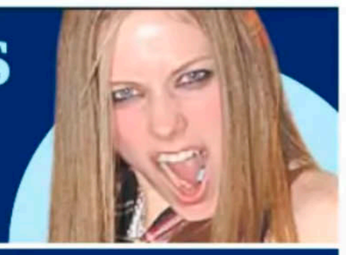


It's complicated Avril Lavigne's best songs – *ranked!*

Film & Music G2



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New blow for PM as former Tory minister says he will vote Labour

Exclusive Ex-net zero tsar accuses Sunak of politicising climate crisis

Pippa Crerar
Political editor

The Tories' former net zero tsar has revealed he intends to vote Labour for the first time because Rishi Sunak has been "siding with climate deniers" to politicise the energy transition.

Writing exclusively on the Guardian website, Chris Skidmore, a former energy minister, said he could not back the Tories, who had argued that net zero was "a burden and not a benefit", a decision that he said would cost the party votes.

In a deeply personal attack, he accused the prime minister of breaking the consensus of the past on climate action to "seek division and polarisation", suggesting it was the "greatest tragedy" of his premiership.

"Worse still has been the rhetoric and extreme tone that has sought to politicise net zero as being forced upon people, a false narrative that is either the product of ignorance, or deliberate misinformation," he said.

The former Tory MP, who attended cabinet in his previous role, becomes the most senior figure yet to switch his support to Labour, following a small handful of Tory backbench defections, in a further blow to Sunak's campaign.

The prime minister has had yet another difficult week, with four major polls suggesting the Tories are on track to suffer their worst ever defeat and senior cabinet ministers projected to lose their seats.

The polls, combined with warnings from Conservative figures that Labour would have unchecked power if it won a large majority, have raised suspicions that the party is now engaged in damage limitation rather than trying to win.

Sunak has also become mired in a row over alleged betting on the election date after it emerged that a second Tory candidate and the party's campaigns director were being looked into by the Gambling Commission. The watchdog is examining bets allegedly placed by Laura Saunders, the Tory candidate in Bristol North West, and her husband, Tony Lee, who is now on leave of absence from his job at party headquarters.

Last week the Guardian revealed that the prime minister's closest parliamentary aide, Craig Williams, had placed a £100 bet with Ladbrokes on a July poll, three days before Sunak announced the date.

Sunak has been widely criticised for allowing new

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PHOTOGRAPH: JANA RODENBUSCH/REUTERS

England labour to 1-1 draw against Denmark

Gareth Southgate's side moved a step closer to the last 16 of the Euros yesterday, with Harry Kane's goal a rare bright spot in a lacklustre performance. They now face Slovenia on Tuesday. **News** *Page 4* →

Misogynist Andrew Tate praised by Farage

Rowena Mason
Ben Quinn

Nigel Farage has praised Andrew Tate for being an "important voice" for the "emasculated" and giving boys "perhaps a bit of confidence at school", in interviews apparently aimed at young men over the past year.

The Reform UK leader spoke in favour of the misogynist influencer for defending "male culture" in a Strike It Big podcast aired in February, while acknowledging Tate had gone "over the top" and elsewhere that he had said some "pretty horrible" things.

Since December 2022, Tate has been facing charges in Romania of human trafficking, rape, and forming a criminal gang to sexually exploit women, which he denies.

Many politicians and teachers have spoken out against the influence of Tate on young boys in the UK, with the self-proclaimed misogynist saying women belong in the home, and are a man's property. "There's no way you can be

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Outgoing Dutch PM Rutte wins race to be next leader of Nato



▼ *Mark Rutte needed the agreement of all 32 member states to take over as secretary general of Nato*
PHOTOGRAPH: JOHANNA GERON/REUTERS

Jennifer Rankin
Brussels

The outgoing Dutch prime minister, Mark Rutte, has won the race to become the head of Nato at a perilous moment for the western alliance, after his only rival withdrew his bid.

The long-serving Dutch leader is expected to be confirmed formally as Nato's secretary general in the coming days and take over when Jens Stoltenberg steps down on 1 October after nearly a decade in charge.

Rutte's imminent appointment comes as Ukraine faces relentless pressure from Russian bombardment in its eastern regions, while the Nato-sceptic Donald Trump vies for another term in the White House.

Rutte, 57, is a strong supporter of Ukraine and quickly won the support of key Nato countries, including the US, the UK, France and Germany, after he threw his hat in the ring following his decision to retire from Dutch politics.

Although he is a critic of Vladimir Putin, Rutte could be seen as less hawkish than possible candidates from central and eastern Europe, making him a near consensus choice.

But to secure the job, which requires unanimous agreement of Nato's 32 members, he had to win an endorsement from a wary Turkey, then overcome opposition from Hungary.

The final hurdle fell yesterday when the Romanian president, Klaus Iohannis, announced he was withdrawing from the race. Romania will back Rutte and donate one of its two operational Patriot missile systems to Ukraine on condition that allies replace it with a similar air defence system, Bucharest's supreme defence council, chaired by Iohannis, said.

On Tuesday Rutte persuaded Viktor Orbán to support his bid, overcoming years of tensions between the EU's two longest-serving leaders over democratic standards in Hungary and EU spending. Rutte once said Hungary had "no business being in the European Union any more" owing to anti-LGBTQ+ legislation.

At a meeting in Brussels, Rutte gave the Hungarian leader assurances that no Hungarian troops or money would be deployed in Ukraine, in line with an existing agreement. Slovakia, another holdout, soon followed in announcing its support for Rutte.

Rutte takes the reins of the alliance after nearly 14 years as Dutch prime minister and 18 as leader of his liberal People's party for Freedom and Democracy. He is the great survivor of Dutch politics, nicknamed "Teflon Mark" for his ability to avoid being tainted by scandals. For years his no-nonsense persona endeared him to Dutch voters, propelling him to lead four coalition governments in a row. In one viral video, he insisted on mopping up coffee he had spilled, as cleaning staff applauded and he laughed at his own clumsiness.

Well known for cycling to work – or driving a battered Saab when in a hurry – Rutte does his own supermarket shopping and lives in the same part of The Hague where he grew up, in a house he bought with friends as a student. For several years he has taught social studies once a week at a Dutch high school. "Maybe I'll do it a couple of times a week," he said last July when he said he would not run for election again, after his coalition collapsed over immigration policy.

Another nickname is the "Trump whisperer" for his ability to manage the former US president, who may return to the White House next year. Rutte is widely credited with rescuing a 2018 Nato summit by talking Trump around on defence spending.

Under Rutte, the Dutch government has given Ukraine €2.6bn (£2.2bn) in military support and promised a further €2bn for 2024. "Ukraine must win this battle. For their security and ours," Rutte said. He also led a push to give Kyiv F-16 fighter jets, a decision described by President Volodymyr Zelenskiy as "historic" on a trip to the Netherlands.

The shooting down of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over Ukraine in 2014, with 196 Dutch people among 298 killed, was a defining moment in Dutch attitudes towards the Kremlin. Two weeks after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Rutte described Putin as "cold-hearted, brutal, merciless".

Ukraine has also revealed Rutte's evolving views towards the EU. "He's been on a journey," one EU diplomat said. "There has been a clear trajectory, going from 'the EU is a market' towards 'we need to defend Ukraine to defend our values'."

Early in his premiership, his wariness of some EU integration made him a close ally of the then UK prime minister, David Cameron. But the chaos unleashed by Brexit, as well as the 2015-16 migration crisis, reconciled Rutte to the EU as a foreign policy player. "There is no such thing as splendid isolation," Rutte said in 2019 in a landmark speech when he called for a stronger, more united Europe to deal with global problems.

Rutte has never been afraid to speak his mind, once arriving for EU budget negotiations with a biography of Frédéric Chopin to get through the night because "what else is there to do". The former German chancellor Angela Merkel was said to be irritated by his behaviour.

That bluntness was on display at the Munich security conference in February when he said Europe had to work "with whoever is on the dancefloor". "All that whining and moaning about Trump – I hear that constantly over the last couple of days, let's stop doing that," he said.

Sellafield pleads guilty to IT security failings at nuclear site

Anna Isaac
Alex Lawson

The UK's most hazardous nuclear site, Sellafield, has pleaded guilty to criminal charges related to cybersecurity failings brought by the industry regulator.

Lawyers acting for Sellafield told Westminster magistrates court yesterday that cybersecurity requirements were "not sufficiently adhered to for a period" at the vast nuclear waste dump in Cumbria.

The charges relate to information technology security offences spanning a four-year period from 2019 to 2023. It emerged in March that the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) intended to prosecute Sellafield for technology security offences.

Late last year the Guardian's Nuclear Leaks investigation revealed a catalogue of IT failings at the site dating back several years.

Sellafield pleaded guilty to a charge that it had failed to "ensure that there was adequate protection of sensitive nuclear information on its information technology network", the Financial Times reported.

The Guardian reported last year that the site systems had been hacked by groups linked to Russia and China in December last year, embedding sleeper malware that could lurk and be used to spy or attack systems. At the time, Sellafield said it did not have evidence of a successful cyber-attack.

Paul Greaney KC, acting for Sellafield, told the court: "It is important to emphasise there was not and has never been a successful cyber-attack on Sellafield."

Greaney added that Sellafield's systems were now robust and said media reports of hacks were "false".

An ONR spokesperson said: "We acknowledge that Sellafield Limited has pleaded guilty to all charges.

"There is no evidence that any vulnerabilities have been exploited," the spokesperson said, adding that owing to active legal proceedings the ONR could not offer further detail.

Sentencing is expected to take place on 8 August. The site has the largest store of plutonium in the world and is a sprawling rubbish dump for nuclear waste from weapons programmes and decades of atomic power generation.

The Guardian investigation revealed a string of IT issues, including concerns about external contractors being able to plug memory sticks into its computer system while unsupervised.

The investigation found problems had been known by senior figures at the nuclear site for at least a decade, according to a report dated from 2012, which warned there were "critical security vulnerabilities" that needed to be addressed urgently.

Sellafield's computer servers were deemed so insecure that the problem was nicknamed Voldemort after the Harry Potter villain, according to a government official familiar with the ONR investigation and IT failings at the site, because it was so sensitive and dangerous.

At the time, Sellafield said: "All of our systems and servers have multiple layers of protection."

"Critical networks that enable us to operate safely are isolated from our general IT network, meaning an attack on our IT system would not penetrate these," a spokesperson said.

Britain's public spending watchdog, the National Audit Office, launched an investigation into risks and costs at Sellafield earlier this year.



◀ *Sellafield has suffered a catalogue of failures dating back several years, including a cyber-attack on its systems by groups with links to Russia and China*





▼ *The historic British Antarctic station, Port Lockroy on Goudier Island. Left, staff in the shop there*
PHOTOGRAPH: RADHARC IMAGES ALAMY

Fidlets, fingies and doo-riding: study reveals cool secrets of Antarctic English slang

Eva Corlett
Wellington

If you know what it means to be a "fidlet" going for a "jolly" in your "doo", then you are part of an exclusive club that speaks colloquial Antarctic English.

A New Zealand linguistics doctorate graduate from the University of Canterbury has completed a world-first study into colloquial Antarctic English, spoken at the US, British and New Zealand Antarctic research stations.

While there have been previous literary studies into Antarctica English vocabulary, Dr Steph Kaefer's study marks the first time a researcher has visited Antarctica to document the unique colloquialisms used in daily life.

Over three weeks in 2019, Kaefer spent time at three English-speaking Antarctic stations observing and gathering data from workers based on what the US station refers to as "the Ice", or the British call the "South".

Initially prompted by a love of the continent, Kaefer was further inspired to investigate Antarctica's vocabulary after reading an academic's article discussing how newcomers to the continent were struck by the distinctive vocabulary.

"Some of it was mundane, talking about the weather conditions, organisation of the community and day-to-day operations, but he did say some of the lexicon was richly figurative," Kaefer said.

Before embarking on her trip, Kaefer expected to find a pan-Antarctic vocabulary, but quickly discovered there were distinct colloquialisms within each station.

Americans, for example, call newcomers to Antarctica "fingies", which comes from FNGs – a borrowed military abbreviation that stands for "fucking new guy".

The British use the term "fidlets", a diminutive of "Fid", which in turn is an acronym for Falkland Island Dependencies, the former name of the British Antarctic Survey.

A non-work excursion away from the station in US Antarctic English is a "boondoggle", or a "jolly" for the Britons. A snow mobile is "snow machine" for the US workers and a "doo" at the British station. New Zealanders, Kaefer said, tend to adopt colloquialisms from the Americans, due to the closeness of their research stations, but a few original terms stood out.

"Nose wipers" refer to the large protective gloves used in extreme weather conditions, while being "tray'd" refers to the last person to put their dish in the dishwasher after a meal and who now must empty it.

'Words get preserved because there is not as much backwards and forwards with the language'

Dr Steph Kaefer
Linguist



Colloquial words and expressions in Antarctica often borrow from military, navy and mountaineering terms but not exclusively.

Sometimes terms are newly created on site, but mostly, they are English words repurposed for the environment or lifestyle.

Kaefer added: "For example, the word 'toasted' refers to an individual who is burnt out from serving a winter. So for someone who has just come out of that, you would say 'he's pretty toasted'."

Kaefer said it is difficult to pinpoint exactly how some words came into common use, but Antarctica's isolation likely plays a part into why some words such as "boondoggle" – an old US term – may have lingered on.

"It's possible when we started building research stations in the 50s and 60s words like 'boondoggle' might have been common at that time and it became a regular part of speech in Antarctic culture it can take on a life of its own."

Antarctica, like outer space, is known as an ICE environment – isolated, confined and extreme – meaning that unlike other isolated communities, the rate of change for its vocabulary can be slower. Dr Kaefer was expecting to see evidence of younger generations bringing in new slang words over time but was surprised not to see this happening.

"It goes against what linguistic theories tell us; we would expect the changes be faster, especially in an isolated environment. But the community I researched is different to other isolated communities in that it's not just isolated but also confined and extreme," she said.

"That's a really cool linguistic phenomenon, where [words] get preserved or fossilised in Antarctica because there is not as much backwards and forwards with the language."

A previous experiment analysing recordings of scientists at the British Antarctic Survey's Rothera Research Station on Adelaide Island found that they began to develop their own accent. A team of phonetics researchers at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich in Germany listening to recordings of the same words over six months discovered some shifts in the pronunciation of vowels, with sounds converging to match others at the station.

Same-sex encounters in animals 'more common than reported'

Hannah Devlin
Science correspondent

George Murray Levick, an explorer with the Scott Antarctic expedition, spent the southern summer of 1911-12 taking detailed notes on the breeding cycle of Adélie penguins. Male penguins, he was surprised to discover, frequently had sex with other males, but this fact was deemed too shocking for the official expedition report, and it was 50 years before it was noted in the scientific literature.

Today, same-sex sexual behaviour has been reported in a wide variety of species, but an analysis suggests a gulf remains between how often it happens and how often we hear about it. A survey of scientists found they widely observe, yet seldom publish on, same-sex sexual behaviour in primates and other mammals.

"This appears to be due to a perception of researchers that same-sex sexual behaviour is very rare," said Karyn Anderson, a graduate student in anthropology at the University of Toronto, and first author. "We found, however, that it was commonly observed by our survey participants."

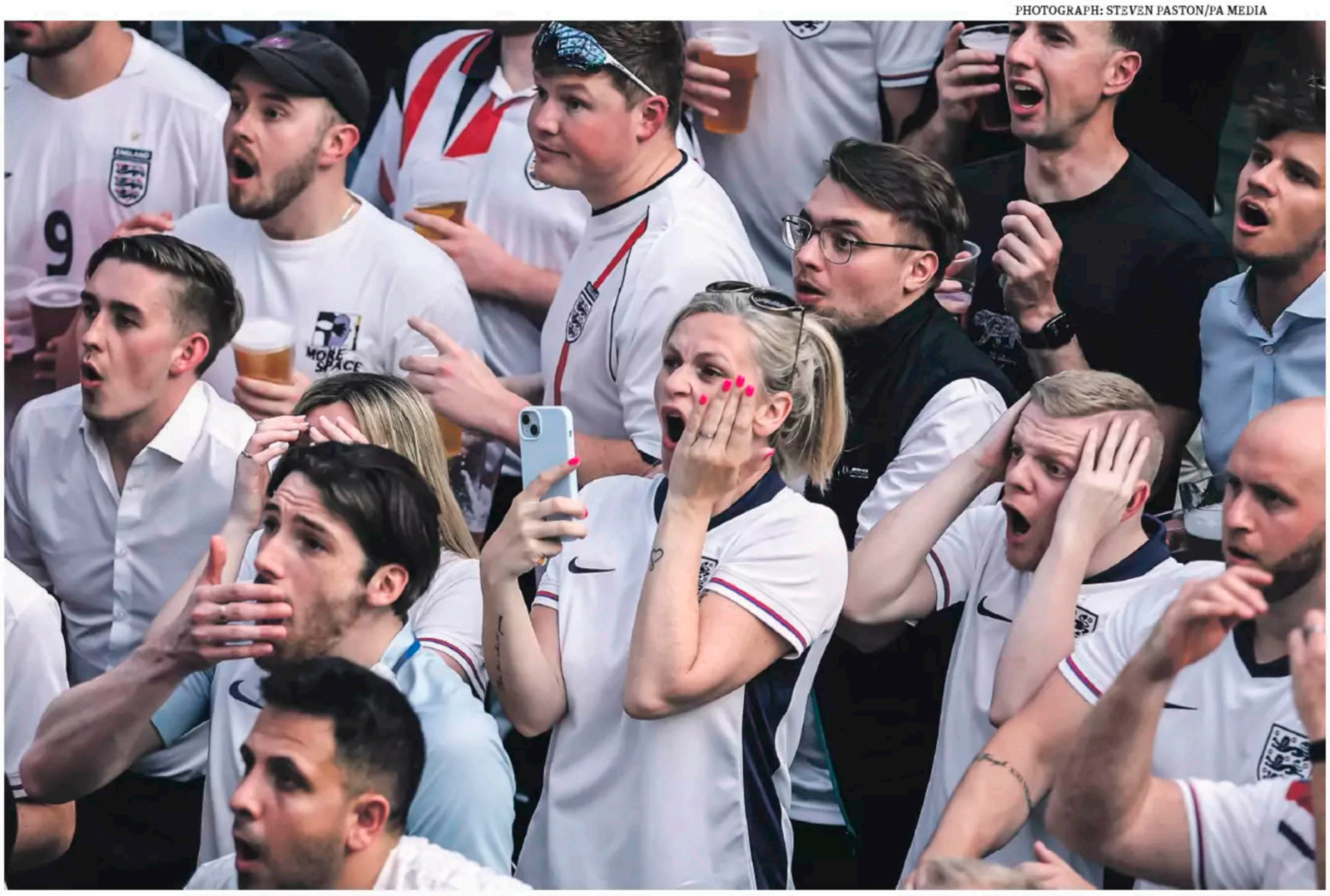
The survey found that, of 65 researchers working on 52 species, 77% had observed same-sex sexual behaviour such as mounting. But only 48% had collected data and just 19% had published their findings, according to the study in PLOS One.



▶ *Japanese macaques are among the species known for same-sex activity*

Penguins and Japanese macaques have become poster animals for same-sex couplings, but tend to be presented as outliers. However, the latest analysis highlighted observations of same-sex couplings in many species with no previous reports, including mole-rats, squirrels and various monkeys.

Anderson said the perception that same-sex sexual behaviour was rare in animals had fed into a narrative that it was "unnatural" in humans. "I think that record should be corrected," she said. "One thing I think we can say for certain is that same-sex sexual behaviour is widespread and natural in the animal kingdom."



