictured on the podium with his arm in a sling, having dislocated a shoulder and was taken to hospital. **Reuters**

Rugby league

Smith leaves Leeds role by mutual consent

The Leeds head coach, Rohan Smith, has left the Super League club by mutual consent. The 18-10 defeat by Hull FC on Saturday was the Rhinos' third reverse in four games and they sit seventh in the table. Smith led Leeds to the 2022 grand final after his appointment in April of that year but followed that up by missing out on the playoffs and finishing eighth. The assistants Chev Walker and Scott Grix take charge for the game against Leigh tomorrow night. **Guardian sport**

Results

Cricket

MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP

Super 8: Group Two North Sound South Africa 194-4 (Q de Kock 74). USA 176-6 (A Gous 80 no). South Africa beat USA by 18 runs.

SECOND WOMEN'S ONE-DAY INTERNATIONAL

Bengaluru India 325-3 (SS Mandhana 136, H Kaur 103 no). South Africa 321-6 (L Wolvaardt 135 no, M Kapp 114). India beat South Africa by four runs.

CHARLOTTE EDWARDS CUP

Edgbaston Central Sparks 138-8. The Blaze 139-5 (M Kelly 89 no). The Blaze beat Central Sparks by five wickets.

Seat Unique Riverside Lancashire Thunder 61. Northern Diamonds 62-5. Northern Diamonds beat Lancashire Thunder by five wickets.

Hove Southern Vipers 179-5 (ME Bouchier 93). South East Stars 66. Southern Vipers beat South East Stars by 113 runs.

Chelmsford Western Storm 142-7 (HC Knight 66). Sunrisers 131-9. Western Storm beat Sunrisers by 11 runs.

Tennis

ATP CINCH QUEEN'S CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS (London)

Second round: R Hijikata (Aus) bt M Arnaldi (It) 7-6 (7-0) 7-6 (9-7); **S Korda** (US) bt G Dimitrov (Bul) 6-4 3-6 7-5; **J Thompson** (Aus) bt A Murray (GB) 4-1 ret; **T Fritz** (US) bt M Raonic (Can) 7-6 (7-5) 6-4

WTA ROTHESAY CLASSIC (Birmingham)

Second round: A Tomljanovic (Aus) bt Zhu L (Chn) 6-7 (6-8) 6-1 6-4; **E Cocciaretto** (It) bt S Stephens (US) 6-4 6-2; **L Fernandez** (Can) bt V Golubic (Swi) 4-6 7-5 6-3; **A Potapova** (Rus) bt L Bronzetti (It) 6-3 7-5

ATP TERRA WORTMANN OPEN (Halle, Germany)

First round: J Struff (Ger) bt L Darderi (It) 6-7 (2-7) 7-5 7-6 (12-10); **M Berrettini** (It) bt A Michelsen (US) 7-6 (7-5) 6-2

Second round: A Fils (Fr) bt D Koepfer (Ger) 6-3 6-4; **C Eubanks** (US) bt A Bublik (Kaz) 7-6 (7-5) 4-6 6-3; **Zhang Z** (Chn) bt D Medvedev (Rus) 6-3 2-6 7-6 (7-5); **A Zverev** (Ger) bt L Sonego (It) 6-4 7-6 (7-5)

WTA ECOTRANS LADIES OPEN (Berlin, Germany)

First round: O Jabeur (Tun) bt Wang X (Chn) 6-4 7-6 (7-4)

Second round: V Azarenka (Blr) bt Z Sonmez (Tur) 6-3 6-3

Fixtures

Football
Euro 2024
Group B Spain v Italy (8pm)
Group C Denmark v England (5pm); Slovenia v Serbia (2pm)

Rugby league
Betfred Super League
Castleford Tigers v Hull KR (8pm)

Cricket (7pm unless stated)
Men's T20 World Cup
Group One Afghanistan v India, Bridgetown (3.30pm).
Group Two West Indies v England, Gros Islet (1.30am)
Vitality Blast
North Group Warwickshire v Northamptonshire, Edgbaston; Yorkshire v Lancashire, Headingley (7.15pm).
South Group Glamorgan v Gloucestershire, Sophia Gardens (6.30pm); Essex v Hampshire, Chelmsford; Middlesex v Surrey, Lord's; Sussex v Kent, Hove

O'Brien takes blame for 'blips' but gets it right with Auguste Rodin

Greg Wood
Ascot

Aidan O'Brien has spent plenty of time kicking himself this season, most notably over his preparation of City Of Troy for the 2,000 Guineas, and he was at it again here yesterday after Auguste Rodin's three-quarter-length success in the Prince of Wales's Stakes.

"Honestly, I feel the blips were my fault," O'Brien said. "The instructions were wrong, and it was time to start getting it right."

The blips in question were a complete no-show in the King George here last year and another in the Sheema Classic in Dubai three months ago, and since this was the sixth Group One win of Auguste Rodin's career – and a staggering 400th at the highest level for O'Brien – it could be argued that, for the most part at least, he had been getting it right already.

But the 2023 Derby winner had started to acquire a reputation as an all-or-nothing performer, first or nowhere, and if O'Brien and Ryan Moore have indeed found the key to keeping Auguste Rodin interested then there will surely be more Group One wins on his record when the season draws to a close.

The race yesterday went like clockwork for the 13-8 favourite, as he settled in mid-division going easily behind a strong pace and a much-anticipated challenge from Inspiral, the Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Turf winner at Santa Anita last year, completely failed to materialise. Inspiral was drawn widest of all in stall 10 but ceded even more ground with a sluggish start and never threatened to make any inroads on the leaders.

Blue Rose Cen, a dual Classic winner in France last year, set a frantic pace to three out under Christophe Soumillon but she was a spent force as they straightened up for home with Auguste Rodin clearly going best of those waiting to pounce.

Moore sent him for home just inside the final quarter-mile and while two more French-trained runners, Zarakem and Horizon Dore, did their best to chase him down Auguste Rodin kept finding more to repel the challenge. "He gets a mile-and-a-half very well, but when he gets to the front, he waits," O'Brien said. "So I was probably giving him [Moore] the wrong instructions all along.

▲ *The Prince of Wales presents Aidan O'Brien with a cloth marking 400 Group One winners*

"We were riding him too far back and when there was no pace, he was too far out of the race. We changed everything, Ryan said he was going to ride him positive from now on and engage him straight away. We say today, when he gets to the front he waits, and then he goes again."

O'Brien has two Derby winners in his yard and with City Of Troy, winner at Epsom this month, expected to line up for the Eclipse Stakes at Sandown Park in July, which is usually an obvious port of call for a Prince of Wales's Stakes winner, Auguste Rodin seems sure to head elsewhere.

"The lads [in the Coolmore syndicate] will decide, but I'm hoping there will never be any need [for the two horses to take each other on]," O'Brien said. "When those horses come along, you want to pick slots for them, space them out, appreciate them and enjoy them."

O'Brien, meanwhile, will no doubt move swiftly on from his 400th winner at the highest level to the 401st, perhaps as soon as today, when Kyprios will attempt to repeat his success in the 2022 Gold Cup, the royal meeting's feature event. He is also likely to send Illinois, his latest winner of the Queen's Vase earlier on the day's card, into Group One company sooner rather than later.

Illinois is a half-brother to Danedream, the 2011 Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe winner, and is now a leading ante-post contender for the St Leger at Doncaster in September at around 6-1. "He's a middle-distance, mile-and-six type horse and he's going to get better from three to four," O'Brien said. "He's a big, sound, honest horse and a bit of a baby mentally still. He might have a rest now and go to York [in August] on the way to the St Leger, something like that.

"When he went to the front, he flattened out and he thought the race was over, and then he [Moore] asked him to come again and he did. He probably learned a lot today."

▲ *Auguste Rodin (left), ridden by Ryan Moore, tears towards the finish line*
DAVID DAVIES/PA

Two timer

Kyprios set to strike gold for second success

Greg Wood
Guide to Royal Ascot TV races

While 22 horses have won the Ascot Gold Cup more than once in the race's 217-year history, **Kyprios (4.25)** will be only the third to do so in non-consecutive years if he can add to his victory as a four-year-old in 2022 in the royal meeting's showpiece event today.

Kyprios denied the great Stradivarius a record-equalling fourth Gold Cup two years ago and in the process looked more than capable of running up a sequence of his own.

Aidan O'Brien's runner missed out on the race last year because of injury and eventually drew a blank from two starts in 2023, but he has looked back to his best in his two outings this year and has a significant edge on today's field on ratings.

2.30 The past two winners of this race were returned at 150-1 and 50-1 and any one of at least a dozen could find enough improvement to win. That said, however, **Whistlejacket**, the favourite, has very strong claims, having posted an exceptional time in the conditions when getting off the mark at the second attempt at the Curragh in early May.

Royal Ascot 3.05 There will be high hopes of a second consecutive winner for the royal colours in this race and Gilded Water, an easy winner last time, holds obvious claims. This is a deep and highly progressive field, however, and O'Brien's **Chantilly**, third in a hot race at Newbury last time, is just one among many that seems sure to appreciate the step up to 12 furlongs.

3.40 In defeat behind Friendly Soul at Newmarket last time **Kalpana** lost nothing and should improve further for this step up in trip. The warm favourite, Diamond Rain, has beaten little in her two wins to date and Andrew Balding's filly could be significantly overpriced at around 6-1.

5.05 The step up to a mile is likely to suit several of the principals but none more so than **Mickley**, a ready winner in a useful time on his handicap debut over seven furlongs last time.

5.40 An opening mark of 93 for **King's Gambit** proved woefully inadequate at Newbury last month and he looks more than ready for this quick step up into Group Three company.

6.15 Northern Express and **Bopedro** both ran well to finish third and sixth respectively in this race last year, but preference is for the latter this time around as he is now 5lb lower in the ratings and has a better draw towards the stands' rail.

Online today
Tony Paley liveblogs the third day at *theguardian.com/sport*

Today's big race

Gold Cup

4.25pm ITV1

Group One, Class One, 1m 2f £567,100

1 (10)	**Coltrane**	7 9-4	A Balding	**O Murphy**	86
155-01	(50, CD)		M Manscotti	
2 (1)	**Enemy**	7 9-4	I Williams	**R Kingscote**	83
-21275	(42, C)		T Ball & C Lyons	
3 (8)	**Kyprios**	6 9-4	A O'Brien	**R Moore**	90
/22-11	(34, CD)		Magnier/Tabor Smith/Moyglare	
4 (6)	**Prydwen**	6 9-4	G Scott	**C Shepherd**	82
1-5211	(53)		Blue Star & K Breen	
5 (9)	**Sweet William**	5 9-4	J & T Gosden	**R Havlin**	85
223-31	(28)		Normandie Stud	
6 (3)	**Trawlerman**	6 9-4	J & T Gosden	**W Buick**	87
0111-3	(82, C)		Godolphin	
7 (4)	**Trueshan**	8 9-4	A King	**H Doyle**	85
114-43	(28, C, D)		Singula	
8 (5)	**Vauban**	6 9-4	W Mullins	**C Keane**	86
/110-2	(34, C)		S Ricci	
9 (2)	**Gregory**	4 9-3	J & T Gosden	**J Doyle**	88
1135-3	(34, C)		Wathnan Racing	
10 (7)	**Caius Chorister**	5 9-1	D Menuisier	**B De La Sayette**	85
231-22	(28, BF)		C Washbourne	

Betting 10-11 Kyprios, 6-1 Gregory, Vauban, 8-1 Trawlerman, 12-1 Caius Chorister, Coltrane, 16-1 Sweet William, 33-1 Trueshan, 50-1 Prydwen, 100-1 Enemy.

Greg Wood's tips

Ripon 1.35 Stellarmasterpiece **2.05** Lovely Spirit **2.40** Canaria Queen **3.20** Garden Oasis **3.55** Manila Scouse **4.35** Continuance **5.10** Mambha
Chelmsford 2.15 Foro Romano **2.50** Dark Side Prince **3.30** Qamari **4.10** Tarjeeh **4.50** Chourmo **5.20** Noodle Mission
Royal Ascot 2.30 Whistlejacket **3.05** Chantilly **3.45** Kalpana **4.25** Kyprios **5.05** Mickley (nap) **5.40** King's Gambit **6.15** Bopedro (nb)
Wolverhampton 5.28 Pique' **6.00** Cavallo Bay **6.35** Synthesize **7.10** They **7.40** Muttasil **8.10** Baroque Buoy **8.40** Ustath
Lingfield 6.25 Bakersboy **7.00** Worrals **7.30** Pit Boss **8.00** Porfin **8.30** Secret Bid **9.00** Spring Is Sprung

Scot feels the pain on centre court

Andy Murray receives a massage for his back but it was to no avail and he had to retire at 4-1 down in the first set

BEN STANSALL/ AFP/GETTY

Murray retires five games in as brutal year takes new twist

Continued *from back page*

the French Open last month, he revealed he would undergo treatment to address the soreness in his back, something he said he has done before most clay seasons over the past decade. He says the pain had been manageable right up until his pre-match warm-up. He has never before felt the shooting pains down the right side of his back and right leg that followed.

"During my pre-match warm-up, I was pretty uncomfortable, and then just before going on the court, I didn't have the usual strength in my right leg," Murray said. "It was not a usual feeling. I don't know how many of you were watching, but the first two balls I hit in the warm-up, my right leg, it was so uncoordinated. I had no coordination. Then [my] right leg just was not working properly."

Understandably devastated by his misfortune, Murray quickly packed up his bags and prepared to leave the centre court at Queen's Club. As he departed, the packed crowd saluted the greatest British tennis player of the Open era with one last standing ovation.

Since the procedure he underwent at the French Open did not directly address the right side of his back, Murray's hopes of competing at Wimbledon will likely rest on a positive result from his upcoming medical tests and possible treatment of the injury.

> ***'Maybe there is something that can be done to help my right side'***
>
> **Andy Murray**

"I didn't necessarily get my right side of my back treated after the French Open, because, like all tennis players, we have degenerative sort of joints and stuff in the back, but it's all predominantly been left-sided for me for pretty much my whole career. I have never had too many issues with the right side. So maybe there is something that can be done between now and then to help the right side," Murray said.

Murray has repeatedly said he is unlikely to compete after this summer and either Wimbledon or the Paris Olympics would be the likely venue of his retirement. At the beginning of the week, he was announced as a member of Great Britain's Olympic team but his hopes of competing in doubles alongside Dan Evans were already in doubt after Evans was also forced to retire from Queen's with a knee injury.

While Murray's body has been relatively resilient since the beginning of 2022, this year has been brutal. In March, his torn ankle ligaments came just as he finally appeared to find some form after a difficult start to the season. As he discussed his struggles on court, Murray sought to distinguish the two injuries; while the ankle injury was indeed unfortunate, this was perhaps another sign of his body's vulnerability after competing for so many years.

"I have tried to work through it and, you know, find ways to get on the court and compete at this level. But tennis is a really, really hard sport," Murray said.

"Obviously, as you start to age, your body has got a lot of wear and tear in it. You have seen it with Rafa. Novak's obviously, unfortunately, had the injury recently. Roger, the way that his career finished and some of the problems he had in the latter stages of his career, when you start to play lots and lots of matches, that's hard. But there is a lot of work that goes into being ready to play and compete at this level. So it's not easy."

Wildcard for Raducanu

Emma Raducanu is one of four grand slam champions to have been awarded wildcards for Wimbledon. Britain's former US Open winner will return to the All England Club for the first time in two years following surgery last year. The other slam champions are Naomi Osaka, Caroline Wozniacki and Angelique Kerber, along with the British players Francesca Jones, Heather Watson and Yuriko Miyazaki.

▲ *Emma Raducanu bowed out in the second round of Wimbledon in 2022*

Slot seeking to build on Klopp's work at Liverpool

Arne Slot has called on Liverpool fans to 'do the same job' as before

Morgan Ofori

The new Liverpool manager, Arne Slot, has said he will implement a playing style that is the "best of both worlds" from himself and from Jürgen Klopp.

Slot said his predecessor had left Liverpool in a good place. "I think we have a lot of quality and the way they played last season was already impressive, so we are going to build from there," he said in a club interview.

"Of course, you want to take some people with you as well because they know who you are, they know your playing style and they can translate this to the other people in the staff as well. But if you go to a club like Liverpool, you can assume - and I already noticed that - that there are a lot of good people working here as well.

"So, we are going to use hopefully the best of both worlds to implement a few things from us and to use the knowledge that is inside this club already because of the nine years Jürgen and his staff worked here."

Liverpool confirmed three appointments to Slot's staff. Two come from Feyenoord - his assistant, Sipke Hulshoff, and performance coach, Ruben Peeters - while the United States' men's goalkeeping coach, Fabian Otte, will arrive after Copa América. Slot confirmed discussions with the Liverpool sporting director, Richard Hughes, on "one or two" more additions.

Slot also revealed he has spoken to Klopp for advice, and has been analysing footage of his work behind the scenes as much as Liverpool's games.

He challenged the fans and players to "do the same job" as in previous seasons to help the club transition to this new era. "There is a change but the change hopefully isn't that big, because we still have the same players, we still have the same fans - and if both of them are going to do the same job, that will make my life a lot more easy!"

He highlighted the similarities shared by Feyenoord and Liverpool. "Both are cities alongside the river, people work on the docks, it's hard, working-class fans that appreciate seeing the team," he said.

"I think these clubs like Feyenoord and Liverpool, from what I saw of it, it just means a bit more for the fans, it just means a bit more if the team does well than at some other places around the world. This is what I felt at Feyenoord and I'm expecting to feel the same here at Anfield."

Leicester target Cooper after breakdown of Potter talks

Jacob Steinberg

Leicester have switched their focus to Steve Cooper after talks with Graham Potter over becoming their new manager broke down.

Potter, who has been out of work since being fired by Chelsea in April last year, was the leading contender to replace Enzo Maresca at the King Power Stadium following his move to Stamford Bridge this month. Discussions had moved in the right direction since the end of last week and Potter was understood to be very close to returning to work. However, negotiations have collapsed at a late stage, forcing Leicester to revise their plans. They are in advanced talks with Cooper, who has been available since his dismissal by Nottingham Forest in December. The 44-year-old, who led Forest back to the Premier League via the playoffs two years ago, is expected to take the job.

Cooper was loved by supporters at the City Ground and will hope that he can put his experience of avoiding relegation to good use at Leicester. The east Midlands club, who won the Championship last season, have financial problems and could begin the new campaign with a points deduction for breaching the Premier League's profit and sustainability rules.

The situation is unclear and it remains to be seen if Leicester will be forced to sell players. If talks with Cooper collapse then the club may approach the West Brom manager, Carlos Corberán.

Potter has turned down a number of roles since leaving Chelsea and there was a sense that the 49-year-old felt the environment at Leicester would suit him. He could be a contender for the England job if Gareth Southgate departs after Euro 2024.

Villa close to Maatsen deal

Aston Villa are hopeful of finalising the signing of Chelsea and Netherlands defender Ian Maatsen, after agreeing terms on a six-year contract. The clubs are thought to have agreed a fee in excess of £35m for the full-back, who is currently at Euro 2024. The 22-year-old has played 12 league games for Chelsea and spent the second half of last season on loan at Borussia Dortmund. Ben Fisher

Hjulmand goes back to future in quest for Euro redemption

Paul MacInnes
Frankfurt

One famous Dane once spent a lot of time weighing up the pros and cons of revenge, before opting to indulge in "bloody thoughts". Hamlet's approach, it appears, will not be taken by Denmark when they face England in Frankfurt.

Kasper Hjulmand's side were defeated in the semi-finals of Euro 2020 by a penalty won by Raheem Sterling, a decision that was "borderline, let's say it that way", in the words of Brentford's Danish manager, Thomas Frank. But speaking yesterday in the depths of the Frankfurt Arena, Hjulmand and his goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel said the past was behind them.

"I'm not looking into that," Hjulmand said of the penalty incident. "We are looking at a football match out of the front window, and we have a great team in front of us. I'm not using that [moment] as anything - maybe some of the players, I don't know - but I'm looking at it as another football game."

Schmeichel was quick to make clear he was not among those players. "I'm not the type of person that's going to be looking back three years to have motivation," he said. "The biggest motivation is that we are playing another Euros with Denmark and we shouldn't take that for granted. We have 16,000 fans following us and the biggest motivation is to be celebrating with them after a victory."

Hjulmand did confess he had not been able to move quickly past the defeat. "I carried it for a while," he said. But ultimately he believed the match had left a positive legacy. "That kind of game gives you motivation. They make you realise you can do it if you really go for it and strive for a win. Those kind of defeats make us learn and grow."

Schmeichel felt their opponents had grown, too. "I think England were a world-class side [in 2021] but look at the additions that have come in and the experience gained and they are probably a better side than ever, at least in the time I've played

Kasper Schmeichel hinted that he may well return to England at some point

against them. They have world-class talent throughout the side, we are going to have to be at the top of our game to beat them."

Schmeichel extended his praise to include the entirety of English football and, a free agent after leaving Anderlecht, suggested he may return to the country where he and his father, Peter, left a strong legacy. "For me English football is the ultimate," he said. "I love playing in England, it's the type of football I grew up with, and watching English football has a great space in my heart. I miss playing there but maybe I'm going to end up there again at some point."

Denmark could do with at least a point after their disappointing draw with Slovenia in Stuttgart. Hjulmand and Schmeichel spoke of their "hope" and "dream" of pushing deeper in the tournament and, on this question at least, Schmeichel was happy to refer to the past.

"If we don't dream something is wrong," he said. "No one comes to the Euros without dreaming of gold. Dreams are a funny thing. As a country we've done it before - it's something that inspires us. Our standards are high and that's how it is supposed to be."

Analysis
Jonathan Wilson *Hamburg*

Eriksen still a danger but Denmark seem to have lost their edge

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Denmark's game against Slovenia on Sunday was how familiar it all felt. A side highly reliant on one outstanding creator taking the lead in a first half they controlled and then unexpectedly losing their way against physical opponents in the second half, leading to a gnashing of teeth about what had gone wrong and why things weren't as good as they had been at the last Euros. But for the fact that Slovenia scored an equaliser and Serbia didn't, Denmark's start was similar to England's.

To outsiders, the big story from the game was Christian Eriksen, who was brilliant in the first half, dictating the play and scoring the opening goal. Given he had a cardiac arrest in his previous game at the Euros, three years ago, the symbolism of return and recovery seemed obvious.

But the sense was that Danes have heard all the resurrection stuff a bit too often, that however pleased they may be for Eriksen, they were mainly just irritated at two points dropped against the lowest-ranked side in the group.

The post-match press conference took on a weird dynamic: gentle lobs from foreigners about how brilliant it must be not to have, you know, briefly died this time, interspersed with Danish grumbles about why the substitutions had been delayed.

Even Eriksen, polite though he remained, seemed a little bored by talking about his recovery. He has, after all, made 106 appearances for club and country since his collapse, including playing in a World Cup. He too seemed more bothered by the result than by his own miraculous return.

At the last Euros the manager, Kasper Hjulmand, emerged as a vaguely heroic figure, impressively composed in the most trying of circumstances. Perhaps, in retrospect, he should have refused to complete the game against Finland after Eriksen's collapse, but even though Denmark ended up losing that match and their subsequent fixture, against Belgium, they rallied and beat Russia 4-1 to reach the knockouts.

There they hammered Wales and edged past the Czech Republic before losing to England in extra time in the semi-final. It was Denmark's best showing at a major tournament since 1992 and Hjulmand rightly took the credit.

But patience with him is fraying. This is a strong squad; every player is at a club in one of the top eight leagues in Europe by the Uefa ranking, and 20 of the 26 are at clubs in the top four. There is a feeling that Denmark, if not among the favourites, should at least be competitive, but they have not played well since the Nations League win over France in September 2022.

The World Cup was a huge disappointment: a grim 0-0 draw against Tunisia, a late goal conceded to lose 2-1 to France and

▲ *Kasper Hjulmand, the Denmark manager, has come in for criticism*
LISELOTTE SABROE/AP

then a dismal 1-0 defeat to Australia. They may have qualified for the Euros top of their group, but there were away defeats to Kazakhstan and Northern Ireland amid a string of unconvincing displays.

Thomas Gravesen, as uncompromising as a pundit as he was as a midfielder, was critical of Hjulmand for not being more "visible" on the touchline, but given he was praised for his calmness three years ago, it seems a little unfair to condemn

▲ *Christian Eriksen has done his best to lift a team in indifferent form*

him for that now. The criticism, though, seems to be weighing on him; the statesman of three years ago has been replaced by a beleaguered figure.

The bigger issue is the lack of structure. In that sense Eriksen's performance against Slovenia was impressive and indicative of broader problems. He made seven key passes, three more than any other player in the first round of group games. While that reflects well on him and suggests that, after a difficult few months, both for Manchester United and the national team, he is returning to form, it also shows how reliant Denmark have become on him - almost as though he were the sort of playmaker who disappeared from football three decades ago.

The return to the back three used at the last Euros - albeit more of a 3-4-1-2 than the 3-4-3 of three years ago - does make sense, though, in giving Eriksen a platform in midfield. It also gets both Jonas Wind of Wolfsburg and United's Rasmus Højlund into the side, although that does make them reliant on the wing-backs Alexander Bah and Victor Kristiansen for width.

The game against England will pose a very different challenge. There will be less onus on Denmark to take the game to their opponents. They can sit deep and use Eriksen to spring Wind and Højlund on the break, which may suit them better than dealing with the massed defences of Northern Ireland, Kazakhstan or Slovenia.

The issue at the moment, though, feels less to do with tactics than morale. There is a sense, very familiar to England, of a cycle coming to an end.

Denmark

England

Today 5pm

Denmark
Subs from
Hermansen, Rønnow, Kjær, Mæhle, Jørgensen, Kristensen, Jensen, Delaney, Damsgaard, Skov Olsen, Dolberg, Poulsen, Dreyer, Bruun Larsen

England
Subs from
Ramsdale, Henderson, Konsa, Dunk, Gomez, Gallagher, Palmer, Wharton, Mainoo, Toney, Gordon, Eze, Watkins, Bowen
Unavailable
Shaw

one booking from suspension *(probable teams)*

Venue Frankfurt Arena
Referee Artur Soares Dias (Por)

Last two meetings

England 2 Denmark 1 July 2021
Harry Kane's extra-time strike puts England into a major men's final for the first time in 55 years.
England 0 Denmark 1 Oct 2020
Harry Maguire and Reece James are sent off in a Nations League defeat for the hosts at Wembley.

Key clash

Joachim Andersen v Harry Kane
Kane will be determined to get off the mark at this tournament and it will largely be up to the Crystal Palace defender to keep the former Tottenham striker quiet.

Managers

Kasper Hjulmand
'That [Euro 2020 semi-final] hurts. We will try to do better'

Gareth Southgate
'We are trying to find the best way - I am confident we will score goals'

Weather

22°

Follow the action

TV BBC One
Radio BBC 5 Live
theguardian.com Join Barry Glendenning from 4pm for minute-by-minute coverage

England use the Southgate siege mentality to find calm amid intense focus

David Hytner
Frankfurt

"Guys, I'm not reading a single word of your copy but keep writing, you're doing well. Keep going. Cheers!" This was not a direct quote from Kyle Walker as he signed off in typically cheery fashion from a chat with the UK press before England's Group C Euro 2024 match against Denmark tonight. But it was not far off and absolutely the thrust of things.