▼ *England supporters at the Greenwich fan park in London watch their team labour to a 1-1 draw*

PHOTOGRAPH: STEVEN PASTON/PA MEDIA

Same old England

Party falls flat as error-strewn draw frustrates players and supporters alike





▲ *Watching the game at the fan zone in Frankfurt, where joy at England's early goal was short-lived*

PHOTOGRAPH: NEIL BAYNES/GETTY

Gareth Southgate took off goalscorer Harry Kane

Paul MacInnes
Frankfurt

England remain on course to qualify for the knockout stages of Euro 2024 by topping group C, but you could be forgiven for imagining they were going home already after a lethargic error-strewn 1-1 draw with Denmark left fans segueing from jeers to boos as the final whistle was blown.

After a day of raucous but law-abiding behaviour in the centre of Frankfurt, an estimated 20,000 Three Lions fans made the journey to the Frankfurt Arena, but judging by their mood afterwards a fair number regretted their decision. "Crap", "dreadful", "awful" and "same old, same old" were some of the printable responses.

England took an early lead through Harry Kane, with the England skipper tucking away a deflected cross from Kyle Walker. They started to struggle immediately after, however, and a 35-yard rocket from Morton Hjulmand levelled matters just after the half hour. The second half was a meandering mish-mash.

"It was absolutely awful," said Ben Evans, who had travelled from Devon for the match. "They were trying to play safe football but it ended up being risky. It was agony, but then I think they wanted a point and they got it. And maybe if I hadn't paid €100 for a ticket I might feel differently about it."

Ben from Tunbridge Wells did not dissent from the common view but identified another factor in England's poor show. "It was dry," he said. "But to be honest the Danish fans outdid us. They were organised, all coming in the same colours, creating that wall of red in the ground. I don't know when they practised their chants but everyone knew every word and it affected the game on the field. I'm an Arsenal fan and Declan Rice is always an 8 out of 10, but he looked rattled tonight."

'It was absolutely awful. They were trying to play safe but it ended up risky'

Ben Evans

The Danes had arrived at the stadium having completed an organised march through the centre of Frankfurt to the main train station. They had new chants slamming the English (to the tune of Yellow Submarine: "England, England, it's never coming home"). They all wore red. It felt like they saw this as a derby match. For England fans, meanwhile, there was more of an emphasis on partying, perhaps in anticipation of not entirely enjoying themselves at the match.

To a backdrop of picturesque half-timber houses and the Old St Nicholas church, fans had descended on the central Romerberg square to chug crates of beer, boot oversized tennis balls in the air and sing songs that baited not the Danes, but the Germans.

While it was rowdy, this situation was not dangerous, a reflection on the continued good behaviour of England fans and a different approach by police from that experienced last weekend in Gelsenkirchen, when England played Serbia. While various young men stripped themselves to the waist and indulged in the highlight of the afternoon, a bellyflop contest into the square's Fountain of Justice, Frankfurt police maintained a discreet distance.

A polite announcement from a loudspeaker on top of a van encouraged fans to make their move to the Frankfurt Arena three hours before kick-off, a request which wasn't promptly followed by most. Meanwhile, the Danes were marching through Frankfurt's financial centre testing out their new chants. The Danish parade eventually became that wall of red along the north side of the Frankfurt Arena. On the south side was a less visually striking, but equally voluble England end.

Both sides were equally cheered and jeered on to the pitch, both national anthems were (just about) respected and sung volubly. A full throttle contest was expected. That was not the way it turned out.

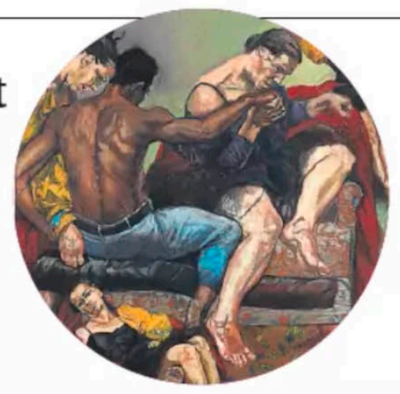
The Danes, whose fans had begun to whistle in frustration at their team, were soon roaring in jubilation as Hjulmand scored.

As England looked increasingly shell-shocked, Danish fans indulged in the full range of mocking chants, pinched from English grounds. "You only sing when you're winning" and "Champions of Europe, you'll never sing that", they sang. At the end, they were also the ones cheering.

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Ian McKellen to miss the rest of show's run
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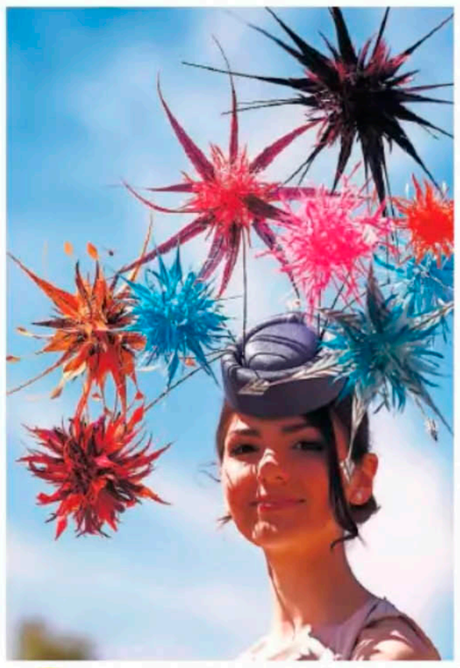
Paula Rego
Work expected to set record at auction
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National









Feathers and stars On the third day of Royal Ascot, known as Ladies' Day, punters took advantage of the dry weather to display a variety of head gear. Clockwise, from top left: a floaty pink creation; flowers bedeck a saucer-shaped hat; a snowy owl and feathery nest complete an all-white ensemble; and stars of many colours burst from a pillbox hat.

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHUTTERSTOCK; REUTERS; PA

Rate of E coli cases linked to lettuce slowing after at least 86 hospitalised

Tobi Thomas
Health and inequalities correspondent

At least 86 people have been admitted to hospital as a result of an *E coli* outbreak linked to lettuce, health officials have said.

A further 45 cases of *E coli* infection have been confirmed since 18 June, bringing the number of confirmed cases across the UK 256.

According to the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), those affected had developed symptoms before 31 May.

The UKHSA said: "Although the rate of cases has now slowed, we expect the figure to rise as NHS laboratories refer specimens to UKHSA for genomic sequencing which can link cases to this outbreak strain."

Food manufacturers have recalled sandwiches, wraps and salads sold in major supermarkets and retail chains over fears they are linked to the outbreak.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has said lettuce is thought to be the likely source of the outbreak. All the recorded cases involve Shiga toxin-producing *E coli* O145 (Stec).

Darren Whitby, the FSA head of incidents, said: "Several sandwich manufacturers have now taken precautionary action to withdraw and recall various sandwiches, wraps, subs and rolls, as food chain and epidemiological links have enabled us to narrow down a wide range of foods consumed to a small number of salad leaves ... used in these products.

"This remains a complex investigation and we continue to work at pace with the relevant businesses and local authorities to ensure necessary steps are being taken to protect consumers."

He added: "Although we are confident in the source of the outbreak being linked to a small number of salad leaves, which we identified early on through extensive food chain analysis, work continues to identify the root cause of the outbreak with the growers, suppliers and manufacturers so that actions can be taken to prevent a reoccurrence. We will remain vigilant until the root cause of the outbreak is confirmed."

E coli is a vast group of bacteria, with some strains producing toxins that can make people severely ill. Symptoms include bloody diarrhoea, stomach cramps and a high fever.

Stec is often transmitted by eating contaminated food but can also be spread by close contact with an infected person.

NHS emergency care embroiled in summer crisis, doctors warn

Andrew Gregory
Health editor

The NHS is engulfed in a summer crisis, senior doctors have warned, amid severe ambulance delays, corridors crowded with trolleys and patients facing 25-hour waits in A&E units.

The Royal College of Emergency Medicine sounded the alarm over the "national scandal" of long waits for emergency care it said were leading to "entirely preventable" deaths at a time of the year when there should be some respite from the traditional pressure experienced over winter.

Elderly people in particular were facing the brunt of the impact, with many forced to endure horrific long waits for a bed once a decision has been taken to admit them to hospital, the college said.

A snapshot survey by the RCEM of emergency department chiefs from across the UK, conducted between Monday and Wednesday, exposed the extent of the summer crisis.

Nine in 10 (91%) of 63 A&E bosses admitted NHS patients were "coming into harm" in their wards due to the quality of care that can be delivered under current conditions. Eighty-seven per cent said they had patients being treated in corridors, and 68% said they had patients waiting in ambulances outside their A&E.

One emergency department leader revealed one of their patients this week waited more than 19 hours for a hospital bed to come available once a decision was made to admit them after they had already waited six hours to be seen.

"It very much used to be the case that A&E clinicians would expect a spike in demand in the colder months due to the usual season illnesses and there would be some slight respite and time to regroup in the summer," the RCEM president, Dr Adrian Boyle, said. "But those days are long gone."

Boyle told the Guardian the NHS was trapped in a "Narnian" winter "permacrisis" all year round.

The warning came a week after the latest NHS figures revealed the overall waiting list in England had risen for the first time in seven months.

An estimated 7.57m treatments were waiting to be carried out at the end of April, relating to 6.33 million patients - up from 7.54m treatments and 6.29 million patients at the end of March, NHS England said.

Boyle has written to the major political parties. In the letter, he described the summer crisis as "nothing short of a national scandal" as he called for specific commitments to address problems in A&Es.

The survey results showed "the level of harm and risk our patients are being exposed to, as recently as yesterday," he added. "These responses reveal the true and shameful reality of the state of emergency care in the UK. Last year the deaths of more than 250 people a week were associated with long waits in emergency departments - that's the equivalent of [an] aeroplane full of people every seven days. These deaths are entirely preventable if long waits before admission were addressed and eradicated.

"But as the political parties detail their plans and commitments ahead of the general election, we have yet to see one specific policy in any manifesto aimed at tackling this scandalous and shameful situation.

"The risk to patients' lives is very real, it is very serious and is happening right now. People are dying, and all we have from those hoping to form the next government is a deafening silence on this issue, which really is a matter of life and death."

The Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats have pledged to tackle NHS waits in their manifestos.

The shadow health secretary, Wes Streeting, said: "24 Hours In A&E was a TV programme - under the Tories it's a grim reality for patients. We'll fix the front door of the NHS by bringing back the family doctor, so patients aren't forced to A&E because they can't get a GP appointment."

Sunak urged to suspend second Tory candidate in gambling row



Pippa Crerar
Matthew Weaver

Rishi Sunak has become mired in a row over alleged betting on the general election date after it emerged that a second Conservative candidate and the party's campaigns director were being looked into by the Gambling Commission.

The watchdog is examining bets allegedly placed by Laura Saunders, the Tory candidate in Bristol North West, and her husband, Tony Lee, who is now on a leave of absence from his job at party headquarters.

It is not known when the alleged bets were placed or for how much.

Labour called for the Tories to suspend Saunders from the party. The Labour leader, Keir Starmer, said: "This candidate should be suspended, and it's very telling that Rishi Sunak has not already done that. If it was one of my candidates, they'd be gone and their feet would not have touched the floor."

The Liberal Democrats called for a Cabinet Office inquiry. The party's leader, Ed Davey, said: "I think it's quite awful. It needs a heavy hand from the top."

The cabinet minister Michael Gove said the situation "doesn't look great" for the Conservatives but the commission had to get on with its investigation, while the former party leader Iain Duncan Smith also criticised party officials and candidates who were potentially involved.

A Tory spokesperson said the party had been contacted by the watchdog about "a small number of individuals" who had allegedly placed bets on a July election. A party insider said they were not aware of any more cases beyond those already in the public domain.

Saunders is "considering legal action against the BBC" and other outlets "who infringe her privacy rights", after the broadcaster first reported she was being investigated.

Sunak told a BBC Question Time audience last night he was "incredibly angry" about the Tory betting allegations. "I want to be crystal clear that ... if anyone is found to have broken the rules, not only should they face the full consequences of the law, I will make sure they are booted out of the Conservative party," he said.

Last week the Guardian revealed that the prime minister's closest parliamentary aide, Craig Williams, placed a £100 bet with Ladbrokes at 5-1 on a July poll, three days before Sunak announced the date.

The Guardian later revealed that the Gambling Commission asked bookmakers to trawl through all substantial bets placed on a July election.

The watchdog wrote to all licensed bookmakers requesting information on anyone who stood to gain more than £199 by betting on a July election in the UK.

Saunders has worked for the Tories since 2015 and is standing as the party's candidate in Bristol North West, which Labour held on the old boundaries with a 5,700 majority. She has not commented on the allegations.

Williams, 39, is the Tory candidate for Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr in mid-Wales. He had a majority of 12,000 before the boundary change.

After the Guardian's revelation, he apologised for placing the bet three days before Sunak announced the date, saying he had made a "huge error of judgment". The prime minister said he was "disappointed".

The Guardian understands the Tory party opened a formal HR process when they were notified of the watchdog's inquiries, but has now put that on hold.

Separately, one of Sunak's close protection officers was arrested on Monday over alleged bets about the timing of the election, on suspicion of misconduct in public office.

The Metropolitan police said they were contacted last Friday by the commission, which said it was looking into 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 removed from operational duties," the force said.

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

The commission said: "This is an ongoing investigation, and the commission cannot provide any further details at this time. We are not confirming or denying the identity of any individuals involved in this investigation."

Labour's campaign chief, Pat McFadden, who has written to Sunak urging the Tories to withdraw support from Saunders and Williams while they are being looked into, said the Tories needed to say "how wide this scandal goes".

£100

Sum wagered by Craig Williams, the PM's closest parliamentary aide, on an election in July

'Who do you trust?'

Election date scandal could linger in public awareness

Dan Sabbagh
Jim Waterson

When Rishi Sunak called a general election in the pouring rain last month, he must have been have hoping his party would close at least some of the 20-point deficit in the opinion polls.

Instead, it seems the only members of his party who have profited since are some of his Downing street aides – in a political betting scandal that has swiftly reinforced prevailing anti-Conservative stereotypes in the British public's imagination.

A week ago, the Guardian revealed that Craig Williams, Rishi Sunak's parliamentary private secretary, an otherwise obscure politician with an intimate knowledge of Downing Street, had placed a £100 bet on his boss calling an early general election in July.

The odds were 5-1, hardly enough to be worth risking a reputation over. But nevertheless, even though Williams only stood to gain £500, he thought it worth placing a bet on Sunday 19 May with a rural Welsh bookmaker. Three days later, a rain-soaked Sunak made his surprise announcement, asking the British public on 22 May: "Who do you trust?"

Before that Wednesday morning, few in Britain had expected an election to be called before the summer.

Williams' bet raised the question of whether word of the prime minister's plan had spread and he was relying on inside information, and the industry's regulator, the Gambling Commission, began an inquiry. Cheating – betting on an event where you already know the outcome – is illegal in English and Welsh law.

However, it was a question the gilet-wearing Williams studiously avoided when the BBC caught up with him the day after. "I'm not expanding, because it is an independent process," Williams said with the television cameras following him, although he was willing to admit the bet was "a huge error of judgment".

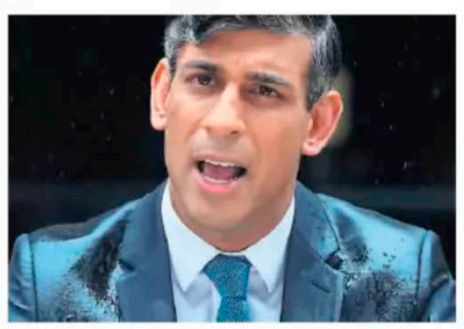
Political scandals in Britain do not have to involve large sums of money – but they linger in the public imagination if they feel politicians have been acting with impunity.

Fifteen years ago, dozens of MPs were forced out after an expenses scandal. One Tory quit after asking taxpayers for £1,645 for an ornamental duck house.

The Gambling Commission widened its investigation, looking at last-minute bets on a July election where anybody stood to gain more than the relatively modest sum of £199. Other data already suggested several gamblers were making last minute online bets on a surprise July election.

A Guardian analysis shows that a sudden flood of bets on a July election was placed on Tuesday 21 May on the Betfair Exchange, before Sunak even told his own cabinet that the early election was going ahead.

Between January and May an average of £27 a day was gambled on Sunak calling a general election in July, with most people betting just a few pounds on what was seen as an unlikely outcome. Then, the day before Sunak's announcement, a total £3,285 was gambled on Betfair in dozens of bets. Some punters bet hundreds of pounds on the date, suggesting a serious confidence, driving the odds down.



▲ *Accusations about election bets are more setbacks for Rishi Sunak*

▼ *The Gambling Commission is investigating bets allegedly made by Laura Sanders, centre, the Tory candidate for Bristol North West*



'This looks as if there is one rule for the Tories and another for everyone else'

Pat McFadden
Labour party

Although the data is from one specialist online bookmaker, it suggested the scale of bets across the industry may have been much more substantial – as the Gambling Commission's own inquiries appeared to be bearing out.

On Monday, a police bodyguard, whose job it was to protect Sunak from terror attacks and other physical threats, was arrested after allegedly placing a bet on the timing of the election. Then it emerged two more Conservatives were involved.

Laura Saunders, the party's candidate in Bristol North West, was under scrutiny over an election day bet, the BBC revealed. Her husband, Tony Lee, the party's director of campaigns, was placed on leave of absence – and the Conservatives admitted that "a small number of individuals" were being investigated.

Pat McFadden, the Labour party's national campaign coordinator, said he did not understand why it was only the police officer that had been suspended: "This looks as if there is one rule for members of the Tory party, and another rule for everybody else."

Betting on stupidity

Did they see a gap in the metaphors market?

Marina Hyde's campaign trail



Break out the comedy air quotes, because Tony Lee, the Conservative party's director of campaigning has taken a "leave of absence". A development to which one's immediate response is: wait, this Conservative campaign has a director??? Does he work in the snuff genre? If not, this is surely the Heaven's Gate of general election campaigns – and you have to remember that fabled cinematic flop collapsed not simply an entire genre (the western), nor simply an entire legacy movie studio (United Artists), but the entire promise-filled era of film-making known as the New Hollywood.

Righto: metaphors. In the weeks leading up to Rishi Sunak's general election announcement, you would think the one thing the party that had been in charge for 14 years wasn't short of was metaphors.

Britain was now a country whose own excrement was literally lapping at its shores. Britain was now a country whose prime minister travelled from central London to Manchester to announce that the government's flagship central-London-to-Manchester rail project would no longer be going to Manchester – or indeed to central London. Say what you will about recent administrations but you absolutely could not question the commitment to creating their own metaphors. It was possibly our last manufacturing success story.

Which brings us to the revelation that two Tory parliamentary candidates are under investigation by the Gambling Commission for placing bets on the election date before it was formally announced.

Last week the Guardian revealed Sunak's closest parliamentary aide, Craig Williams, had placed a £100 on the date. On Wednesday evening, the BBC revealed a police officer in Sunak's protection detail had been arrested and suspended over an election timing bet. Hours later, the BBC revealed a second Conservative candidate, named as the Bristol North West hopeful Laura Saunders, was also being investigated. Then this morning, the Beeb revealed that someone else – oh do look, it's campaigns director Tony Lee himself! – was being looked into over an alleged bet related to the timing of the election.

Please take a moment to create a fantasy scenario as to how on earth this hugely unfortunate series of events occurred. Did someone – perhaps the director of Conservative campaigns – take a look at the party's prospects, and spot a gap in the metaphor market? Did Tony Lee issue some form of APB, perhaps along the lines of: "Guys, we can see that Labour are just short of one metaphor – specifically something to illustrate the idea that we gambled with the country to enrich ourselves. For the love of God, can anyone help them out?" I want to say: look, if you want a job doing, etc. But I think that legally, I am required to say: if allegedly you want an alleged job allegedly doing, etc.

As for what precisely we're dealing with – you always see the bookies' publicists press-releasing odds on things like the next election date, or who killed a Coronation Street character or something. When I worked on this paper's Diary column, we'd sometimes ring those PRs and claim we wanted to place a bet on these supposed markets, in the interests of seeing if they actually existed in the real world, or were just a publicity trick. There would always be an incredible amount of waffle in reply.

Bookmakers watch these novelty markets incredibly closely, as they are so vulnerable to punters with inside information. So what is being alleged here is not just irregular betting, but intense stupidity.

How many stupids are there? By lunch, Conservative campaign HQ had issued a statement saying "it wouldn't be proper to comment" , adding they had been contacted about "a small number of individuals". Why not say three? Oh man – it's not more than three … is it?

This was not a question answered by Conservatives on the campaign trail. Michael Gove regretted being unable to discuss an ongoing investigation, before waltzing onwards and breezing of the party's electoral prospects: "We're not in Fergie time yet!" Michael, it would be good for the Conservatives if you were in Fergie time, because it would mean you might be about to pull off an astonishing late-stage winner with the clock arguably running on till you did. An alternative analogy for this particular general election campaign might be the infamous Nigerian match in which Akurba FC lost 79-0 to Plateau United Feeders, with the Feeders scoring a goal every 37 seconds in the second half. The Nigerian Football Association called it "a mind-boggling show of shame". Lifetime bans ensued.

Tories' former net zero tsar says he will vote for Labour

Continued *from page 1*

oil and gas licences, doing too little to improve the condition of the UK's rivers and beaches, which are filthy with raw sewage, and, while vowing to stick to net zero, dismantling many of the policies – on electric vehicles, boilers, public transport – needed to get there.

Skidmore, who resigned as a Tory MP in January in protest at the party's dash for oil and gas, triggering a byelection in his Kingswood seat that Labour won, had been a leading voice within the Tory party on green issues.

He was the energy minister who signed into law the former prime minister Theresa May's "net zero by 2050" pledge. More recently, he led the government's net-zero review, which was published in September 2022.

In his piece for the Guardian, he criticised Sunak's decisions to prioritise new oil and gas licences, scale back measures that would have saved households billions in energy bills and "pass on" the huge economic opportunities of transition.

But his sharpest criticism was reserved for what he suggested were the prime minister's attempts to transform net zero into a culture war issue in a bid to draw dividing lines with the Labour party before the election.

"No one is in the pay of Just Stop Oil or Putin. No one has ever been told they must remove their boilers, or replace their petrol cars, for the energy transition is just that: a moderate transition from the past towards the future."

Skidmore said previous Tory governments had understood that change would be required to reach net-zero climate targets and needed to be carefully managed and incentivised.

"Rishi Sunak's decision instead to side with climate deniers and to deliberately politicise the energy transition, breaking the consensus of the past to seek division and polarisation, is perhaps the greatest tragedy of his premiership," he said.

▼ *Chris Skidmore accused Sunak of breaking the climate consensus 'to seek division and polarisation'*
PHOTOGRAPH: AARON CHOWN/PA



"It has cost the UK not just environmentally but economically, and it has cost the Conservative party the ability to demonstrate that it is the party of the environment and nature.

"It is a decision that will cost votes, including my own. For the first time, I cannot vote for my party that has boasted of new oil and gas licences in its manifesto, or that now argues that net zero is a burden and not a benefit."

The former Conservative, who is now a professor, said he would now transfer his vote to Labour, which has pledged to deliver a "green industrial revolution" to meet net-zero targets.

Keir Starmer's party has also faced criticism for cutting its £28bn green investment plans by half, infuriating environmental campaigners, who said it would push up costs in the long term and make it harder for Labour to reach ambitious green targets.

However, Skidmore said: "Like many others who know that we have no choice, nor any more time, but to tackle the climate crisis now, I have decided that the Labour party is best placed to achieve [that]. For this reason, I will be voting Labour at this election.

"It is a decision that I know others have and will be making also … All Conservatives serious about delivering real change to reduce emissions and grow our economy should be thinking the same."

The shadow energy and climate secretary, Ed Miliband, said: "This endorsement shows that only Labour has the practical and ambitious plan needed to secure Britain's energy supply, end the cost of living crisis, and grow our economy by investing in clean homegrown power for our country.

"As even former Conservative ministers are now making clear, voters face a stark choice at this election: between a Conservative party that would leave our climate and our economy exposed, and a Labour party with a clear plan to grow our economy, make us energy-independent, cut bills for good and tackle the climate crisis.

"Labour's plans, starting with Great British Energy, will make our country better off by cutting bills for families and seizing the industrial opportunities of net zero, bringing good jobs to our communities."

Farage tries to woo young male voters by praising misogynist Tate

Continued from page 1

rooted in reality and not be sexist," Tate said in one video.

In other clips reported by the Observer, the British-US kickboxer - who poses with fast cars, guns and portrays himself as a cigar-smoking playboy - talks about hitting and choking a woman, and stopping them from going out. He has been banned from YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and TikTok.

Farage's interviews suggest he is attempting to appeal to younger audiences through controversialist podcasts and online shows. He has ranged from arguing against diversity quotas for minority ethnic people, saying "the idea we should give people jobs according to how suntanned they are, the colour of their skin" was "nonsense" and suggesting some people on benefits were "too fat ... too stupid, too lazy" to work.

In his Strike It Big podcast appearance from February, Farage said that Tate had been "an important voice" for men who were being told male culture should be looked down on.

"Tate was a very important voice for an emasculated ... you three guys, you are all 25, you are all kind of being told you can't be blokes, you can't do laddish, fun, bloke things ... That's almost what you're being told. That masculinity is something we should look down upon, something we should frown upon. It's like the men are becoming feminine and the women are becoming masculine and it's a bit difficult to tell these days who's what.

"And Tate fed into that by saying: hang on, what's wrong with being a bloke? What's wrong in male culture? What's wrong in male humour? He fed into those things. His was a campaign of raising awareness, his was a campaign of giving people perhaps a bit of confidence at school or whatever it was to speak up."

He acknowledged Tate "maybe took that alter ego of masculinity too far in his relationships with women" and some of things he had said and posted "were over the top". But he said the "jury is out" on investigations into the influencer. Farage was pictured with Tate in 2019, before the legal case in Romania.

Elsewhere in the podcast, Farage said: "The banking sector, now full of idiots, people are promoted not because of ability but ethnicity or gender ... The white male - you lot - are going to feel the world's against you. Andrew Tate tapped into that. You're going to feel the world's against you, you're going to feel resentful and angry ... These are massive cultural battles."

Asked about his podcast appearances, including his comments on Tate, Farage said: "There's an awakening in a younger generation who have had enough of being dictated to, have had enough of being lectured to. They're seeing through the rubbish they're getting taught in schools and universities. If no other politician is willing to reach out to this group of people, then I will."

Alex Davies-Jones, a Labour candidate and the shadow minister for domestic violence, said Tate was a "dangerous misogynist who is facing charges of human trafficking and sexual offences - and it is inexplicable that a politician would praise him".

On a Your Round podcast aired earlier this month, the Reform UK leader hit out at the idea of recruitment policies that took diversity into account, appearing to describe people of colour as being "suntanned".

"The race thing is even worse. The idea we should give people jobs according to how suntanned they are, the colour of their skin. The whole thing is nonsense. A guy who's my producer at GB News is half Indian. I'm darker than he is! It's nonsense." He later added: "Now we're saying this person gets this job because they're black, or they're gay."

Another appearance on the "free speech" Triggernometry podcast, with almost a million subscribers, in February 2023 saw Farage claim that "welfarism, I'm afraid, is making millions of people lazy". "'I'm too fat, I'm too stupid, I'm too lazy, I don't get out of bed in the morning. I smoke drugs, give me money'... That's what we're saying. 'I don't need to work, the state will provide for me' ... We cannot afford it," he said.

Other rightwing views aired on the podcast included Farage saying he wished that the former Tory prime minister Liz Truss had "held her nerve" and stuck to her budget as "a lot of it was good thinking" - although he said it was too much, too fast. He also claimed Jeremy Hunt taking over as chancellor after the budget triggered a negative market reaction was part of a "globalist coup".

In a further interview with a show called Nomad Capitalist in April 2024, Farage had huge praise for Javier Milei, the far-right libertarian Argentinian president famous for posing with a chainsaw, saying he had been bringing in "Thatcherism on steroids, this is incredible, cutting and slashing public expenditure", saying "that's leadership ... he is amazing". When asked for best leaders in the west, Farage named Hungary's rightwing leader, Viktor Orbán, as a "strong leader" and his "friend" Donald Trump.



TikTok

Can Reform leader's social media really click with gen Z?



▲ *A fan near Runcorn, where Farage addressed supporters yesterday*

Ben Quinn
Rowena Mason

Nigel Farage has written off many in generation X for being hopelessly woke and leftwing, but he is much more interested in generation Z. "Support is exploding among young gen Z 18-25 voters," he told an audience in Runcorn, Cheshire, yesterday. "Something remarkable is happening out there. There's an awakening in a younger generation who have had enough of being dictated to, have had enough of being lectured to, and they're seeing through the BS they're getting in schools and universities."

Reform backers are sometimes thought of as even older than Tory voters. But recent polling shows that Farage's party is actually attracting more younger supporters than the Conservatives, with particular backing among young men. According to the latest Survation survey, Reform is backed by 12% of younger people, compared with 2% of 18- to 24-year-olds opting for the Tories. The most recent YouGov poll has Reform on 15% among 18- to 24-year-olds and the Conservatives on 7%.

The polls suggest Reform's decision to target younger voters is deliberate and its strategy of engaging with them on social media appears to be paying off.

Farage has been appearing on a number of podcasts that appeal to young men - many of which appear to be hosted by rightwing controversialists with large social-media followings. It is on one of these, the Strike it Big podcast, where Farage praised the "important voice" of the self-proclaimed misogynist Andrew Tate - while acknowledging that Tate had gone "over the top". Other recent guests on Strike it Big, which has 200,000 followers, include David Icke, the conspiracy theorist.

Farage's short, punchy social media clips have also gained far more attention than many of his more straight-laced political rivals.

He is one of a small number of British politicians who have successfully and enthusiastically embraced TikTok as a way of reaching the young. With 776,000 followers on the platform, he is the most followed UK politician on



▼ *Nigel Farage, Reform's leader, watches the England-Denmark game in Blackpool yesterday*

PHOTOGRAPH: PHIL NOBLE/REUTERS

TikTok by far, with Labour's Zarah Sultana next at 446,000.

He has recently taken to speaking with fondness of gen Z – the cohort born between the mid-90s and early 2010s and for whom TikTok is often a preferred social media tool.

Farage is not known as a hip-hop fan, and his TikTok output indicates a younger hand at work. Clips that have cut through include one of Farage mouthing the lyrics of Eminem's Without Me (7.6m views). Another, which has received 2.4m views, features Farage inspecting fruit on a walkabout and raising an eyebrow as he turns to the camera and says "lovely melons".

Some of Farage's close advisers behind his strategy include his long-term media aide Dan Jukes, who helped with the politician's social media during his I'm a Celebrity appearance. Others have included Michael Heaver, a former press aide to Farage and Brexit party MEP, who has sought to create his own social media following on YouTube.

However, eyebrows have been raised within Reform UK about the involvement of a newer figure, Jack Anderton, who has been contracted to do digital work. Anderton, 23, is a prolific presence on social media, and has sought to link immigration to the struggles faced by young British people. Twitter posts included one in which he referred to millions of people living in Britain who he said "hate our country", adding: "They might, on paper, be British citizens but they are distinctly foreign."

A source close to Anderton said: "Jack was speaking in a personal capacity and is entitled to his opinion. He was referring to a large scale pro-Palestinian march deliberately timed to coincide with Armistice Day."

Labour will undoubtedly win the vote with younger people on 4 July. But the major parties may come to reflect on Reform's strategy on social media, as once again Farage appears to be reaching sections of society that politicians have not always engaged with before.

776,000

The Reform leader's following on the social media platform TikTok, more than any other UK politician

Analysis

Jessica Elgot



Could the polls be wrong about a huge Labour victory? The 'undecideds' may spoil the party

In three weeks, Ed Davey could be at the dispatch box as leader of the opposition, Rishi Sunak could be on a plane to California having lost his seat, and three-quarters of the cabinet could be on the job hunt, with no leadership chances for seatless James Cleverly, Penny Mordaunt or Priti Patel. More than 500 Labour MPs could be taking their seats.

Are such predictions outlandish? Not all the polls are as apocalyptic for the Conservatives as the scenario above describes, but if Keir Starmer enters parliament with a majority of 150, it would feel almost disappointing.

Inside Labour HQ, there is a policy not to discuss the polls at all and to make decisions based purely on the party's own data and precision targeted strategy. But for Labour campaigners trying to mobilise voters, the polls are becoming positively unhelpful. It is the Tories who stand to gain the most from the argument that it is important to have a bulwark of Tory MPs as a counter to an unprecedented Labour majority.

It is also a key argument for Starmer's critics on the left. A Labour landslide is nailed on, they argue, so vote with your conscience for Greens or independents if you want to put pressure on the party about the climate crisis or war in Gaza. And it is easy to see why that argument has some merit – the polls indicate that Starmer will be the most powerful prime minister in modern times with a majority double that of Tony Blair's in 1997.

But drill closer into the data and listen to ground reports from Labour MPs and activists and the picture is not quite the same. A dozen Labour candidates the Guardian spoke to this week said they were encountering large numbers of undecided voters. "It feels more volatile than ever with a lot of undecideds," said one MP.

"It's positively unhelpful," said another, drawing a comparison with the 2017 election, when people voted for Labour thinking the then leader, Jeremy Corbyn, wouldn't win. "So many 'undecided' voters may land Tory as they think it won't matter … I've been in a seat where the Tories are hiding in undecided responses too – so I expect things to narrow a lot."

Not all polls are so apocalyptic for the Conservatives, but if Starmer gets a majority of 150, it would now feel almost disappointing

Some Labour candidates are so anxious about their own, safe seats they are annoyed at being harangued by Labour HQ to leave – and some of the Labour WhatsApp groups are near mutinous about the control on their movements.

Ellie Reeves, the party's deputy campaign coordinator, recently told them not to make more than 500 contacts in their own seats and that those with bigger majorities had to spend at least five days a week in battleground seats.

The most recent MRP polls – for Savanta and Ipsos – put between 100 and 150 seats on a knife-edge. Such polls use a method of taking about 10 times the usual number of survey respondents and extrapolate that data on to constituencies.

But very different methods are used by all the pollsters now using this new method of MRP polling in order to drill down into the different constituencies. In the past, these polls have been very accurate – the YouGov MRP poll in 2017 was the only one to detect the Tories would lose their majority.

But the numbers of voters actually surveyed in each seat is tiny and the methods used to determine how that will affect the national picture differ from pollster to pollster. All predictions are for a Labour win – but between all the pollsters, results vary by 134 seats.

The clincher for the Tories is that – for all the wobbles about undecided voters – no one is detecting a swing back to Rishi Sunak. Campaigners say they are barely meeting anyone who says they are voting Conservative.

Greens Party hopeful that it could take two Tory rural seats

Peter Walker
Senior political correspondent

Increased disenchantment with the Conservatives could result in the Greens taking two rural seats from the Tories in the general election, a Green co-leader has said after internal polling showed they were ahead in both constituencies.

Adrian Ramsay said the polling in the seats, including Waveney Valley, which he is contesting on 4 July, demonstrated how recent local election successes had helped the party move beyond its traditional strongholds in urban, Labour-facing seats.

A lot of usually Tory voters "feel deeply left out by a Conservative party that's torn up the rulebook on standards in public life, and also deeply care about the environment", Ramsay, who co-leads the Greens in England and Wales with Carla Denyer, told the Guardian.

"Voters in rural constituencies are very connected with the environment, and very angry about sewage in rivers," he said. "I've spoken to Conservative voters who say they're thinking about what the future is going to be like and they're voting Green for the first time."

Another major worry for wavering Tories was the decline in public services, Ramsay said, including a lack of NHS dental services in areas such as Waveney Valley, which straddles Norfolk and Suffolk.

Previous polling has shown the Greens could potentially win two urban seats: Brighton Pavilion, which the party has held since 2010 under Caroline Lucas; and Bristol Central, where Denyer might unseat Labour's Thangam Debbonaire. But surveys done for the party by pollsters Omnisis suggest the party is currently ahead in its two other major target seats, Waveney Valley and North Herefordshire.

'Voters in rural areas are very angry about sewage in rivers'

Adrian Ramsay
Green co-leader

While there are some caveats – the sample sizes are relatively small, at 500 and 430 people respectively, and over a third of voters in both seats are still undecided – the polling appears a significant vindication of Ramsay and Denyer's decision to run a highly focused campaign, with almost all resources devoted to the target seats.

In Waveney Valley, a new seat but one made up of parts from strongly Tory constituencies, if people unlikely to vote and don't knows are excluded, Ramsay is on 37% support with the Tory candidate, Richard Rout, the deputy leader of Suffolk county council, on 24%.

In North Herefordshire, the Green former MEP Ellie Chowns, who is now a Herefordshire council councillor, has 39% support, against 28% for the Tory incumbent, Bill Wiggin.

Tactical voting would be key, Ramsay said: "People know that if they want to change in these constituencies, then they need to vote Green, it's either going to be Conservative or Green."

‘A huge job’

Essex in Labour sights after the wilderness years



Jessica Elgot
Deputy political editor

Like the water lapping the sands on Southend’s Jubilee beach, the county of Essex has been a sea of blue since 2010. Standing on the sands looking out towards the pier, Bayo Alaba is one of the Labour candidates hoping the tide is turning in seats such as Southend East and Rochford.

Long neglected by Labour, the seat is one of the Tory strongholds that could go red, with Alaba emblematic of a new kind of Labour candidate, a businessman and former parachute regiment soldier who spent D-day doing a sponsored jump for the Royal British Legion.

Alaba says: “This has been a Labour ambition that has never been realised. We are backing ourselves. We can talk to people here, we can support their lives and community. Southend is full of working people, independently minded, and they are frustrated with the state of their city.”

Essex man is a totemic concept for the Tories: patriotic, self-made and first associated with backing Margaret Thatcher. Labour held a clutch of seats during the Blair years but since the party has been out of government none has ever returned. Yet now the county is firmly in the sights of Labour strategists – for Keir Starmer to better Tony Blair’s 1997 majority, the only way is Essex.

The Labour leader has visited Thurrock twice in the past month, with shadow cabinet ministers flocking to Harlow, Southend and Colchester. Polls predict as many as nine seats could go red, but voters on manydoorsteps are still telling candidates that they are undecided.

Starmer launched his six “first steps for change” in Purfleet, in the seat of the Conservative Jackie Doyle-Price, which Labour looks nearly certain to take. The party’s Thurrock candidate, Jen Craft, has been campaigning with Starmer, Yvette Cooper and Liz Kendall in the past fortnight. Her espresso machine is named “Angela” after the energy boost from the Labour deputy leader.

“If we win this, we win the country,” Craft said, among teetering piles of leaflets in her office in Grays, the town where she grew up. “People want to know that they’ll be in safe hands with us. They’re not looking for bells and whistles. I’m realistic about what we can offer, but they want to know that they’re going to be safe.”

In south Essex activist numbers have swelled. But more than anything, it is the cost of living, sky-high mortgages and some of the worst GP waiting lists in the country that are driving Conservative to Labour switchers.

Craft raised her family in Grays and was a civil servant until taking a career break to look after her daughter, who has Down’s syndrome. She says she can relate strongly to people navigating impenetrable systems to get help, and to families finding themselves struggling with everyday costs.