There has been the temptation to wonder whether there is a siege mentality taking hold within the England setup. Put yourself in the players' shoes, especially the 13 who were a part of a tournament match-day squad for the first time on Sunday when England opened with a 1-0 win against Serbia, experiencing the craziness of it all. And the reaction. It was intense, the analysis of every detail forensic - it always is. Why did Harry Kane hardly touch the ball in the first half? Is Trent Alexander-Arnold the answer in midfield? What is going on with Phil Foden? Whisper it, is Jude Bellingham trying to do too much? To repeat: England won 1-0.

It has emerged that Gareth Southgate addressed the squad on Tuesday night to explain, as he put it, how this was a "different world" to the one the players normally inhabit. "It's very rare at their clubs they'd win a game and experience what they've experienced over the last couple of days," the manager said.

This is England. And yet this is not a siege mentality. A siege mentality in the classic sense involves pulling the shutters down, saying nothing in public or some aggressively defiant stuff at best. Think of the masters such as Sir Alex Ferguson and José Mourinho. A siege mentality does not involve good relationships with the journalists, being friendly, giving insightful interviews and seeming to enjoy them. Maybe call it a Southgate siege mentality: measured, plenty of understanding and empathy.

There is nonetheless an impression that the squad is a little bemused by the fallout from the Serbia game and is pulling together, looking to the leaders - including Walker - for guidance. At 34, Walker is the senior statesman. He is in his fifth tournament. He has 84 caps; only Kane from this squad has more with 92.

Walker has admitted he had to be talked out of international retirement by Southgate after the previous two tournaments but he made it clear here that he wanted to go on for some time.

"I look at Pepe playing for Portugal and he is 41 ... the likes of Luka Modric [who is 38]," Walker said. "They're the levels people are setting. If they can do it, why can't I? What is my timescale for how long I want to go on? How long's a piece of string? A lot of people do bang on about my age but age is just a number to me. I still feel quick, I still feel strong, I still feel young. And even at my age I still want to learn."

Walker was interesting when he addressed the noise outside the England camp; how he deals with it. And it is no great stretch to imagine him preaching to others what he practises. "I don't have anything [in terms of social media], I don't look at anything," the vice-captain said.

"I feel that I'm in here and this is the only little bubble. When you start listening to outside noise or good press and bad press, it affects different people in different ways.

▼ *Kyle Walker (right) says he lives in a bubble and does not look at any social media*
EDDIE KEOGH/THE FA/GETTY IMAGES

Use Euro 2028 to celebrate black players, say pioneers

A generation of black British football pioneers has called on organisers to use the next men's European Championship, to be held in the home nations and Ireland in 2028, to celebrate the contribution of black footballers to the game.

In a letter in today's Guardian Viv Anderson, Brendon Batson, Clyde Best and a host of former professionals who were the first black players at their clubs, have called for a moment of commemoration that will use "the game's unique power" to bring people together.

"Like so many of us, I'm proud of our diverse England team and what it represents – and I hope we're defending champions when we host the Euros in 2028," said Batson, who alongside Cyrille Regis and Laurie Cunningham was one of West Bromwich Albion's trio of groundbreaking black stars in the 1970s. "That tournament is a chance to commemorate the Black players who paved the way for today's stars."

In 2028 it will be the 50th anniversary of Anderson's debut for England, the full-back becoming England's first black player. It will also be the 30th anniversary of Hope Powell's appointment as England women's manager, a role in which she transformed the perception of the women's game.

Letters *Journal, page 9* →

If you were to write good things or bad things about me … if I don't read it, I don't react and don't change my opinion on what I'm going to approach a game like.

"I concentrate on what's in this camp. What the manager says, what the people around me and team-mates are saying. When we get that scrutiny after beating a well-drilled Serbia team 1-0, we have to take it as a positive in that people expect so much of us. But we cannot take away that we came away with three points, a clean sheet and in a good stead for Denmark."

Southgate also said that he was not "reading a thing or listening to a thing", although he is aware of the various discussion points "because they get sent to you". What he wanted to impart was his considered view on the Serbia match, having had the time to pore over it, and how it would inform the approach against Denmark.

Southgate liked the way England kept and moved the ball in the first 30 minutes, the period defined by Bellingham's goal. He also talked up the impact his substitutes made – Conor Gallagher, Jarrod Bowen and Kobbie Mainoo.

He did not like the low levels of chance creation, even during the initial purple patch, and how his team came to lack the correct structure to build the play, the right overloads. It was a part of why they lacked control, seemingly inviting Serbia on. "The other reason was individual errors with the ball," Southgate said. "Poor detail on passes. We have challenged everybody to take that next step."

Southgate said Alexander-Arnold was not going to be a midfielder "who dictates tempo" like, say, Modric or Toni Kroos. But he continues to believe that the Liverpool player could open up compact defences with the range of his passing. Without the ball, he has been open to taking on the responsibilities required.

Southgate was fiercely protective of Foden but he perhaps lowered his guard momentarily when discussing Bellingham. "He definitely got 90 minutes of running into 45; I think the occasion, the emotion, scoring …" Southgate said. It was as though he felt Bellingham had been too all-action in some of the wrong areas.

"I mean, he had a phenomenal impact on the game and the great thing is that he is really coachable," Southgate said. "We can sit and talk things through. We've got to get the right balance of not losing what he's already bringing. And also, can we sow one or two things – as with all the players – that we can refine and get even more from him? That's always the challenge."

Southgate has plenty of them.

Unselfish Kane can shift roles and still grab goals

Captain can drop deep or play as a No 9 and will mix it up depending on the opponent and the state of the game

Jacob Steinberg
Frankfurt

Wembley Stadium, 7 July 2021, a crisis brewing. Denmark are 1-0 up against England in a Euro 2020 semi-final, Mikkel Damsgaard's free-kick catching Jordan Pickford out, and the hosts are beginning to panic.

And so Harry Kane drops deep. All tournament long, people have questioned why he drops deep. Why isn't England's No 9 in the box? Is it ego that makes him think he's a No 10? Well, here's the answer. Receiving the ball midway inside Denmark's half, Kane controls with his left foot and then, with no backlift, plays a defence-splitting pass with his right. Away goes Bukayo Saka, streaking clear on the right, and when the winger's low cross ends up being turned into the goal by Denmark's Simon Kjær, England are back on the victory path.

Kane's ingenuity is the turning point. He had been adjusting after his ankle injuries, running the channels less and operating more as a playmaker, while still retaining that enormous goal threat. He is neither a No 9 nor a No 10; he is a 9.5, a mix of Alan Shearer and Teddy Sheringham, the dip in the power of his running no impediment to pulling away from centre-backs, turning and sending a wide forward away with a pass.

We saw it so often when he linked up with Son Heung-min at Tottenham. He moved to Bayern Munich last summer and finished his first season in Germany with 44 goals and eight assists in all competitions. And last Sunday, as England opened their Euro 2024 campaign with a 1-0 win against Serbia, he managed two touches in the first half, spent most of the game being buffeted by three big defenders and did not have an attempt on goal until late in the game. It was an Erling Haaland-esque performance: low involvement in the buildup, plenty of frustration, a narrative defined by whether or not the big chance ends up in the back of the net.

▲ *Harry Kane can do most things including beating defenders in the air*

Afterwards, though, Kane and Southgate were satisfied with how things had gone. Kane explained that it was part of the plan for him to play high and make space for Jude Bellingham and Phil Foden in between the lines. Southgate talked about the captain's hold-up play relieving pressure in the second half. Jamie Carragher, writing in his Daily Telegraph column, said England will not win the European Championship if Kane is unable to resume his old playmaking role. Why is he playing so high? Why is he in the box all the time?

Yet, as Kane said, each game will be different. He was doubted at the start of Euro 2020 and the 2022 World Cup, only to respond with a flurry of goals on both occasions. Do not bet against him. There will be goals and assists. They could come when England face Denmark again in Frankfurt this evening.

An altered role does not have to spell disaster. Equally, though, it is clear that the nature of England's attack has shifted since the early Southgate era. One of the team's biggest wins, the 3-2 triumph against Spain in October 2018, was built on Kane dropping back and releasing Marcus Rashford and Raheem Sterling with through balls. England had pace and directness in the wide areas, with Sterling influential on the left at the last European Championship. Against Serbia, though, the speed was limited to Saka on the right. Foden, a more technical player than Sterling, would spend his time drifting in from the opposite flank. Behind Kane, meanwhile, was a 20-year-old superstar who oozes main-character energy.

He was doubted at the start of Euro 2020 and the 2022 World Cup, only to respond

Inevitably there will be questions about whether the irrepressible rise of Bellingham will steal Kane's thunder. Who is England's talisman now? Maybe it's the wrong question to ask. Maybe, as Southgate says, England do not need a talisman. It will help Kane if some pressure is lifted from his shoulders.

The captain is obsessed with scoring but if he has to sacrifice himself for the team he will do it. He didn't actually have a bad game against Serbia; he just wasn't getting anything to feet. Everything centred around Bellingham's energy. Kane occupied defenders. There was space for Bellingham to make a late run into the box. In the second half Kane held the ball up, won free-kicks and with his one chance hit the bar. The narrative would have been different had that gone in.

But even the comparison with Haaland would not quite be right. Haaland is rarely involved in City's buildup play. His game is almost entirely defined by whether he scores. Kane is different. He can do almost everything. He was perfectly capable of fighting Serbia's bruisers in the air.

Perhaps it can be put to one side. After all, when England beat Italy last October, the move that led to their equalising penalty came from Kane dropping back, holding off his marker and laying the ball off for Bellingham to surge through on goal. Everything seemed to be in fine working order then and Kane will make his presence felt at some point. It might be a towering header at the back post, a fizzing shot or one of those trademark assists. One way or another, it's coming.

Shaw to miss Denmark clash but manager 'still positive'

Continued *from back page*

approach against Serbia came from Erik ten Hag, working as a pundit on Dutch television. The Manchester United manager suggested Southgate's vision is to sit back after going 1-0 up. Southgate responded by noting that bringing on Jarrod Bowen, Conor Gallagher and Kobbie Mainoo helped England to restore control in the second half.

"There's obviously millions of opinions and so whilst I'm not reading a thing, or listening to a thing, you become aware of these things because they get sent to you," he said.

"There was a moment where we weren't in as much control of the game on Sunday as we would have liked. I think there are moments where you're in control and you can push forward, moments where you've got a different problem to solve. I was really pleased with Gallagher, Kobbie and Bowen."

Southgate acknowledged England did not keep the ball well enough against Serbia but he was positive about Trent Alexander-Arnold's performance in midfield. The Liverpool defender is likely to be given another opportunity in that role.

Southgate had hoped that Shaw, who has not played since February, would be on the bench against Denmark. But the left-back was not involved in team training yesterday and Ten Hag has predicted that Shaw will not be ready before the end of the group stage.

The matches

Group A	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Germany Q	2	2	0	0	7	1	+6	6
Switzerland	2	1	1	0	4	2	+2	4
Scotland	2	0	1	1	2	6	-4	1
Hungary	2	0	0	2	1	5	-4	0

Germany 5 — **Scotland** 1
Wirtz 10, Musiala 19, Havertz 45+1pen, Füllkrug 68, Can 90+3 — Rüdiger 87og

Hungary 1 — **Switzerland** 3
Varga 66 — Duah 12, Aebischer 45, Embolo 90+3

Germany 2 — **Hungary** 0
Musiala 22, Gündogan 67

Scotland 1 — **Switzerland** 1
McTominay 13 — Shaqiri 26

Switzerland v **Germany**
Sunday 23 June, 8pm, BBC*, Frankfurt

Scotland v **Hungary**
Sunday 23 June, 8pm, BBC One, Stuttgart

Group B	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Spain	1	1	0	0	3	0	+3	3
Italy	1	1	0	0	2	1	+1	3
Albania	2	0	1	1	3	4	-1	1
Croatia	2	0	1	1	2	5	-3	1

Spain 3 — **Croatia** 0
Morata 29, Ruiz 32, Carvajal 45+2

Italy 2 — **Albania** 1
Bastoni 11, Barella 16 — Bajrami 1

Croatia 2 — **Albania** 2
Kramaric 74, Gjasula 76og — Laci 11, Gjasula 90+5

Spain v **Italy**
Today, 8pm, ITV1/STV, Gelsenkirchen

Albania v **Spain**
Monday 24 June, 8pm, BBC*, Düsseldorf

Croatia v **Italy**
Monday 24 June, 8pm, BBC*, Leipzig

Group C	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
England	1	1	0	0	1	0	+1	3
Denmark	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Slovenia	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Serbia	1	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0

Slovenia 1 — **Denmark** 1
Janza 77 — Eriksen 17

Serbia 0 — **England** 1
Bellingham 13

Slovenia v **Serbia**
Today, 2pm, ITV1/STV, Munich

Denmark v **England**
Today, 5pm, BBC One, Frankfurt

England v **Slovenia**
Tuesday 25 June, 8pm, ITV1/STV, Cologne

Denmark v **Serbia**
Tuesday 25 June, 8pm, ITV4, Munich

Group D	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Netherlands	1	1	0	0	2	1	+1	3
France	1	1	0	0	1	0	+1	3
Poland	1	0	0	1	1	2	-1	0
Austria	1	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0

Poland 1 — **Netherlands** 2
Buksa 16 — Gakpo 29, Weghorst 83

Austria 0 — **France** 1
Wöber 38og

Poland v **Austria**
Tomorrow, 5pm, ITV1/STV, Berlin

Netherlands v **France**
Tomorrow, 8pm, BBC One, Leipzig

Netherlands v **Austria**
Tuesday 25 June, 5pm, BBC*, Berlin

France v **Poland**
Tuesday 25 June, 5pm, BBC*, Dortmund

Group E	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Romania	1	1	0	0	3	0	+3	3
Slovakia	1	1	0	0	1	0	+1	3
Belgium	1	0	0	1	0	1	-1	0
Ukraine	1	0	0	1	0	3	-3	0

Romania 3 — **Ukraine** 0
Stanciu 29, R Marin 53, Dragus 57

Belgium 0 — **Slovakia** 1
Schranz 7

Slovakia v **Ukraine**
Tomorrow, 2pm, BBC One, Düsseldorf

Belgium v **Romania**
Saturday 22 June, 8pm, ITV1/STV, Cologne

Slovakia v **Romania**
Wednesday 26 June, 5pm, BBC*, Frankfurt

Ukraine v **Belgium**
Wednesday 26 June, 5pm, BBC*, Stuttgart

Group F	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Turkey	1	1	0	0	3	1	+2	3
Portugal	1	1	0	0	2	1	+1	3
Czech Republic	1	0	0	1	1	2	-1	0
Georgia	1	0	0	1	1	3	-2	0

Turkey 3 — **Georgia** 1
Muldur 25, Guler 65, Akturkoglu 90+7 — Mikautadze 32

Portugal 2 — **Czech Rep** 1
Hranac 69og, Conceição 90+2 — Provod 62

Georgia v **Czech Rep**
Saturday 22 June, 2pm, BBC One, Hamburg

Turkey v **Portugal**
Saturday 22 June, 5pm, ITV1/STV, Dortmund

Georgia v **Portugal**
Wednesday 26 June, 8pm, ITV*/STV, Gelsenkirchen

Czech Rep v **Turkey**
Wednesday 26 June, 8pm, ITV*/STV, Hamburg

Last 16

38 2A v **2B**
Saturday 29 June, 5pm, Berlin

37 1A v **2C**
Saturday 29 June, 8pm, Dortmund

40 1C v **3D/E/F**
Sunday 30 June, 5pm, Gelsenkirchen

39 1B v **3A/D/E/F**
Sunday 30 June, 8pm, Cologne

42 2D v **2E**
Monday 1 July, 5pm, Düsseldorf

41 1F v **3A/B/C**
Monday 1 July, 8pm, Frankfurt

43 1E v **3A/B/C/D**
Tuesday 2 July, 5pm, Munich

44 1D v **2F**
Tuesday 2 July, 8pm, Leipzig

Quarter-finals

45 Winner 39 v **Winner 37**
Friday 5 July, 5pm, Stuttgart

46 Winner 41 v **Winner 42**
Friday 5 July, 8pm, Hamburg

48 Winner 40 v **Winner 38**
Saturday 6 July, 5pm, Düsseldorf

47 Winner 43 v **Winner 44**
Saturday 6 July, 8pm, Berlin

Semi-finals

49 Winner 45 v **Winner 46**
Tuesday 9 July, 8pm, Munich

50 Winner 47 v **Winner 48**
Wednesday 10 July, 8pm, Dortmund

Final

Winner 49 v **Winner 50**
Sunday 14 July, 8pm, BBC One/ITV1/STV, Berlin

** BBC or ITV channel showing match to be confirmed*

◀ *Klaus Gjasula (No 8) watches in horror after his ricochet gives Croatia the lead; then he celebrates his late equaliser*
LISI NIESNER/REUTERS
DAN MULLAN/REUTERS

Gjasula's reversal of fortune earns 'amazing' Albania last-gasp point

Croatia 2
Kramaric 74, Gjasula 76og

Albania 2
Laci 11, Gjasula 90+5

Jonathan Wilson
Volksparkstadion Hamburg

When Klaus Gjasula came off the bench after 72 minutes for Qazim Laci, the player who had put Albania ahead, what was he expecting? To sit at the back of midfield, to be a damp blanket stifling the game, to preserve the Albanian lead? Maybe he thought he would make a couple of tackles, be a useful breakwater in front of the defensive line. Maybe he dreamed of a heroic block he could tell people about for years but for him, a quiet game would have been a good game. As it turned out, his game could hardly have been noisier.

Gjasula, now at Darmstadt having played for a series of Germany's less storied names, had been on the pitch for two minutes when Andrej Kramaric squeezed a shot through Elseid Hysaj's legs to equalise.

Then Luka Sucic's shot from Ante Budimir's cutback was blocked by Berat Djimsiti and cannoned off Gjasula into the net. He had been on the pitch four minutes, during which time Croatia had scored twice and he had got one of them.

Lesser figures would have quailed. Just get out of there. Draw no more attention to yourself. Whatever you do, don't risk missing a golden chance to equalise. But Gjasula had one more moment of involvement and it was vital. Once Croatia had gone ahead, Albania found a second wind. Arber Hoxha had a drive from 20 yards saved. Mirlind Daku, seemingly startled by just how much time he had been afforded in the Croatia box, had an effort blocked.

Other sides might have panicked, might have just slung the ball into the penalty area and hoped for the best. But Albania remained calm. They built up patiently, then Hoxha laid in Mario Mitaj who crossed low. Gjasula ran on to it.

In 28 previous games for Albania he had never scored. He is 34 and has been playing professional football for 16 years. He has scored only 19 league goals. He is 6ft 4in. Deftness, precision in front of goal, that's not really his thing. But this was his time. He didn't snatch at the chance but swept it calmly past Dominik Livakovic. At which point nobody was calm any more. Albania's bench and players and fans celebrated wildly, and deserved to do so.

▲ *Qazim Laci turns to the fans after heading Albania into an early lead*

"The game was crazy," said the Albania manager, Sylvinho. "The pace of the game was difficult for him but at the end of the game, it was a present for everyone that he scored."

In Albania's only previous major tournament, Euro 2016, they did win a game, but whatever happens against Spain in their final game here, they will leave this tournament having made more of an impression than they did in France.

"It was an amazing sensation," Sylvinho said. "I'm going to remember this game all my life. We are proud and the nation should be proud about the performance. We did well and I'm really proud of my players, they played so hard to represent our people."

Croatia, meanwhile, will almost certainly go through if they beat Italy in their final game. They may have lost 3-0 to Spain and been broadly outplayed in the first half by a younger, sharper Albania, but they still have a chance. They have a capacity to hang in games and tournaments until their talent eventually blossoms. "We can't," as Kramaric said, "do anything the easy way."

It might be easier, though, if their starting midfield did not have a combined age of 99. Just as Spain had been able to find space between the midfield and the defensive line, so did Albania, taking the lead after 11 minutes as Jasir Asani, given an extraordinary amount of time, crossed for Laci to nod under Livakovic. It could have been worse for Croatia but Kristjan Asllani and Rey Manaj snatched at presentable chances before half-time.

"They were two completely different halves," said the Croatia coach, Zlatko Dalic. "The first half was again bad, we played badly. We conceded and then we couldn't do anything. We were very slow. We made a lot of errors, we lost many balls. In the second half we played a lot better, were a lot more decisive."

Marcelo Brozovic was one of two Croatians replaced at half-time, the shape became more of a 4-2-3-1 and Dalic urged his team to play quicker. It worked. Albania slowly wilted as the pressure mounted. It seemed like classic Croatia. It seemed that, once again, they had found a way. But this was Gjasula's day and he wasn't to be denied.

Croatia
4-3-3
Livakovic; Juranovic, Sutalo, Gvardiol, Perisic (Sosa 84); Modric, Brozovic (Pasalic ht), Kovacic; Majer (Sucic ht), Petkovic (Budimir 69), Kramaric (Baturina 85)

Albania
4-2-3-1
Strakosha; Hysaj 🟡, Ajeti, Djimsiti, Mitaj; Ramadani (Hoxha 85), Asllani; Asani (Seferi 64), Bajrami, Laci (Gjasula 72); Manaj (Daku 85)

Referee François Letexier (Fr)

Group A

Gündogan guides Germany into last 16 after controversial opener

Germany	**2**
Musiala 22, Gündogan 67	
Hungary	**0**

Possession: Germany 68% – Hungary 32%

Shots on target: 7 – 3

Corners: 11 – 7

Nick Ames
Stuttgart Arena

Which of Germany's old stagers will be next to steal the scene? Toni Kroos had teased Scotland to pieces on the opening day but this time his captain delivered a resounding statement. Four months from now Ilkay Gündogan will turn 34 but this was another of those evenings where, as with his imminently retiring colleague, the idea that the show will one day end feels simply unfair.

Gündogan intervened decisively midway through each half, creating the opener for Jamal Musiala and sweeping in a second goal that finally deflated a largely impressive Hungary. Had Marco Rossi's players converted one presentable chance among several, notably through Barnabas Varga on the hour, they would have quietened a buoyant crowd. Instead they were the latest to find that the hosts have begun this summer with the dead-eyed edge of old. Germany were clinical and their momentum is gathering.

If the veterans are trading star billing, Musiala is a dazzling constant. "The way he's going right now, he can be one of the best," Gündogan said afterwards and it was justified praise. He turned in another irrepressible performance and what a special moment it was when, in his home city, he met the captain's pass and hammered high into the net. Musiala tormented Hungary out wide but his acuity in occupying pockets of space more centrally was fundamental to the moments that won this game.

Exhibit A came in the 22nd minute of a game Germany had started slowly, finding that Hungary were as good as their word in promising a more aggressive display than in a poor defeat against Switzerland. Some of the hosts' connections around the box had started to show promise, and Peter Gulascsi had saved from Kai Havertz after ineffectual defending from Willi Orban, but it took Musiala's initiative to calm their early jitters.

Musiala had collected the ball in a tight space on the edge of the box, with four opponents looking to minimise his options, and slipped it through to an on-rushing Gündogan. There was a sizeable element of fortune after that, the pass bouncing off his thigh as he sought to tame it and seemingly allowing Orban to take control.

The centre-back, no more convincing than he had been earlier on, stumbled as he tried to shepherd the ball towards the byline. The complaint was that Gündogan had shoved him, but Orban had seemed to lean into his opponent and surely should have been stronger. Several of Hungary's players certainly erred in stopping with hands held aloft while the midfielder took control of matters and, from the left side of the six-yard box, teed up Musiala for a second thudding finish in as many games.

Rossi was furious that the referee, Danny Makkelie, let the goal stand. "It's a double standard," the Hungary manager said, citing a moment in the second half when Robert Andrich tumbled in his own box and was given a foul. "Germany didn't need help from the referee. When they play against someone like France let's see if a foul will be given or not."

Hungary had come close after only 16 seconds, Manuel Neuer diving at the feet of Roland Sallai, and gave the 38-year-old more to do. They did not appear perturbed at going behind and were denied soon afterwards when Neuer brilliantly repelled a Dominik Szoboszlai free-kick and blocked the rebound from Varga. If the excellence of golden oldies is to be a theme, Neuer was another who warmed to it.

By the three-quarter mark Germany had not put Hungary out of view. Then Kroos sped up a prolonged passing move with a first-time clip to Musiala, imbued with instructions to maintain that raised tempo. Eyes in the back of his head, Musiala found the left-back Maximilian Mittelstädt in space and the resulting cutback was swept in by Gündogan.

He barely put a foot wrong throughout and Julian Nagelsmann pointed out that, off the ball, he had kept Germany on the straight and narrow when they were listing. "He worked amazingly," Nagelsmann said. "He tried to steer the match, he used some of the stoppages and tried to double check things with me. I have big trust in him because I know what is within him."

Perhaps the post-match enthusiasm would have been more restrained if Varga, unmarked from a perfect Sallai cross, had equalised rather than looping his header over. Sallai had a goal correctly disallowed before the interval and, towards the end, a late goalline clearance from Joshua Kimmich ensured the bank of almost 20,000 fans behind Neuer's goal were left with nothing bar an improved showing to savour. Hungary are on the brink of elimination.

Germany	Hungary
4-2-3-1	**3-4-2-1**
Neuer; Kimmich, Rüdiger🟡, Tah, Mittelstädt🟡; Andrich (Can 72), Kroos; Musiala (Führich 72), Gündogan (Undav 84), Wirtz (Sané 58); Havertz (Füllkrug 58)	Gulacsi; Fiola, Orban, Dardai; Bolla (Adam 75), A Nagy (Kleinheisler 64), Schafer, Kerkez (Z Nagy 75); Sallai (Csoboth 87), Szoboszlai🟡; Varga🟡 (Gazdag 87)

Referee Danny Makkelie (Neth)

Golden oldie Gündogan plays hits

The captain, Ilkay Gündogan, slots home Germany's second goal to seal qualification from Group A

MOHAMED MESSARA/EPA

Kylian Mbappé wore strips on his nose as he returned to training

Group D

Mbappé back in training but facing surgery after finals

Ben Fisher
Berlin

Kylian Mbappé returned to France training yesterday – for the first time since breaking his nose in their Euro 2024 opener – but Didier Deschamps confirmed his captain will require surgery at some point, most likely after the tournament.

France are sourcing a custom-made mask for Mbappé, who trained alone at their base in Paderborn before joining in a finishing drill with the rest of his teammates. Mbappé wore wound-closure strips across his nose and was limited to non- contact exercises.

The 25-year-old Real Madrid forward is expected to miss France's game against the Netherlands tomorrow in Leipzig but the French Football Federation is optimistic he will return in time to feature prominently at the tournament. Yesterday Mbappé posted on Instagram: "Sans risqué il n'y pas de victoires" – without risks there are no victories – with a smiling face emoji.

Mbappé had tests at Düsseldorf hospital after the collision with Austria's Kevin Danso on Monday and Deschamps said his medical staff continue to monitor his condition.

"Even if there is not surgery immediately, he will have to do it after the tournament," the France manager said. "This morning [Wednesday] he was already a little better, so we will see. We will follow it closely every day."

The France midfielder Adrien Rabiot said he was confident Mbappé will return to action quickly. His Juventus clubmate and the Poland goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny had surgery after breaking his nose in April. France face Poland in their final Group D match in Dortmund on Tuesday. "A fractured nose isn't the end of the world, so he should be with us pretty soon," Rabiot said.

Rabiot insisted France can cope without their star player. "We definitely want him to play but looking at who we have on the bench we have what it takes to replace Kylian," he said. "We have to count on the group. If he is not there then it is going to be more tough but I trust the great players we have on the team."

Shaqiri clips Scotland's wings but draw keeps knockout hopes alive

Scotland	**1**
McTominay 13	
Switzerland	**1**
Shaqiri 26	

Possession

Scotland	Switzerland
45%	55%

Shots on target

3	4

Total attempts

12	11

Ewan Murray
Cologne Stadium

Scotland came into this game with the sole aspiration of not being sent homeward to think again. Defeat in Cologne would have left them needing unlikely favours from other groups, even if they were to beat Hungary in Stuttgart on Sunday. On that front, it was job done. Scotland now know a win against Hungary would take them to the four-point tally that should be sufficient for the holy grail of a tournament knockout place for the first time.

The Scots responded admirably from the 5-1 thumping by Germany. It is just that when the dust settles on this invigorating bout, Scotland may feel they should have taken more.

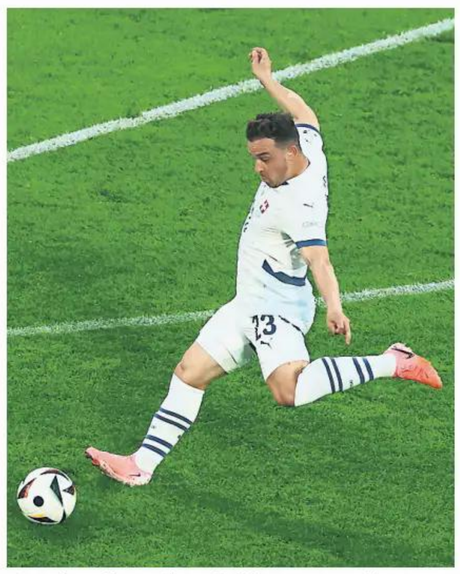
The pre-match scene meant the 90-odd minutes to follow had a lot to live up to. Murat Yakin, the Switzerland head coach, whipped his supporters into a frenzy three quarters of an hour before kick-off. In a stadium which lends itself to a rousing atmosphere, a vociferous rendition of the Swiss Psalm was topped by a staging of Flower of Scotland which only epitomised how much this fixture meant to the Tartan Army. This felt a seminal moment in Steve Clarke's tenure.

With John McGinn winning Scotland a corner after 102 seconds, the team had provided more attacking menace than during the wounding episode in Munich on Friday. Scott McTominay duly slammed the set play low and against a defender.

From another corner, this time a Switzerland one, Scotland earned the breakthrough. The Swiss dithered having taken it short, which allowed Clarke's men to break. Billy Gilmour, restored to the starting XI, fed Andy Robertson. The Liverpool full-back rampaged to the edge of the Switzerland penalty area, at which point he overhit a pass to Callum McGregor.

The Celtic captain salvaged the situation by laying the ball back to Scott McTominay; his shot flew off Fabian Schär and beyond the stranded Yann Sommer. McTominay's attempt was on target but would have presented no problem to Sommer had the Newcastle defender not intervened. Scotland had liftoff; just not for long.

Anthony Ralston will have nightmares about his role in the equaliser. The right-back panicked and blindly flicked the ball inside, to nobody in particular, as Scotland tried to tidy up a Swiss attack. Xherdan Shaqiri latched on to Ralston's error and curled beyond Angus Gunn from 18 yards. Ralston's slackness will command attention but this was a touch of class from Shaqiri, who did not start Switzerland's win over Hungary. He has now scored in the last three European Championships and last three World Cups.



▲ *Xherdan Shaqiri hammers home a spectacular goal to level the scores*

As Gunn saved smartly from Dan Ndoye, Switzerland were of a mind to make their first-half domination of possession count. Ndoye had the ball in the net seconds later, only to be denied by an offside flag. To describe the pace of play as frenetic would represent gross understatement. It was wonderful, chaotic stuff which only occasionally slowed down to a blur. The entertainment level was helped by the fact neither team looked at all convincing in defence.

Scotland had made it through the latter stages of the half in no small part because of the composure of Gilmour and McGregor. They provided a delicate touch as the game raged around them. It was further to Scotland's credit that Granit Xhaka had little to say during those opening 45 minutes. Shaqiri, whose influence was more profound, was withdrawn on the hour mark.

The second period had been something of a slow burner until Ndoye burst free of the Scotland defence before watching his shot turned wide by the advancing Gunn. As he battled with the Switzerland forward,

Scotland left to rue Hanley's near miss

Grant Hanley clatters the post with a header in the second half, coming within a whisker of a winner
TOM JENKINS/ THE GUARDIAN

6
Xherdan Shaqiri is the only player to have scored at ***all three Euros and all three World Cups*** *from 2014 onwards*

1
Switzerland's Shaqiri became the first male scorer at a Euros who plays ***at club level in North or South America***

Kieran Tierney pulled up holding his left hamstring. The defender was removed from the field on a stretcher; it will be a shock if he plays any further part in this tournament. This felt a meaningful blow.

Still, the Scots came within the width of a post of taking a 67th-minute lead. Robertson swung in a teasing free-kick, which was met by the head of Grant Hanley. As the ball rebounded from the woodwork, the Swiss were able to scramble it clear.

Clarke's call now was whether to stick or twist. The Swiss appeared content to take a point. Yet Yakin's men also carried danger on the counterattack. They were pinpointing Ralston, who endured his second torrid evening of the Euros.

McTominay saw an acrobatic effort blocked. The Swiss substitute Breel Embolo found Gunn's net but was offside. Zeki Amdouni headed a glorious opportunity wide. The sharing of two goals felt incredible given the start to proceedings. It was also perfectly fair.

Scotland
3-4-2-1
Gunn; Hendry, Hanley, Tierney (McKenna 61); Ralston, Gilmour (McLean 79), McGregor, Robertson; McGinn (Christie 90), McTominay; Adams (Shankland 90)

Switzerland
3-4-3
Sommer; Schär, Akanji, Rodríguez; Widmer (Stergiou 86), Xhaka, Freuler (Sierro 75), Shaqiri (Embolo 60); Aebisher, Ndoye (Amdouni 86), Vargas (Rieder 75)

Referee Ivan Kruzliak (Svk)

Analysis
Barney Ronay *Cologne Stadium*

Gilmour has delivered a way for his country to play – now all they need do is keep doing it

Early on at the Cologne Stadium, on a night when Scotland carried out a kind of mini-exorcism, packing away the horrors of Munich via a 1-1 draw with Switzerland, it seemed as though Steve Clarke's team had a basic textural problem.

Billy Gilmour is their best passer, the setter of the midfield patterns. At the same time Gilmour wants to play football in a way that, frankly, doesn't suit the players at the back, who looked at times bullied and harried by their own midfield playmaker, more concerned by being asked to pass the ball than they were by having to mark the Swiss attack.

When Gilmour had the ball there were slick, short passes, an attempt to build a sequence. Then suddenly someone else had it and it was all knee-pumping runs, helium balloon touches, possession as a kind of trauma, something to be shifted like a ticking package.

The fit looked wrong, the recipe doomed. With Gilmour spraying the ball around Scotland seemed to be trying to make a truffle risotto with a Pot Noodle, a can of Tennent's and half a pound of cheddar. You might actually get the best results in the end just chugging it all down with a fork as God intended.

Then an interesting thing happened. The ballad of Billy Gilmour came in three phases. Early awkwardness. The low point, pegged out around Switzerland's wonderful goal. And finally the peak Gilmour phase midway through the second half, as Gilmour and John McGinn grew into the game, began to affect the way teammates moved around them, Gilmour's passing growing more direct, more vertical, more aggressive.

This was real progress. Scotland needed something from this game, if not a win, or even a draw, then at least to turn up and play and feel good about it. They got a point. They also found a way to play. Beat Hungary now and a team that looked dead on the table should even make the last 16.

Cologne had been a lovely soft summery place at kick-off. The stadium is a wonderful thing, a vast leafy open weathered complex, with a meadow out in front and a 1930s colonnade hiding its square metal outline. It feels very Echt German football, a vinyl gatefold album of a stadium.

In the opening exchanges the noise clattered around this massive vibrating box in unceasing waves.

▲ *Billy Gilmour kept Scotland moving with slick, short passes*

Scotland won an early corner on the left and it was like being battered in the side of the head.

At which point phase one of the ballad of Billy occurred. Gilmour is a lovely mover, relaxed in every touch. Early on he was taking the ball and signalling the next pass with his hand, although it was also clear the next player didn't always seem ready to take it.

The Swiss goal came via this route. It was an equaliser at that stage. It was an astonishing point-and-shout moment from Xherdan Shaqiri. It was also made by Anthony Ralston's poor pass across his own area. He was given the ball by Gilmour in a tight space where he just didn't want it, and flapped it back into the space where he imagined Grant Hanley to be standing.

Unfortunately the most skilful, power-packed, impishly creative presence on the pitch just happened to be skirting into that empty green space. Shaqiri saw it all at once, ran the maths, pounded the turf a little harder, reading the strides, then took the ball first time with his left foot, lifting it with startling dip and swerve in a hard arc straight into the top corner.

Shaqiri went for a knee slide, stuck in the ground, ended in a kind of bear-cub roll. He has been many things, the Magic Dwarf, the Red Cube, Switzerland's premier celebrity in his pomp. He still looks in great shape. His calves still appear to have calves of their own. This is a seriously talented footballer.

Phase two of Gilmour's night was the struggle. Scotland played 25 long passes out of defence in the first half. They struggled to rest on the ball, to find any rhythm, any kind of pattern. The players never stopped running and harrying. Maybe sometimes it's a good idea to stop running and harrying.

But Scotland also scored a goal in this period, the first part of which was Shaqiri winning an improbable header on the edge of the Scotland box, hurling through the evening air like an action man with a jet pack. The ball dropped to Gilmour, who produced a wonderful quicksilver touch, reading the space ahead of him and releasing Andy Robertson.

From there it was just wonderful ball-carrying, Robertson taking the ball through just the right channel to retain Scotland's overload. Callum McGregor cut the ball back to Scott McTominay whose shot struck the flailing knee of Fabian Schär and zinged into the top corner.

The roof air crackled, the blue-shirted section of the crowd seethed and tumbled. And after half-time came phase three. What happened was Scotland got better, found ways to pass and keep the ball, to pressurise the Swiss. They could have won this. Hanley hit the post. They also could have lost it. But the lesson seemed clear. Pick your best passer and play this way, no matter how hard the accommodation.

▼ *Scott McTominay (No 4) watches his shot deflect off Fabian Schär past Yann Sommer for Scotland's goal*
TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

'We are still in the competition and that was the most important thing'

Steve Clarke was satisfied with a job well done against the Swiss

'A lot better' Clarke salutes side fighting to restore pride

Ewan Murray

Steve Clarke praised his Scotland team for showing the true version of themselves after a fine display against Switzerland.

Scotland were widely criticised after they lost 5-1 against Germany in the opening game of Euro 2024 but this result in Cologne keeps hopes alive of a place in the last 16, which should be secured if they beat Hungary in Stuttgart on Sunday.

"This is the way we have been playing over the last three or four years," Clarke said. "It's why we are here at a tournament. We knew what we had to do. It was a good team performance against a good opponent.

"We are going to feel a lot better going into the next game on the back of that performance. This is how we play, this is how we work. As well as the dirty side of the game, we can play. We got the ball down and created some chances. We did what we had to do, we are still in the competition and that was the most important thing. That was what we expected: a good reaction from a disappointing night. We are still alive in the tournament."

Scotland had taken the lead after Scott McTominay's shot was deflected into the Switzerland net by Fabian Schär. Xherdan Shaqiri notched the equaliser before half-time.

"The reality is, when the draw was made and we were up against the host nation in the opening game, you are looking at the other two games in the group and thinking: 'Maybe that's where the points are going to come from,'" Clarke said. "That's the way it has turned out.

"Everybody was trying to overhype the fact we had to get something out of this game but the reality was, even if we had played well against Germany, we probably would have been in a similar position of having to get something from this game to keep us alive going into the last game. That is what we have done."

Clarke confirmed Kieran Tierney would miss the Hungary game after sustaining what appeared to be a serious hamstring injury.

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Sport

It's a knockout
Magic Musiala strikes again as Germany reach last 16

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Slot right in
Liverpool to get 'best of both worlds from Klopp and me'

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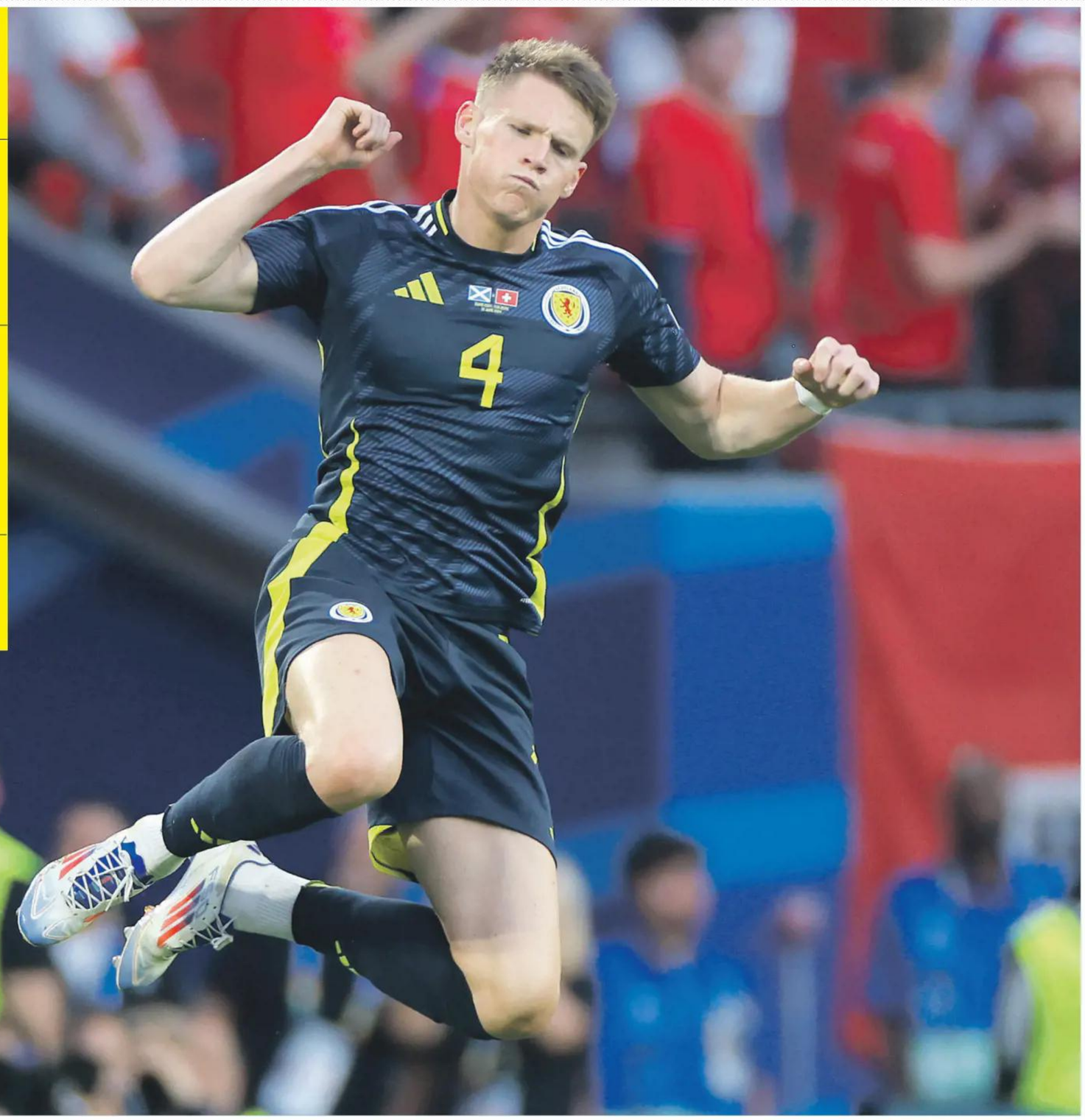
Auguste Rodin is O'Brien's 400th top-level winner
Royal Ascot, page 39 →

Euro 2024

McTominay keeps Scots' hopes alive

Scotland	Switzerland
1	1



Scott McTominay celebrates his deflected strike, which gave Scotland an early lead
Full coverage *Pages 46-47 →*

TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

Foden 'did an exceptional job', insists Southgate

Jacob Steinberg
Frankfurt

Gareth Southgate has defended Phil Foden's "exceptional" display against Serbia and has told England's players to ignore criticism of their performances during Euro 2024.

Southgate, who remains uncertain when Luke Shaw will return from a hamstring injury, has been trying to make sure that England are not affected by external noise before they face Denmark in their second match in Group C.

It has not escaped the head coach that Foden, who is hoping to keep his place in an unchanged starting XI at the Frankfurt Arena tonight, was the subject of much debate after the tense 1-0 win against Serbia last Sunday. Southgate does not subscribe to the view that the Manchester City attacker is struggling to produce his outstanding club form for England.

"I thought Phil did an exceptional job for us on Sunday," Southgate said. "Other players grabbed the attention, but the way he worked for the team, defended the spaces, real intelligence in how he played. Towards the end of the game, he retained the ball for us in really crucial moments. We were happy with what Phil did.

"There's going to be a narrative - a player, a couple of players - after every England game. This is a different world to the one you experience at clubs. The players recognise that now after the last couple of days.

"We talked with them about it. It's very rare at their club they'd win a game and experience what they've experienced over the last couple of days.

"I have to make sure I can guide them through that, let them understand it and recognise it's the reality of our world but that we shouldn't be thrown off track by it. We're in a good position."

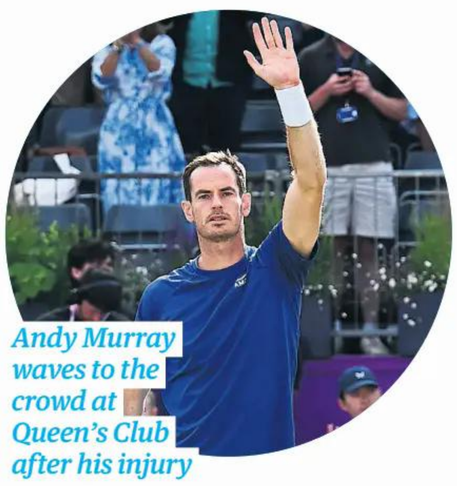
One of the most notable comments about England's 43 →

'My leg was not working'
Murray's Wimbledon farewell in doubt after injury at Queen's

Tumaini Carayol
Queen's Club

The final stretch of Andy Murray's career took a dramatic turn yesterday as he was forced to retire from his second-round match at Queen's Club with a back injury while trailing Jordan Thompson 4-1. The injury means it is unclear whether Murray will be physically ready to compete at Wimbledon for what would likely be a final time.

In the immediate aftermath of the retirement from the match, Murray said he "wouldn't know" about his prospects of competing. He will undergo tests to determine the extent of his injury and to see what treatment is available to him before the Championships, which begin on 1 July. "I will get scans tomorrow and get it rechecked and see if there's anything that can be done," he said.



Andy Murray waves to the crowd at Queen's Club after his injury

Murray, a five-time champion at Queen's Club, had started his tournament with a 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 victory against Alexei Popyrin on Tuesday, which marked his first ATP win since tearing ankle ligaments during a third-round match at the Miami Open in March. Despite gesturing repeatedly towards his back during the second set, Murray played an excellent third set in a match that seemed to represent real progress.

From his first serve on the opening point yesterday, though, it was clear that something was seriously wrong. Instead of leaping back into a split step and chasing down the second ball, Murray remained rooted to the spot and members of the crowd gasped as Thompson's slow return of serve rolled past him as a winner.

It soon became clear that Murray was unable to move at all and, as the worried audience watched in silence, a retirement quickly seemed inevitable.

Back injuries have been common in Murray's career, with the Briton undergoing surgery in 2013 and particularly struggling during most clay seasons. After his first-round defeat at 40 →

David Hytner Do England have a measured, empathetic siege mentality? *Page 42 →*

Jonathan Wilson Eriksen a bright light but state of Denmark in question *Page 41 →*

The Tories are facing a much greater threat than Reform *Martin Kettle, page 3*

The pope is right: laughing at God is fine *Ravi Holy, page 4*

How the world got Ethiopia's leader all wrong *The long read, page 5*

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Opinion and ideas

ILLUSTRATION: BEN JENNINGS

Two seats, two leaders – and a symbol of our divided politics

Zoe Williams

It was four weeks before election day when I spoke to one member of the constituency Labour party in Holborn and St Pancras, in central London, as he was on his way out of the door to go canvassing in Barnet, several miles away in north London. This is not at all unusual: victory is assured in Keir Starmer's constituency, which has been continuously red since its creation in 1983. Next door, in Islington North, it was once a similar story. It has been Labour since 1937, with a couple of turbulent SDP years in the 80s; their canvassers have in the past been twinned with Stevenage, considered more useful there than in their own backyards.

Bookies are giving odds on Starmer's win in his constituency of 1/250 and 1/500, making him one of the safest bets in the general election. The result in Islington is less predictable, since Jeremy Corbyn is standing as an independent. His popularity as a local MP is well known. But, as Corbyn's communications guy, Oly Durose, tells me, there are the people on the doorstep who say: "I'll vote Jeremy, of course. I'll vote Labour." It's hard to say from this distance which of those loyalties will win out – the party or the man – once everyone is clear that they are at odds.

Almost every member of the constituency Labour party who spoke to me did so on condition of anonymity. Sometimes that was because what they're engaged in would see them expelled from the party (canvassing for Corbyn, for instance, when Labour's candidate is Praful Nargund); other times because they're embroiled in local rivalries and enmities of such epic history, spanning decades, that to break cover in the press would be an inelegant escalation.

In neither constituency is any party but Labour in serious contention, but in each there is an independent challenger from the left. That reflects the wider picture: this election has 459 independent candidates standing, about 10% of the overall number, and more than twice as many as in 2015. But the red-on-red battle varies from place to place, in its subjects and its symmetry.

Starmer is opposed by Andrew Feinstein, a 60-year-old film-maker and author who was an ANC activist in his native South Africa. An ally of Feinstein's says he is standing because Starmer is "simply invisible" locally. But Feinstein's issue is also Palestine. A "Gaza week" in Kentish Town at the start of June saw daily speeches and rallies, as well as counter-protesters holding Israeli flags. Four arrests were made on 6 June, with both sides claiming

✻
Guardian Newsroom: election results special
Join our columnists for a live event online at 7.30pm on 5 July

Two seats, two leaders – and a symbol of our divided politics

Zoe Williams

← Continued from front

it was their opponents who had caused the public order offences, and the police declining to be drawn. Labour's slow and diffident stance on Israel's war in Gaza has driven a wave of independent candidates, particularly in areas with high Muslim populations. For some Labour voters, the manifesto commitment to recognise the state of Palestine will alleviate the tension – but not for all.

For all the talk about Labour's antisemitism from rightwing politicians and the mainstream press, they show little understanding of what Palestine means in the party. The majority of Labour members support Palestinian rights, considering it fundamental that people can't be oppressed in broad daylight without that affecting human rights everywhere. Palestine has also traditionally been the conduit for discussing US imperialism, while Israel – sliding from the early leftwing ideals of the kibbutz to the current political dominance of the far right – came to represent a broader disappointment in the radical promise of bygone times.

Played out in constituency Labour party meetings, talking about Palestine and Israel was a coded struggle between the left and the right factions of the party. As an ally of Nargund says: "Basically, anyone that didn't buy into their views on Israel/Palestine and Stop the War was treated like dirt." (This ally has been in the Islington North party for years, but was never active when Corbyn was leader.)

These disputes made many Jewish members uncomfortable, but it's not that simple. Loads of not-Jewish, centre-right members also felt uncomfortable, and many members expelled for their pro-Palestinian views are Jewish. While Feinstein poses no immediate electoral threat to Starmer, this rift will not simply evaporate.

The bookies have Corbyn as odds-on favourite in Islington North – he's been the MP for 41 years. The name recognition alone, never mind the number of people he's helped in that time, can't be written off. His supporters' ground game is impressive – at least 1,000 people have signed up for canvassing sessions – so it's quite a mountain for Nargund, but he also has a significant activist army. Some are drawn from out of the area, it's true (the same goes for Corbyn), and some from within the constituency Labour party, just not part of its Corbyn-era in-crowd. Nargund also, naturally, has the support of the party's big names.

This is not just about whether Labour is radical enough, or about bread-and-butter issues such as the cost of living crisis and the NHS – which Corbyn's team say is the key dividing line between him and his opponent, who used to work in private healthcare. It's also about candidate selection and internal party democracy.

Islington North has been without a Labour candidate for two years, but one was suddenly rushed in without any membership involvement at all. Nargund's team explains this was to avoid a situation where the candidate selection was still going on after Corbyn had announced his candidacy.

There's always been a lot of grit in the relationship between Labour's central command and its members, and a hearty debate about whether a powerful membership is better or worse for the country as a whole (look what happens when Conservative party members get their way). While the "commonsense" view is that members of all parties are cranks and best ignored, that's quite consequential for democracy: it jettisons the only concrete and transparent mechanism a citizen has to participate in their representation.

You have to wonder, too, whose influence is taking precedence over that of party members: is there really a large body of "normal" people, whose "normal" political desires are easily legible? Are those desires best relayed to party elites by the media alone? Labour members, at least, are not ready to give in without a fight, and there is a new ferocity to the tension, as the election grinds like a juggernaut over fragile ententes.

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'Comment is free... but facts are sacred' CP Scott

Scottish National party

The call for independence has come to be a catch-all excuse for failure in office

The Scottish National party has been in government since 2007, but only in the past year has the weight of incumbency started to look like an unmanageable burden. At the party's election manifesto launch yesterday, John Swinney performed the role of a steady-handed veteran for which he was recruited just over a month ago. But voters have not forgotten the chaos that led to his appointment – the calamitous miscalculation that collapsed Humza Yousaf's coalition with the Scottish Greens and triggered his resignation after little more than a year as first minister.

Also not forgotten are the financial scandals that have tarnished the legacy of Nicola Sturgeon, Mr Yousaf's predecessor. The period when Ms Sturgeon rose above the political fray, and opposition barbs bounced off the SNP without sticking, feels long gone.

The party retains a reliable core of voters who are motivated by the demand for independence. But breaking up the union is not the most salient issue for most Scots. Many who voted yes in the 2014 referendum see the cost of living crisis and crumbling public services as issues to address ahead of separation from England. And even on that mission – the SNP's foundational purpose – progress has stalled.

Mr Swinney's manifesto advances the independence policy agreed at the SNP's conference last year. Winning a majority of Scottish Westminster seats would be treated as licence to begin negotiations with the UK government "to give democratic effect to Scotland becoming an independent country". The first minister rejects the corollary view that failure to reach that target should mean the demand be dropped. He retrospectively configures the result of the 2021 Scottish parliament elections as a pro-independence mandate to trump the plebiscite seven years earlier.