“They’ve perhaps bought their first house, but their mortgages skyrocketed,” Craft says. “They’ve not made risky financial decisions. It’s just the old certainties they had completely falling away.”

Thurrock has attracted first-time buyers from London to new-build homes with neat lawns. There are also long-standing working-class communities, including near Tilbury, where some still farm small pieces of land under the shadow of a gargantuan Amazon fulfilment centre. Despite the warehouse and the nearby docks, unemployment is nearly twice the national average. Thurrock council in effect declared bankruptcy in December 2022 after running up a £500m deficit.

Living in those streets are significant numbers of people who are saying on their doorsteps that they will switch directly to Labour from the Conservatives. Thurrock had one of the highest votes to leave the EU, but several residents mentioned their anger at Boris Johnson.

“We have always voted Conservative as a family,” says Pauline Harris, 80, in Tilbury. But she says she is now switching to Labour because “we just don’t feel represented locally, we can’t help a lot of what has gone on with the pandemic and wars, but we’ve had nothing here for years”.

Terry Aldwinckle, 43, says he is furious about rampant antisocial behaviour, which he says includes brazen drug dealing and flytipping. He says he will vote Labour, but is adamant that a change is needed in the way of doing politics. “We don’t want someone to come in and then not be back here, because that’s what’s been happening. Never been back and never done anything.”

A few miles up the A13 is Basildon, part of a seat into which the Tory chair, Richard Holden, was controversially parachuted from his previous North Durham seat. It is also the home of one of the veterans of Labour in Essex who will sit in Starmer’s cabinet: Angela Smith, the shadow leader of the Lords and the former MP for Basildon, elected in 1997 and ousted in 2010. This election does not feel like 1997 for Smith, even though the gains could be greater.

Walking down Basildon’s high street she says: “We have a huge job to convince people that politics can be a force for good. But they do say things have got to change. Talking about seats in Southend being in play for us is extraordinary – we’ve never held those seats. These are places that are going to be incredibly close. If people believe the polls and think everything is going to be fine maybe they won’t vote. I almost think it’s part of the Tory strategy to suppress the vote.”

Activists do have some hopes for even greater gains. There are whispers of South Basildon, perhaps even the seat of the Brexiter Mark Francois in Rayleigh and Wickford. James Cleverly, the home secretary, is rumoured to be feeling the heat in Braintree.

But for the nervous candidates hoping to make inroads in places

The Tories could lose more than half of their seats in Essex

Majorities over time in 18 Essex seats, and latest YouGov MRP projections



Constituency (Old name)		2010	2015	2017	Modelled* 2019	Projection 2024
North West Essex *(Saffron Walden)*	Con holds					
Rayleigh and Wickford						
Castle Point						
Brentwood and Ongar						
Maldon						
Witham						
Braintree						
Epping Forest						
Thurrock	Lab gains					
Colchester						
Southend West and Leigh *(Southend West)*						
Southend East and Rochford						
Harlow						
Harwich and North Essex						
South Basildon and East Thurrock						
Clacton	Reform gains					
Basildon and Billericay						
Chelmsford	Lib Dem gain					

2014 byelection

Source: House of Commons Library for 2010-17 results. Press Association, Rallings and Thrasher for 2019 results *modelled to new constituency boundaries. YouGov MRP poll, 11-18 June 2024, for 2024 forecast

▼ *The Southend Labour candidate, Bayo Alaba, right, canvassing with the shadow minister David Lammy*

PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH/THE GUARDIAN



such as Southend, there are still a huge number of voters whose voting intentions are unknown and who will make a key difference to the size of Labour's majority.

Labour missed out on control of Harlow council by 35 votes at the May council election. Reform are concentrating on Nigel Farage in Clacton but the party could eat into the undecided vote across the county. The numbers in many of the seats are very tight.

In Southend, Alaba is also getting extra firepower from Labour HQ, knocking on doors with the shadow foreign secretary, David Lammy. Alaba is keen to raise the profile of the town and to win the votes of its longstanding residents and younger families moving out to the coast from London.

It is a tough crowd in the homes up the hill and behind the Kursaal, an amusement park now largely derelict. The majority tell Alaba they are undecided or not likely to vote, though none are prepared to say they will vote Tory.

The degradation of community assets such as the Grade II listed Kursaal, as well as raw sewage in the sea by Southend's beaches, are fuelling irritation and apathy. Alaba says: "People have felt before that they supported the party they saw; we haven't always been that. It's important first that we listen, that people feel heard. Politics has been poor and if we can reconnect, we can be a safe place for people to park their boat."

In charts

What Tory rule has done to the economy

Phillip Inman
Pamela Duncan

While inflation figures usually generate a news story in their own right, last month's figures led to the biggest news line of them all.

Rishi Sunak's surprise announcement that he would hold a snap election on 4 July came hours after April's inflation figures were announced. They were widely reported to have heavily influenced his decision to go to the polls.

On Wednesday, there was more good news for the government as CPI inflation fell to 2% in May, returning to the official target rate for the first time in nearly three years. The inflation figures were one of the last significant economic indicators due for release before voting day. But inflation – although important – is not the only measure that economists look at.

So with James Carville's 1992 soundbite ("The economy, stupid") still echoing in our ears, we ask how 14 years of Conservative party rule have changed Britain.

Prices are still rising

If one phrase sums up how Britain suffered in the years after the Covid pandemic, it is "cost of living crisis". A combination of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine sent prices soaring, most notably for food, energy and heating.

Inflation peaked in October 2022 at 11.1%. It has fallen since, helping Rishi Sunak meet his pledge to halve inflation during 2023. Yet food prices remain 20% above the level in July 2021.

As an example, we can use the Office for National Statistics' basket of goods to calculate what it would have cost to make a spaghetti bolognese for a family of four six years ago: £8.44 in May 2018.

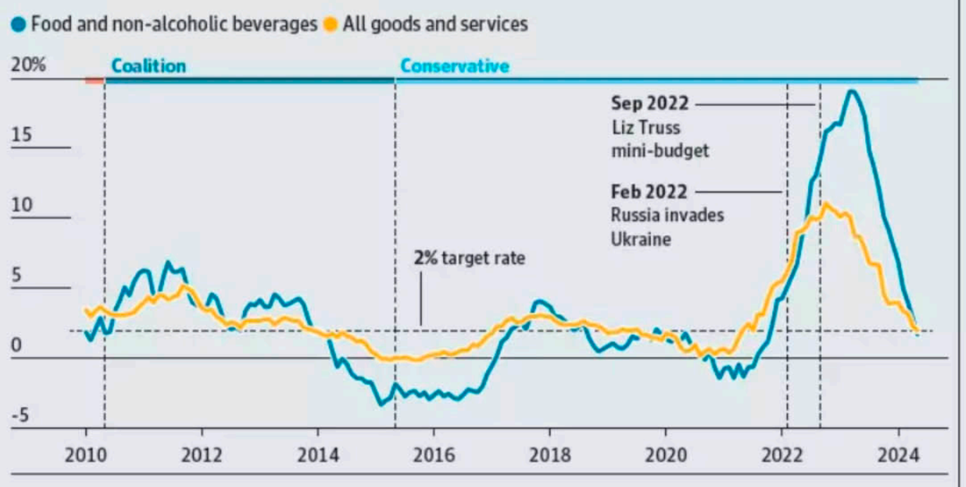
Food prices peaked later than general inflation. In June last year, the ingredients which make up a spag bol hit £10.35 before falling back to £10.15 last month.

Interest rates could be falling

Interest rates were high in the 1980s when the price of property was low. Rates fell in the 00s as home prices soared. Then came the 2008 financial crash and the cost of borrowing tumbled to almost zero. Rising inflation in 2021 triggered interest rate increases to 5.25%.

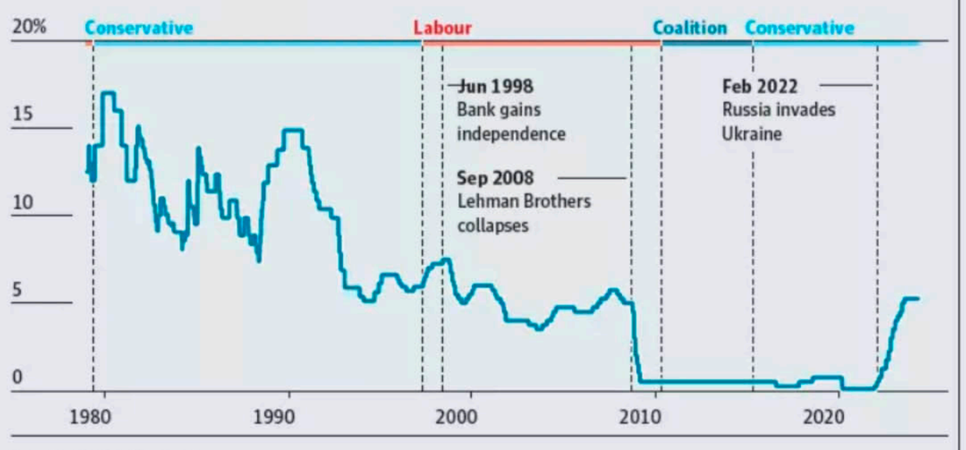
Now we have the worst of all worlds – high interest rates and stratospheric house prices.

Food price annual CPI inflation



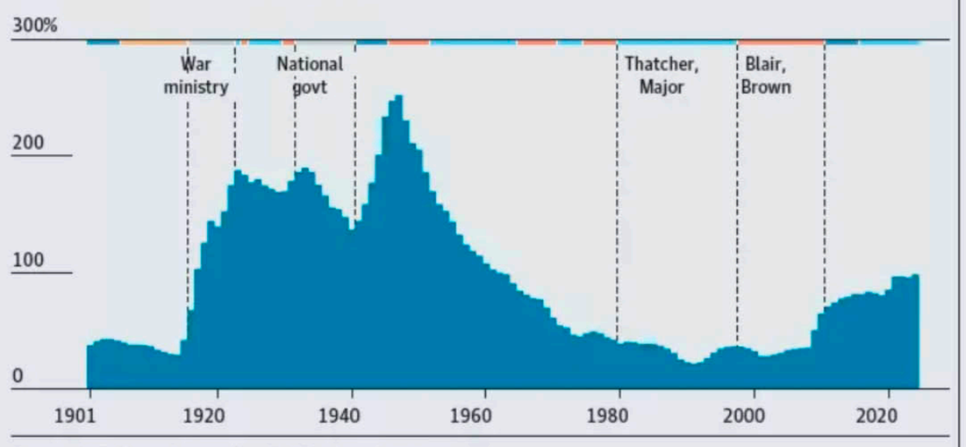
Source: ONS. CPI (consumer price index) does not include costs associated with owning and maintaining a home

Bank of England base rate



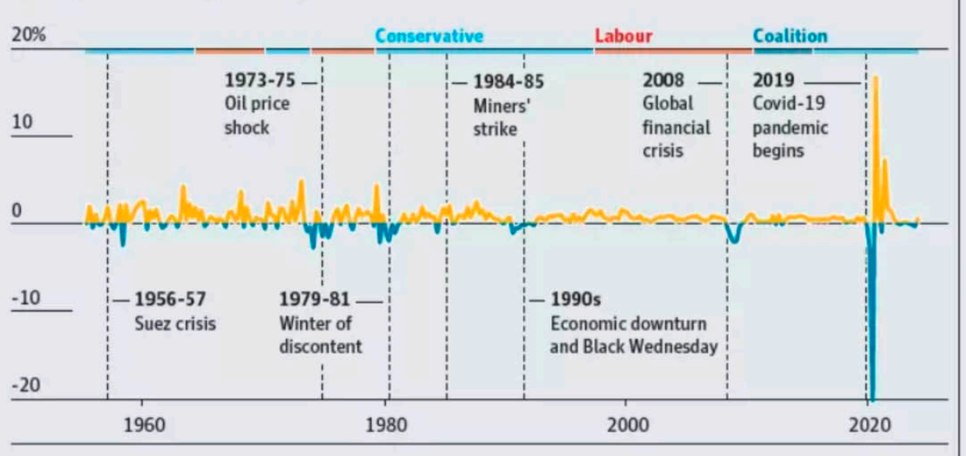
Source: Bank of England

Net debt as a percentage of GDP



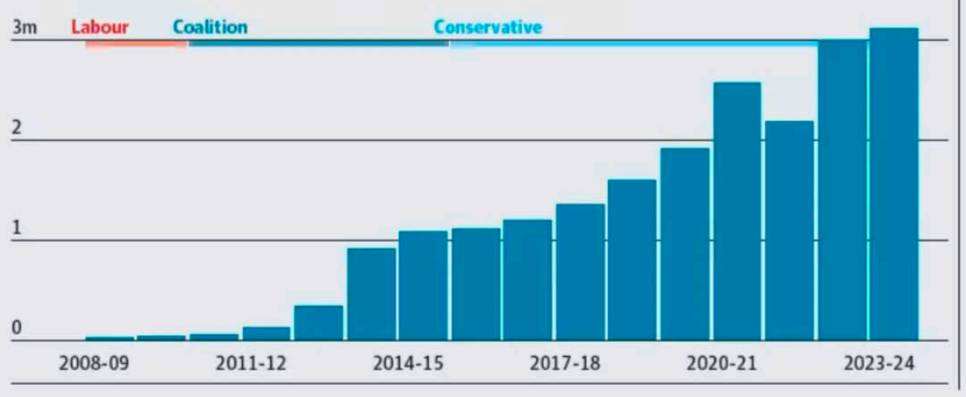
Source: ONS. Note: data as of end of March each year

GDP quarter-on-quarter growth



Source: ONS

Food parcels distributed by Trussell Trust food banks



Source: Trussell Trust. Note: The trust says the rise in distributions is mainly driven by increasing demand

After the latest fall in inflation, the betting is that Bank of England officials may start to cut interest rates in September and possibly again in December to 4.75%.

Other factors prompting action are figures showing that the economy is growing slowly and that unemployment is rising – both legacies of Conservative governments that favoured austerity over investment.

Lower interest rates will give the economy a much needed lift, but it's not a done deal. There are risks from the global economy, domestic price pressures and the Ukraine and Middle East conflicts.

Borrowing remains high

Government borrowing has declined sharply as a proportion of national income, or gross domestic product (GDP), from the first half of the last century. As chancellor, Gordon Brown reduced the overall level of debt to less than 50% of GDP. It rebounded after the 2008 financial crash to more than 100% and is now 97%. Successive Tory-led governments failed to bring down the ratio to anywhere near the pre-crash levels.

Economists are divided about how much borrowing is too much. Labour is concerned about criticism that it will be profligate in government and has pledged to maintain a Tory budget rule that forces the chancellor to cut the debt-to-GDP ratio in the final year of a five-year forecast.

Are recessions a thing of the past?

When an economy contracts for two consecutive quarters, it is considered to be in recession. Some economists take a stricter view. The National Institute of Economic and Social Research says there needs to be a contraction over a full year, which rules out the June-December downturn in 2023. There was a huge contraction in the Covid-affected spring of 2020, but there were lots of subsidies around.

Recessions are always not far away. They tend to arrive when businesses have run out of road after borrowing heavily to grow. The last 14 years have shown that shocks can come from left field and the government needs to be better prepared than it was in 2020.

Food bank reliance has soared

While prices shot up, wages remained stagnant, leading to record numbers of people relying on food banks. The Trussell Trust, Britain's largest food bank charity, has seen its business grow rapidly.

Many of the people who visit food banks are in work, but their low wages cannot stretch to cover bills. Taxes, rent and mortgages have also risen. The overall tax level is heading to its highest since the second world war. Mortgage and rent bills have also soared.

Figures from the homelessness charity Crisis show that the number of people sleeping rough is now 61% higher than it was 10 years ago and 120% higher than when data collection began in 2010.

Graphics by Tural Ahmedzade and Paul Scruton

Sketch

John Crace

Rishbot with mangled software fumbles through the scrapheap challenge to dustbin of history

They seek him here, they seek him there. That damned elusive Sunakel. We need to talk about Rishi. Has anyone you know seen him recently? Is he checking out schools in Santa Monica? Has he been abducted by aliens? Is he at home studying the spread betting odds on a Labour landslide along with the rest of his campaign team?

Face it that's about the only thing any of them are likely to win in this election. When Rish! says "Can you afford to gamble on Keir Starmer?" he means you to take him at face value.

Sunak has gone missing in action. Some claim to have made fleeting sightings of him over the last week but none of these has been confirmed. Not so long ago, you could guarantee to see the prime minister every day during an election campaign at a press conference. Not to mention regular trips to different parts of the country where they would kiss babies and be nice to dogs. OK, so they would tend to make the same dreary stump speech wherever they went but it was easy to tune out. What mattered was they were at least visible.

What's happened is that Sunak has been replaced by an avatar with faulty AI. You thought the Maybot was bad? Then hold my beer. Because Rish! is even worse. Let's examine the evidence. First there's the sheep. We caught a glimpse of someone resembling Sunak on a farm in Devon. Only the sheep sussed him out. They stayed away from him even though he was offering them food. They knew he wasn't real.

Now the clincher. Only bad AI could be as consistently woeful as Rish!. By the law of averages, a real human would have the occasional day when he was moderately less useless. Do something almost normal. Not Avatar Rish!. He hasn't put a foot right throughout the campaign. From the rain-soaked speech, to D-day, to the pisspoor manifesto to the gambling, he hasn't put a single foot right. It's like the Tories have bet the house on losing the election and didn't want to leave anything to chance. Nearly there, guys. Nearly there.

Just two weeks to go. Along with some more pointless debates. Starting with BBC Question Time last night. After all, what better way to cheer yourself up after England fumbled to a scratchy draw than two hours of the party leaders answering the same questions they've been asked hundreds of times before?

First up were Ed Davey and John Swinney. Presumably because if they'd gone last then we unhappy few who were watching would have switched over to Spain v Italy for the second half. The Liberal Democrats and the Scottish National party were very much the evening's supporting cast. Not that the audience gave either an easy ride. Davey struggled on tuition fees and the Post Office Horizon scandal, Swinney prevaricated on what constituted a mandate for a referendum. But he at least got some applause for being genuine.

Keir Starmer got off to a nervy start as he was asked to explain why he had said Jeremy Corbyn would make a great prime minister at the 2019 election. Hardly surprising as it's not generally a good idea to admit that you were lying through your teeth while playing the election game. But thereafter he looked more assured, despite frequent interruptions from the BBC's Fiona Bruce who decided her own questions were more interesting, and he got out more or less alive.

You thought the Maybot was bad? Rish! is even worse. Only bad AI could be as consistently woeful as Rish!

But then the moment the audience had clearly come for. To give the Tories a kicking. Out walked Rish! – or possibly his avatar – with a forced smile. The smile of a man who wanted to punch someone. This wasn't just Tetchy Rish!, it was Angry Rish!. He had no time for the little people bothering him with their stupid questions. Why couldn't they accept he was Mr Integrity, Accountability and Professionalism? Hell, no one ran a better gambling ring inside No 10 than him.

The Avatar was now completely out of control. Furious that the only applause was for the audience questions. Furious that there was not more gratitude for him. Furious that no matter how patronising and condescending he became, no one warmed to him nor believed a word he said. At one point he was even laughed at. The billionaire Avatar was now just a standing joke. Stop the Boats. Stop the Bets.

It was an object lesson in how not to win friends and influence. The only logic to the performance was that the Avatar is a secret Labour supporter. His gift to the country the destruction of the Tory party. If only more people had been watching.