The second prong of the SNP strategy is an attack on Labour from the left. There is ammunition in Sir Keir Starmer's cautious prospectus, drafted with an eye on ex-Tory voters in England, not the mood in Scotland. Labour's silence on Brexit, and the shadowing of Conservative fiscal plans that dictate painful spending cuts in the next parliament, make it easy for Scottish Nationalists to overlay patterns of grim continuity on to likely regime change at Westminster.

But the SNP's proposed alternative links its radical constitutional and economic projects. The plan stirs UK-wide tax rises together with independence and rejoining the European single market. It heroically assumes no cost to Scotland from any Brexit-style rupture from the single market with England.

SNP candidates are cast as agents of defiance to be sent to protect the national interest in a repressive alien parliament. Problems in areas of Holyrood competence – policing, education, health, transport – are, by rhetorical pivot to the terms of devolution, made to sound like someone else's fault. By this device, Mr Swinney hopes to deflect blame for his party's failures in office.

This is a line that resonated when Downing Street was occupied by Boris Johnson and Liz Truss – prime ministers whom even Scottish Tories struggled to endorse. The prospect of the UK having a majority Labour government for the first time since 2010 changes the calculus. The SNP argument has worn thin from overuse. The demand for independence has been abused as a catch-all excuse for failure on other issues: 16 years is a long time – too long – for a ruling party to switch into opposition mode whenever there is a whiff of accountability in the air.

Economy

There are better ways to measure the health of the nation than GDP

"Great news this morning!" beamed Rishi Sunak yesterday. Not every release from the Office for National Statistics gets its own prime ministerial post on Instagram, but inflation falling to 2% was, the Tory leader claimed, a personal victory. When he moved into No 10, it was 11%, he reminded voters. "But we took bold action, we stuck to a clear plan and that's why the economy has turned a corner."

Not so fast, Mr Sunak. The prices of food and petrol remain about 25% higher than two years ago. More than one in five households say that they are struggling to pay their bills or to make ends meet. The cost of living crisis was always much bigger than a number on the consumer price index: it was a catch-all term, taking in everything from a punitive welfare system and poorly paid and insecure work to rising expenses. Millions of households were in a cost of living crisis long before it made the front pages; long after the term falls out of fashion, they will still be in one.

Much of modern politics runs like this: taking a big and complex issue and squeezing it down to fit into a single number that serves as a target. Perhaps the most glaring example is the fixation on GDP growth. Last month, just hours after the ONS announced that the UK's national income had grown 0.6% in the first quarter of the year, Mr Sunak proclaimed that "things are starting to feel better". Over this election campaign, Labour's Sir Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves have made much of how they will boost GDP growth.

This is an odd strategy, politically and economically. For one thing, surveys show that GDP means very little to most of the British public. In one study from 2020, respondents confused GDP with "the exchange rate (due to the similarity to GBP) and even general data protection regulation (due to the similarity to GDPR)". Rather than GDP, previous generations of politicians measured economic success by living standards or even industrial production. As the economic historian Jim Tomlinson observed in a recent essay, Liz Truss stands out for her focus on GDP growth. However great the disaster of Trussonomics, he writes, "both Conservatives and Labour accepted her view that growth should now be central to the political agenda".

Second, most of the benefits from economic growth have not been shared out. In their book When Nothing Works, the Foundational Economy collective of researchers show that of all the growth in take-home pay between 1999 and 2020, the 10% highest earners scooped 25%, while the bottom 10% got only 3%. This kind of disparity led to the Brexit heckle of "that's your bloody GDP, not ours". Finally, history shows that over the past 50 years, almost every government has overseen lower economic growth than its predecessor.

So GDP growth is something that the public doesn't understand, and enjoys little of. Far better would be for politicians and the media to look at a range of measures of economic health and social benefit. The UN publishes a human development index that looks at life expectancy and schooling as well as income. In Britain, such an index could take in healthy life expectancy and security of housing, as well as decent jobs. Living standards are more than one measure and more than one number. Our discussion should reflect that breadth.

Ed Davey plays frisbee on the campaign trail in Hampshire this week

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW MATTHEWS/PA

The Tories are facing a much greater threat than Reform

Martin Kettle

In this general election, the Conservatives are supposed to be fighting a campaign on three fronts. One is against Labour, a second is against Reform and the third is against the Liberal Democrats. The Conservatives' problem is partly that they are not fighting very well and partly that they are only fighting on two of the fronts, leaving the third unguarded.

If wartime analogies are your thing, you could say that the Conservatives have a Singapore problem. Before the second world war, the British empire armed Singapore to fight naval battles against Japan. Famously, most of Singapore's heavy artillery faced out to sea. But in 1942, the Japanese army overran Singapore from the rear, coming in from the Malayan mainland.

Today, the Tory high command and many supporters, especially in the media, look fixedly out to sea at the advance of Reform. As a result, they have all underestimated the threat from the Lib Dems at their rear. Even now, the Conservatives have not understood that Ed Davey is a far bigger danger to their majority than Nigel Farage.

True, David Cameron was dispatched to Devon to strengthen Tory defences there this week, even though polling finds Cameron is no longer the gamechanging asset some assume. The overall approach, however, has been wilfully blinkered. It is not as though the Conservatives have had no warning. During the 2019-24 parliament, they lost four byelections to the Lib Dems, all spectacularly, all in very safe seats. The damage inflicted by Reform is small by comparison.

The Lib Dem byelection wins came in some strikingly different parts of England - Chesham and Amersham in the London commuter belt, Tiverton and Honiton, along with Somerton and Frome, in the A30 corridor stretching to Land's End, and North Shropshire in the rural West Midlands. All of these seats are among the 60 or so targets around which Davey's consistently smart 2024 campaign is concentrated.

The biggest mistake that anyone could make is to dismiss these seats as a bunch of random places. They are not. Terms such as "middle England" or "middle Britain" are inexact, but they capture something emotionally meaningful about what these target electorates represent. They are not partisan places, but they have a belief in community, a conviction that the country could do better, including in their area, and they mostly have generous values. They have little in common with Reform. They are the middle-ground voters and government parties ignore them at their peril.

Talking to voters this month in the perfectly named village of Myddle, that impression was hard to miss. Myddle sits in the heart of the North Shropshire seat that the Conservatives had held for more than a century before Helen Morgan won it for the Lib Dems in late 2021. That was a pivotal moment in the Tory eclipse, a leading indicator that Boris Johnson's electoral allure was over. But holding on to North Shropshire on 4 July would be something else.

I suspect Morgan will do it, even though hers is the toughest of the four byelection gains to retain. Morgan is an exemplary local campaigner, and in Myddle an impressive number of people recognised her when she stopped by. By far their most common concern was the local NHS. Many had stories of long delays to recount. None of the 40 or so people I spoke to said they would vote Conservative. "It would be outrageous if she doesn't retain the seat," Michael, a Myddle resident, told me.

> **Most Lib Dem targets are on Labour's list of 211 'non-battleground' seats, clearing the way for extensive tactical voting**

It isn't hard to tell a Lib Dem target seat when you find yourself in one. But the exact number of targets is a jealously guarded secret. One official says she hasn't even shared it with her husband. Most, though, can be identified by looking at the 75 seats in which the party finished second in 2019 and had a vote share of 20% or more. But not all. The targets will also tend to be more rural, more middle-class and more remain-voting. But, again, these are not foolproof indicators.

Another key sign is that Labour is not fighting hard. Almost every Lib Dem target is on Labour's list of 211 "non-battleground" seats. The only three exceptions, it is said, are Cambridge, Wimbledon and Nick Clegg's former seat of Sheffield Hallam. For the rest, Labour and the Lib Dems are fighting in distinct spheres, leaving the field open for extensive tactical voting on 4 July, without any formal agreement.

As polling day nears, stand by for sheaves of advice about tactical voting. There has not been anything like this since 1997. Both parties, and maybe the Greens too, will benefit in some way. Five years ago, the Lib Dems took almost 12% of the national vote and won 11 seats. This year, with poll averages showing them with a lower national share, the Lib Dems are in line to win 38 seats, according to Ipsos this week, or 56 seats, according to Survation.

An outcome like this would not merely highlight the workings of the first-past-the-post electoral system; it would also say something profound about the kind of country that this still is - just about. It would say the claim that the real England or the real Britain finds its voice in the Conservative party as it currently exists, let alone in Reform, is dangerously untrue. As the most disruptive 10 years in political memory come to an end, it would say that Labour and the Lib Dems, between them, are the truer voice of middle Britain today.

The pope is right: laughing at God is fine

Ravi Holy

What subjects, if any, should be off limits for comedians? For Jimmy Carr, Ricky Gervais and particularly Dave Chappelle, the answer appears to be "nothing". But for the rest of us (because, while I'm hardly in their league, I am, for my sins, a comedian as well as a vicar) the golden rule is "punch up, not down". In other words, it's OK to mock the powerful but laughing at any minority group, as old-school comics such as Bernard Manning used to do, is a form of bullying.

By that logic, God, the most powerful being in the universe, is a legitimate target for humour. Pope Francis himself said as much last week. In an address to a gathering of comic luminaries, he said that laughing at God is not blasphemy. I wonder what he'd make of Jim Jefferies' "God is drunk at a party" routine? "I think it would be really great, if you could all sing songs about me."

Personally, I think it's brilliant but I suspect that many of my parishioners would be appalled by it; even the ones who like Life of Brian. Of course, that was famously denounced as blasphemous when it was released in the 70s, but the Pythons were always clear that their issues were with Christ's followers, not the man himself. As Terry Jones said, we've spent 2,000 years killing each other because we couldn't agree on what our leader said about peace and love.

I don't talk about the Spanish Inquisition in my set (nobody would expect that!) but I do poke fun at my own church, which most audiences seem to enjoy. The punters may never have met a bishop, but we've all had a boss who was both pompous and incompetent.

To be clear, I'm not referring to my current Mother in God, Rose Hudson-Wilkin, and, while she's never seen my act, I'm sure that she would approve of it. Particularly the parts in which I confront racism, homophobia and just the overwhelming middle-classness of the Church of England.

I'd like to think that Jesus would approve too; because "punching up" isn't just good comedy practice, it's a Christian value. Think of Mary's famous rallying cry in Luke's Gospel: "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly."

But surely laughing at God himself (or herself) is different? Obviously, I don't do that. Indeed, I can't say anything on stage that might constitute "behaviour unbecoming of a clerk in holy orders". Although I am quite proud of the fact that I manage to get in both satanism and hanging out with adult film actors in a way that hasn't generated any complaints – so far.

But I've seen other comics do material that would, undoubtedly, "offend the religious feelings of believers", which the pope urged his audience to try to avoid. I once had to follow someone whose big finish was acting out performing a sex act on Jesus. I didn't find that particularly funny because, unlike the Jefferies bit, her joke seemed designed simply to shock rather than to make any actual point. However, it was a gift to me: all I had to do was walk on wearing my clerical collar and a confused expression and the audience were in stitches before I'd even started.

So, what exactly does Francis have in mind when he says that laughing at God is OK? He likened it to "playing and joking with the people we love" and, as someone who tries my best to love God, it's reassuring to have that blessing from the highest ecclesiastical authority. But atheist comedians, such as the woman I mentioned above, hardly need permission to do what they've happily been doing for years anyway.

So, in her own, obscene way, Jesus-sex-act-lady was punching up and the sort of Christians who would be most offended by her act are unlikely ever to see it. They probably don't go to comedy clubs and, if she ever makes it to Live at the Apollo, she'd almost certainly have to cut that bit.

As to God's own feelings about all this: a central tenet of the Christian faith is that the son of God gave up the glory of heaven for a shameful death on a Roman cross. From which he unconditionally pardoned his executioners. So it seems that he's not that bothered about being laughed at, even in a spiteful way.

Meanwhile, I know from my own experience that God has a great sense of humour because it was he who inspired my stage name – Ravi Holy – and, thus, my signature joke that if I'd been a Pentecostal minister, as I nearly was, I would have been Pastor Ravioli.

* **Ravi Holy** *is the vicar of Wye in Kent, and a standup comedian*

From Nobel peace prize to civil war

When Abiy Ahmed took power in Ethiopia, he was feted as a great unifier. Two years later, violence was raging. How did the world get him so wrong?

Tom Gardner

Ethiopia's prime minister Abiy Ahmed in 2019

ASHRAF SHAZLY/ AFP VIA GETTY

'I'm sorry, I don't know anything about Abiy Ahmed." The message flashed up from someone I had been told to call Napoleon. It was the middle of 2023, six years after I had first arrived in Ethiopia, and one year after I had left, in the midst of a war which was tearing it apart. Ethiopia was lurching from crisis to crisis, and behind each of them loomed one figure larger than any other: the prime minister, Abiy Ahmed.

Napoleon was in the US. He had known Abiy when they had worked together as cyber-intelligence officers in the 2000s. A mutual contact had prepared him for my call, and assured me that he was ready and willing. Just one day earlier, Napoleon had told me himself, via text message, that he would share with me what he knew of the character of the man who, five years earlier, had won control of the Ethiopian state. Now, though, Napoleon was having second thoughts. When I tried to ring, he blocked my number.

The closer someone had been to Abiy, it seemed, the less likely they were to talk about him. Even those living far away in safe countries in the west were often too afraid to speak with me. Some would read my messages and

then block my number. A few would reply, promising to schedule an interview, only to disappear. Many would not answer my calls at all.

Over the six years I had been living and working in Ethiopia, I had tried to speak with as many people as possible who had known and worked with Abiy. Despite the appearance of openness that characterised his early days in power, almost everyone agreed he was an enigma. Later, as their lives, and those of all Ethiopians, were profoundly altered by the political decisions he made, many sought further explanations: who is Abiy, really, and what does he want?

When he came to power in 2018, Abiy was feted in the west as a liberal reformer would shepherd an Ethiopia bedevilled by factional politics and competing identities into a democratic future. As the first national leader in Ethiopia's modern history to identify as Oromo, the largest but historically underrepresented of the country's ethnic groups, Abiy was thought to be a unifier after years of fracture.

He was also hailed as a visionary peacemaker. In July 2018, Abiy struck a historic peace accord with Eritrea, Ethiopia's smaller neighbour which had seceded in 1993 and then - between 1998 and 2000 - fought a bloody border war that claimed as many as 100,000 lives. For his role in this, the new prime minister was awarded the Nobel peace prize in 2019. The Nobel committee's chair praised not only Abiy's peace deal with Eritrea, but also his domestic reform efforts, including the release of tens of thousands of prisoners and the return of once-banned opposition groups. Accepting the prize at a ceremony in Oslo, Abiy declared war "the epitome of hell for all involved. I know because I was there."

But the world got Abiy wrong.

Little more than a year later, one of the worst wars of the 21st century erupted in Tigray, Ethiopia's northernmost region. For much of the preceding three decades, Tigray's authoritarian ruling party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), had held pre-eminent power in a national coalition government. Abiy, too, had been part of the coalition - but over time had grown resentful of his Tigrayan superiors (the Tigrayan ethnic group comprises just 6% of the population of Ethiopia). The war, which ended in late 2022, would be fought over conflicting ideas of Ethiopia but also over the raw matter of power. Abiy was not solely responsible for this catastrophic conflict - which some have described as a genocide - but he was arguably more to blame than anybody else. He may go down as the most controversial recipient of the Nobel peace prize since Henry Kissinger.

Yet Abiy is no conventional authoritarian demagogue either. He came to power with a certain vision of the country he wanted to see, though that isn't to say he had a clear policy programme or a rigid ideological agenda for achieving it. He could be deceptive and dishonest, allowing different constituencies to believe whatever they wanted about him, however contradictory. He conflated his own fate with that of the nation, believing himself to be indispensable. He deployed rhetoric that was often hateful, xenophobic and violent. But his mission in government wasn't only amassing power and enriching himself. It was also about remaking Ethiopia in his own image.

Fortunately for Abiy, there were powerful states that were all too happy to enable him. One of the first was the US. Another was the United Arab Emirates, whose ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan wanted - and still wants - to expand the UAE's regional influence throughout the Horn of Africa and the broader Red Sea region. So after he took power, Abiy was lavished with investment, diplomatic backing - and, most importantly, arms.

It can be easy to forget, looking back, the power of the spell Abiy briefly cast over Ethiopia and its western allies. For a few heady months in 2018, his ascendance seemed to many as though it were divinely ordained, the nation's collective deliverance from years of sacrifice and suffering. Over the previous four years, the multiethnic Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition government, in which Abiy had been a senior official, had been waging a brutal crackdown on the young demonstrators defying its autocratic rule. Now, in his swearing-in speech in April 2018, Abiy asked, in a gesture without any precedent, for "forgiveness from the bottom of my heart". He called for national unity and for talks with the opposition, urging for bridges to be built even with Eritrea, Ethiopia's mortal foe since 1998. "For us, building democracy is today an existential matter," he intoned, "more than it is to any other country."

Ethiopians all over the country clapped and cheered before their television screens. In a juice bar in Adama, a city in Oromia, Abiy's home region, a middle-aged woman and her family watched the event underneath the large poster of the new prime minister she had pinned to the wall. "There is nobody on Earth as happy as me," she said. Far away in the distant south, people celebrated by slaughtering camels, cows and goats.

All around the world, Ethiopian diaspora sang and danced into the night. A blanket amnesty was issued for all the many dissidents and opposition members who had fled the country since the EPRDF took power in 1991. The names of rebel groups were struck off the terrorist list, while the steady release of political prisoners was accelerated. The co-founder of the Ginbot 7, an armed opposition group hosted and supported by Eritrea, had been sentenced to death; now the sentence was dropped. The once-banned colours, symbols and flags of opposition movements blossomed everywhere.

Rhetorically, at least, reconciliation and forgiveness were the order of the day. Ethiopia's Orthodox church had been split between those loyal to a synod-in-exile - led by its former patriarch from Amhara, the second most populous and historically most powerful ethnic group - and those allied to the Tigrayan patriarch installed in the capital, Addis Ababa. Abiy swiftly set about bridging the divide, a feat of mediation which won him the Church's special recognition. Likewise, he helped to reunite the country's two main Muslim factions. A devout Pentecostal Christian, fired by a belief in his own providential mission, Abiy seemed to be promoting religious unity as a tool for consolidating his authority. And it made sense. In a country as devout as Ethiopia, there were few more powerful resources than faith for an ambitious politician to draw on.

Former officials from the previous regime, a ferociously repressive Marxist junta called the Derg, which had ruled Ethiopia from the fall of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974 until 1991, were welcomed back. To the dismay of many Ethiopians old enough to remember the days of the Red Terror, in which tens of thousands had been murdered, mutilated and tortured in the name of class revolution, some were granted an audience with the prime minister. Nonetheless,

GUARDIAN GRAPHICS

Pentecostal churches across the land declared that Abiy had been sent by God. So too did senior government officials: Gedion Timothewos, a widely respected constitutional lawyer who would later become Abiy's justice minister, personally told me so.

The rest of the world was catching Abiymania too. In August 2018, the prime minister embarked on a tour of the Ethiopian diaspora in the US, visiting Washington, Los Angeles and Minneapolis in the hope of persuading some of them to return to Ethiopia and invest there. Wherever Abiy went he was welcomed with wild enthusiasm. A crowd of 20,000 people filled the Walter E Washington Convention Center, which was bedecked in red, yellow and green, the colours of the Ethiopian flag. "It was euphoric," recalled Tewodros Tsegaye, a Tigrayan journalist in Washington. "The intellectuals who were meant to analyse and ask him questions there were not using their brains. They just were saying: 'Hail Abiy.'"

Not everyone was so happy. In fact, some of the first signs of real tension were evident in Abiy's interactions with the diaspora he encountered in the US, and in particular among the Tigrayans - but also among Oromos, the prime minister's own, now ascendant, ethnic group. "He was not interested in serious deliberation," recalled Jawar Mohammed, the prime minister's most prominent rival in Oromia, who met with him privately for the first time after a rally in Minneapolis. The influential Oromo activist had laid out a set of concerns with the trajectory of the transition to democracy which Abiy claimed to have launched, including its apparent lack of a clear road map for elections. Abiy had simply brushed them away. "He just wanted us to move on," Jawar later wrote.

Nowhere was the collective entrancement more striking than in western embassies and capitals. Prime minister Abiy's liberal democratic rhetoric; his admission that the EPRDF's violence could be likened to terrorism; his appointment of a gender-equal cabinet and a respected elder stateswoman, Sahle-Work Zewde, as president; his apparent pragmatism - all played marvellously with western audiences. "It was like they were meeting a rockstar," said a British aid official recalling the occasions when government ministers would visit Ethiopia. "The joke among the diplomats was: 'I hope my minister doesn't ask him for an autograph.'"

Michael Raynor, then the US's wide-eyed ambassador, stood out as the most unabashed cheerleader among the western diplomatic corps. He told colleagues that Abiy was the "real deal" while pointedly refusing to engage with the prime minister's political rivals. One of Raynor's senior embassy colleagues told me at the time that the new Ethiopian leadership consisted of "individuals who have service as the driving force in their work and lives". Raynor later told a European counterpart in Addis Ababa that Abiy was the "most pro-west leader we're going to get".

Quite what the breezy assessments were based on, given how little western diplomats actually knew about either Abiy or his colleagues, was never clear. But in the absence of firm direction from Washington during the Trump years - the then national security adviser, John Bolton, told me he doubted the president had even read his own administration's Africa strategy - the embassy in Addis Ababa was given a free hand to cultivate Abiy as it saw fit. In its internal strategy document of 2018, the embassy cheered Abiy's "strongly western orientation" and argued that his administration represented a "once-in-a-generation opportunity to advance US interests in the region".

In practice, "US interests" amounted to little more than pulling Ethiopia out of China's orbit. By assuring Washington that Abiy could be an essential African ally against Beijing, and with Abiy having signalled privately to the Americans that he regarded the Chinese Communist party as "godless", Raynor was able to shepherd a flood of development funding in the prime minister's direction. Between 2018 and 2023, America ploughed more than $4.1bn in aid into Ethiopia, including more than $600m to support democratic and economic reforms. The embassy drew

up plans to embed advisers in Ethiopian government ministries.

The international media was often just as uncritical. It didn't seem to matter that the prime minister assiduously avoided media scrutiny, refusing – with just one exception – to give press conferences, and almost never granting interviews. After little more than a year in office, the prime minister was anointed one of Time's 100 Most Influential People and Foreign Policy's 100 Global Thinkers. In 2019, the Financial Times splashed Abiy on the cover under the headline "Africa's new talisman".

Abiy painted himself as a westerner at odds with the more China-friendly, market-sceptical TPLF, which had previously dominated the government. In a star turn at the World Economic Forum in Davos, he informed his audience that it was not possible to sustain economic growth without democracy. With a flash of his winning smile, Abiy boasted that Ethiopia was now one of the few countries in Africa not to imprison reporters. The audience broke into rapturous applause.

He could be extraordinarily charming. When high-profile foreign visitors arrived in Addis Ababa, the prime minister would often meet them at the airport in his own 4x4, taking the steering wheel himself and driving them through the city for a guided tour of the palace and its surroundings. Among those given the red-carpet treatment by Abiy in this way was David Beasley, a former Republican governor of South Carolina, who was then chief of the UN's World Food Programme. The two had known each other for about a decade through the National Prayer Breakfast, an influential networking event in Washington run by the Fellowship Foundation, a Christian outfit known for its promotion of anti-LGBTQ+ activism both in Congress and in Africa.

Another admirer was former British prime minister Tony Blair, whose non-profit organisation, the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, would be closely involved in steering some of the government's

Nowhere was the entrancement more striking than in western embassies and capitals. 'It was like they were meeting a rockstar'

Abiy with the Nobel peace prize committee in Oslo in 2019

TORE MEEK/NTB SCANPIX/AFP VIA GETTY

liberalising reforms. "This is a remarkable leader," Blair told an audience in Addis Ababa in 2018. "He has the energy. He has the commitment. He has a real sense of purpose. He's got a good mind, but most important of all he's got a good heart … If the future of Ethiopia is in your hands, sir, I'm confident about its future."

Abiy himself appears to have been genuinely enamoured with the west, and in particular the US. Jon Lee Anderson, a reporter for the New Yorker who was one of only two foreign journalists to be granted a proper interview with the prime minister in these years, would later be struck by how Abiy became most animated when talking about the US and the time he had spent there, on and off, in the early 2010s, when his wife and children had moved to Denver. Abiy was, he told Anderson, a "Bay Area kind of guy", and Americans, he insisted, "the most generous people in the world".

The economic agenda that Abiy announced shortly after taking office proposed that the government would open state-owned telecoms, electricity and logistics, as well as the highly profitable national airline, to foreign investors for the first time. It would also allow for the full or partial privatisation of railways, ailing sugar factories, industrial parks, hotels and some manufacturing firms. Ethiopia's application to the World Trade Organization, long stalled, was to be revived. Plans to establish Ethiopia's first stock exchange were also to be sped up. The Ethiopian birr was to be aggressively devalued and, eventually, floated. Abiy now likened both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to a "mother" because of their generous lending terms, and called on them to guide his government's Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda – so named to counter allegations that it had been written to appease international financial institutions and investors.

The TPLF, led by erstwhile revolutionary Marxists, criticised these plans as "temporary solutions" that would not solve Ethiopia's problems. Western investors and many donors, by contrast, were thrilled. Abiy, it was clear, viewed free-market capitalism as an aspirational endeavour, perhaps even a moral one. "My model is capitalism," he proudly told the Financial Times in 2019. "We need the private sector."

Perhaps more than any other single event, it was the peace deal Abiy struck with Eritrea's tyrannical president, Isaias Afewerki, that set Ethiopia on the path to civil war. This deal was among the elements of Abiy's early success most energetically promoted by the US.

In 2017, Donald Yamamoto, then America's top diplomat on Africa and a former ambassador and chargé d'affaires in Ethiopia and Eritrea, had been given free rein by the Trump administration to explore a settlement that might bring both Ethiopia and Eritrea away from China and back inside the US orbit. Liberal squeamishness about engaging with a serial human-rights abuser like Afewerki – who runs Eritrea, according to the UN and human rights groups, like a slave state – became a matter of less and less concern.

Yamamoto visited Abiy in Addis Ababa shortly after the new prime minister was appointed in April 2018. "Abiy was looking for an angle to define who he was going to be as prime minister," the diplomat recalled in an interview after he had left government. "So he said to me and Ambassador Raynor: 'What do you want me to do? What does America want me to do?' And I replied: 'Well, what we want you to do is bring a conclusion to the Ethiopia-Eritrea dispute after 20 years.' … So that was what we wanted to get out of it – and he did it. He took it. He took the ball."

Yet given what transpired later, it now seems that what Abiy sought by making peace with Eritrea was not simply a peace agreement, or brotherly relations between two exceptionally interwoven societies, but rather – in Afewerki – a political ally: someone to support him in any future confrontation with the TPLF. After all, there was nobody more vehemently opposed to the Tigrayan old guard than the Eritrean president. The TPLF, Afewerki had declared in June 2018, were "vultures" whose final demise was imminent. Replying via a TV broadcast not long after this, Abiy had ignored the thinly veiled threat, gliding smoothly over the invective against his coalition colleagues as though nothing were awry. A political alliance, not just a diplomatic entente, had been formed. In Tigray, just across the border, alarm bells had begun to ring.

By 2019, even before Abiy won the Nobel prize, it had become clear to anyone paying attention that the peace deal Abiy had struck with Afewerki should be viewed with scepticism. What the deal really demonstrated were the limits of a peace-building process that prioritised speed over deliberation and the goodwill of individual leaders over public consultation. No written agreement ever appeared before Ethiopia's parliament for ratification. For a while there was little sign that either side had thought about the trickier aspects of the rapprochement: trade and tariff regimes, currency conversion or even physical demarcation of the border. If there was ever a concrete agreement for Ethiopia to regain tax-free access to Eritrea's ports, it was never shared with the public.

Yet few concerns were raised by the western governments that hailed the new deal as a breakthrough. The absence of

An abandoned tank in the Tigray region in 2020

EDUARDO SOTERAS/ AFP VIA GETTY

anyone senior from the TPLF accompanying Abiy on his trips to the Eritrean capital Asmara – a telling oversight given Tigray's centrality, both politically and geographically, to the original conflict – was never mentioned. The TPLF's own objections to the peace deal were also brushed aside. Though the TPLF had formally welcomed Abiy's announcement in June 2018, a trenchant statement later issued by the party alleged the process had "fundamental flaws". But foreign diplomats, for their part, typically waved away Tigrayan worries as the work of recalcitrant "spoilers".

For a short while, it seemed as though everyone outside the TPLF might be happy to overlook the flaws in Abiy's approach to diplomacy – not least his faith in the power of his own charisma to heal rifts – and simply embrace the new order. After all, when it came to the peace agreement, many ordinary Tigrayans had initially sounded elated, too. "I never dreamed this would happen," said a Tigrayan friend whose Eritrean father was deported during the border war, and who was later reunited with a long-lost sister. "It's like divine intervention."

That feeling would not last long.

For most Ethiopians, Abiymania came to seem like a holiday romance turned sour. For many others, though, it had always been a lie. In Ethiopia's south, mass violence – much of it ethnic – had exploded within days of Abiy taking power. With the new prime minister quickly pursuing a unilateral political agenda of his own, the Ethiopian state quickly weakened.

Uncertainty at the centre encouraged local actors elsewhere to settle old territorial disputes. In the weeks that followed Abiy's ascent, such disputes led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands in southern Oromia – comparable figures to those in Myanmar's Rohingya crisis a year earlier, which had attracted a global outcry and an investigation by the international criminal court (ICC).

This was social upheaval on a momentous scale. But outsiders largely ignored it because it was inconvenient: a fly in the ointment of Abiymania and a wrinkle in the otherwise uplifting tale of democratic progress that the prime minister and his allies were anxious to promote.

By the end of 2018, nearly 3 million Ethiopians had been forced from their homes by conflict. Far too many officials, local and foreign, preferred the illusion that these were isolated incidents to be expected

For many Ethiopians, Abiymania came to seem like a holiday romance turned sour. For others, it had always been a lie

of any transition to democracy. In fact, they became normalised – and continue to this day.

It was in Abiy's home region of Oromia that the threat of state collapse was most acute. Soon after he had returned to Ethiopia in August 2018, Jawar – one of Abiy's most potent opponents – had told local media that the country now effectively had "two governments": one led by Abiy, the other by the Oromo youth movement, known as the Qeerroo, for which Jawar was the figurehead.

In parts of western Oromia there were groups that now called themselves Qeerroo Police and had taken over responsibility for local security; in some places they manned roadblocks and exhorted "taxes" from local businesses and passersby. In the eastern city of Harar, residents went without drinking water for nearly a month after Qeerroos in the surrounding hinterland shut the supply down and demanded a ransom of 10m birr (about $350,000). "Anarchy and state collapse are within the realm of possibility," fretted one federal official at the time. The US's deputy ambassador later put it more bluntly: "It was chaos."

But few outsiders paid heed to what that chaos portended. As security deteriorated, few journalists, local or foreign, ever made it to more remote areas. Western diplomats, anxious to save face, were reluctant to admit the dark side of the "democratic transition" they had so enthusiastically cheered.

Between 2018 and 2020, Abiy moved to limit the power of the TPLF – the best organised and most equipped obstacle to his political project – in the country's federal government, economy and security apparatus. Tensions between his government and Tigrayans rapidly mounted. Thinly veiled hate speech, much of it targeting Tigrayans, spread. Again, though, warning signs were downplayed.

"It was obvious [that he was against] not only the TPLF but also the Tigrayan people," said a former interim prime minister, Tamrat Layne, who met with Abiy shortly after he took office. "I was trying to advise him from the beginning to handle the TPLF situation in a wise way, not to use force of arms … but he was always telling me: 'They are nothing', 'They don't have a place in Ethiopia', things like that … It was like a revenge thing."

By 2020, even senior allies had urged him to reconcile with the TPLF in order to head off a violent conflict. But Abiy doubled down. The TPLF, and by extension Tigrayans, were increasingly singled out as the sole source of Ethiopia's ills. Abiy's government openly accused the Tigrayan ruling party of waging a campaign of violent national sabotage. Even power cuts or water shortages were now laid at the Tigrayans' door.

Over the border in Eritrea, Afewerki was preparing for war: reorganising the Eritrean Defence Forces, stocking up on arms from Russia, digging trenches and stepping up conscription. Eritrean media ramped up anti-TPLF propaganda, accusing it of agitating against Abiy's peace agreement. Authorities warned repeatedly that the TPLF planned to invade Eritrea and repeat the horrors of the 1998-2000 war.

Ethiopian soldiers started deploying on the Eritrean side of the border. Abiy ratcheted up the economic pressure on Tigray, turning what had for many months already been a loose blockade of the region into a fast-tightening chokehold. Ostensibly to fight corruption, but really to strangle the TPLF's finances, the federal government had introduced new currency notes in September 2020, forcing everyone to hand their old money into the banks. Now it went even further, halting budget payments to Tigray entirely – a move decried by the TPLF as a "declaration of war" – and suspending welfare payments to farmers there. Support for the region's efforts to fight the locusts then decimating Tigrayan agriculture was slashed.

Civil war erupted on 3 November 2020. Over the following days, the first glimpses of its horrors began to emerge: refugees streaming into Sudan, columns of militiamen brandishing rusty Kalashnikovs, wobbly videos of corpses under plastic shrouds. "This is about to get very fucked," a shaken foreign researcher texted me as word of the first massacres reached us. Later, the fighting would spread to other regions, and almost reached the capital, Addis Ababa. By the time the rest of the world had awoken to the disaster unfolding, it was too late.

After two years and at least 600,000 deaths, mass rape and ethnic cleansing, Ethiopia's Tigray war came to an end, but the peace is extremely fragile. Conflict has created widespread famine and catastrophic economic damage. In Amhara and Oromia, the two largest regions, rebellions against Abiy's government are still raging – and the response of his security forces is often no less brutal. Yet the US and the EU are seeking to gradually bring him in from the cold. Last year, the Biden administration determined that the Ethiopian government is no longer engaging in a "pattern of gross violations of human rights". Western and African officials alike act as if Ethiopia were a problem solved. But it is far from it.

Ethiopia's messianic prime minister sought to transcend his country's difficult history – to wipe away the complexities of identity, ideology and nation-building in a single stroke and build afresh. But instead he has been consumed by it. Under his highly idiosyncratic and personalised style of rule, Abiy has heightened what sociologists might call the Ethiopian state's "structural contradictions" to the point of collapse. As the country's disrupter-in-chief, who took a sledgehammer to an already delicate set of political arrangements, Abiy is the prime catalyst for the country's spectacular unravelling. ●

✻ **Tom Gardner** *is the Economist's Africa correspondent based in Nairobi*

This is an edited extract from The Abiy Project: God, Power and War in the New Ethiopia, published by Hurst and available at guardianbookshop.com

Established 1906

Country diary

Shipley, West Yorkshire

The cricket field has been freshly mown and marked, but it doesn't feel like summer. It feels like late March or early April, those cool just-spring days of greentops and low bounce. There are no cricketers out there now – just birds, turning over the cuttings in search of breakfast. Starlings at midwicket, crows at slip. A magpie on the long-leg boundary. A song thrush works for a worm on the cut strip, just short of a length.

Across the lane from the cricket field, there's a community nature reserve and a shallow pond fringed with short reeds. The mood here is sullen. Adolescent tadpoles, each a heavy-bodied Cooper Black comma, sulk on the silt bed. The pond skaters move stiffly among the lily pads. A newt treads water in a lily shadow – and then there's a sudden surge of motion, and a freshwater leech comes swimming across a shaft of daylight.

It's khaki green – so empty of blood, for now – and a good two or three inches in length. It ripples its long, flat body in a sort of swimming shudder to propel itself through the water. Leeches are wolfish predators. I think this one's a duck leech, *Protoclepsis tesselata*, and a pretty big one at that. They like to anchor themselves inside the throats of ducks and other waterbirds to feed. No ducks here today, though – only a wren yelling in a flowering elder, and the grey reflections of wood pigeons passing overhead.

Weeds are enjoying the weather. Forests of groundsel and wild camomile have risen from the angles of walls and pavements. Wild camomile, a long-naturalised immigrant from the US, is also known as pineappleweed. I squidge a flower between my fingers to remind myself why (much as when we come across the whiff of fresh coconut among gorse bushes, the pineapple zing of a wild camomile flower is like a microdose of sunshine). Before I move on, I relocate an idling snail from the pavement to the grass verge. I stepped on one on our back steps yesterday. A small repayment.
Richard Smyth

ILLUSTRATION: CLIFFORD HARPER

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Level the playing field? Schools have none left

There's a significant detail missing from your account of the inequality in school green space ('Staggering inequality' in schools' green space, 17 June). Starting with Margaret Thatcher's government, local education authorities were encouraged to sell their playing fields for development. Others built on their own land as they expanded. Between 1979 and 1997, 10,000 playing fields were sold off. Many schools used to have swimming pools; now pupils have to be taken to privately run leisure centres. Labour slowed but did not stop the sales, then they resumed with the coalition government. ITV reported that Michael Gove intervened in 2012 to overturn advice to halt the sales.

Winchester College, whose rowers you show on the River Itchen, has slowly removed public access to its lands in the 40 years that we've lived here. Bridges have been allowed to decay and not been replaced, footpaths have been allowed to erode and not been repaired, while land has been fenced and walkers corralled on to narrow strips alongside playing fields. Fields where our children once skated on ice when the river flooded are now inaccessible. A few years ago, my husband's old school, Bradfield College, was fundraising for a golf course for the pupils – charitable donations being tax deductible, of course. You can imagine where that appeal went.
Judith Martin
Winchester

● The inequality in green space for private and state school pupils is not just staggering but grotesque. As a state school headteacher, I am seething about it after a visit to Rishi Sunak's alma mater, Winchester College, a couple of weeks ago. I calculated that students there have three times as many teachers per pupil as my students, eight times the amount spent on their education, and 36 times as much space. And that's not to mention the truly lavish facilities and the glorious setting.

I work as an adviser for one secondary school with no green space at all around the school buildings – just a sports field that can only accessed by walking through a busy traffic system. There are plenty of state schools worse off than mine. The idea that there is any sort of level playing field in educational opportunities is laughable – and the fact that so much of public school land was granted originally to create opportunities for poor children makes this inequality obscene.
Name and address supplied

"The fact that so much of public school land was granted originally to create opportunities for poor children makes this inequality obscene

● Some private schools have maintained that they allow local state schools and communities to share their facilities. During the Covid period in 2020-21, I used to go running near a well-known private school in London and was surprised that the school felt it necessary to hire security guards to keep local residents off its vast playing fields. This is in an area where many people do not have access to gardens and there are few public parks.

What great PR it would have been for the school to have been more generous in sharing its green spaces during that period in particular.
Sophia Crowther
Coulsdon, London

● Bedford school has a £6m theatre and a £3m music school? The disparity in arts facilities in private schools compared with those in state schools is at least as shocking as that in the provision of playing fields, and much more damaging to the nation as a whole.
Anna Hodson
Todmorden, West Yorkshire

Time to celebrate England's Black footballers

The Three Lions team that we will all cheer on this week in the Euros is a symbol of England that we can all be proud of, embodying the multi-ethnic society we share today.

This Saturday marks Windrush Day, the anniversary of the 1948 ship bringing new arrivals from the Caribbean that has come to symbolise postwar migration to Britain. The legacy of the Windrush is evident in our football team as it is in our society: from Cyrille Regis, John Barnes and Rio Ferdinand to Jude Bellingham and Bukayo Saka today.

Football can unite us in support for our team and hope that we bring the trophy back this summer from Germany – before the UK and Ireland host the next Euros in 2028. That year also marks 50 years since Viv Anderson became England's first Black full international player and 30 years since Hope Powell became the Lionesses' first Black manager – as well as 80 years since the Windrush arrived in Britain.

It is a moment that we should mark in a major way, celebrating the Black contribution to English football and using the game's unique power to bring people of all backgrounds together.
Alford Gardner *Windrush passenger,* **Viv Anderson** *First Black full international England player,* **Brendon Batson** *One of West Bromwich Albion's legendary "Three Degrees",* **Patrick Vernon** *Convener, Windrush 100 Network,* **Sunder Katwala** *Director, British Future,* **Stan Horne** *First Black player at Manchester City,* **Clyde Best** *Player at West Ham,* **Mark Chamberlain** *Player, England, Port Vale, Stoke and Portsmouth* **and 18 others**

Labour is offering a credible economic plan

Britain has suffered a long period of economic stagnation over the last 14 years, with low growth in productivity, real wages and living standards. Not only is this record poor by historical standards, but the UK has also underperformed compared with its international peers. We invest too little and too inefficiently – especially in skills, infrastructure and innovation.

A key problem relates to the many policy mistakes, reversals and leadership churn – these have helped create huge investment-sapping uncertainty. Second, structural reforms are needed to boost national infrastructure and housing, especially around the planning system. Third, we need to improve our relationship with the European Union, our closest trading partners. Finally, the transition to net zero, and sustainable growth, needs a new urgency. Change is desperately needed.

Contrary to what the government has been saying, we believe that Labour provides a credible economic alternative across all these dimensions, and that Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves offer a combination of stability and an ambitious set of reforms to help grow the economy.
Prof Philippe Aghion, Charles Bean, David Blanchflower, Angus Deaton, Richard Layard, Prof Mariana Mazzucato, Christopher Pissarides, Prof Richard Portes, Prof Danny Quah, Dani Rodrik, Prof David Soskice, Anna Valero, John Van Reenen, Joe Stiglitz, Simon Wren-Lewis and Tony Yates

Corrections and clarifications

● **An article said that 557 people "described themselves as fluent Cornish speakers" in "the most recent UK census". In fact this census, which covered England and Wales only, said that 563 people had described Cornish as their main language (Psych-pop and lockdowns breathe life into previously 'extinct' Cornish language, 17 June, p3). And, to clarify, in 2014 the UK government formally recognised the Cornish people, not language, as a national minority.**

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Imagine there's no Nigel, easy if you try

The Reform UK Party Limited, with Nigel Farage as its leader, has produced five core pledges, all of which start with the word "imagine". I much prefer John Lennon's exhortations to imagine people living for today, living life in peace and sharing all the world. You may say Lennon was a dreamer, but he wasn't the only one.
Toby Wood
Peterborough

● Having been named after Jude, the patron saint of hopeless causes, and endured Hey Jude being sung to me when I introduce myself, I had hoped that Bellingham might change this. Having heard him being serenaded, I fear that this is a lost cause (Bellingham gets England off to a winning start, 17 June).
Jude Carr
London

● It's not just Tayor Swift (Letters, 13 June). As an elderly second-wave feminist (OK, I'm not sure my daughter's forgiven me for the boiler suits and kaftans), I'm asking *why* do these very talented poets and musicians feel obliged to leap about in glittery swimsuits and the occasional pair of thigh-high boots?
Cat Bracey
Bristol

● There is no such butterfly as a "cabbage white" (Report, 12 June). This is a loose term for two white butterflies – the large white and the small white – both of which may eat your cabbages, although there are other white butterflies that won't.
Liz Lloyd
Malvern, Worcestershire

● Your editorial (13 June) says "water privatisation" is a failed experiment. The extraneous word "water" seems to have crept in.
John Symonds
Ryde, Isle of Wight

Jerry West

Star basketball player for the Los Angeles Lakers who later went on to become a team manager

Jerry West, who has died aged 86, was a unique force in basketball for the better part of seven decades. A star for the Los Angeles Lakers for 14 years, not only is West still considered one of the top handful of players in National Basketball Association history, but in his second career in management he built two separate dynastic Laker teams, turned around the struggling Memphis Grizzlies, and as a consultant played a part in the run of success of the Golden State Warriors.

As if that were not enough, West was also the model for the NBA's logo, a silhouette of him dribbling the ball in his left hand, which led to his nickname The Logo.

Great players often need more than one nickname to fully define them; the Los Angeles announcer Chick Hearn dubbed West Mr Clutch, after his penchant for making game-winning shots. Yet West's talent was often diminished by his teams' inability to clear the final hurdle. His most famous shot, a 60-footer that tied the New York Knicks at the buzzer in the 1970 NBA finals and sent the game into overtime, still wound up a Laker loss.

And no player took losing more intensely. "He never learned to lose," wrote Jeff Coplon, in a profile titled The Man Who Loves Basketball Too Much, published in Men's Journal in 1996. He was often regarded as a volatile man, frustrated by imperfection.

West came by this obsession the hard way. He grew up poor in the West Virginia coal country, born in Cheylan, where his father, Howard, was a mine electrician and a machine operator. His mother, Cecile Sue (nee Creasy), worked in a shop. Jerry was a shy and sickly child and was kept from sports, so he began shooting basketballs alone at a hoop on the side of a neighbour's barn. In 1951 his brother David was killed in the Korean war, and for Jerry basketball became an obsession.

West of the Los Angeles Lakers, centre, passing the ball to Wilt Chamberlain during a game against the New York Knicks at Madison Square Garden, 1970
AP

After failing in his first try to make his high school's basketball team, a growth spurt to 6ft led to him starting the next year, and he became a star in his third season, taking East Bank high school to the state championship; every year thereafter, until the school closed in 1999, on the anniversary of that game, East Bank was renamed West Bank for a day. In his first year at the University of West Virginia the team won 26 games, and lost two; in his second they lost the national championship to the University of California 71-70, although West was chosen the tournament's "most valuable player" (MVP).

The next year, ranked second in the nation, they were upset in the tournament by New York University. In the 1960 NBA draft, West was selected second overall by the Lakers, after Cincinnati's Oscar Robertson. That summer the California coach Pete Newell chose both players as the core of the US Olympic team; in Rome, West and Robertson led them to eight wins, and the gold medal.

West joined the Lakers for the 1960-61 season. His teammate Elgin Baylor heard his southern accent and dubbed him Tweety Bird, but the name that stuck was the hillbilly-sounding "Zeke, from Cabin Creek", Cabin Creek being just down the road from Cheylan.

"West had an innate sense of the sport. 'It's a game of quickness ... and how your mind is wired'

With Baylor's ability to play above the basket, and West's shooting, the pair were dubbed "Mr Inside and Mr Outside" in homage to the army football greats Doc Blanchard and Glenn Davis. West, now listed at 6ft 3in, but in fact almost two inches taller, with long arms and fine jumping ability, could score, pass, rebound and defend. But he had an innate sense of the sport. "It's a game of quickness," he said, "and how your mind is wired." And he was tough; his nose was broken 14 times.

He and Baylor made LA the best team in the NBA's west. But they could not beat Bill Russell's Boston Celtics, falling to them six times in the championship finals. In 1969, limping from an injured hamstring, West scored 42 points in the deciding game, and repeated his college feat of being named MVP from a losing team, the only one in NBA history. Russell once said his greatest wish was to "see Jerry happy". In 1970 the Lakers added Wilt Chamberlain as centre, and after losing to the Knicks, came back to finally win a championship in 1972, with a team that won a record 33 straight games.

West retired two years later. He transferred his obsessiveness to golf; at one point shooting a course-record of 28 on the front nine at Bel-Air Club in LA, but finishing the round with a 65. In 1976, the Lakers coaxed him back as coach. He improved the team to the league's best record in his first season, but he bristled at the selfishness and sloppiness of the players and after three seasons moved to scouting.

He took over as Lakers' general manager in 1982, winning four titles with the "Showtime" team led by Magic Johnson, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and James Worthy. Then he built a second dynasty around Kobe Bryant and Shaquille O'Neal. Only Boston's Red Auerbach had managed to build successive dynasties; no former star player ever had. But a rift with the coach Phil Jackson led to West's departure for Memphis in 2000.

He retired in 2007, and in 2011 published an autobiography: West by West: My Charmed, Tormented Life (with Jonathan Coleman). That year he joined the Warriors' executive board, and titles followed in 2015 and 2017. He publicly offered to return to the Lakers, who were rebuilding their management; instead he went to the Los Angeles Clippers.

West's first marriage, to his college sweetheart Martha Jane Kane, ended in divorce. He is survived by his second wife, Karen Bua, whom he married in 1978, and their two sons, Ryan and Johnnie, and by three sons, David, Mark and Michael, from his first marriage.
Michael Carlson

Jerry Alan West, basketball player and executive, born 28 May 1938; died 12 June 2024

obituaries@theguardian.com
@guardianobits

David Attwood

Television director hailed for his powerful 1998 Bosnian war drama Shot Through the Heart

Some of the most remarkable television dramas directed by David Attwood, who has died aged 71 after suffering from Alzheimer's disease, observed ordinary people in extraordinary situations, dealing with what life has dealt them.

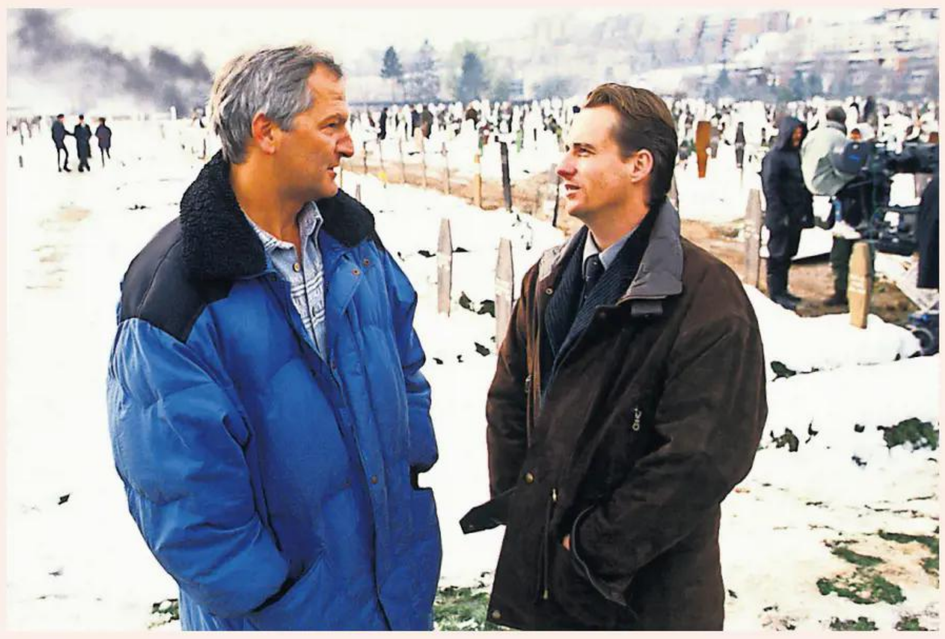
The feature-length Shot Through the Heart, a 1998 BBC co-production with American TV, told the true story of two soldiers on opposing sides of the war in Bosnia a few years earlier. Guy Hibbert's script, based on a report by the American war correspondent John Falk, featured Vlado, a Croat played by Linus Roache, ordered to kill a Serbian sniper who is picking off Croatian and Muslim women and children in a Sarajevo street – only to be horrified on discovering that the marksman is Slavko, his best friend since childhood, played by Vincent Perez.

In the course of research for the drama, the real Vlado showed Attwood – who was keen to concentrate on the personal rather than the politics – photographs of himself and Slavko as youngsters. "Vlado was an ordinary person who just happened to get caught up in a war," the director told the Independent journalist James Rampton. "The power of the film lies in the degree to which the viewer identifies with Vlado and goes through the experience with him."

Attwood's chance to make Shot Through the Heart came after success in the US with the ITV miniseries The Fortunes and Misfortunes of Moll Flanders, Andrew Davies's 1996 adaptation of Daniel Defoe's book, with the heroine (Alex Kingston) romping through 17th-century England. With no previous experience of costume drama, Attwood was considered the perfect director for it by David Lascelles, the producer, who wanted to make a period piece in a modern way by hiring someone "without baggage".

It was also Attwood's job to set the style and pace of the action for the Granada Television production. "Moll Flanders should glance off the screen and be irreverent, totally like Defoe," he told me during filming. "The extravagance of Ken Russell is my influence for the flamboyant section featuring Moll's second husband, Dawkins, and Sam Peckinpah's western The Wild Bunch came to mind for the relationship between Moll and Lucy Diver, and all their stealing."

Attwood went on to make TV films such as Fidel (2002), a biopic of the Cuban leader for the US network Showtime starring Victor Huggo Martin as Castro and Gael García Bernal as Che Guevara. He also nurtured Benedict Cumberbatch's career, directing him in the BBC miniseries To the Ends of the Earth (2005), an adaptation of William Golding's sea trilogy, with the actor playing a 19th-century English aristocrat on a long voyage to Australia, learning both the advantages and limitations of his social position. On location in South Africa, Attwood had to contend with difficult weather while filming a ship at a dock, while Cumberbatch was the victim of a carjacking.



Attwood, left, with the actor Linus Roache on the set of Shot Through the Heart. It told the true story of two soldiers on opposing sides of the conflict in Bosnia
EVERETT/ALAMY

Not put off by this experience, Attwood directed Cumberbatch shortly afterwards in the TV film Stuart: A Life Backwards (2007), an adaptation of Alexander Masters's memoir, with Cumberbatch as the writer and Tom Hardy as Stuart Shorter, a homeless alcoholic.

Attwood was born in Sheffield, to Doreen (nee Fidler) and Frank Attwood, a British Railways clerk. After moves to Biggleswade and Hull, the family settled in Cambridge and David attended Cambridgeshire high school for boys. While studying at Ravensbourne College of Art and Design (now Ravensbourne University London), in Bromley, Kent, he directed plays for Beckenham Theatre Company.

In 1973, he joined BBC Scotland in Glasgow as an assistant floor manager, a job he continued for BBC Birmingham at Pebble Mill from 1976. After working as a production assistant on Alan Bleasdale's play The Black Stuff (1980), he was production manager on the resulting classic series Boys from the Blackstuff (1982), and other dramas.

> **In 1973, he joined BBC Scotland and three years later moved to Pebble Mill, where he took a job as a production assistant**

Inspired by Pebble Mill directors such as Philip Saville and Stephen Frears, Attwood took a BBC course and made his directorial debut with Peter Buckman's brass band comedy play All Together Now (1986). He followed it with episodes of the crime drama Rockliffe's Babies (1987-88) and Malcolm McKay's play Airbase (1988), whose story of drinking and drug-taking by American pilots in Britain sparked questions in parliament and a complaint from the morality campaigner Mary Whitehouse.