▲ The leaders in the debate: the Liberal Democrats' Ed Davey, the Scottish National party's John Swinney, Labour's Keir Starmer and the Conservatives' Rishi Sunak PHOTOGRAPH: STEFAN ROUSSEAU/PA

Sunak: ban driving for those refusing national service

Peter Walker
Senior political correspondent

Rishi Sunak has indicated that young people might face restrictions on access to finance or driving licences if they refuse to do national service, as he faced a TV quizzing from voters.

Asked during a BBC Question Time special what sanctions people could face for declining to take part in the Conservative policy of compulsory national service for 18-year-olds, the prime minister pointed to "driving licences, or the access to finance, all sorts of other things".

Questioned on whether this could mean denying young people bank cards, he replied: "There's a lot of different models around Europe."

In his half-hour slot on the show, following Keir Starmer, Ed Davey and John Swinney, the Labour, Liberal Democrat and Scottish National party leaders, Sunak was repeatedly challenged on why the public should trust the Conservatives after 14 sometimes chaotic years in office.

He received shouts of "shame" after refusing to say he would keep Britain in the European convention on human rights. He was also challenged on revelations about alleged betting on the general election date, which he said he was "incredibly angry" about.

The prime minister was asked why Brexit was "absent" from his party's manifesto, a question that prompted applause from the audience in York. Pressed on NHS waiting lists, he conceded the government had not made "as much progress as I would like", but insisted things were improving.

Asked if this had convinced him, the questioner replied: "No." Another audience member, a doctor, attacked Sunak on his NHS plans, saying: "People are suffering."

The sceptical tone was set by the first question to Sunak, which noted the five Tory prime ministers, including Liz Truss's weeks in office: "I am asking if you would confess to us tonight even just a small amount of embarrassment to be leading the Conservative party?"

Sunak insisted people should judge him on his own record, but was then asked why young people should trust him given the "shenanigans with the Tory party". Fiona Bruce, hosting the show, said: "There's a bit of a theme emerging."

Starmer was also asked some tricky questions, with one audience member calling out "all of the backtracking on policies from Labour". Starmer gave a bullish response, saying tough decisions were needed, such as between reducing NHS waiting lists and removing student tuition fees. "They are political choices," he said, calling himself "a common sense politician", adding: "I'm telling you what they are before the election, so people can make their mind up."

Starmer faced a grilling over whether he was sincere when he praised Jeremy Corbyn during the 2019 election as someone who would make a "great" prime minister.

After saying he did not expect Labour to win in 2019, Starmer said: "I was campaigning for the Labour party, I was a Labour politician."

Pressed by Bruce for a yes or no answer, Starmer indicated he believed Corbyn would have been better than his Conservative opponent, saying: "Look what we got - Boris Johnson."

Asked about transgender rights and differences within his party over the issue, Starmer said he wanted to bring the public together on divisive issues, contrasting this with Sunak's decision to make a "trans joke" in parliament, winning applause.

Davey faced tough questions about his party's role in the 2010-15 coalition, with one audience member winning applause by accusing the Lib Dem leader of having "enabled Cameron's and Osborne's austerity".

Another questioner prompted applause by asking how young people could trust the Lib Dems when they had broken a pledge by introducing tuition fees. Davey conceded he was "not proud" of some of the policies enacted, saying one lesson he had learned was that in 2010 his party "promised what we couldn't deliver".

Similarly, Swinney was asked about recent SNP scandals, with one questioner saying it had "destroyed itself from the top down". The SNP leader said he realised his party had to "rebuild the trust of people in Scotland". He dodged a question about whether the SNP would push for independence if it did not get a majority of Scottish Westminster seats.

Reality check

Have NHS waiting lists started to come down over recent months?
Rishi Sunak said that not enough progress had been made but that lists had gone down by around 200,000 appointments in the last five months.

A recently as April, the overall number of waits for non-emergency treatment in England was 7.6 million, a figure that was about 350,000 higher than when the prime minister first pledged that lists would fall.

However, it is about 200,000 down from when waiting lists hit a peak in September last year.

That said, new NHS figures last week showed that the hospital backlog in England had gone up slightly over the past month.

The waiting list was 7.57 million at the end of last month, up from 7.54 million the previous month.

Can Labour clear the NHS backlog in England completely in five years?
Keir Starmer once gain referred to his party's plan to clear the backlog by incentivising staff to work at the weekends and using agency staff.

It's a tall order - about 3.2 million people in England are now waiting more than 18 weeks for NHS treatment.

Experts have said it will be challenging to deliver, representative bodies such as the British Medical Association have also emphasised that it relies on paying staff properly.

Are the Lib Dems' policies 'responsible' and 'fully costed?'
A range of ambitious Liberal Democrat pledges were touted by the party's leader, Ed Davey, including a plan to recruit 8,000 more GPs. Ultimately, an extra £27bn would be put into day-to-day public spending. Money would be raised by getting "large corporates" to pay more tax and reversing tax cuts on big banks, according to Davey.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies thinktank has said that planned Lib Dem taxes on banks would need to be raised to new highs - much higher than under the Conservatives - to achieve the party's planned revenue, and would ultimately be felt at least in part by their customers.

Is Brexit is source of problems in the manufacturing sector?
John Swinney, the leader of the Scottish National party, was eager to mention the B word, claiming that it was at the root of problems in Britain's manufacturing sector.

It is a position with no shortage of supporters beyond the SNP. When British factories last year reported a 16th consecutive month of falling exports, manufacturers themselves warned that obstacles since leaving the EU were undermining relationships.

But for many, manufacturing has been in decline for many, many decades. As far back as 2011, Britain's manufacturing sector had already shrunk by two-thirds over the previous three decades, the greatest de-industrialisation of any major nation.

Ben Quinn

General election 2024

In Film & Music

The Bikeriders ★★★★★

Austin Butler and Tom Hardy lend potency to this study of 60s bikers

Page 8 →



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A distant dream

Help to buy boosted prices – and locked out a generation

Oliver Wainwright

With a penthouse in Santa Monica, a rambling Georgian manor in North Yorkshire and a five-bedroom mews house in Kensington, Rishi Sunak knows a thing or two about the joys of home ownership.

"I want everyone to feel what I felt when I got the keys to my first flat," Sunak said in his recent TV debate, recalling the moment he stepped into his South Ken pied-à-terre. Launching his manifesto, Sunak reiterated his party's eternal commitment to estate agents, housebuilders and the transformational power of bricks and mortar. "From Macmillan to Thatcher to today, it is we Conservatives who are the party of the property-owning democracy in this country," he declared.

It is a familiar tune. But, after 14 years of Tory rule, the prospect of home ownership has never been more distant for so many people, as house-price inflation continues to rocket far beyond wages. Two decades ago, a household with the median income could afford to buy an average priced house in England. Now, they can afford only the cheapest 10% of properties across the country.

In the capital, the situation is even more absurd. An average first-time buyer in London now has to save for more than 30 years to afford a deposit on an average home. The result is ever more people trapped in the private rented sector, at the mercy of unregulated landlords and subject

▼ *New-builds in Rochdale. Help to buy has inflated prices and boosted developers' profits* PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHER THOMOND/THE GUARDIAN



to rents that have reached a record high. The number of adults living with their parents has risen by 700,000 over the past decade, with about 30% of 25- to 29-year-olds now living back at home. Tory doctrine has created not a nation of homeowners, but a country of squeezed renters, overcrowded flat sharers, and rough sleepers, with the number of people sleeping on the streets more than double the figure of when the Conservatives came to power in 2010.

So what is Sunak's grand plan? His momentous proposal is to resuscitate the still-warm corpse of help to buy, the single policy that the government's housing strategy has relied on for the past decade. Like a B-movie sequel to Margaret Thatcher's right to buy, it is a policy that has defined the Conservatives' shameful housing record. It was billed as a silver bullet to boost home ownership, but it has only served to help the already well-off by increasing house prices even further and pumping public subsidies straight into the pockets of the party's favourite donor housebuilders. Sunak's promise to reboot the failed policy reveals a party that has not just run out of ideas, but is determined to continue doing damage.

Help to buy was introduced in 2013 by the then-chancellor, George Osborne, and trumpeted as "the biggest government intervention in the housing market since the right to buy" of the 1980s. Over the past four decades, that disastrous policy has seen two-thirds of Britain's council homes transferred from public to private hands. Even the new generation of award-winning council homes is now being sold off, less than five years after they were completed. But help to buy was supposed to be different. "It's a great deal for homebuyers," said Osborne. "It's a great support for home builders. And because it's a financial transaction, with the taxpayer making an investment and getting a return, it won't hit our deficit." Win-win-win.

So how did it work? The policy provided first-time buyers with an equity loan of up to 20% of the value of a new-build property – or 40% in superheated London – capped at a total price of £600,000. The buyer was required to stump up a deposit of just 5%. It was a reaction to sluggish rates of housebuilding, when developers were still licking their wounds from the financial crisis, and banks were reluctant to lend more than 75% of a new-build home's value, cutting many first-time buyers out of the market. The dubious logic behind help to buy was that by stimulating housing demand, housing supply would inevitably follow.

> ***'It's supply and demand, and the demand has been created through the help-to-buy scheme'***
>
> **Jeff Fairburn**
> *Former Persimmon CEO*

Economists balked. As Christian Hilber, professor of economic geography at the London School of Economics, wrote at the time: "Help to buy will likely have the effect of pushing up house prices (and rents) further with very little positive effect on new construction. Housing will likely become less – not more – affordable for young would-be-owners!"

Duncan Stott of the campaign group Priced Out was equally prescient: "Help to buy should really be called help to sell," he wrote, "as the main winners will be developers and homeowners who will find it easier to sell at inflated prices. Pumping more money into a housing market with chronic undersupply has one surefire outcome: house prices will go up."

One decade on, this is exactly what has happened.

A report published by the House of Lords built environment committee in 2022 concluded that the help-to-buy scheme "inflates prices by more than the subsidy value" and does "not provide good value for money, which would be better spent on increasing housing supply". What began as a three-year programme worth £3.5bn ended up being extended for a full decade, costing the taxpayer more than £29bn. The committee rightly pointed out that the cash should have been used to replenish England's stock of social housing.



▲ *Margaret Thatcher with a family who bought their council house under her right-to-buy scheme – which eviscerated social housing* PHOTOGRAPH: PA

Research conducted by Hilber and his team at the LSE found that help to buy increased house prices in London by 8%, and boosted developers' revenues by 57%. The researchers found the policy "led to higher new-build prices but had no discernible effect on construction volumes". Worse still, they found that the policy actively stimulated construction "in the wrong areas" all over the country. It fuelled out-of-town developments, increasing commuting distances and car use, rather than helping to revive depressed town centres.

Meanwhile, the housebuilders reaped bigger rewards than ever. Persimmon posted pre-tax profits of more than £1bn in 2018 and 2019, a record matched by Barratt in 2022. Share prices across the industry rocketed, leading to huge bonuses for chief executives. Jeff Fairburn, the then-boss of Persimmon, was awarded a bonus of £82m, one of the largest such bounties in British corporate history, and was forced out as a result. Fairburn was frank about the cause of the vast sum: "It's supply and demand, and the demand has been created through the help-to-buy scheme."

So, who benefited at the other end? Did the policy help to mint a new generation of homeowners? In total, the government says the scheme helped about 330,000 first-time buyers before it was axed in October 2022. But it seems that most beneficiaries were not the most needy recipients. According to Shelter, the government's own evaluation of the policy showed that only two in five help-to-buyers actually needed the scheme to buy a home. The majority used the subsidy to buy more expensive properties. The average first-time buyer using help to buy earned £50,000 – 85% more than the typical private renter household.

Helping out the comfortably-off and lining the pockets of developers may have been a calculated part of the Tory policy. But help to buy has also had a major unintended consequence: leaving many buyers trapped in negative equity. When a home bought using the scheme is sold, the government gets 20% of the property's value based on its sale price, rather than the cost when the owner first bought it. Market stagnation, or a fall in value, can therefore leave buyers unable to move.

A 2020 investigation by consumer group Which? found that one in seven homes bought using help to buy had lost value. This is a consequence of help to buy having created massively inflated premiums on new-build homes – which quickly evaporated once the home had been lived in (and the shoddy reality of much new-build construction was discovered).

The market distortion was particularly evident in flats. Before help to buy was introduced, the premium on new-build flats was 5%, according to the property data company TwentyCi. By 2022, it had shot up to 65%. That's a lot of new-build flat owners who, also thanks to cladding scandals and ballooning service charges, will be locked into their poorly built towers for years to come.

Voter turnout

Are landslide predictions offputting?

Paula Surridge

The devil may yet be in the detail, but the polls are clear about one thing: Labour is heading for a large, possibly very large, majority on 5 July. But what might this mean for turnout?

A clear and large polling lead for one party may mean voters are less inclined to vote, but it isn't immediately clear who that might benefit. Those who intend to vote Labour may think it isn't necessary for them to do so, but equally those who have previously voted Conservative may think a loss is inevitable. Voters that have previously voted for one of the two may also feel enabled to cast a vote for a smaller party, knowing it is unlikely to change the outcome.

Broadly there are two types of non-voters. First there are the habitual non-voters, many of whom are not on the electoral register. The factors that influence this kind of abstention are often structural: habitual non-voters are less interested in politics, less likely to feel any attachment to or strong dislike for a political party. They are less likely to be homeowners, less likely to have a degree-level qualification and are disproportionately drawn from lower socioeconomic groups.

The others – those who have voted previously but who may choose not to on 4 July – are more difficult to predict. They are more likely to be influenced by the campaign and the polls.

Those that voted in a previous election are usually very likely to do so again. Before both the 2019 and 2017 elections, polling from YouGov showed that three-quarters of voters for the main parties said they were absolutely certain to vote again.

But recent data has shown fewer than two-thirds of those who had voted Conservative in 2019 say this now, while for Labour and the Liberal Democrats this has remained at a similar level (78% and 72% respectively). This hesitancy in the Conservative vote reflects unusually high indecision, with many still undecided how they will vote. While the party is doing all it can to try and motivate previous voters, there is little sign these messages are helping.

With less than two weeks to go, getting out previous voters may be as important for the Tories as getting them back from rivals.

Paula Surridge is a professor of political sociology at the University of Bristol

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▲ *Sutherland with Julie Christie in Don't Look Now*

PHOTOGRAPH: CASEY PRODUCTIONS/STUDIO CANAL

'He loved what he did': actor Donald Sutherland dies after long illness



Andrew Pulver

Donald Sutherland, whose acting career spanned six decades and included films such as Don't Look Now, M*A*S*H and The Hunger Games, has died in Miami after a long illness, aged 88, his representatives said.

His son, the actor Kiefer Sutherland, also shared the news on X. "With a heavy heart, I tell you that my father, Donald Sutherland, has passed away," he wrote. "I personally think one of the most important actors in the history of film. Never daunted by a role, good, bad or ugly. He loved what he did and did what he loved, and one can never ask for more than that. A life well lived."

Sutherland appeared in more than 190 films and TV shows and embodied an off-kilter appeal that served him brilliantly in a series of classic 1970s movies, which gradually evolved into a veteran gravitas in the latter stages of his career. He did not win a major award for any of his film roles - and was never nominated for a conventional Oscar - but he did win two Golden Globes for best supporting actor for the TV movies Citizen X (in 1996) and Path to War (in 2003). Sutherland received an honorary Oscar in 2017.

Born in Canada in 1935, Sutherland studied engineering and drama at the University of Toronto, and moved to London in 1957 to join the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (Lamda). After small roles on British TV shows, Sutherland was cast in the action film The Dirty Dozen, as one of a group of prisoners trained for a dangerous mission during the second world war.



▲ *Donald Sutherland at the premiere of The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1, in 2014. The film introduced the actor to a new generation*

PHOTOGRAPH: JULIE EDWARDS/AVALON



▶ *Sutherland with Elliott Gould in the hit war comedy M*A*S*H and, above, with his family in California in May 1970*

PHOTOGRAPHS: CO RENTMEESTER/ THE LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION/ GETTY IMAGES

The Dirty Dozen was a hit and he appeared in two more war films with anti-heroic sensibilities: the massively influential Korean-war comedy M*A*S*H, in which Sutherland played the rule-bending surgeon "Hawkeye" Pierce, and Kelly's Heroes, as a whacked-out tank commander who joins Clint Eastwood's bank robbery.

The Canadian prime minister, Justin Trudeau, called Sutherland a "truly great Canadian artist", while the two-time Oscar-winning actor Michael Douglas, who starred in the 1994 film Disclosure alongside Sutherland, shared a picture of the pair together on Instagram, saying: "What a lovely, talented, and curious man. RIP Donald Sutherland."

Sutherland's work became more radical later in his career: he played the title role in Klute, opposite Jane Fonda's sex worker, as a detective investigating a murder in the first of director Alan J Pakula's so-called "paranoia trilogy" and appeared with Fonda in the anti-Vietnam war documentary FTA. In 2017, declassified documents showed that Sutherland, a vocal anti-war activist, was on the National Security Agency's "watch list" between 1971 and 1973.

In 1973 he starred opposite Julie Christie in Don't Look Now, the Nicolas Roeg-directed psychological horror, which contained a then-infamous sex scene, intercut with Christie and Sutherland getting dressed, which Sutherland was repeatedly forced to deny was authentic. He starred in Federico Fellini's Casanova, played murderous fascist Attila Melanchini in Bernardo Bertolucci's epic 1900, and featured alongside Michael Caine as a duplicitous IRA man in the war thriller The Eagle Has Landed.

He played a dope-smoking professor in National Lampoon's Animal House, and fought "pod people" in a remake of the horror sci-fi Invasion of the Body Snatchers - giving rise to a popular gif of the film's final moments.

In the 1980s and 90s his roles included an art dealer in Six Degrees of Separation, the mysterious Mr X in Oliver Stone's JFK and slayer trainer Merrick Jamison-Smythe in the Buffy the Vampire Slayer movie.

In 2012 his role as the villainous President Snow in The Hunger Games introduced him to a new generation of film-goers. He also starred in the disaster thriller Moonfall in 2022. Most recently, he had a recurring role in the TV series Lawmen: Bass Reeves with David Oyelowo.

Sutherland was married three times, to Lois Hardwick between 1959 and 1966, Shirley Douglas (1966-1970) and Francine Racette, whom he married in 1972. His memoir will be published in November.

Appreciation

Peter Bradshaw



An aristocrat of screen actors who gave roles a touch of class

Donald Sutherland was an utterly unique actor and irreplacable star. Possessed of a distinctive leonine handsomeness that the white beard of his latter years only made more majestic, he was watchful, cerebral, charismatic, with a refinement to his screen acting technique comparable perhaps only to Paul Scofield, and his Canadian background (together with his early stage training and experience in England and Scotland) giving his American roles a certain touch of Anglo-international class.

Commanding and exacting, he gave each of his roles and films something special: he addressed his co-stars and the camera itself from a position of strength.

Even playing a weak or absurd character, as he did starring as the preposterous womaniser in Federico Fellini's Casanova in 1976, finally reduced to the job of a librarian in a German count's castle, brooding grotesquely over the phantoms of past lovers, Sutherland was still mesmeric.

In the latter years, he tended towards gravitas (and it's a shame there is no screen Lear from Sutherland) but in his heyday could convey bulging-eyed rage, joy, glee or malice – or a grinning satiric detachment, as he did in Robert Altman's M*A*S*H in 1970, as Hawkeye Pierce, the brilliant but irresponsible army field surgeon in Korea, a live-wire dissident, thrumming with directionless unused energy.

He gravitated to complex leader roles, and repeatedly directors found that Sutherland had the intellectual seriousness and emotional maturity to play a complex father figure, a troubled paterfamilias – as in Robert Redford's Ordinary People and perhaps most sensationally of all, his role as the art historian John Baxter in Nicolas Roeg's 1973 ghost story, Don't Look Now.

Sutherland's range in this movie is superb: he is heartrending as the man who has to pull his young daughter's dead body from a pond – and deeply affecting as the husband who rebuilds his emotional and erotic relationship with his wife as they struggle to deal with their grief.

In his mature years, Sutherland often settled into potent cameos and supporting roles. He was an aristocrat of screen actors.

James Morrison's ex-partner took own life, coroner rules

PA Media

The former partner of the singer James Morrison took her own life after suffering mental health difficulties, an inquest has heard.

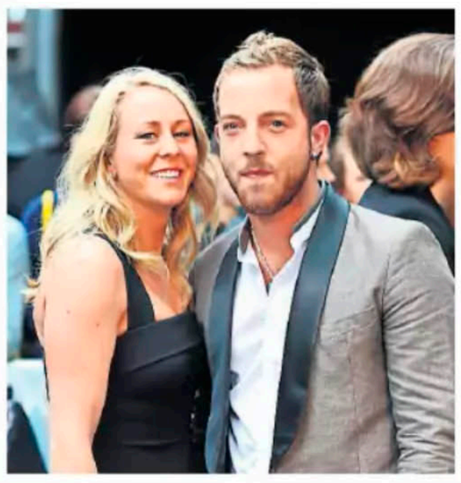
Gill Catchpole, 45, was found dead by Morrison at her home in Whitminster, Gloucestershire, on 5 January this year. Gloucestershire coroner's court heard a friend had gone to Catchpole's home and found a handwritten note on A4 paper attached to the front door saying: "Don't come in, call the police."

The friend had gone to the adjacent property, where the musician lived, and Morrison had used keys to access the property and found his former partner's body. Police and paramedics were called, and Catchpole was pronounced dead at 9.37am.

DS David Kania, who investigated the death, ruled out third-party involvement. "A friend of the deceased had attended when they saw a sheet of A4 paper with the words written: 'Don't come in, call the police'," the officer said in a statement. "The friend went to the house and raised the ex-partner, who located a set of keys to the annexe house, whereupon they entered and found the deceased.

"Upon entering the living room, I saw a series of handwritten notes on the lounge table which were addressed to the deceased's ex-partner, family and friends.

"There were no signs of a disturbance or third-party involvement. It has been relayed to me that close friends and family had indicated that



Gill Catchpole, 45, was found dead by Morrison at her home in January

Four in five locum GPs in England are unable to find job

Tobi Thomas
Health and inequalities correspondent

More than four in five locum GPs in England are unable to find work with a third forced to leave the NHS because they cannot make ends meet, a survey has found.

A survey of 1,852 locums, conducted by the British Medical Association (BMA), found that 84% cannot find work despite patients across the country waiting weeks for GP appointments. The study also found that more than half are considering a career change due to a lack of work, while 33% have already made definite plans to work in a different career away from the NHS.

Thirty-one per cent of respondents also said that the lack of suitable shifts was leading them to leave the NHS entirely, while 71% said the government funding model was to blame for the levels of unemployment.

More than half of GP appointments are now conducted by non-GP practice staff as they are cheaper, which is leading to locums being unable to find work. The BMA say this is due to the government's model of funding GP practices meaning that many are unable to hire family doctors through these funds.

A previous survey by the BMA also found that 54% of practices reported issues with cashflow which affected their day-to-day running, meaning that they were unable to afford locum cover.

71%

The proportion of locum GPs who blame the levels of unemployment on the government funding model

33%

Proportion of locums who said they had made definite plans to work in a different career outside the NHS

Anna (not her real name), a locum GP from Dorset who has been working in the NHS for more than 25 years, said she began to experience problems with getting shifts in December 2023. "I had a contract end in December of last year, and I then realised that there was very little work available so that I couldn't choose where or when I worked, I had to take whatever was available," she said.

Since then, Anna has had to take on other work, such as tutoring GCSE pupils, as the lack of locum GP work meant she was struggling financially.

"It's made me very sad and frustrated. I feel like I've lost my purpose," Anna said. "But after nearly 30 years of service, I've been driven out of the NHS by a government scheme that blocks general practice from employing general practitioners – it's maddening."

She added: "All day, when I find some work, I hear from patients who say they want to see a GP, and I'm thinking that I am a GP, and I'm here, but I'm watching daytime TV while you're at home worrying about your health. There is something not right there."

Dr Mark Steggles, the BMA's sessional GP committee chair, said that the "shocking" results of the survey reveal the stress and worry locum GPs are experiencing by being unable to find enough work.

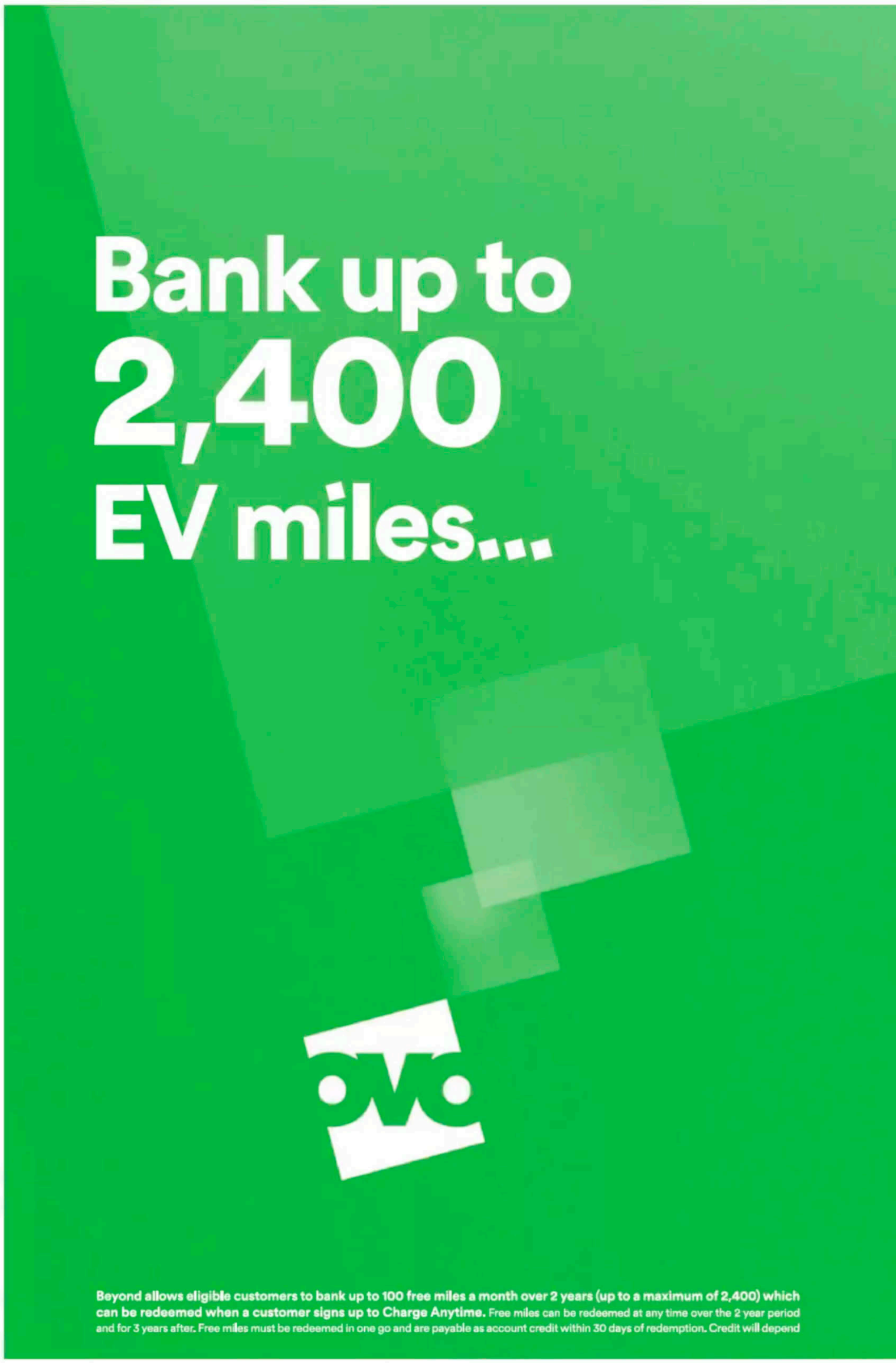
Steggles said: "As well as the stress and worry that causes them – when combined with the lack of NHS salaried and partnership opportunities – it leaves us in the ridiculous situation where so many patients are being denied the chance to see a GP, even though we have GPs wanting to work.

"It's difficult to comprehend how the NHS – a health service once world-renowned – has reached this point where thousands of highly skilled doctors are unable to find suitable work within it and patients are suffering as a result."

Dr Katie Bramall-Stainer, BMA England's GPs committee chair, said that the government's funding model for general practices was "ridiculous", and leading to many practices being unable to fund GPs.

"We have made it clear to the government that this needs to change so we can have more GPs working in local practices," Bramall-Stainer said. "We're hearing lots of pre-election promises about increasing GP numbers, but the first challenge for the next government will be to find a way to keep the GPs we already have in the NHS. To run a bath, you first must put in the plug; this is basic workforce planning."

The Department of Health and Social Care was approached for comment.



Gill had been suffering with her mental health for the last year or so and since the split from her ex-partner.

"It is likely that this had a further negative detrimental impact on her mental health, which culminated in her taking actions which led to her untimely death."

Toxicology tests found an alcohol level of 190mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood. The legal drink-drive limit in England is 80mg per 100ml of blood. The inquest heard the toxicologist was unable to determine "whether or not or the degree" to which the use of alcohol had affected Catchpole's state of mind at the time of her death. The court was told Catchpole had suffered from kidney disease since 2008 and later underwent a kidney transplant.

In a written statement, Dr Emma Basker, a GP, said Catchpole had also suffered from "reoccurring mental ill health", including anxiety and PTSD, and had received medication, counselling and psychological therapy.

The Gloucestershire area coroner Roland Wooderson recorded a conclusion of suicide, saying: "It is quite clear to me that, sadly, at the relevant time Gill was in a difficult place mentally.

"It is entirely clear to me that the contents of those notes indicate Gill unfortunately was in a very difficult place at the time of her death. Having reviewed the evidence I have, it seems to me sadly that the appropriate conclusion, on the balance of probabilities, I will record a conclusion of suicide."

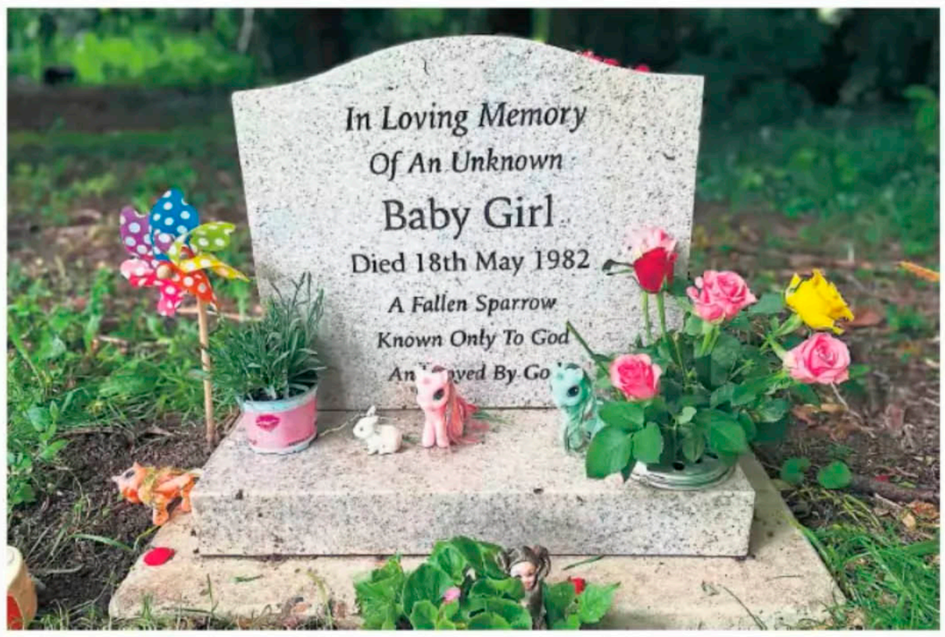
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▲ *The Burgons attended the burial of the baby girl found near Northampton station. The case was closed in 1993* PHOTOGRAPH: JESSICA MURRAY/THE GUARDIAN

Never forgotten How couple kept pledge to baby found dead in 1982

Jessica Murray
Midlands correspondent

It was 9.30 on a cold November morning in 1982 when George and Margaret Burgon laid to rest an unknown baby girl who had been found dead in a carrier bag near Northampton train station. The couple, along with three police officers, an undertaker and two journalists, were the only people present at the service led by George, who was then a vicar at St Mary's church in Northampton.

Ever since, Margaret has been travelling to the baby girl's grave, tucked away in an isolated corner of a cemetery, to lay flowers four or five times a year.

She said: "I promised her that she wouldn't be forgotten. And I've kept that. It's really, really sad. I can remember looking at her tiny coffin."

Last week, police arrested a 57-year-old woman in Northampton on suspicion of the baby's murder, more than 40 years after her death, following a cold case review. The baby's discovery in 1982 created headlines nationwide and there was a big police investigation, but nobody was prosecuted and the case was closed in 1993. It is understood the infant was found strangled and wrapped in cloth.

Margaret Burgon, who has three daughters, said she was stunned when two police officers turned up at her door last week with news of the arrest.

She said: "When they sat there and told us, I just went 'Oh my God.' I almost burst into tears. I was so amazed that after 42 years, they could make an arrest. Then I was getting so many messages from people saying: 'Margaret, is this the baby you take flowers for? Is this your baby?' I've been asked on more than one occasion, why do you still do that? And I said, because I made her a promise."

She had last visited the grave at Northampton cemetery on 16 May; she always visits around the recorded date of death of 18 May.

The grave sits apart from those of other children, in an isolated spot, as there was no family to pay for a plot. It is adorned with flowers, a windmill and toys left by children.

After her most recent visit, she had posted on social media to say she did not suppose "we'll ever know who this little one is, or indeed, when her birthday actually is. My friend and I visited her today, pouring with rain, but that didn't deter us."

In 2019, the Burgons arranged to have a headstone made, donated by a local stonemason – Margaret feared the baby could become forgotten without a visible grave.

They also had to enlist the help of a councillor to prevent the area from becoming overgrown with trees and bushes. The headstone refers to the girl as "a fallen sparrow", an allusion to a biblical passage used by George Burgon in the funeral service he held for her decades before.

"A fallen sparrow known only to God and loved by God," it reads.

He said: "I remember the whole community was very shocked by what happened. She is our child as a society, as a humanity. But what we've done, this is only the preface to the story. The real story has got to come out."

> ***'I almost burst into tears. I was so amazed that after 42 years, [police] could make an arrest'***
>
> **Margaret Burgon**
> *Wife of former vicar*

Plaque unveiled honouring the first woman to win the Booker

Steven Morris

She was the first woman to be awarded the Booker prize and remains the only Welsh winner, but until now there has been no memorial to the achievements of Bernice Rubens.

Today a plaque will be unveiled honouring Rubens, who died in 2004, at her family home in the Roath area of Cardiff at a ceremony attended by literature scholars and politicians.

Sue Essex, the chair of Purple Plaques Wales, said: "There was nothing to mark her impressive achievements. I'm so glad we've been able to put this right with a plaque on the family home."

Among those present will be Cai Parry-Jones, who featured Rubens in his book The Jews of Wales: A History and has pointed out the disparity in how she has been remembered compared with the poet Dannie Abse, who was also born into a Welsh Jewish family and is honoured with a plaque placed on his house in Roath a year after he died. Parry-Jones described Rubens' Booker win in 1970 for her novel The Elected Member, focusing on the struggles of a Jewish family in London's East End, as "hugely significant".



Bernice Rubens, who died in 2004, will be honoured with a plaque on her family home in Cardiff today

Rubens was born in Cardiff, the third of four children of Eli and Dorothy Rubens. Eli was a Lithuanian Jew who fled Latvia at the age of 16 in the hope of starting a new life in New York. After being swindled by a ticket tout in Hamburg he never reached the US, ending up in Cardiff.

Having worked as a teacher and a documentary maker, Rubens went on to publish more than 20 novels, the main themes of which were family life and Jewishness. She said of Cardiff: "It was a rich place to grow up."

Parry-Jones said: "Bernice's centenary last year [she was born in 1923] made me realise there was nothing in Cardiff to commemorate her life and work, which was a great shame. Anniversaries like this make us reflect on what has and hasn't been done in terms of official commemoration.

"Until recently, Wales has had a poor record in publicly commemorating the achievements of Welsh women, which initiatives like the purple plaque campaign aim to rectify. Wales has tended to commemorate its poets over its novelists as a result of deep-rooted bardic traditions.

"Unlike many Welsh writers, most of Bernice's novels did not engage with obvious Welsh themes and settings, and she lived most of her life outside of Wales. However, Cardiff was very much considered home and her upbringing in a Jewish family in the city would prove to have a lasting impact on her writing."

> ***'There was nothing to mark her impressive achievements. I'm so glad we've been able to put this right'***
>
> **Sue Essex**
> *Purple Plaques Wales*

A family member, Janet Reuben, said: "The Rubens family are delighted that Bernice is being honoured in this way. Bernice spent her formative years growing up as a girl in Cardiff and these experiences inspired many of her works."

The Welsh government's chief whip, Jane Hutt, said: "Bernice Rubens was one of the most captivating and versatile novelists of the 20th century, and I am thrilled to see her achievements celebrated."

Purple Plaques was launched on International Women's Day in 2017 with the aim of recognising women's contribution to Welsh life.

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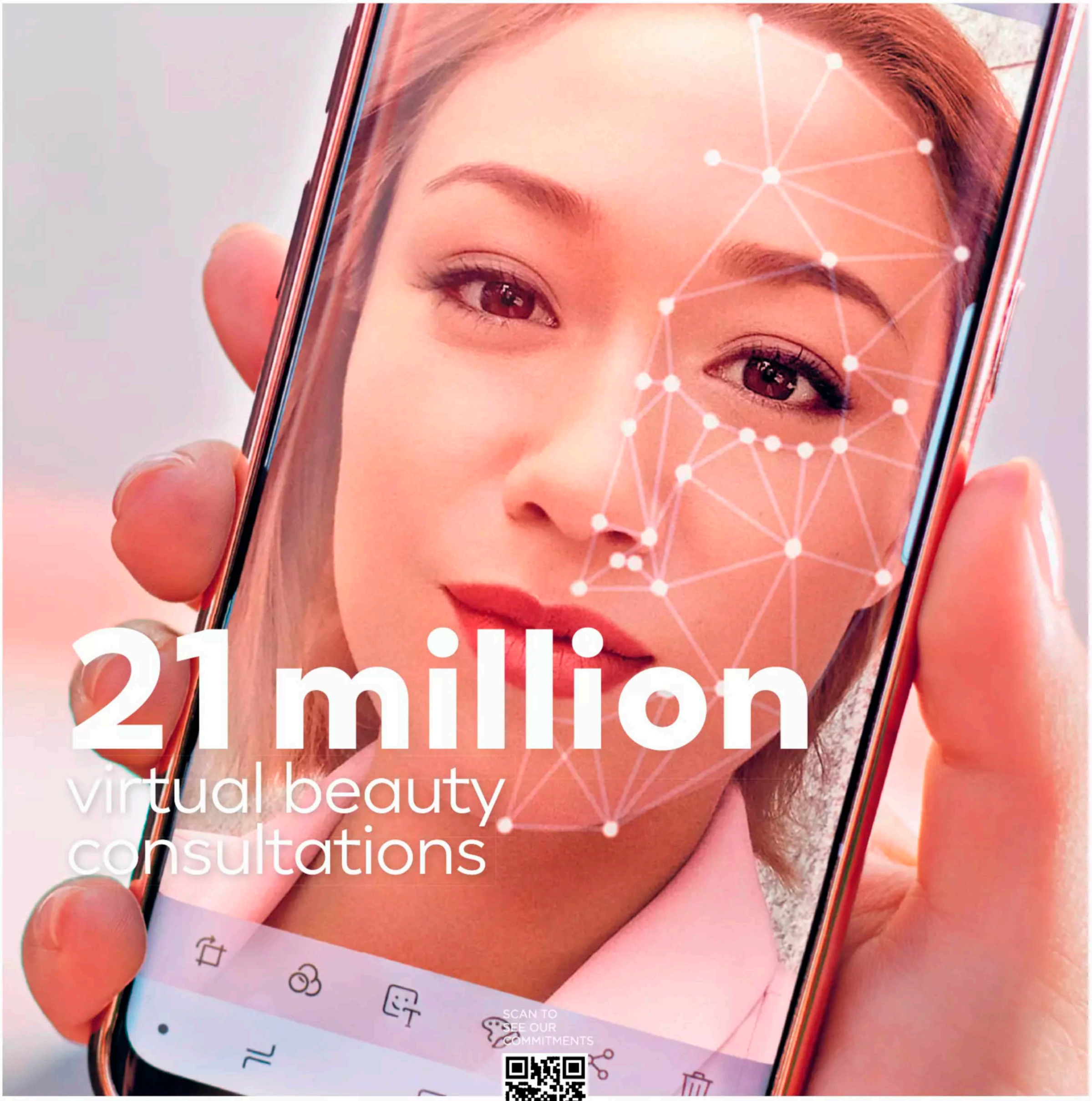
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Friends of teenager missing in Tenerife urge UK and Spain to send specialist search teams

Hannah Al-Othman

Friends of a British teenager who disappeared in Tenerife have urged British and Spanish police to send reinforcements to aid the search as they have resorted to hunting for evidence and interviewing potential witnesses themselves.