Switching to ITV, Attwood directed another police series, The Bill, between 1989 and 1994, and during that period made the film Wild West (1992), a culture-clash comedy about a British-Asian country and western group, partly funded by Channel 4.

He was back at the BBC for Saigon Baby (1995), a play about a couple based in Thailand (played by Kerry Fox and Douglas Hodge) wanting to adopt a child and becoming involved in a baby trafficking business. His other BBC feature-length productions include The Hound of the Baskervilles (2002) and May 33rd (2004), about a woman suffering a life of abuse. Naomie Harris and Jodhi May starred in Blood and Oil (2010), a two-part drama about British oil workers kidnapped in Nigeria.

In 1997, Attwood married the television producer Jane Tranter; they later separated. He is survived by Jane, their children, Maddy and Jo, and his brother, Philip.

Anthony Hayward

Frank David Attwood, director, born 28 August 1952; died 21 March 2024

Birthdays

Nouri al-Maliki, former vice-president of Iraq, 74; **Donna Covey**, former chief executive, Against Violence and Abuse, 63; **Wendy Craig**, actor, 90; **Stafford Dean**, operatic bass, 87; **Peter Dowd**, Labour politician, 67; **Sir Stephen Frears**, film director and producer, 83; **the Duchess of Gloucester**, 78; **John Goodman**, actor, 72; **Andrew Graham**, economist and former director of the Scott Trust, 82; **Nicole Kidman**, actor and producer, 57; **Allan Lamb**, cricketer and commentator, 70; **Frank Lampard**, footballer and manager, 46; **Sir Brandon Lewis**, barrister and Conservative politician, 53; **Prof Gordon Marshall**, sociologist, 72; **Sheila McLean**, professor emerita of law and medical ethics, Glasgow University, 73; **Prof Paul Muldoon**, poet and writer, 73; **Raúl Ramírez**, tennis player, 71; **Peter Reid**, footballer and manager, 68; **Lionel Richie**, singer, songwriter and record producer, 75; **Robert Rodriguez**, film-maker, composer and visual effects supervisor, 56; **Budge Rogers**, rugby player, 85; **Vikram Seth**, novelist and poet, 72; **Beccy Speight**, chief executive, RSPB, 57; **John Taylor**, musician, 64; **Claire Tomalin**, journalist and biographer, 91; **Brian Wilson**, musician and songwriter, 82.

Wendy Craig, the actor, is 90 today. She was appointed CBE in 2020

Announcements

Deaths

KENYON, Peter, 2 June at Crick Care Home, Monmouthshire. Peter, aged 93 years, of Tutshill, Gloucestershire, formerly of Ponteland, Northumberland. A successful career in teaching and higher education. Lifelong Guardian reader. Husband of Eleanor for 62 years, father of Ruth and Elizabeth, and Grandpa to Harriet and Jo. Funeral service is Thursday 27 June, 1.30pm at the Forest of Dean Crematorium, Cinderford, Gloucestershire. Family flowers only, donations for the Library Queens' College Cambridge, cheques payable to Queens' College Cambridge to Philip Blatchly & Son, Highcroft House, Woolaston, Lydney, Gloucestershire GL15 6PN.

For Announcements, Acknowledgments, Adoptions, Anniversaries, Birthdays, Births, Deaths, Engagements, Memorial Services and In Memoriam, email us at announcements@theguardian.com including your name, address and telephone number or phone 0203 353 2114.

Reread our obituaries of the short-story writer Alice Munro and the singer Françoise Hardy
theguardian.com/obituaries

Yesterday's solutions

Killer sudoku
Easy

8	6	3	5	2	1	4	7	9
9	5	4	7	3	8	1	2	6
1	2	7	4	9	6	3	5	8
3	7	8	1	5	9	6	4	2
5	1	2	6	8	4	9	3	7
6	4	9	3	7	2	8	1	5
2	3	6	9	1	7	5	8	4
4	8	1	2	6	5	7	9	3
7	9	5	8	4	3	2	6	1

Medium

8	9	6	1	4	2	5	3	7
4	5	2	3	7	6	1	8	9
3	1	7	8	9	5	2	4	6
1	3	5	9	8	7	4	6	2
2	8	4	6	1	3	9	7	5
7	6	9	2	5	4	3	1	8
9	7	1	4	2	8	6	5	3
6	4	8	5	3	9	7	2	1
5	2	3	7	6	1	8	9	4

Codeword

	L		M		F		E	F	F	I	G	Y		
P	A	R	A	L	L	A	X		J		U			
	W		T		A		P		O	O	Z	E		
	F	U	C	H	S	I	A		R		Z			
	U		H		K		N	O	D	U	L	E		
C	L	O	W	N	S		D				I			
			O				E		A	U	N	T		
	R		O	V	E	R	D	U	B		G			
Q	U	I	D		N				A					
	E				F		V	E	N	D	O	R		
O	F	F	I	C	E		I		D		X			
	U		M		E	C	O	L	O	G	Y			
U	L	N	A		B		L		N		G			
	L		G		L	O	I	T	E	R	E	D		
B	Y	G	O	N	E		N		D		N			

Cryptic crossword
Solution No. 29,413

C	I	C	E	R	O	N	I		S	K	E	T	C	H
A		A		E		E			E		R		E	
S	U	M	M	E	D	U	P		G	E	N	E	V	A
A		E		D		R		A		P		E		D
B	E	L	L	Y	L	A	U	G	H	S				
L		S				S		R		A		M		S
A	B	H	O	R		T	R	I	C	K	I	E	S	T
N		A		A		H		B		E		R		E
C	O	I	N	T	R	E	A	U		S	K	I	E	R
A		R		I		N		S			T		I	
			O	P	I	N	I	O	N	P	O	L	L	
L		F		N		A		N		A		C		I
O	N	E	W	A	Y		G	E	S	T	U	R	E	S
N		R		L			S		A		A		E	
G	A	N	D	E	R		I	S	O	L	A	T	E	D

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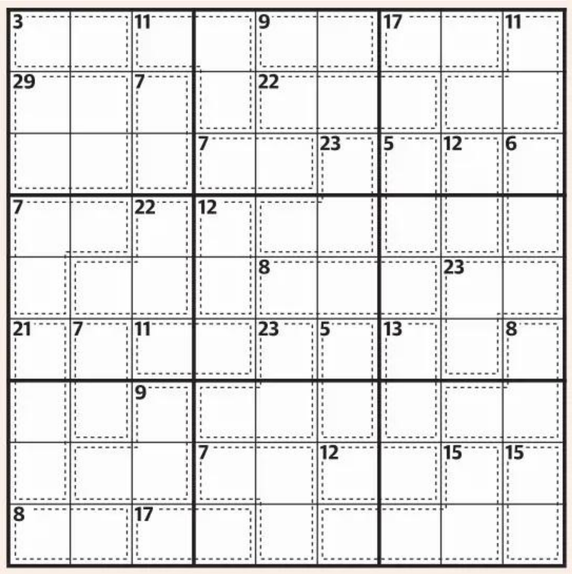
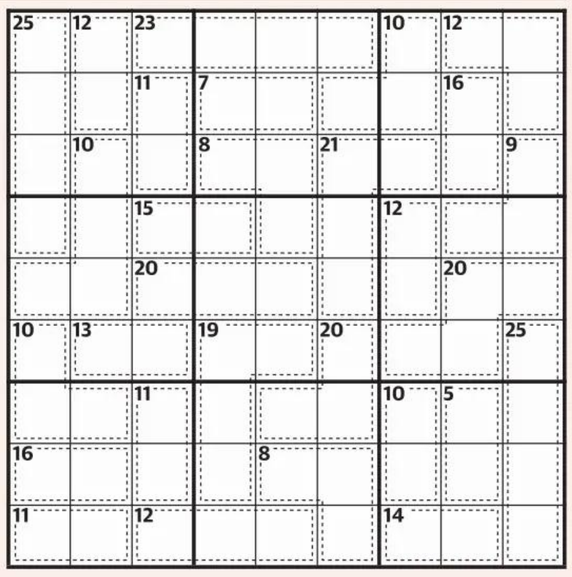
Killer sudoku

Easy

The normal rules of sudoku apply: fill each row, column and 3x3 box with all the numbers from 1 to 9. In addition, the digits in each inner shape (marked by dots) must add up to the number in the top corner of that box. No digit can be repeated within an inner shape.



Medium



Codeword

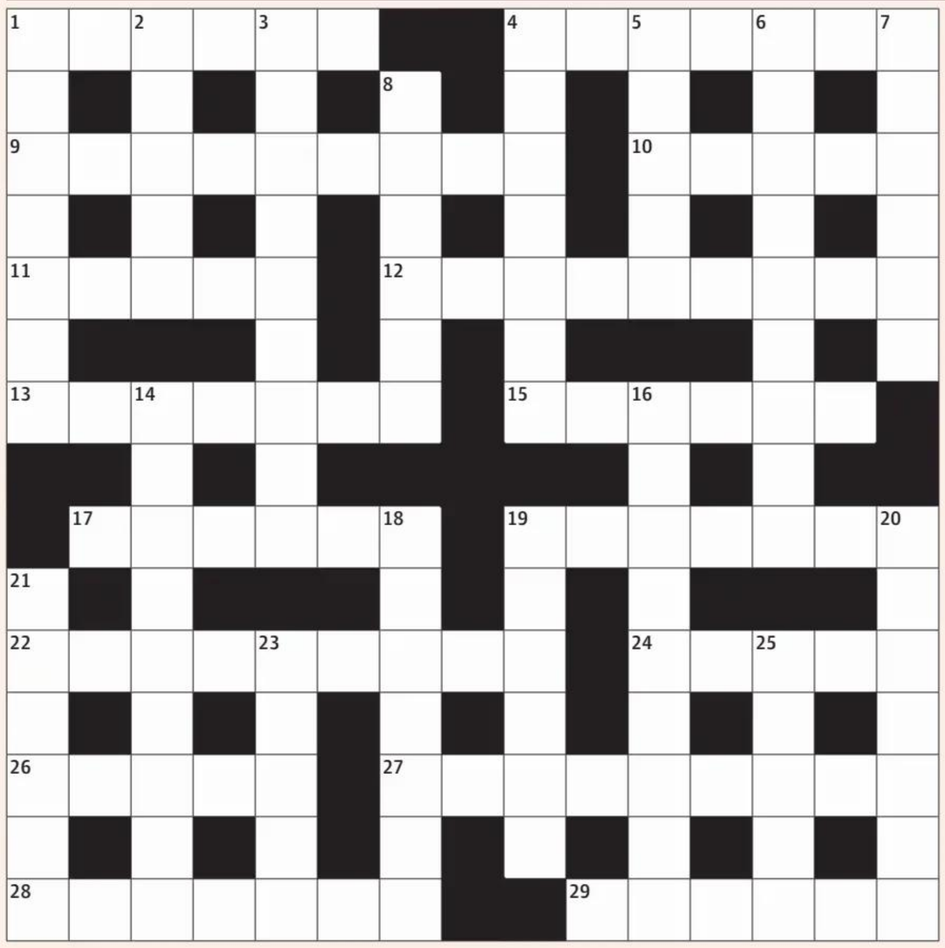
Each letter of the alphabet makes at least one appearance in the grid, and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. The letters decoded should help you to identify other letters and words in the grid.

15	16	6	3	8	■	13	11	4	15	3	23	■
14	■	22	■	16	■	6	■	1	■	26	■	6
15	5	3	7	7	26	1	■	13	5	2 I	17	26
14	■	17	■	2	■	21	■	15	■	9	■	16
13	24	11	12	3	21	24	13	■	20	2	13	15
■	■	4	■	21	■	■	6	■	16	■	■	15
13	3	23	1	■	9	17	16	21	21	16	26 L	2
26	■	■	7	■	3	■	17	■	3	■	■	4
3	10	14	2	26	2	4	1	■	26	16	4	25
19	■	■	20	■	8	■	■	20	■	19	■	■
1	4	19	11	■	1	18	1	17	25	1	4	15
17	■	2	■	25	■	2	■	16	■	17	■	3
1	2	7	1	17	■	18	16	26	26	14	13	21
7	■	1	■	3	■	2	■	2	■	13	■	2
■	21	16	25	4	3	21	■	21	26	1	3	15

A B C D E F G H ✗ J K ✗ M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2 I	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26 L

Guardian cryptic crossword No 29,414 set by Paul



Across

1 Drop is put into drink (6)
4 Oxygen-fuelled lifting device found after little time - not long? (3-4)
9 Gentleman sent back in exchange for lawyer (9)
10 Excitable, somewhat touchy perhaps (5)
11 See 28
12 Cook tries open sandwich (9)
13 It becomes more peaceful for wild animals (7)
15 Hands down back of settee, a number of items not quite retrieved, unknown quantity (6)
17 Leader in Russian preserved by a paper, still (2,4)
19 A cruciverbalist residing in Split given new identity (7)
22 Travelling in car, thunderous - if so, what's up? (4,5)
24 Bump on the rear sounded - little accident (5)
26 Hunter with shaved head, one might be bald (5)
27 Shame miserable clothing is being worn by husband (9)
28/11 Corner insert fit for pocketed item? (7,5)
29 Balance at the limits having sex on your bike! (4,2)

Down

1 Section in contract withdrawn (7)
2 Remove untidy vegetation (5)
3 See 14
4/5/23 Insolence shown after performance: Congress let it go (4,3,5,5)
6 Short investigation into fruit served up for a piece of cake (2,7)
7 String runs through pipes (6)
8 *one* flight (6)
14/3/25 Average postcard unnecessary then? (7,2,5,4,5)
16 Cock-up over character without children (4,5)
18 As requested, 19 down pulled up? (2,5)
19 Edible plant, a food under review, originally (6)
20 Follow communist, gentle pace (7)
21 Pants, where fire breaks out in lying? (6)
23 See 4
25 See 14

How a single therapy session changed my life

The Guardian

G2

Thursday 20/06/24

Life & Arts

Adrian Chiles
One watch, 54 chilli plants, so many memories
page 3

The experts
Confidence tips from Maxine Peake and Johnny Flynn
page 4

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Adrian Chiles

My dad has died, but his watch ticks on. Why does that feel so heartless?

After my dad died, this thing happened that I can't get past. It was when I went to the undertaker to get his ashes. They weren't ready, said the lady there, but she did have his watch to give me. This she handed over in a little velvety bag. As she went into an explanation about the hold-up with the ashes, I got the watch out of the bag and just stared at it, stunned. I couldn't believe that it was still ticking away, showing the correct time. I mean, I know: why would a cheap, battery-powered watch have died just because the wrist it had been around had gone for ever? At some level I must have thought it would have had the decency to stop at the moment that my dad stopped, as a mark of respect. But no, on it went regardless, heartless.

It's funny what gets you. And what doesn't. Dates, for example, mean nothing at all to me. I was asked on Sunday if I felt particularly sad about my dad. I didn't really get where the question had come from, even though I knew it was Father's Day as my daughters had texted me. I just didn't make the connection. I felt no sadder or less sad on Sunday than I did on Saturday or Monday. And it'll be the same when his birthday comes round; and the anniversary of his death, too. Dates are just random numbers. I'm not proud of feeling this way; I've been forgetting birthdays and anniversaries – my own as well as others' – all my life, causing a fair amount of offence and upset in the process.

> A pigeon got in the flat. Perhaps it was my dad come back to tell me to stop being a prat

But now, oddly, dates did come into play, albeit in a different way, because my dad was forever mithering about the date being wrong on that bloody watch. I'd bought it for him because he'd knackered the one he'd had before, which I'd bought him to replace the one he'd bust before that. Even as he lost interest in nearly everything he'd ever been interested in, he got more obsessed with his watch, checking and rechecking it for accuracy, asking for another hole to be put in the strap. There was always some issue.

It was unclear to any of us, including him, why the time had become such a concern – as the very few things he did with this time weren't time-specific at all. In trying to make the necessary date adjustments at the end of shorter months, he'd get in a right old muddle and mess it up completely. It reduced him to despair – probably because he could forgive himself for never coming close to mastering his iPhone, but couldn't come to terms with being unable to change the date on his watch. "Sort this out, will you?" he'd say, every time I saw him, handing me the watch. If he'd bust it I'd buy him another one; if he hadn't, I'd fix the date.

I don't know how long I stood there in that undertakers, slack-jawed, watching the second hand make its merry way around the face, and the date being correct until the end of the next short month. Eventually I heard someone saying my name. It was the woman who had, probably, long finished telling me about when the ashes would be ready for collection, and couldn't let my trance go on for ever. I wouldn't have blamed her if she'd snapped her fingers a couple of times, like a stage hypnotist. Time moves on, obviously.

A clever, if cringe-making, ad campaign for an epically expensive Swiss watch brand featured a handsome father who looked like he ran a hedge fund, and his son who looked as if he'd soon be running one, too. "You never actually own a Patek Philippe," the ad insisted. "You merely look after it for the next generation." This is the kind of drivel you need to come up with, I suppose, in order to persuade people to part with tens of thousands of pounds for a mechanical watch when you can get a more accurate quartz one for 20 quid, like my dad's. Although, when the senior hedge fund man's time was up, his reassuringly expensive, precision-engineered timepiece – needing movement to wind it – would soon have stopped ticking and observed a period of mourning. Classy. Worth £30,000 of anyone's money.

But our cheapo watch just ticked remorselessly on. A bit of time passed, and my mum went off to Croatia for a while. Before she left, she happened to sow some chilli seeds. Not in memoriam or anything like that – she just had some seeds and a bit of soil in a tray, so thought she may as well bung them in. Now she realised she wouldn't be there to water them, so nothing would come of them. Whatever, she shrugged. After a couple of weeks I popped in to check the house and saw that every seed had germinated and countless nascent chilli plants were fighting for space, gasping for air and light.

I took them home with me and tried to pick out the strongest for replanting. The task proved beyond me. I couldn't dispatch any of them. So now I sit here at my desk with my dad's watch missing not a beat and no fewer than 54 chilli plants crowding out the window sill. It feels like it has to be this way.

Yesterday a pigeon got in the flat and, in the ensuing shooing, set about trampling my crop. I wondered if it was my dad come back to tell me to stop being a prat, get a grip, bin the watch and stop the chilli madness. But I can't comply. The pigeon damage turned out to be less severe than feared. Five of the plants looked doomed but three have rallied overnight and I'm hopeful the other two will pull through. And I've only just at this moment remembered that my dad's nickname at school was Chilly. Funny that. Anyway, if you see me around and want a chilli plant then please let me know. I need to disperse them before that pigeon comes back for another go.

COVER: LINDA NYLIND/THE GUARDIAN; THIS PAGE: GETTY IMAGESH

Pass notes

№ 4,711

The corpse flower

Age: It takes up to 12 years for the titan arum to flower for the first time.
A plant, then? In the family Araceae and endemic to the rainforests of Sumatra. *Amorphophallus titanum* if you're a botanist.
From the Greek for "giant misshapen penis"? Correct. Because of its tall, not un-willy-like yellow spadix of flowers that emerges from a maroon spathe, which looks like a massive petal.
So it's big? The largest unbranched inflorescence in the world, up to three metres high. But its size is not what it is most famous for.
What, then? Clue's in the name. In Indonesia it's called *bunga bangkai* …
Sounds like a party Silvio Berlusconi might have once thrown for his chums in finance. Wrong country, wrong language. *Bunga* means flower, *bangkai* corpse.
And "corpse" because? That's what it smells like. Rotting flesh. The odour attracts pollinators from up to half a mile away.
Eww. Well, Indonesia's many miles away (unless you're reading in Sumatra, of course). They have some at Kew Gardens in west London. It's where the titan arum flowered for the first time outside Sumatra, in 1889. The second time it bloomed, in 1926, it attracted massive crowds and the police were called to control them.
It doesn't happen often? Flowers are both rare and unpredictable. The plant can take years to rebloom. But it did happen, in the Princess of Wales Conservatory at Kew, this week.
Quick! Taxi to Kew! Too late – a bloom lasts for just 24-36 hours and the foul stench is emitted only for a single evening. You'll have to wait to inhale the aroma of the world's smelliest plant.
Is that right, world's smelliest? I can also offer the eastern skunk cabbage of the North American wetlands, the blooms of which are said to smell like roadkill skunk.
Nice. Or *Hydnora africana*, which might resemble female genitalia but smells more of faeces. Probably why it's so attractive to dung beetles.
OK. The flowers of the carob tree, on the other hand, are said to smell of semen, if that's more your thing.
You know what, I'm just going to stick with the corpse flower for now, thank you. The good news is they have several at Kew, so you might not have to wait too long. Another one flowered just a couple of weeks ago.
Do say: "A perfect opportunity to raise awareness of the fragility of its native habitat."
Don't say: "Hahaha. No, officer, we've just got a flowering titan arum, down there in the basement …"

20 ways to exude more confidence

Do presentations and meeting new people make you sweat? **Sarah Phillips** asks actors including Maxine Peake and Johnny Flynn how to look and feel sure of yourself – when you're anything but

From job interviews to presentations, first dates to wedding speeches, how can you give the air of being self-assured if you feel anything but? Actors share their secrets on how to appear confident.

Know that hardly anyone feels confident naturally

"I'm not confident at all," says the actor Maxine Peake. "For me, another part of the acting process is pretending to be confident." Similarly, the actor and musician Johnny Flynn says: "It's amazing how many actors identify as introverted." Flynn says he hates public speaking so much that he sang instead of doing a speech when he got married. "My mum called me 'incredibly shy' in front of a massive group of people the other day, which made me want the ground to swallow me up. Performing is like going on a rollercoaster for me; it's the opposite of my safe space. There is an exhilarating feeling in being raw, truthful and removing any kind of boundaries in front of a group of strangers."

Embrace nerves

"I always get nervous," says the actor Maria Austin. She has just finished performing in Agathe at the Playground theatre in London. "There were five of us in the cast and we were all nervous for every performance. There is a sense that nerves are a bad thing, which they can be if you get overly anxious for a long period of time. But it would be great to reframe nerves as a necessary feeling of adrenaline."

Combat fear with joy

Flynn has had to deal with debilitating stage fright, which he says was triggered by an incident when he was in the play Jerusalem in the West End. In one scene, he was hidden inside a sofa on stage and had to burst out when Mackenzie Crook's character blew a horn. One night, Flynn managed to catch a shaving cut on his face while waiting for his cue, then began to panic and have heart palpitations for fear he would be covered in blood. When he emerged, it was hardly noticeable, but it started a cycle of anxiety about going on stage.

> **Nerves can be seen as bad – but reframe them as a necessary feeling of adrenaline**

Flynn dealt with this through a combination of hypnotherapy and cognitive behavioural therapy. "A thought can become your whole being, that is the amazing thing about the brain," he says. "If you're inside a negative thought, it can very quickly escalate. My therapist would say: 'A drop of joy in an ocean of fear neutralises it.' You can't actually feel fear and joy at the same time; they're incompatible with each other." If you can help yourself move into just the tiniest bit of joy, he says, that will quickly spread: "Like food colouring in a cake, it will turn the whole thing pink."

Learn how to hold yourself

The actor Gina Bramhill says: "At stage school, you learn how you are perceived by other people – what you give off for free – so that you can then build a character on to that. But you can't do that unless you understand what you have anyway." There is "a lot of feeling your feet on the floor. Feeling centred, and releasing your knees, so you're able to move more easily. If the back of your knees are rigid, then someone could push you over, you're that unstable."

At the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, which Bramhill attended, she learned the Alexander technique, "which is where you allow your body to be manipulated into this perfect way of standing, walking and lying down", she says. "Once you know that, you can play a character with tension in their body. But

if you're coming at a character with a lot of your own tension, it's really hard to undo that and play a relaxed person."

Smile

"For public speaking or presentations, smiling is really welcoming," says Austin. "It puts the audience at ease. If you can smile at people as they are coming in, it makes you more approachable and means that people will naturally want to engage with and listen to you. People should smile more in life." Don't be too polished, says Bramhill, as this can be "unrelatable and off-putting". Instead, "inject some humour and your own personality into what you're saying".

Focus on your breath

Breathing is simple yet effective in dealing with nerves, says Flynn, who practises a combination of yoga and qigong for this. The latter "is about moving chi, or energy, around your body. If there are any blockages, that is what manifests in physical tension, fear and anxiety."

Austin suggests box breathing, where you breathe in, hold, breathe out, then hold again. "Your exhale should be longer than your inhale, which is really grounding, because when you're nervous you're not breathing all the way down to your diaphragm - your breath tends to get quite shallow. Whether you are performing or just feeling anxious in the day to day, breathing tends to go really shallow and into the chest. The more we can cultivate a feeling of being grounded, and assure the body that it's not in mortal danger, the better." Austin does this before going into an audition and says you can do it anywhere: "No one is going to know what you are doing."

Project your voice

Breathing is also useful for vocal projection, says Austin. "Breathing deeply helps with vocal control. You don't want to be running out of breath halfway through a sentence." Peake likes to sing or hum and do tongue twisters as a vocal warmup: "I've got a phrase: 'Hanging the still stained sheet from the washing line,' and before I go on every night, just repeat and repeat that."

Peake occasionally appears at political rallies, where she prefers doing a reading to making a speech. To avoid tripping over your words, "don't be afraid to take a breath", she says. She gives the example of Shakespeare, where there are certain beats where you can breathe. "And take your time. People are interested. I think we give our audiences short shrift sometimes. People want to listen and they want to be engaged."

Loosen your jaw

"Relaxing the jaw is a massive one," says Bramhill. "We have a lot of tension here." She recommends a simple massage technique, which involves clenching your jaw tight, then putting your fingers into the space in your cheek between your teeth and your jaw bone. Unclench, make circular motions with your fingers, then open your mouth and say "ahhhh".

Take in your audience

"Eye contact is so important," says Peake. Even with a big crowd, this should involve "at least moving your head around and taking everybody in. Some people can get so scared that they can just fix on one point or look above the crowd." But the audience loves it "when people feel that you're taking them in. It's about connection." Avoid eyeballing, though, says Austin. "It gets a bit creepy when people don't blink. Talk to a group of people, rather than staring at one person."

Own the space

If you can, says Bramhill, "become acquainted with the space that you're performing or speaking in. Get a friend or colleague to stand where you're going to stand and then go to the very back and see if they can hear you." When you get on stage, "take your time to own the space", even if this takes a few seconds, says Peake.

Talk slowly

"Think of the audience as about five or six," says the actor Anni Domingo, who has just appeared in Swim, Aunty, Swim at the Belgrade theatre in Coventry. "You are telling them some information that they want or need to know. Then you will put it at a pace that people can understand. If you're too fast, they lose the thread and they get impatient. If you're too slow, they can't connect the dots. It doesn't mean that you are going to be in a voice that's telling them off or like it's storytime with mother: 'Are you ready, dear? Now, let's begin!'" It's about getting yourself to a pace where the audience will pick up what you are saying.

> **Smiling puts an audience at ease – it will make them want to engage and listen to you**

Assume that PowerPoint will fail

"When I started out, there was no PowerPoint," says Domingo, who often gets asked to give speeches. "It's the bane of my life now. Because no matter how much you've set it up, something's going to go wrong. Be prepared for this and don't be embarrassed about it - everybody in the room understands that this happens. You just have to be calm and try it again or abandon the PowerPoint. I always have it printed out just in case anything goes wrong."