Police on the island have been looking for Jay Slater, a 19-year-old apprentice bricklayer from Lancashire, since Monday morning with the help of drones and a helicopter.

But the area where he disappeared, in Rural de Teno nature reserve, is so vast and rugged that friends have said specialist search teams from the UK and the Spanish mainland need to be drafted in to help.

Slater's friend Lucy, with whom he had been on holiday, was among those urging UK police to fly out to help with the search.

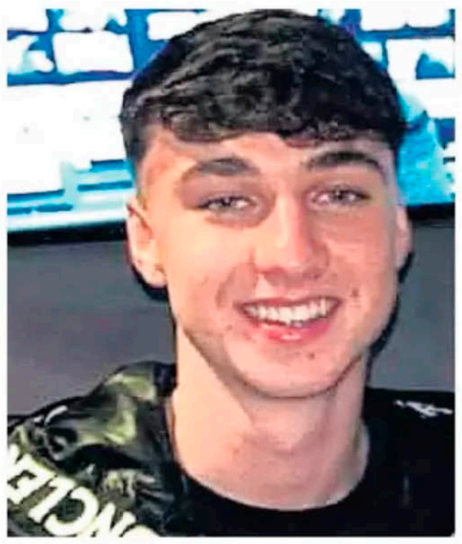
She reported Slater missing after she received a call from him at about 8.15am on the morning he disappeared, in which he told her that he did not know where he was, that he was thirsty and had just 1% phone battery.

"I just think they need to get as much help as they can out here," she said. "There's no helicopters here [now]. He's been missing for that long now, what are they actually doing?"

Lucy said she welcomed the support from local police "who know the area", but that the search operation needed to be much more intensive. "There's nobody here," she said.

On the first day she reported Jay missing, Lucy said she had gone back to his last known location. "I was here literally until it was dark, and I was told I needed to come away," she said. "That full day not one person was here."

In efforts to help find him, friends have identified the house he went back to with people he had met at a music festival the night before he disappeared. They said they had traced the house from social media videos, and that by speaking to people in the village, they learned that the men whom Slater had befriended had already flown back to the UK.



▲ *Jay Slater, 19, disappeared on Monday morning after calling a friend to tell her that he was lost.*

Below, local police search his last known whereabouts, Rural de Teno

PHOTOGRAPH: BORJA SUÁREZ/REUTERS

Slater's friends do not believe the men were spoken to by police before they left the island to see whether they may hold vital information about his last known movements.

They have also combed the expansive undergrowth, finding bags, clothing, and other detritus probably left behind by tourists, among the caves, rocks, cacti and banana plants that make up the landscape.

They have collected and kept items such as cigarette butts, in case they may later prove useful to the investigation.

Yesterday afternoon there were some police and search and rescue workers in the area where Slater was last known to have been, but there was no sign of any large-scale search operation. Another family friend said: "Even if they had 30,000 people here it's like a needle in a haystack."

She said they had spent 12 hours on Wednesday trawling all of the paths in the area surrounding Slater's last known location.

"It needs to be taken seriously," Lucy added, saying she believed UK police may have specialist resources that could aid local forces.

She also said friends and family needed more support, as they were struggling to get information from, and communicate with, local police.

Speaking to ITV news yesterday morning, Slater's mother, Debbie Duncan, described her "living nightmare" as she waited for news about her "beautiful boy".

She said: "I wouldn't wish this on anybody. I just want my baby back. Please just anybody who can help – look for him. It's a massive area.

"He's out there somewhere or somebody knows where he is. I wish I hadn't encouraged him to go to this. I should have said: 'Don't go to Tenerife.' I just think he was probably still in high spirits, buzzing – he's not known where he is. He's not known the extent of the long journey that he went on to get up there."

One member of the emergency services on site said they remained optimistic that someone could survive in the current conditions.



McKellen to be replaced in his West End role after stage injury

Lanre Bakare

Ian McKellen will be replaced by an understudy for the rest of the London run of Player Kings after the 85-year-old was injured during a performance.

The veteran stage and screen actor needed hospital treatment after falling off the stage during a fight scene at the Noël Coward theatre on Monday.



▲ *Sir Ian McKellen lost his footing in a fight scene and fell off the stage*

The rest of that performance of Robert Icke's adaptation of Shakespeare's Henry IV plays was cancelled, along with performances scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday, to allow him to rest.

It was hoped he would return to the production but he has not recovered well enough and David Semark will instead take over the role of Sir John Falstaff for the remaining three West End performances, according to a post on the Player Kings' X account.

It added: "We look forward to Ian returning to the production, which begins a national tour in Bristol on Wednesday 3 July, before visiting Birmingham, Norwich and Newcastle."

After McKellen's fall, the Lord of the Rings star and Olivier award winner thanked everyone who had sent messages of support. He wrote on X: "I want to thank everyone for their kind messages and support. Since the accident, during a performance of Player Kings last night, my injuries have been diagnosed and treated by a series of experts, specialists and nurses working for the National Health Service. To them, of course, I am hugely indebted. They have assured me that my recovery will be complete and speedy and I am looking forward to returning to work."

A statement from the theatre said earlier this week that McKellen had had a scan and was told he would make a "speedy and full recovery".



▲ *Katie Archibald had been a strong contender for gold in three events*

Champion cyclist to miss Olympics after breaking leg in two places

Morgan Ofori

The two-time Olympic champion cyclist Katie Archibald will miss Paris 2024 after suffering a double leg break in an accident. The 30-year-old Scot fractured a tibia and fibula, and dislocated an ankle, tripping over a garden step. She also sustained ligament damage after the incident on Tuesday and had surgery.

Archibald was a strong contender for gold in three disciplines: the omnium, madison, and team pursuit races. The injury means a reshuffle for Team GB's track lineup and the team pursuit squad when the Olympics begin in July.

She confirmed yesterday, via Instagram, that the injury would prevent her racing at her third Games.

She posted, with a picture of herself in a hospital bed: "Had surgery yesterday to pin the bones back together and reattach the ligaments. Then hopefully this afternoon I'll be going home. A hundred apologies for what this means for the Olympic team ... which I've been told won't involve me ... thought I better confirm it publicly ... A hundred thank yous for the fabulous doctors, nurses, radiographers, porters, physios, surgeons and more at the Manchester Royal Infirmary."

Archibald came to prominence at the 2013 European Track Cycling Championships where, alongside Laura Kenny, Dani King and Elinor Barker, she won the gold medal and broke the world record twice in the team pursuit. Her 20 gold medals in European elite track championships make for an all-time record. She also won gold for Scotland in the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

She topped the podium in the madison alongside Kenny at the Tokyo Olympics and won the team pursuit gold at the 2016 Games.

However she has endured a difficult past couple of years. She missed the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham after colliding with a vehicle. In the same year she fractured her spine then broke her collarbone in a crash at the UCI Track Nations Cup, while her partner, the mountain biker Rab Wardell, died suddenly that summer aged 37.

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Just Stop Oil targets private jets at Stansted airport



▲ *Two people were held after the jets were sprayed at the airfield where Taylor Swift's plane is being kept*
PHOTOGRAPH: JUST STOP OIL/UNPIXS

Matthew Weaver

Just Stop Oil activists sprayed orange paint over two private jets at Stansted airport yesterday on the airfield where Taylor Swift's plane is stationed, the group said.

Two activists, Jennifer Kowalski, 28, a former sustainability manager from Dumbarton, and Cole Macdonald, 22, from Brighton, broke into a private airfield at Stansted at 5am before targeting the jets.

Essex police said officers had been "on the scene within minutes" and that two women, aged 28 and 22, had been arrested on suspicion of criminal damage and interference with the use or operation of national infrastructure.

Just Stop Oil (JSO) said on X that two activists had "cut the fence into the private airfield at Stansted where taylorswift13's jet is parked, demanding an emergency treaty to end fossil fuels by 2030".

In February Swift's lawyers threatened legal action against a student tracking the singer's jet use on social media. The X account CelebJets found the plane was used more than those belonging to any other celebrities, emitting more than 8,000 tonnes of carbon. A spokesperson for the singer denied Swift was on every flight, saying her plane was lent to other people.

The demonstration came a day after two JSO activists were arrested in connection with the spraying of orange powder on Stonehenge.

Nick Merriman, the chief executive of English Heritage, which cares for hundreds of sites, including Stonehenge, said the protest was "vandalism to one of the world's most celebrated ancient monuments".

He told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: "We respect the rights of people to protest as an important right in British life. But we wish people would channel their protests away from cultural heritage sites, museums and galleries, because we feel that doesn't actually help their cause and causes this huge upset and disruption to the operation of these important sites."

Restorers had managed to clean the orange powder from the stones using blown air to avoid damaging rare lichens on the surface, he added.

"Stonehenge is about 5,000 years old, and people in those ancient times were living so sustainably, and the stones are a testament to the desire of people to connect with nature and the Earth and the sun and the moon as well as each other."

The group have targeted a series of cultural institutions in recent months including disrupting a Proms concert at the Royal Albert Hall, damaging a case around the Magna Carta at the British Library and throwing tomato soup over Vincent van Gogh's Sunflowers in the National Gallery.

Regarding the Stonehenge protest, JSO said it was time for "megalithic action" 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."

Pregnant women should be tested for diabetes far earlier – study

Anna Bawden
Health and social affairs correspondent

Pregnant women should be tested for diabetes much earlier than the current practice of doing so between 24 and 28 weeks, according to research.

Gestational diabetes, which only develops in pregnancy, affects thousands of women in the UK and one in seven pregnancies worldwide. It is the most common medical pregnancy complication and occurs when a hormone from the placenta stops the body using insulin effectively, causing raised blood glucose levels.

Without treatment, gestational diabetes can lead to high blood pressure, increased risk of caesarean sections, mental health conditions and complications for the baby at delivery, alongside health problems for the mother later in life.

In England, as in many countries, women at risk of gestational diabetes are generally tested between 24 and 28 weeks of pregnancy.

Twenty-eight academics from 13 countries have called for testing and treatment to occur before 14 weeks of pregnancy rather than in the third trimester, to prevent complications.

In three linked papers in the Lancet the authors say women with high blood glucose in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy had worse outcomes compared with those whose gestational diabetes occurred later in pregnancy.

Show of unity Owens channels the power of inclusion on Paris catwalk

Lauren Cochrane



▼ *Many of those who walked the catwalk at Rick Owens' show – which featured Cleopatra-style headpieces and gowns in light fabrics – were students from fashion schools around Paris* PHOTOGRAPH: EMILY MALAN/GETTY

Olympic excellence has – understandably – been something of a theme at the menswear fashion shows in Paris this week. The latest to highlight the impressive power of athletes was Rick Owens. For his spring/summer 2025 show in the grounds of the Palais de Tokyo yesterday, he included a "gymnast bouquet" – three gymnasts on a steel structure carried by nine young men in shorts and vests.

Owens is usually associated with a gothy, dark aesthetic rather than sports, so this was a different take on what may be seen at the opening ceremony in a few weeks' time. But the show also had a heartwarming story. Rather than professionals, the models here were largely students and staff from fashion colleges across Paris.

If fashion shows typically feature one model at a time wearing a different outfit, here groups of about 20 models reached the catwalk together, each wearing the same outfit. The black Owens usually loves was replaced by an entirely white and ivory collection. With Owens' otherworldly aesthetic, the effect was slightly sci-fi – especially with outfits featuring Cleopatra-like headpieces, and some models with balaclavas and capes.

This show follows two previous collections that were shown to an exclusive group in the hushed and minimal environs of the designer's house. In a statement, he said that the bigger space of the Palais de Tokyo was a reaction. "I felt bad about making attendance so restricted so this time around I wanted to welcome *everyone*," he wrote. Hence asking fashion schools for "men and women who would like to walk in this white satin army of love.".

Owens said the show was about unity: the gymnast at the top of the bouquet held a flag with a picture of people holding hands. "Expressing our individuality is great but sometimes expressing our unity and reliance on each other is a good thing to remember too," he said, "especially in the face of the peak intolerance we are experiencing in the world right now."

*Advertised price includes 36-month Device Plan (credit agreement) at £20pm, and 24-month 300GB Value Airtime Plan at £24pm. **From 2025, each April Airtime Plan monthly charge will increase by December's consumer price index rate + 3.9%** and includes £5 discount for paying by recurring method. Proof of Switching (PAC Code and your number) required. £144 saving – £6pm on featured Airtime Plan vs standard price. Credit provided by Hutchison 3G UK Limited at 0% APR throughout credit term, subject to status and credit check, 18+ only. Missed payments may be reported to a Credit Reference Agency and may make it more difficult/expensive to obtain credit in future. Hutchison 3G UK Limited authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority for Consumer Credit, registered office: 450 Longwater Avenue, Reading, Berkshire, RG2 6GF. Terms apply. **Value Plan**: Warranty only applicable to original plan and handset. Terms apply. Use your allowances to call and text the UK and use data for up to 28 days in our Go Roam destinations. Fair use policy of 12GB per month applies. See three.co.uk/go-roam.

Eyewitness



▼ Khan Younis, Gaza
A girl poses yesterday with a wedding dress found in the rubble of buildings hit in Israeli airstrikes
PHOTOGRAPH: BASHAR TALEB/AFP/GETTY



Theatre review

Wilde classic brought into age of Instagram

The Importance of Being Earnest
Royal Exchange, Manchester
★★★☆☆

Mark Fisher

To update Oscar Wilde is a perilous game. He is a playwright locked in the manners and mores of his time. To change the context is to risk sacrificing the comedy. Undeterred, director Josh Roche makes a convincing stab at a 21st-century makeover of The Importance of Being Earnest, first performed in 1895, even if the concept wobbles after initial gains.

By setting the play among today's idle rich, Roche breathes fresh life into a familiar classic. Algernon Moncrieff (Parth Thakerar) lounges around in his smart-but-casual cottons, up-turning discarded takeaway cartons and picking out the tune of Whitney Houston's I Wanna Dance With Somebody on his Casio keyboard. His pal Jack Worthing (Robin Morrissey) is a public school layabout with more education than sense.

The new perspective sharpens Wilde's aphorisms and satirises the young men's indolence. Rather than indulge their poshness, it offers it up for scrutiny. That remains the case with the arrival of Gwendolen Fairfax (Phoebe Pryce). She is earnest about Ernest and hilariously humourless, but worldly enough to post her engagement ring on Instagram the moment Jack proposes.

Ruling the roost, Lady Bracknell (Abigail Cruttenden) is no stage ogre, but a recognisably formidable



▲ *Rumi Sutton as Cecily and Parth Thakerar as Algenon in Josh Roche's production of The Importance of Being Earnest* PHOTOGRAPH: JOHAN PERSSON

force, a woman powered by her own sense of entitlement. The younger generation buckle at her every pronouncement.

But the production falters with the move to the country. In a gently tweaked script, we are on the other side of the north-south divide in the environs of Cheshire. An explosion of blossom cascades from Eleanor Bull's set above a garden of fluffy pink mounds. Although nature has been made synthetic, the artificial language of the city has been dropped, giving Miss Prism (Emma Cunniffe) and the trust-fund teenager Cecily Cardew (Rumi Sutton) a modern-day directness. This is a Cecily who lives through her phone, keeps an online diary and corrects Algernon for referring to her "pretty little head". So far so feminist, but without the sheen of politeness her newly assertive lines lose their wit.

It makes for a mirthless start to the second act, until the plot deceptions kick in and Wilde's mighty comedy reasserts itself.

Until 20 July

Man, 87, charged with murder of woman, 85

Rachel Hall

An 87-year-old man has been charged with murder after the death of a woman, also in her 80s, at a property in Bath.

Delia Haxworth, 85, was found in need of urgent medical treatment at a property in Upper Lansdown Mews on 18 June, but despite receiving medical attention she was pronounced dead at the scene.

William Arthur Haxworth, of Upper Lansdown Mews, appeared before magistrates on 20 June, where he was remanded into custody. A hearing will be held at Bristol crown court on 21 June.

DI Mark Newbury, leading the major crime investigation team, said: "Our thoughts are very much with Delia's family as they begin to come to terms with this tragedy. Although a man has been charged, we are still in the early stages of our investigation. I hope that anyone with information will come forward to help us find the answers for the family."

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Post Office investigator deleted 'damaging' words about Horizon errors, inquiry told

Jason Deans

A former Post Office investigator deleted part of a draft witness statement that referred to the Horizon IT system's failures, before the criminal prosecution of a post office operative, a public inquiry heard.

Graham Ward, a former Post Office financial investigator, was questioned before the public inquiry examining what MPs have described as one of the biggest ever miscarriages of justice.

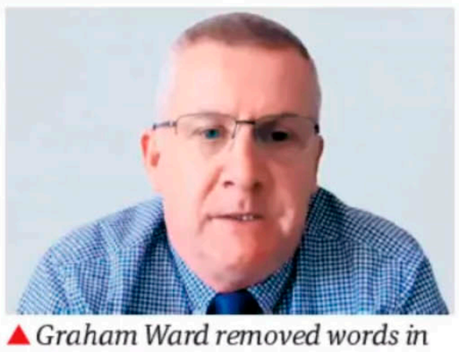
The state-owned body wrongly prosecuted hundreds of post office operatives, alleging financial shortfalls at their branches. It emerged that the Post Office's Horizon IT system was not reliable and had defects.

Ward was asked about changes he made in 2006 to a draft witness statement from Gareth Jenkins, an IT engineer at Fujitsu, the company that developed the Horizon IT system. The Post Office had wanted to use Jenkins' statement in the criminal prosecution of Noel Thomas, a post office operative from Anglesey, Wales, who is one of the highest-profile victims of the scandal.

Thomas was jailed for nine months for false accounting in 2006 but had his conviction quashed in 2021.

The inquiry was shown a copy of the draft witness statement made by Jenkins to which Ward made changes highlighted in red.