Think about body language on a first date

To exude confidence when dating, "show that you're interested with active listening", says Austin. "Acknowledge what the person is saying with a nod of your head and make eye contact. Use open body language; don't just hunch over and look at your knees. As with public speaking, it's really hard to connect with someone if their body language is closed off." Bramhill agrees: "Be curious about the other person. Their body language, what they are wearing, then that will spark conversation. If they don't reciprocate, you're on the wrong date."

Walk in to interviews with positivity

"I have so many auditions," says Bramhill. "I think, more than your average person, I have so much rejection and it's really hard not to take it personally." How is it best to approach an interview? "Walk in with a positive frame of mind: I'm here to help you solve your problem, let's figure it out together." It is as much about working out if it is somewhere you will feel comfortable working, she says: "Have lots of questions for them up your sleeve." Bramhill says she sometimes goes into auditions imagining a light coming out of her head: "It's a bit woo-woo, but feels really nice."

Brush your teeth

"I always have to clean my teeth," says Peake of her pre-performance rituals. "I don't know why. It's odd you have these little things you have to do." At her last production, Robin/Red/Breast at Aviva Studios in Manchester, someone threw out the toothbrush she had left in the bathroom. When she realised, just before a performance, she was in "a blind panic". A spot of dental care won't do any harm before most public engagements.

Have a sense of perspective

"I always say: 'Be prepared: if something goes wrong, try to solve it. If you can't solve it, it's still not the end of the world. You can redeem yourself,'" says Domingo.

Peake says: "What's the worst that can happen? I've had the worst. I've been on stage and forgotten my lines and completely blanked. It was the second preview of A Streetcar Named Desire at the Royal Exchange in Manchester. It was an amazing experience in a way, because I felt the audience really got behind me."

Beware dutch courage

"Rescue Remedy is like brandy," says Bramhill. "I find it helps immensely. Tom Hollander gave me and my co-star Iain De Caestecker a cheeky glass of champagne before we did our wedding speeches in [the BBC drama] Us and that did give us a little courage and excitement. But I wouldn't endorse it generally."

Dress for success

"Wear something comfortable," says Domingo. "If you're going to be giving a lecture and it's really hot, don't wear something that's going to make you sweat and feel uncomfortable." Be careful shoes aren't too high or pinching, she adds, to ensure that you are "comfortable in your own skin".

Maybe don't imagine the audience naked

"I have nightmares where I am naked on stage," says Peake. "I forgot my costume, I forgot my lines and I'm wandering around and people are going: 'You really need to put some clothes on,' and I can't get off stage. I have never imagined the audience naked, though. I missed the memo on that one." Austin hasn't tried this, either. "I have ADHD [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder] and my brain would find that really distracting," she says. "But some actors apparently do. Whatever makes you feel most at ease."

Have a secret

"I think it's fun to have a secret," says Bramhill. "If you're feeling nervous that you've got a big presentation, maybe you can wear your favourite colour, or you could wear your favourite pair of pants, or a fun pair of socks." This will mean you have a little spark that whoever you are presenting or performing for won't understand, she says. "Basically, wear your lucky pants!"

ILLUSTRATION: GUARDIAN DESIGN/GETTY

‘I started smoking at 14 – then finally found a way to quit’

He used to smoke 40 a day, but **Chris Godfrey** has been trying to give up for decades. Finally, he decided to try hypnotherapy. Just one session changed everything

Smoking has warped my brain. One evening last winter, as I stood outside a pub, cigarette in hand, a friend who works in life insurance decided to calculate the chance of me dying before I hit 60 if I carried on smoking. “If you give up smoking now, there’s a 6% chance you die before hitting 60. If you don’t, it’s 13%,” he concluded. Normal people will see that the chance of early death has doubled. But smokers don’t think normally. *Just 13%?* I thought. *I could work with those odds* …

I love smoking. Cigarettes are the cherry on top of life’s best moments and a crutch for the worst. Is there anything better than chain-smoking in a sunlit beer garden? Or more satisfying than the victory cigarette that punctuates a completed project? Is there anything more necessary when you’re given terrible news? My form tutor at school, Mr Styles, once told us that smokers were foolish for saying it relaxed them, as really it was no different from wearing a pair of shoes a few sizes too small and celebrating the relief of taking them off, only to then put them back on again moments later. That analogy stuck with me and I thought about it often. But then I’d watch my team surrender a four-goal lead away at Newcastle and, honestly, there was simply no other response but to light up, inhale, exhale. Sweet relief.

I had my first cigarette when I was 11. A friend had stolen a pack from somewhere and a group of us took it in turns toking, retching, giggling. When I got home that evening, I convinced myself I was going to die. I sat on a chair in the hallway and took deep breaths to check my lungs still worked. I vowed not to touch cigarettes again.

But at 14 I fell in with an older group of friends who smoked a lot. So I did what all insecure teenagers do and copied them. Smoking made me feel cool, rebellious; I had social capital, a reputation as a smoker, a bit of edge (all nonsense; all in my head). I looked old enough to buy from the less scrupulous newsagents, and sold sandwiches at school to fund my habit – at my peak I cleared £50 a week. Soon I was hitting five to 10 a day, often going for long “walks around the block” with my friend Mark, who lived down the road. I wasn’t worried about the health implications – when you’re young, you think you’ll live for ever. And, besides, I’d heard someone say that as long as you quit by the time you’re 30 your body will eventually reverse the damage, so I clung to that.

(Having finally looked into this claim, I now realise I had a grossly oversimplified understanding of a complicated situation. According to the NHS, for example, the risk of lung cancer is halved 10 years after giving up, while the American Cancer Society says it takes 15 years for the risk of heart attack to fall back to that of a non-smoker. And the jury is out on whether the effects are fully reversed.)

Almost two decades later, I’m still a smoker. At my peak, I was probably putting away 40 a day at university – easily done when you’re playing poker all afternoon, then going out drinking till 3am. I made efforts to cut down after uni, and, as my 30th birthday approached, I accepted that the time to quit altogether had arrived.

As the saying goes, quitting was easy: I did it thousands of times. I tried the usual tactics such as cold turkey, moderation, steadily reducing the number of cigarettes a day to zero, or smoking cigarettes with so little nicotine and tar in them you pulled a cheek muscle trying to get a hit (you can if you cut off the ends of the filter!). I’ve tried most of the usual nicotine replacements (gum, patches, vaping), habit replacements (regular gum, cocktail sticks, lollipops) and replacements for smoking’s unrivalled feeling of relief (chocolate, stress balls, screaming into a pillow). There was a brief period when I would take my monthly cigarette budget and spend it on something nice and tangible that I couldn’t smoke, such as a coat, in theory forcing myself into a position where I couldn’t afford to smoke, but in reality just forcing myself further into my overdraft. Then there were my “batshit logic” attempts: such as smoking so heavily one night that the thought of a cigarette made me feel sick for the next few days and gave me a platform with which to build momentum; or telling my friends they could throw a glass of water over me if they saw me with a cigarette (one of my swifter backtracks); or, not smoking cigarettes but allowing myself the odd cigar as a treat (obviously this ended in regular cigar smoking).

The cycle was always the same: get through the first few days or weeks, then either get drunk, lose all willpower and start charming cigarettes off strangers (the sport I’m best at). Sometimes I didn’t even need the alcohol. I’d just find an excuse to start again – a slightly stressful day at work, a tense game of football, a low-stakes argument.

But now I’m 33 and that’s three years past my deadline. The time has come to break the cycle. And, with this fresh attempt comes the chance to try something I haven’t yet: hypnotherapy.

Godfrey aged 15 (left, centre) and right, with a schoolfriend

After an afternoon of internet searching and preliminary conversations, I opt for Paul Levrant, and his north London practice, Hypnowellness.

We have an initial phone call where Paul tells me what I can expect. I need to complete some homework, extensive forms where I lay out my relationship with smoking: how I started, emotional triggers, event triggers. We’ll then meet for a two-hour session, which will be broken up into 90 minutes of CBT and 30 minutes of hypnosis – the purpose of both (very broadly speaking) being to change the way I think about smoking and how I see myself, with one being done at a conscious level and the other subconscious. I’ll sign a Promise of Action, committing to be a non-smoker, and then leave with a recording of the hypnosis, which I’ll listen to once a day for a month. It costs £320 (or, at the time of writing, two and a half months’ worth of cigarettes).

I have my last cigarette the night before meeting Paul. It’s gone midnight and I’m outside my flat in the freezing cold. I make it last as long as I can, then put it out in a flower bed. It’s anticlimactic.

The next evening I’m in Paul’s office. He explains how he uses his methods to treat addictions, phobias, insomnia, depression, general anxieties (panic, fear) and specific ones (public speaking), but explains that he is not Derren Brown and this is not a case of him swinging a pendant in front of me while chanting. I have to *want* to quit. He asks me to rate out of 10 how ready I am to quit smoking. I tell him 8, though inside I know it’s a 7. *Good*, he says, because this

'I'm in control, I'm free' ... Godfrey crushes his addiction

PHOTOGRAPHS: LINDA NYLIND/THE GUARDIAN; COURTESY CHRIS GODFREY

is the percentage chance I have of succeeding. 70%? That's great odds!

We start with the CBT. Paul systematically breaks down the thought patterns that lead to me caving into cravings, all the while shifting my perspective of myself and how I feel toward smoking. He helps me to recognise when my five-year-old mind is trying to take over, or when I'm engaging in bargaining language ("if I only smoke when I drink, then surely that's fine!"), or how to spin the negative ("I'm never going to smoke again") to the positive ("I'm going to live past 60!"). He helps me see that what my body really wants when I come to the end of a big project is not a cigarette but a *change of state* – and there are dozens of ways to do that without smoking. I learn that willpower is not how you quit, because willpower is finite, a last resort, a reserve for when you need it most. I learn that my thoughts are just thoughts, and I can completely ignore them if I want to.

A lot of Paul's observations are disarmingly simple. When I tell him that I love chatting to people in the smoking area on nights out, he makes a very simple suggestion: why not just ... go to the smoking section and not smoke? When I tell him I find it frustrating that my partner and friends are able to make social smoking work for them, he tells me it's because they smoke out of habit, whereas I smoke out of addiction. I am an addict. It's a strange thing to hear, despite how blindingly obvious it is, because cigarettes are so normalised in my life that I don't think of myself as an addict in the same way I would if I suddenly became addicted to, say, gambling or painkillers.

Then Paul has one tip that blows my mind. Smokers, he says, think that cigarettes relax them, when, actually, the nicotine is doing the exact opposite to your body. It's a stimulant. What actually relaxes smokers is that they do the one thing that everyone is told to do when they're stressed: take a deep breath. And so if I find the urge to smoke rising up inside me, all I really need to do is take a deep breath. It's a gamechanger.

After 90 minutes, it's time for hypnotherapy. This, says Paul, is a way for him to address the subconscious mind, where our habits and addictions live, out of range from willpower. The subconscious mind acts in a childlike way, ignoring logic and punishment. But, if you can show the unconscious mind the benefits of change, a vision of the future that makes it feel good, we can wear away the attraction of our old habits.

Paul places a black-and-white mandala-style drawing on the coffee table in front of me. He gives me a pendant and asks me to hold this above the centre of the diagram with my head above it. I'm told not to move it. Paul gives instructions such as: "Imagine you're at the top of the pendulum and it's hundreds of feet long and as rigid as a pipe." Eventually, the pendulum starts rotating (I promise, I'm not doing anything!). After a few minutes, Paul says we can stop, I should lie down, and that the hypnotherapy should work as I have a suggestible mind.

If I find the urge to smoke rising up, all I need to do is take a deep breath. It's a gamechanger

That feels vaguely insulting but he's not wrong. The hypnotherapy is shockingly effective. One moment I'm lying down in Paul's office under a blanket, listening to his voice; the next my eyes burst open as Paul lightly taps my forehead and says: "OK, Chris, and you're awake." Twenty-five minutes has passed. Paul checks I'm fully conscious, by asking me to answer questions such as what is my phone number and what colour is my front door. Then he sends me on my way.

He emails me the recording of the hypnotherapy, which I listen to every day for a month. It's a sort of guided meditation that asks me to imagine a future with smoking and without: the grim consequences of the former, the life-affirming joy of the latter. He tells me it's an easy choice, that all I need to do if I need a change of state is to simply: *breathe in, breathe out*. He tells me I'm in control, I'm certain, I'm free.

It's now exactly six months and seven days since my last cigarette. I am a non-smoker now.

Paul's words have been incredibly effective. It's transformed how I think about smoking, and how I think about myself. His tip for simply taking a deep breath has seen me through many testing moments. There isn't space to list all of Paul's nuggets of wisdom and how they've helped me. I've actually forgotten a lot of it, which I think is by design: when I asked if I could record the session for the purposes of this feature, he said there was no need, as I'd remember what I needed to. And he was right. I've internalised much of what he said. Frankly, it's changed my life.

I've beaten many of the usual emotional and contextual triggers, arguments, beer gardens, tense Arsenal matches, actors smoking on screen (Maestro was a tough hang), even a funeral. I made it through a trip to Paris without smoking – a city where to not smoke is almost culturally insensitive. If I can do that, then I'm surely going to be OK. At times I've allowed myself to drift into the slipstream of a smoker walking ahead of me, and I'm not ashamed to say that I've asked my boyfriend to blow his cigarette in my face on occasion. But for six months I haven't smoked and that was unthinkable before.

I can't say it's been easy. For a few months I dreamed regularly of smoking, and temptation is the devil, especially when drinking. I still desperately miss it. I get pangs of sadness when I suddenly realise how nice a moment it would be to have a cigarette. But those pangs are becoming less and less frequent. Sometimes I'll go a whole week without thinking about it.

I wish I could say I feel fitter, healthier, happier or richer for it, but the difference is negligible. The sad truth is I would definitely start smoking again if I could guarantee it wouldn't kill me. Recently, I've been telling myself I can take it up again if I do hit 60. These thoughts are important, though: a reminder that I *am* addicted to smoking and I always will be. And all I need to do when I feel this way is simply breathe. Inhale. Exhale. Relief.

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‘They hang out, ride motorcycles, drink beer – then it gets dangerous’

The Outlaws are the world’s second biggest biker gang and now they’ve inspired a film. Director Jeff Nichols tells **Ryan Gilbey** why he didn’t want to offend them

Boozing, brawling and revving … the whiskery brutes of The Bikeriders

Anyone less like a Hells Angel would be difficult to imagine. Yet Jeff Nichols – this genial, softly spoken director, with his pink face and modest quiff of wavy, silver-streaked hair – is responsible for The Bikeriders, a movie thick with the roar of engines and the smell of grease. Inspired by photographer Danny Lyon’s 1967 book of the same name, it stars Tom Hardy as Johnny, the ageing leader of a Chicago biker gang; Austin Butler as Benny, its coolest member; and Jodie Comer as Kathy, who falls for Benny. Lyon rode with and profiled the Outlaws but Nichols has fictionalised the gang, renaming them the Vandals to avoid aggro from the real-life subjects.

“Becoming the historian of the Outlaws was not my goal,” explains the 45-year-old film-maker, seated in front of a wall of books and knick-knacks at his home in Austin, Texas. “Fictionalising them became the safest approach. These guys aggressively protect their colours, their emblem, so I didn’t want to offend them. They’re the second largest motorcycle gang in the world after the Hells Angels.” So had they been ranked only sixth or seventh, it might have been different? “I’m not saying that,” he laughs. “Let them all be over there, and I’ll stay here in my separate space.”

Lyon described his book as an attempt to record and glorify the life of the American biker, but Nichols takes a different approach. “I wouldn’t use the term ‘glorify’. The first hour is intended to be romantic, for sure. Even though there’s violence, we’re having fun: we invite the audience in. Once you reach the second half, the music pulls back, the voiceover falls away, and the realities of the choices these people have made start to be seen in serious ways.”

That voiceover is one of the most striking elements of The Bikeriders. In a film that is shoulder-to-leather-clad-shoulder with whiskery brutes boozing, brawling and revving their bikes, it is radical to give narrating duties to a woman. This is Kathy, interviewed on a reel-to-reel tape machine by Danny (Mike Faist) in moments that intentionally place some distance between the audience and the bikers. Lorraine Bracco was only trusted to narrate a few scenes in Goodfellas, but The Bikeriders is guided by Kathy’s sceptical perspective.

“I wish I could say it was a high-minded thing,” says Nichols. “You know, ‘It’s time to have a woman narrate this masculine movie!’ That idea wasn’t lost on me. But the truth was that Kathy is the most interesting voice in the book. She’s self-deprecating, introspective, maddening at times, but also hilarious and sincere. Even though the guys like her, she’s still an outsider because she’s a woman. That makes her the perfect lens through which to view this hyper-masculine situation.”

‘She was bam-bam-bam!’ … Jodie Comer and Austin Butler

Comer turned out to be more than a match for Hardy in their scenes together. Kathy, who is in a tug-of-war with Johnny over her beau, confronts him in an electrifying showdown, warning him that Benny will die if he keeps riding with the Vandals. “Whenever two actors are facing off in a scene, I always ask them, ‘Who wants to go first?’ Jodie came in and her tempo was bam-bam-bam! She’s trying to run the scene fast, and Tom’s reaction was to slow right down. She ended up asking me, ‘Can you tell him to speed up?’ But it was much more frustrating that way. Oh man, that scene was great! Tom turned to me after the first take and said, ‘Holy shit, she’s something else.’”

The three leads form an odd kind of love triangle. Benny is serenely beautiful with Butler carrying over a crackling, feline sexuality from his Oscar-nominated performance in Elvis. But Johnny doesn’t want to sleep with Benny, insists Nichols: he wants to *be* him. “He covets him. He’d like to absorb him. I knew it wouldn’t be overtly homosexual: that would over-simplify it. But there’s something there. Tom wears this leather jacket, and underneath that he’s also wearing a leather vest that’s cinched. He’s a totally ripped

“There is a lot of sexuality in the film – even if there’s no sex in the bushes

‘There’s violence but we’re having fun’ … Nichols

guy so every time he moved, you'd hear this *creeeak*. You can't get away from that sound – it imbues the scenes with sexuality."

When Nichols made his last film, Loving, about the real-life relationship which in 1967 overturned US laws against inter-racial marriage, he said: "The two things Americans don't want to deal with are race and sex." The Bikeriders has neither. Biker classics like Kenneth Anger's Scorpio Rising and Kathryn Bigelow's The Loveless drip with eroticism, whereas Nichols's picture feels chaste. When he tells me that the real Benny and Kathy went on to have a son, I'm flabbergasted: there's no evidence in the movie that they even had sex.

"That was a studio note that came up," he recalls. "Someone said, 'Do we ever see them kiss?' And we don't. It hadn't occurred to me because the rest of it – Kathy and Benny in the bar, then her on the back of his motorcycle – is so charged. But I *do* think there's a lot of sexuality there, even though we don't have people fucking in the bushes." Let's agree to disagree on that. What the film is certainly good at is subtly undermining its tough guys. Benny himself remains enigmatic, even nebulous. "Danny never interviewed him. And though there are three photographs of Benny in the book, you never see his face. He's kind of mythologised. Kathy talks about him, and there are newspaper clippings about how he ran all these stop signs. The film asks, 'Is this guy really a badass – or do we just want him to be?'"

For all its violence, though, I wonder whether The Bikeriders isn't guilty of whitewashing. Lyon reported that one of the Outlaws "rolled out a huge Nazi flag as a picnic rug" but the Vandals display no such objectionable tendencies. "I was more interested in how a thing like this gets started," Nichols says. "Usually it's a social club for people who feel they don't belong in the mainstream. They hang out, ride motorcycles, drink beer. That morphs into something more formalised and ultimately more dangerous. I asked Danny what that Nazi stuff was about. I'd read that these guys' fathers had served in the war, and this was a 'Fuck you' to them. Danny's response was, 'They weren't that smart. They just thought it looked cool, and they wanted to shock.'"

What does he make of where male-oriented groups are at today: the rancid male enclaves of "incel" culture, or the followers of Andrew Tate? "Oh man," he sighs. "It's weird with chat forums and the internet amplifying these communities when it was probably just three dudes drinking beer and going, 'This sucks.' Take the Proud Boys. I'm sure there was some unifying grievance but I doubt the idea of storming the US Capitol was on their minds when they first got together. I think it's human nature to want to be part of a thing. We want to find an identity."

Nichols has always been drawn to stories of "people feeling like they don't quite belong in the mainstream so they move to the outside". That idea defines his 2011 film Take Shelter, in which his regular collaborator Michael Shannon plays a possibly deranged man protecting his family against a coming apocalypse; or Mud, with Matthew McConaughey as a fugitive befriended by two teenage boys. What The Bikeriders demonstrates is how even the most rebellious sub-cultures develop their own orthodoxies.

"Identity is such a big topic today," he says. "Everybody is finding their unique identity, whether that's race or sex or sexuality. We're all looking for our own story. What's strange to me is, in the pursuit of that, you get wrapped up in these groups, and then by definition they have to start coming up with rules and structures. Before you know it, these people who felt they didn't want to live by society's rules are now living by another set of rules. As humans, we're susceptible to that. I find it quite scary."

He witnessed it himself when he was growing up in Little Rock, Arkansas. "It's a relatively small city in the American south, but we had a thriving local punk rock scene. I learned to play drums and was in a couple of bad punk bands, but what I remember is it felt like it was ours. None of us were doing it to become famous. Our agenda was pure. But then punk as an idea in Arkansas started to formalise, and rules were applied, 'This is punk, that's not. You're not punk rock enough. And why are you in that polo shirt?'"

He smiles, perhaps realising that this is exactly what he is wearing today. "Then you find yourself walking around the mall and Green Day is playing over the speakers. That's when you realise, 'Well, I guess it's not ours any more.'"

The Bikeriders is in cinemas from tomorrow

Losing his mind ... Michael Shannon in Take Shelter

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF FOCUS FEATURES/AP; KYLE KAPLAN/FOCUS FEATURES; VIVIEN KILLILEA/GETTY IMAGES FOR ABA; MOVIESTORE/REX FEATURES

My best shot

Kathleen Orlinsky

'Lainey hunts in the world's first designated wilderness. Her face is daubed with the blood of an elk she killed'

The Gila Wilderness in New Mexico was, in 1924, the first designated wilderness area in the world. Forester Aldo Leopold's concept was to create a pristine place untouched by man – there would be no mechanised vehicles or buildings, but horses, rafts, hunting and fishing would be allowed. How we designate a wilderness hasn't really changed in the last century. In some ways, Gila was ahead of its time – in the early 20th century, nobody was really thinking about conserving the land. But they also forgot about the people living in this area: the Chiricahua Apache had been there for 200 years, and the Mogollon before that. The Gila is an example of how contradictory conservation can be, back then and now.

One of the most interesting examples of this is the elk. These were once widespread in the Gila region, but were gradually hunted out. In the 1970s, the Forest Service reintroduced Rocky Mountain elk – but since the elk don't know how to survive in the desert conditions, they had to build water tanks, even though construction was against the principles of conservation. Fifty years on, the elk are part of the reason people visit.

The elk are also important to people who live in the region. Lainey, who appears in this image, has deep family ties to the Gila. Her maternal great-grandfather was the first homesteader in the region after the defeat of the Apache by the American military. On her father's side, she has Pueblo and Navajo ancestry.

Lainey is one of the few youths and the only young girl I met who was training to hunt. But gender doesn't matter as much as keeping the tradition alive, and passing down the knowledge. I am fascinated by the way Indigenous communities hunt. It is a huge part of their culture and spirituality. I have deep respect for those who do it.

The first elk hunt is a special moment. Families depend on the meat, and they thank the animal and bless it for its sacrifice. Marking the hunter's cheeks with the animal's blood is a family tradition practised by many – a symbol of success that honours the hunter's first harvest. From the age of 10 or 11, children learn how to hunt as part of a Forest Service training programme.

I had gone out on horseback for a number of days with Lainey, her brother and father. You never know when the animals are going to show up. After a couple of nights camping, we spotted about 30 – the biggest herd I'd ever seen. We were on a slope and had a clear view. With the guidance of her father, Lainey took aim and shot. When we got down to where the animal had fallen, she had to shoot again – I imagine that is the hardest part. After she got the elk, she cried. When the harvesting and processing was done and the family had said a prayer, I took Lainey's portrait.

I care a lot about social issues and politics, and photography became a way to explore them. I used to photograph conflicts and news, but after covering dog sled races in the Canadian Yukon, I became more interested in the environment. Now my work is often nature-focused. My goal is to raise awareness about environments and cultures at risk due to climate crisis.

With the Gila story, it is more about the idea of conservation – about rethinking ethical conservation and how to protect wild places. I wanted this portrait to foster empathy and connection – and to make the viewer want to ask questions. Indigenous people are doing incredible work to protect the environment and they have so many answers. They've been out there the whole time, quietly saving the planet. We need to pay attention.

Interview by Charlotte Jansen. Kathleen Orlinsky is the winner of the Sustainability Prize, Sony World Photography Awards 2024

The CV

Born: *New York, 1983*
Trained: *Self-taught*
Influences: *Graciela Iturbide, Sebastião Salgado, Susan Meiselas*
High point: *'After years of trying, I finally photographed 50,000 western Arctic caribou as they migrated'*
Low point: *'Losing colleagues and friends covering conflict'*
Top tip: *'Kindness and respect for others'*

PHOTOGRAPHS: KATHLEEN ORLINSKY; MEGHAN PETERSON

Insights ... Adam Lambert, right, with Skin of Skunk Anansie

Review Adam Lambert: Out, Loud & Proud, ITV1

A rousing film – but it could have been angrier

★★★☆☆

Rebecca Nicholson

It is a shame that Adam Lambert: Out, Loud and Proud is such a scrapbook of ideas, because parts of it are compelling and could have carried the show alone. Instead, this is an entertaining yet vague documentary about pop and pride, which sees Lambert promising a look back at UK queer history and the trailblazing artists who shoved society forward when it could barely admit it was willing to budge.

Lambert rose to prominence as the runner-up of American Idol in 2009, though, like plucky X Factor third-placers One Direction, he has long since proved that winning a TV contest is not essential for stardom. As well as his solo career, for the last decade Lambert has sung with the surviving members of Queen. By far the most interesting part of this documentary is when he sits down with his bandmates, Brian May and Roger Taylor, to talk about Freddie Mercury. Lambert is an easy conversationalist and his intimacy with May and Taylor allows for a complex conversation about identity, fame and success. He asks about Mercury's queerness; May notes that there are stark generational differences in the adoption of the word "queer", and that Mercury would probably have rejected the description. Would Mercury have been out today, had he lived past 45? There is no easy answer to be found here.

Queen provide a narrative shape for the hour, from their glam-rock beginnings to the scandal of the I Want to Break Free video, to Mercury's treatment at the hands of the tabloids, to his death from Aids in 1991. But this isn't just about Queen: it is framed as a look back at how British artists have fought for LGBTQ+ rights and recognition. To get a sense of this, Lambert also speaks to Erasure's Andy Bell, Skin from Skunk Anansie and MNEK, and he really does get them to open up. Each represents a different era and brings something different to the conversation, from 80s homophobia to 90s laddishness. If Lambert doesn't have his own version of the celebrities-interviewing-celebrities podcast in the works, then surely it is only a matter of time.

Even so, the "British culture" overview feels tacked on. It promises to celebrate how far we've come, while questioning whether progress is slowing down, but it approaches this vast topic loosely, as if struggling to stick to its main thesis. "Homosexuality was illegal in the UK until 1967," it states; in fact, sexual activity between men was illegal, and it was decriminalised in England and Wales in 1967, but only for men over 21. This is a detail but an important one, if the audience is to have confidence in the story this film is trying to tell.

Elsewhere, the touchstones are largely familiar. There's Bowie on TV, being asked by Russell Harty if his shoes are bisexual. There's John Inman and Larry Grayson, camping it up for non-threatening laughs. There are the extravagantly made-up New Romantics, there's Boy George and Pete Burns, here's Elton John, here's George Michael being coy and then, later, after his arrest for "lewd behaviour" in Los Angeles, being fabulously defiant with the video for Outside. We see Margaret Thatcher's infamous speech decrying schools teaching children that they have "an inalienable right to be gay", archive footage of bigots and protests, vile tabloid headlines, reports of controversial same-sex kisses in music videos and suggestions that neutral pronouns in love songs might sell better.

This is occasionally insightful, and sometimes rousing. By the end, it hints at being a more angry and political film, aligning the old homophobic prejudices of the 1980s, built on misinformation and fear, with the ongoing discrimination against – and appallingly toxic discourse around – transgender people. This feels like a far bigger topic than the last section of a broad-brushstrokes pop-and-pride documentary, and again, suffers from a lack of authority. If this is about trans rights as a new frontier of pride and protest in the UK, it seems odd to use the very non-British drama Pose, and the outdated humour of Friends, to discuss that point.

These are small quibbles, really. I enjoyed spending an hour in Lambert's company, wavering between being ushered on to the dancefloor and into the polling booth. His chat with MNEK about the use of pronouns in pop songs is complex and fascinating, as are Skin's insights into what she sees as the erasure of Skunk Anansie's biggest moment. As a whole, though, it feels like it is struggling to work out what the main event is meant to be.

The Stormtrooper Scandal
9pm, BBC Two

Wrap your head round the mind-boggling concept of NFTs – where modern art meets cryptocurrency – with this documentary about a contentious sale of works based on Star Wars Stormtrooper helmets. Artists, buyers and insiders help explain the story of the controversial man behind it all, Ben Moore – described more than once as a "chancer" – who became a millionaire overnight. But what was really going on?

Hollie Richardson

Question Time Leaders' Special
8pm, BBC One
Keir Starmer and Rishi Sunak face off for a mammoth debate (again), alongside Ed Davey and John Swinney, which gives host Fiona Bruce two whole hours to find a meaningful ideological difference between them. In past elections, the QT debate has often been the one to provide vote-winning or losing moments. **Jack Seale**

Tales of the Tardis
8pm, BBC Four
Two distinct eras collide in this new episode of the previously iPlayer-only anthology. In a cosy but cluttered "Memory Tardis", past Doctors and companions reflect on their vintage adventures from before the popular 2005 reboot. But in this special instalment, current incumbents Ncuti Gatwa and Millie Gibson join the nostalgic fun as the Doctor and Ruby. **Graeme Virtue**

Bill Bailey's Musical Master Crafters: Juniors
8pm, Sky Arts
Lovely Bill Bailey speaks to young musicians in this special episode of his wholesome music crafts series. A pianist and violinist are among those he chats to about their instruments' heritage, finding out the special ways in which they are maintained. **HR**

Outrageous Homes
10pm, Channel 4
"Where do you even start with putting velvet on a ceiling?" Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen sets the tone nicely for his new show in which he has a nosy around some of the nation's weirdest and most wonderful houses – a welcome bit of fun in the property TV canon. First up, he visits Highfield, a Treasure Island house built by the late Felix Dennis, the magazine publisher who lived for debauchery. **HR**

The Outlaws
10.40pm, BBC One
The outlaws are plotting a break-in to steal crucial evidence, which sets up the dream pairing of natural comedy duo Gabby (Eleanor Tomlinson) and Diane (Jessica Gunning). The two con their way into an architect's office using lines from Pretty Woman and the fantasy tabloid headline "Toff Tick-Tocker in Croc Shocker". Spin-off imminent. **Ellen E Jones**

What's On
Scan the QR code below to sign up for the What's On newsletter, our free TV email with the best reviews, news and exclusive writing direct to your inbox every Monday

BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **9.30** Morning Live (T) **10.45** Scam Interceptors (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **1.0** News (T) **1.35** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.45** News (T) **2.0** Hope Street (T) **2.45** Animal Park (T) (R) **3.15** Escape to the Country (T) **4.0** Euro 2024 (T) Denmark v England (kick-off 5pm). **7.30** News (T) **7.45** Regional News and Weather (T)

8.0 **Question Time Leaders' Special** (T) Fiona Bruce presents a two-hour edition of the political debate from York, with Rishi Sunak, Keir Starmer, Ed Davey and John Swinney facing questions from the audience.

10.0 **News** (T)
10.30 **Regional News** (T) Weather
10.40 **The Outlaws** (T) Ben is left with a difficult choice when old feelings are rekindled.
11.40 **Newscast** (T) BBC journalists round up events from the general election campaign.
12.10 **Rebus** (T) (R) **12.55** Euro 2024 Match Replay (T) **2.35** Weather (T) **2.40** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 **Scam Interceptors** (T) (R) **7.30** Clive Myrie's Caribbean Adventure (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Gardeners' World (T) (R) **9.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics Live (T) **1.0** Tennis: Queen's (T) **6.0** Richard Osman's House of Games (T) (R) **6.30** Robson Green's Weekend Escapes (T) (R) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** EastEnders (T)

8.0 **Inside the Factory XL: Diggers** (T) (R) Gregg Wallace and Cherry Healey visit the JCB factory in Rocester, Staffordshire.
9.0 **The Stormtrooper Scandal** (T) The story of London art curator Ben Moore and his controversial Art Wars NFT project – the sale of 1,100 Stormtrooper helmets.

10.30 **Newsnight** (T) Weather
11.05 **MOTD: Uefa Euro 2024 Highlights** (T) Alex Scott presents the latest action from Germany.
12.05 **Sign Zone** Springwatch (T) (R) **1.05** Doctor Who (T) (R) **1.50** Lost Boys and Fairies (T) (R) **2.50** On Thin Ice: Putin vs Greenpeace (T) (R) **3.20** This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV1

6.0 **Good Morning Britain** (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** News and Weather (T) **12.50** Local News and Weather (T) **1.0** Euro 2024 (T) Slovenia v Serbia (kick-off 2pm). **4.15** ITV Racing Live: Royal Ascot (T) **6.0** Local News and Weather (T) **6.30** News and Weather (T)

7.15 **Euro 2024** (T) Spain v Italy (kick-off 8pm). Coverage of the Group B match from Arena AufSchalke in Gelsenkirchen. Mark Pougatch presents, with analysis from Ian Wright, Roy Keane and Gary Neville, and commentary by Clive Tyldesley and Ally McCoist.

10.30 **News** (T) Weather
11.0 **Local News** (T) Weather
11.15 **Emergency Nurses: A&E Stories** (T) (R) The nurses face severed arteries.
12.15 **Made in Britain** (T) (R) **12.45** Shop on TV **3.0** Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace (T) (R) **3.50** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.05** Katie Piper's Breakfast Show (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.25 **Cheers** (T) (R) **7.15** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **9.05** Frasier (T) (R) **11.05** Great Canal Journeys (T) (R) **12.05** News (T) **12.10** Help! We Bought a Village (T) (R) **1.10** Car S.O.S (T) (R) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **5.0** Sun, Sea and Selling Houses (T) **6.0** Four in a Bed (T) (R) **6.30** The Simpsons (T) (R) **7.0** News (T) **7.55** Party Election Broadcast (T)

8.0 **The Supervet: Noel Fitzpatrick** (T) Stories of some of the youngest animals Noel has treated.
9.0 **George Clarke's Amazing Spaces** (T) New series. George has the idea of turning a rusty scissor lift into a cabin in the sky, and is in Denmark to see a modern take on a Viking longhouse.

10.0 **Outrageous Homes** (T)
11.05 **Celebrity Gogglebox** (T) (R)
12.05 **24 Hours in A&E** (T) (R) **1.0** Super Surgeons (T) (R) **1.55** 24 Hours to Hell and Back (T) (R) **2.40** The Simpsons (T) (R) **3.05** FILM Ladies Only (2021) Documentary. **4.30** Grand Designs Australia (T) (R) **5.20** Frasier (T) (R) **5.45** Countdown (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake! 9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.15** Storm Huntley (T) **12.45** Friends (T) (R) **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.20** FILM Set Up By My Lover (Roxanne Boisvert, 2021) (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) (R) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Party Election Broadcast (T) **6.05** Police Interceptors (T) (R) **7.0** Escape to the Farm With Kate Humble (T)

8.0 **Happy Campers: The Caravan Park** (T) In Tencreek Holiday Park in Cornwall, newly arrived campers Jason and family are tested by high winds and lashing rain.
9.0 **Cold Call** (T) (R) With nowhere else to turn and tensions rising, June and Kirk are both pushed to breaking point. Last in the series.

10.0 **HMP Full Sutton: Evil Behind Bars** (T) (R) Documentary.
11.25 FILM **Kong: Skull Island** (2017) (T) Action adventure, starring Tom Hiddleston.
1.35 **Live Casino Show** (T) **3.35** Britain By Bike With Larry & George Lamb (T) (R) **4.20** Call the Bailiffs: Time to Pay Up (T) (R) **5.05** Nick's Quest (T) (R) **5.35** Paw Patrol (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 **Great British Railway Journeys** (T) (R) Michael Portillo travels from Ealing Broadway to South Kensington. **7.30** Villages By the Sea (T) (R) A visit to Charlestown in Cornwall.

8.0 **Tales of the Tardis** (T) Ruby and the Doctor recall one of their adventures in space and time.
9.15 **Talking Doctor Who** (T) (R) As part of the 60th anniversary celebrations of Doctor Who, David Tennant goes back through the BBC archive to tell the story of the Doctor's classic era.

10.15 **Eileen Atkins Remembers Mrs Dalloway** (T)
10.30 FILM **Mrs Dalloway** (Marleen Gorris, 1997) (R) Adaptation of Virginia Woolf's novel.
12.05 **Glastonbury: 50 Years and Counting** (T) (R) **1.45** Great British Railway Journeys (T) (R) **2.15** Villages By the Sea (T) (R) **2.45** Tales of the Tardis (T) (R)

Other channels

BBC Three

7.0pm Top Gear **7.55** The Catch Up **8.0** The Traitors US **9.0** FILM Only You (2019) **10.55** Dreaming Whilst Black **11.20** Dreaming Whilst Black **11.50** Paranormal: The Village That Saw Aliens **12.20** Paranormal: The Village That Saw Aliens **12.50** Confessions of a Teenage Fraudster **1.35** Catch Her If You Can **2.05** Dreaming Whilst Black **2.30** Dreaming Whilst Black **3.0** Press X to Continue **3.10** Confessions of a Teenage Fraudster

Dave

6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Yianni: Supercar Customiser **7.35** Yianni: Supercar Customiser **8.0** Special Ops: Crime Squad UK **9.0** James May on the Moon **10.0** Top Gear **11.0** Top Gear **12.0** Storage Hunters UK **12.30** Storage Hunters UK **1.0** Storage Hunters UK **1.30** Storage Hunters UK **2.0** Extreme Fishing With Robson Green **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Top Gear **5.0** The Hairy Bikers' Chicken and Egg **6.0** Rick Stein's Secret France **7.0** Would I Lie to You? **7.40** Richard Osman's House of Games **8.20** Richard Osman's House of Games **9.0** QI XL **10.0** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **11.0** Taskmaster **12.0** Mock the Week **12.40** Alan Davies: As Yet Untitled **1.40** Dave Gorman: Modern Life Is Goodish **2.45** Live at the Apollo **3.30** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **4.0** Teleshopping

E4

6.0am Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **8.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **9.0** The Goldbergs **9.30** The Goldbergs **10.0** Young Sheldon **10.30** Young Sheldon **11.0** Modern Family **11.30** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory **2.0** The Goldbergs **2.30** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Young Sheldon **4.30** Young Sheldon **5.0** The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Come Dine With Me **8.0** Dance Moms **9.0** Gogglebox **10.0** Naked Attraction **11.05** First Dates **12.05** The Big Bang Theory **12.35** The Big Bang Theory **1.05** Rick and Morty **1.35** Smiling Friends **1.50** Smiling Friends **2.10** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **2.35** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **3.0** Dance Moms **3.50** Modern Family **4.15** Modern Family **4.40** The Neighborhood **5.05** The Neighborhood

Film4

11.0am FILM Rio Grande (1950) **1.15** FILM The Bridge on the River Kwai (1957) **4.30** FILM Yangtse Incident (1957) **6.45** FILM Star Trek: Nemesis (2002) **9.0** FILM Venom (2018) **11.10** FILM Angel Has Fallen (2019) **1.30** FILM Force 10 from Navarone (1978)

ITV2

6.0am CITV **9.0** World's Funniest Videos **9.30** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **10.0** Love Bites **11.0** Love Bites **12.0** Dress to Impress **1.0** Deal Or No Deal **2.0** Family Fortunes **3.0** Veronica Mars **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Celebrity Supermarket Sweep **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Deal Or No Deal **8.0** The Masked Singer US **9.0** Love Island **10.05** Tell Me Everything **11.05** Family Guy **11.35** Family Guy **12.05** American Dad! **1.10** Celebrity Karaoke Club **2.10** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.40** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping

Sky Max

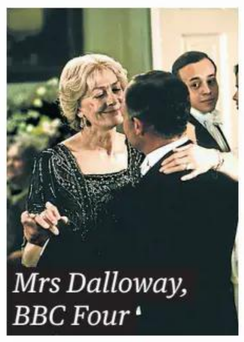
6.0am NCIS: Los Angeles **7.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **8.0** The Flash **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** NCIS: Los Angeles **12.0** The Flash **1.0** MacGyver **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** A Discovery of Witches **9.0** The Walking Dead: The Ones Who Live **10.0** A League of Their Own: Mexican Road Trip **11.0** The Walking Dead **12.0** S.W.A.T **1.0** Entourage **2.0** There's Something About Movies **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** Highway Patrol

Sky Arts

6.0am André Rieu: Happy Days Are Here Again **8.0** The Joy of Painting Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Bruce Willis **12.0** The Joy of Painting **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **1.30** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** The South Bank Show **3.0** The Art Mysteries **3.30** The Art Mysteries **4.0** Discovering: Michelle Pfeiffer **5.0** The Joy of Painting **5.30** The Joy of Painting **6.0** Tales of the Unexpected **6.30** Tales of the Unexpected **7.0** Painting Birds With Jim and Nancy Moir: Kids Special **8.0** Bill Bailey's Musical Master Crafters: Juniors **9.0** Discovering: Mel Gibson **10.0** Spike Milligan: The Unseen Archive **11.35** Decoding Turner **1.30** FILM The Lost Leonardo (2021) **3.10** A Play in a Day **4.10** Cheltenham Literature Festival **5.10** Auction **5.35** Auction

Sky Atlantic

6.0am Richard E Grant's Hotel Secrets **7.55** Six Feet Under **10.05** Gomorrah **12.10** Game of Thrones **1.15** The Sopranos **3.20** Six Feet Under **5.30** Gomorrah **7.30** Game of Thrones **9.0** House of the Dragon **10.15** Band of Brothers **11.25** Succession **12.40** Watchmen **1.50** Game of Thrones **3.25** In Treatment **4.0** Richard E Grant's Hotel Secrets



Mrs Dalloway, BBC Four

Radio

Radio 3

6.30am Breakfast **9.30** Essential Classics **1.0** Classical Live. Mikko Franck conducts the Radio France Philharmonic Orchestra in Sibelius's Symphony No 6 in D minor, Op 104. Plus, Vikingur Ólafsson plays Baldassare Galuppi's Piano Sonata No 34 in C minor: Larghetto and Mozart's Piano Sonata No 14 in C minor, K457. **4.0** Composer of the Week: Dvořák (4/5) **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** In Concert. Live from Snape Maltings Concert Hall, Ryan Wigglesworth conducts the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in Unsuk Chin's Cello Concerto (with soloist Alban Gerhardt) and Bruckner's Symphony No 7. **9.45** The Essay: The Sounds of Tyne. At the Castle Keep in Newcastle, Tara Bergin discovers two altar stones that were dredged up from the Tyne. (R) **10.0** Night Tracks **11.30** 'Round Midnight **12.30** Through the Night

Radio 4

6.0am Today **9.0** In Our Time (12/14) **9.45** NatureBang. Becky Ripley and Emily Knight explore orcas and the menopause. (2/5) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** This Cultural Life. Salman Rushdie talks to John Wilson about his creative influences. (12/14) **11.45** Book of the Week: The Stalin Affair. By Giles Milton. (4/10) **12.0** News **12.04** The Bottom Line (3/8) **12.32** Sliced Bread (7/10) **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** Understand: The UK Election (9/10) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** Middle Men. Comedy-drama, by Sid Sagar, about three middling referees vying for promotion. **3.0** Ramblings. Clare Balding and artist Shelly Perkins paint a field of bluebells in Shropshire. (1/7) **3.27** Radio 4 Appeal: Survivors Fund (Surf) (R) **3.30** Feedback. Listeners' views, with Andrea Catherwood. **4.0** The Briefing Room (12/14) **4.30** Inside Science **5.0** PM **5.57** Weather **6.0** News **6.30** Rhysearch. Rhys James addresses declining attention spans. With guest Gloria Mark. (1/5) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** The Media Show (R) **9.0** Loose Ends (R) **9.45** Empire of Tea (R) **9.59** Weather **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: Jensen. By Heidi Amsinck. (4/5) **11.0** The Today Podcast. The biggest news stories of the week. **11.30** Bonnie Bollywood: 25 Years of Indian Film-making in Scotland. Ravi Sagoo explores why the world's biggest film industry uses Scotland for location shooting. (R) **12.0** News and Weather **12.30** Book of the Week: The Stalin Affair (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News Briefing **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today

Radio 4 Extra

6.0am Boxer and Doberman (1/2) **6.30** Letters of Introduction (4/6) **7.0** Patterson (4/8) **7.30** Dad's Army (15/20) **8.0** For the Love of Leo (1/4) **8.30** Diary of a Young Naturalist (4/5) **8.45** Exile (9/10) **9.0** Rhysearch (3/3) **9.30** Self Drives: The Trabant (4/5) **9.45** Daily Service **10.0** Great Lives (5/8) **10.30** In Search of Southern Hospitality **11.0** Boxer and Doberman (1/2) **11.30** Letters of Introduction (4/6) **12.0** Patterson (4/8) **12.30** Dad's Army (15/20) **1.0** For the Love of Leo (1/4) **1.30** Diary of a Young Naturalist (4/5) **1.45** Exile (9/10) **2.0** The Unbelievable Truth (7/6) **2.30** The Leopard in Autumn (6/6) **3.0** Brideshead Revisited (3/4) **4.0** Great Lives (5/8) **4.30** In Search of Southern Hospitality **5.0** Boxer and Doberman (1/2) **5.30** Letters of Introduction (4/6) **6.0** Patterson (4/8) **6.30** Dad's Army (15/20) **7.0** For the Love of Leo (1/4) **7.30** Diary of a Young Naturalist (4/5) **7.45** Exile (9/10) **8.0** The Unbelievable Truth (7/6) **8.30** The Leopard in Autumn (6/6) **9.0** Brideshead Revisited (3/4) **10.0** Comedy Club: Rhysearch (3/3) **10.30** The Guns of Adam Riches (2/4) **10.55** The Comedy Club Interview **11.0** Clare in the Community (6/6) **11.30** And the Winner Is (5/6) **12.0** Great Lives (5/8) **12.30** In Search of Southern Hospitality **1.0** Boxer and Doberman (1/2) **1.30** Letters of Introduction (4/6) **2.0** Patterson (4/8) **2.30** Dad's Army (15/20) **3.0** For the Love of Leo (1/4) **3.30** Diary of a Young Naturalist (4/5) **3.45** Exile (9/10) **4.0** The Unbelievable Truth (7/6) **4.30** The Leopard in Autumn (6/6) **5.0** Brideshead Revisited (3/4)

TODAY'S TRIVIA CORNER ANSWER **TOKYO, 2020**

Yesterday's solutions

Wordsearch

Solution no 16,886

T	Y	R	R	H	E	N	I	A	N	S	E	A
O	■	U	■	A	■	A	■	W	■	O	■	N
P	U	D	■	P	A	N	O	R	A	M	I	C
U	■	O	■	P	■	T	■	Y	■	E	■	H
P	I	L	F	E	R	E	D	■	A	L	T	O
■	■	F	■	N	■	S	■	M	■	I	■	V
D	E	N	V	E	R	■	T	U	R	K	E	Y
I	■	U	■	D	■	B	■	T	■	E	■	■
S	U	R	F	■	F	R	U	I	T	I	O	N
M	■	E	■	F	■	O	■	N	■	T	■	Y
I	V	Y	L	E	A	G	U	E	■	H	A	M
S	■	E	■	R	■	U	■	E	■	O	■	P
S	E	V	E	N	Y	E	A	R	I	T	C	H

Sudoku no 6,520

1	6	5	9	8	3	4	7	2
7	8	4	1	6	2	5	3	9
2	9	3	4	7	5	1	6	8
5	1	8	2	3	6	7	9	4
9	3	2	7	5	4	6	8	1
4	7	6	8	1	9	2	5	3
8	2	9	5	4	7	3	1	6
6	5	1	3	2	8	9	4	7
3	4	7	6	9	1	8	2	5

Word wheel

HINDRANCE

Suguru

2	3	4	1	5	1
4	1	2	3	2	3
2	5	4	1	5	4
3	1	3	2	3	2
4	5	4	1	4	1
1	2	3	5	3	2

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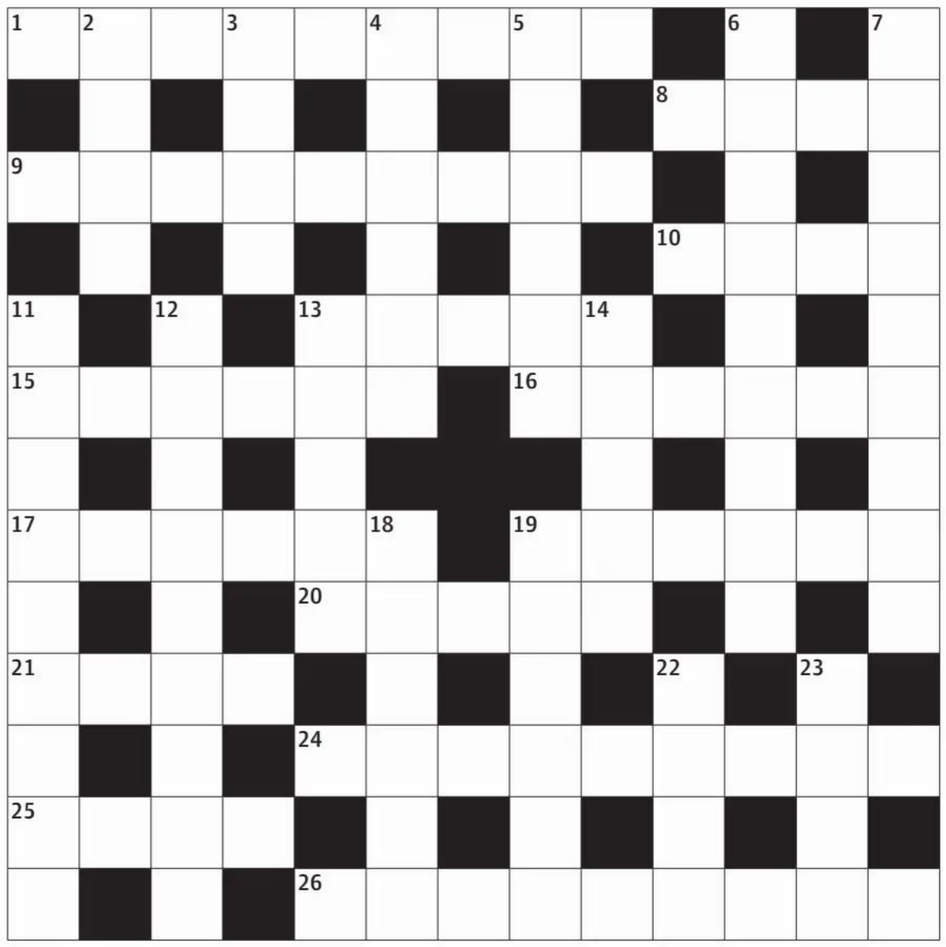
Quick crossword no 16,887

Across

1 That which follows a catastrophe (9)
8 Storyline - vegetable bed (4)
9 Periodical published once each in spring, summer, autumn and winter (9)
10 Answer - reflection (4)
13 Interweave (5)
15 Edible sticks (6)
16 Bug - listening bug! (6)
17 Supernatural (6)
19 Carrier (6)
20 Gourmand (5)
21 Ear dangler? (4)
24 Scarlet plant? (9)
25 Single part of a larger group (4)
26 Engine driver? (9)

Down

2 Pointy-eared Roman creature of the woods (4)
3 Currency of Germany (4)
4 In submissive manner (6)
5 Early film, with sound (6)
6 Mechanism - accuracy (9)
7 Aggressive (tactics) (6-3)
11 Term-time drop-off/collect routine (6,3)
12 Website content aimed at grabbing attention (9)
13 Loper (anag.) (5)
14 Prate (anag.) (5)
18 Moroccan stew (6)
19 Pager (6)
22 Viva (4)
23 Bill of fare (4)



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Sudoku no 6,521

Hard. Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9. Printable version at theguardian.com/sudoku

							1	
				2			3	7
			1		3	9		
		7			8		2	
	9				6	8		
		6	5	1		3		
		3		7	5			
4	1		6				8	3
	6						4	

Suguru

Fill the grid so that each square in an outlined block contains a digit. A block of two squares contains the digits 1 and 2, a block of three squares contains the digits 1, 2 and 3, and so on. No same digit appears in neighbouring squares, not even diagonally.

	4	1			
	2			3	
	4	5	2		

Wordsearch

Can you find 15 places to live in the grid? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight, unbroken line.

R	S	I	C	A	B	I	N	M
P	T	G	B	F	R	A	L	H
N	U	L	R	E	V	O	O	O
O	D	O	N	A	D	S	D	V
I	I	O	R	G	T	S	R	E
S	O	A	E	E	N	H	I	L
N	C	U	L	L	C	R	I	T
A	E	C	O	T	T	A	G	E
M	E	S	U	O	H	S	V	N
M	F	L	A	T	P	E	A	E
D	R	E	C	A	L	A	P	C

Word wheel

Find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each must use the central letter and at least two others. Letters may be used only once. You may not use plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. There is at least one nine-letter word to be found. TARGET: Excellent-55. Good-46. Average-34.

Trivia corner

In which Olympics did speed climbing make its debut?
a. Beijing, 2008
b. London, 2012
c. Rio, 2016
d. Tokyo, 2020
Answer top right