Ward sent an email to colleagues in March 2006 in which he said the statement needed "more work". He attached a revised draft in which he had made changes and deleted some "potentially very damaging" words. The inquiry heard that in the revised draft Ward deleted Jenkins' assessment, which had said "there has been some sort of system failure - such failures are normal occurrences".



▲ *Graham Ward removed words in an IT engineer's witness statement*

Jason Beer, counsel to the inquiry, put to him that he had deliberately made the changes as he knew it was evidence that could support Thomas's defence that the Horizon IT system was to blame for the losses.

"Do you accept by your conduct you removed material information from Mr Jenkins' witness statement at a time a prosecution was afoot against Mr Thomas?" Beer asked him.

Ward replied: "No I don't. I think the decision to remove that had to have been Mr Jenkins' decision. I made a comment and I made a review and I accept that I shouldn't have been doing that but the final decision to make that statement - what went in there - that was for Mr Jenkins to decide."

He added: "Back in 2006 Horizon [IT system] integrity wasn't an issue for us at all ... I was trying to get a statement correct ... That was my intention. I am really sorry for how it comes across, I really am, but I was trying to do my job."

Ultimately, the statement was not heard in court as Thomas pleaded guilty to false accounting on the basis that he accepted that Horizon was working perfectly, and so there was not a jury trial.

Kay Linnell, a forensic accountant and adviser to the post office operatives, told the inquiry that the prosecutions should never have happened and the Post Office engaged in "an extreme form of self-justified bullying" akin to "shooting fish in a barrel". She added in a witness statement: "It seems to me that [Post Office] senior staff have perpetrated a cover-up apparently at any cost to them to hide their criminal theft of funds from SPMs [sub postmasters], possibly orchestrating a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice and endorse or commit perjury in the court by themselves or others."

Separately, it emerged yesterday that the Post Office has launched an "urgent" investigation and referred itself to the data watchdog after it accidentally published the names and addresses of hundreds of post office operators on its corporate website. The state-owned body published the personal details of 555 people involved in suing the Post Office in a high-court lawsuit in 2019.

The lawsuit for the post office operatives had been led by Sir Alan Bates, the campaigner played by the actor Toby Jones in the ITV hit drama Mr Bates vs the Post Office, which portrayed his fight for justice and ignited a public furore about the scandal.

Since the publication of the names, first reported by the Daily Mail on Wednesday, the Post Office has removed the document containing the personal data from its website and referred itself to the Information Commissioner's Office.

'Her time has come' - Paula Rego work expected to set record at auction

Lanre Bakare
Arts and culture correspondent

A "masterpiece" by Paula Rego is to go under the hammer at Sotheby's in London on Tuesday and could set a new record for the artist.

Rego's challenging work about abortion, gender roles and domestic violence has found new audiences in an era when identity is king. Since her death in 2022 the record price for one of her works at auction has risen significantly, jumping from $1.8m in 2015 to a new record of just over £3m at Christie's in October last year.

Meadow, which is on the market for the first time since it was bought in 1997 after her Marlborough Gallery show in New York, could better that with a top-end initial estimate of about £3m.

Emma Baker, Sotheby's head of contemporary evening sale, called the work a "masterpiece" and one that was typical of Rego's love of playing with gender roles, while also referencing art history, specifically Cezanne's Scipio.

She thinks the interest in Rego is aligned with a more general societal shift, with issues of female empowerment, the MeToo movement and the repeal of Roe v Wade in the US forcing these themes into the mainstream.

"Some of her pictures are tough, especially those that confront images of abortion," said Baker. "But attitudes to the hard-hitting themes and topics are changing. Over the last decade there's been a real shift and these issues are being brought to light; these are at the forefront of our contemporary dialogue."

'She's an artist that is gaining the reputation as a major figure from the last century'

Emma Baker
Sotheby's



▶ *Meadow, which is on the market for the first time since 1997, is expected to sell for more than £3m*
PHOTOGRAPH: SOTHEBY'S

The auction is the latest milestone in a career resurgence for Rego, who since her death has become not only a sought-after artist on the market but the subject of several big exhibitions.

Shortly before her death Rego had a career retrospective at Tate Britain in 2021. Later this year there's another exhibition at Kunstmuseum Basel. At the same time, the Holburne Museum in Bath is hosting a show featuring Rego's work alongside Francisco de Goya, called Uncanny Visions.

Chris Stephens, the director of the Holburne Museum, said there has been a huge shift in interest towards not just Rego's work but to that of other female artists who tackled themes of identity.

Stephens said when he worked at Tate in 2004 there was a conversation about hosting a big Rego show. It was decided to put on something smaller, with the overriding opinion being her work felt too niche.

"Now the art world has a more eclectic set of values in terms of what we think is good," said Stephens. "Twenty years ago when the YBAs were at their peak, figurative artists dealing with allegorical subjects seemed a bit old-fashioned."

Born in 1935 in Portugal, Rego moved to London in the 1950s to attend the Slade School of Art, where she became part of the London Group alongside David Hockney and Frank Auerbach. Her early work was often overtly political and addressed the Portuguese dictator Salazar and his regime, while later work delved into fairytales, gender and abortion. The Abortion Series in 1988, which depicted the dangers of criminalising the procedure, were made in response to a botched legislative referendum in Portugal and are regarded as a turning point in altering opinions on the subject in the country.



▲ *Rego's work on gender, abortion and violence has won new audiences*

As one gallerist said after her death: "She's always been on it and we've been behind." But being at the artistic vanguard didn't mean Rego was popular with collectors.

Her themes of trauma, abortion and violence created challenging, explicit work that some collectors found "more suited to a museum setting than above the dining room table", according to one writer.

But Baker believes that tastes have changed, and now collectors and institutions are more open to her challenging work. "Her time has come," said Baker.

"She's an artist that is gaining the reputation as a major figure from the last century. Her facility and talent as a painter of the figure is undeniable and there isn't really any other artist of the time like that."

Sotheby's Modern & Contemporary auction is in London on 25 June. Uncanny Visions: Paula Rego and Francisco de Goya is at Holburne Museum, 27 September-5 January

World

IDF hands over power in West Bank to far-right minister backing settlers

Peter Beaumont
Jerusalem

The Israeli military has quietly handed over significant legal powers in the occupied West Bank to pro-settler civil servants working for the far-right minister Bezalel Smotrich.

An order posted by the Israel Defense Forces on its website on 29 May transfers responsibility for dozens of bylaws at the Civil Administration (the Israeli body governing in the West Bank) from the military to officials led by Smotrich at the defence ministry.

Smotrich and his allies have long seen control of the Civil Administration, or significant parts of it, as a means of extending Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank. Their ultimate goal is direct control by central government and its ministries.

The transfer reduces the likelihood of legal checks on Jewish settlement expansion and development.

Israeli politicians have long sought to find ways to permanently seize, or annex, the occupied West Bank, which it captured in 1967 and where millions of Palestinians live.

Michael Sfard, an Israeli human rights lawyer, said: "The bottom line is that [for] anyone who thought the question of annexation was foggy this order should end any doubts. What this order does is transfer vast areas of administrative power from the military commander to Israeli civilians working for the government."

> ***'The big story – it's not de facto annexation, it is actual annexation'***
>
> **Mairav Zonszein**
> *Crisis Group analyst*

The move is the latest coup for Smotrich, who became finance minister and a minister in the defence ministry after a coalition agreement between his far-right Religious Zionism party and the prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud.

The Civil Administration is principally responsible for planning and construction in Area C of the West Bank – the 60% of the Occupied Palestinian Territories under full Israeli administrative and security control – as well as for enforcement against unauthorised construction, whether by Israeli settlers or by Palestinians.

The transfer of laws, which took place largely unremarked in Israel, follows a years-long campaign by pro-settlement politicians to accrue many of the legal powers previously wielded by the military command.

The laws cover a range of fields including building regulations, administration of agriculture, forestry, parks, and bathing locations. Lawyers have long warned that transferring the laws from military to political control risks bringing Israel into conflict with its responsibilities under international law.

Smotrich has moved quickly to approve thousands of new Jewish settlement homes, legalise unauthorised wildcat outposts and make it more difficult for Palestinians to build homes and move around. Reports in the Israeli media say that US officials have privately discussed the possibility of placing sanctions on Smotrich over his destabilising impact on the West Bank, where he lives in a settlement that is illegal under international law.

Netanyahu has become more reliant on the support of Smotrich and other far-right elements of his coalition government since the moderate former defence minister Benny Gantz quit Israel's emergency war cabinet in a row over strategy in the Gaza war.

Smotrich has made no secret of his desire to carve out his own stronghold in the ministry of defence to pursue his policies. In April he appointed a long-term ideological ally, Hillel Roth, as the deputy in the Civil Administration with responsibility for enforcing building regulations in settlements and outposts. He is a former resident of Yitzhar, a West Bank settlement with a reputation for violence and extremism. He was an official with Bnei Akiva, an NGO linked to Smotrich's party.

Sfard said that the transfer meant legal power in the West Bank was now in the hands of "an apparatus headed by an Israeli minister ... whose only interest is to advance Israeli interests".

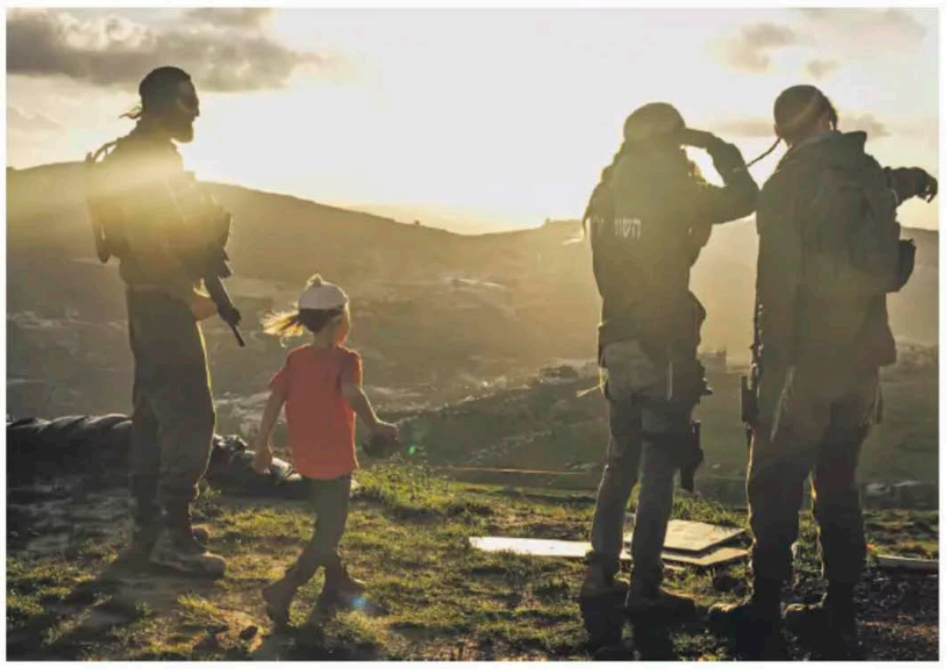
Equally important, Sfard said, was that although the head of the Civil Administration was an officer subordinate to the military command, Roth was a civilian who was answering to Smotrich.

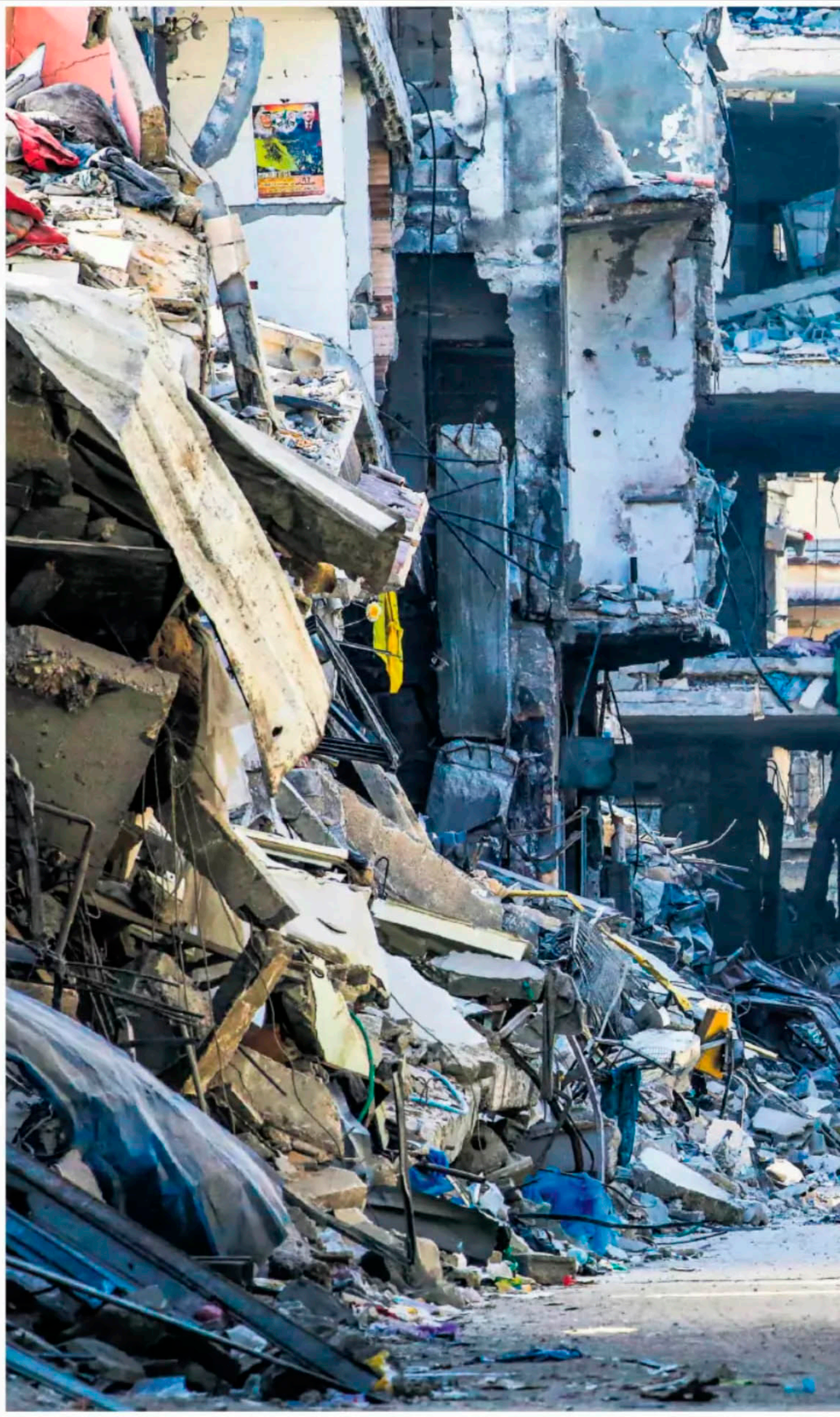
Sfard's view echoes a legal opinion published by three Israeli jurists last year who warned that transferring powers from the military would amount to annexation in law, as Smotrich "considers himself committed first and foremost to advancing the interests of Israeli settlers in the West Bank, rather than the welfare of Palestinian residents".

Mairav Zonszein, an analyst for Israel-Palestine at the International Crisis Group, said: "The big story is that this is no longer 'creeping annexation' or 'de facto annexation', it is actual annexation. This is the legalisation [and] normalisation of a long term policy. Smotrich is basically re-establishing the way in which the occupation works by taking a large part out of the hands of the military.

"Half the people he has brought in to the defence ministry are from [the pro-settler Israeli NGO] Regavim. The same people who worked at Regavim to dispossess Palestinians in Area C are now in government positions."

▼ *Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank look out at Palestinian homes from their hilltop outpost*
PHOTOGRAPH: MARCUS YAM/LOS ANGELES TIMES





Cyprus insists it is neutral in face of Hezbollah threat

Helena Smith
Athens

Cypriots have reacted with shock and disbelief following threats from the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah that Cyprus could become a target if it allowed Israel to use its territory in any conflict between the two sides.

Despite the EU expressing unreserved support for its easternmost member, it was clear yesterday that the Hezbollah chief Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah's warning had set off alarm bells in Nicosia, where officials insisted the island republic remained a "pillar of peace" in an otherwise volatile region.

Diplomats fear Hezbollah and Israel are on the brink of a fully fledged war. "Cyprus is not involved, and will not be involved, in any war or conflicts," the Cypriot government spokesman Konstantinos Letymbiotis told the public broadcaster CyBC. "Therefore, the statements made by the Hezbollah leader do not correspond with reality."

Cyprus, he stressed, not only had "excellent" relations with Lebanon, it would not allow any state to use its territory for military operations against another.

Nasrallah had on Wednesday warned of a war "without rules or ceilings" as he sought to highlight the perils of a full-scale Israeli offensive against his Iranian-aligned organisation. Taking many by surprise, he also threatened Cyprus saying: "Opening Cypriot airports and bases to

Back from the brink
Iberian lynx no longer on endangered list
Page 33



'Barbaric exploitation'
Trade union alarm in Italy after farm death
Page 36



the Israeli enemy to target Lebanon would mean that the Cypriot government is part of the war, and the resistance [Hezbollah] will deal with it as part of the war."

In the event of a broader conflagration "there will be no place safe from our missiles and our drones," he vowed.

Western diplomats stationed in the divided island's internationally recognised south, also voiced dismay at the spectre of Cyprus, a popular tourist destination and barely a 40-minute flight away from Tel-Aviv, being drawn into the Middle East tumult. "Hezbollah has a history of acting on its threats," said one EU envoy. "Hezbollah knows Cyprus does not have the military capability to respond and in that respect it's an easy target."

Within hours of Nasrallah issuing the threat, the Cypriot president, Nikos Christodoulides, also sought to emphasise the island's policy of neutrality, underscoring the role it had played in establishing a sea corridor to transfer humanitarian aid to Gaza. "Cyprus is not part of the problem ... [it] is part of the solution," he said.

Scores of vessels carrying aid have travelled to Gaza under the initiative from the southern Cypriot port of Larnaca since March. But in a conflict where perceptions play an equally vital role, the island's alignment with Israel – along with its ever improving relations with the US – have been noticed by Hezbollah's leadership.

Nicosia's approach was for years more pro-Arab than pro-Israeli. But deteriorating relations between Israel and Turkey and the discovery of gas reserves off the Israeli coast have paved the way for an energy alliance and much closer ties.

The countries not only share intelligence but have increasingly close military links. Cyprus has allowed Israel to use its air space for drills simulating an Iranian attack on Israel. Two years ago Israeli forces used Cyprus to simulate combat in Lebanon, focusing on Hezbollah invasion tactics, with the island chosen because of the similarity of its terrain to Lebanon. Last year forces from both countries conducted exercises on Cyprus "to respond to particularly demanding operational scenarios".

"Both were seen as a provocation by Hezbollah," said another diplomat. "We know that Christodoulides was told as much when he visited Beirut with the EU commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, in May."

In 2006, the geographically strategic island became a transit hub for the evacuation of more than 30,000 foreign nationals fleeing war in Lebanon, a role reprised when thousands of British passport holders were airlifted from Sudan last year.

Political analysts have described Nasrallah's inflammatory rhetoric as "classic deterrence", but also said it was a warning of how bad the situation could get if the conflict escalated.

▲ *Wrecked buildings in Khan Yunis. There are fears the Gaza war could exacerbate the Lebanon conflict*
PHOTOGRAPH: EYAD BABA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



◀ *The politically active Iranian diaspora in Canada has been pushing for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to be listed as a terrorist group for years*

Canada lists Revolutionary Guards in Iran as a terrorist organisation

Patrick Wintour
Diplomatic editor

Canada has listed Iran's Revolutionary Guards as a terrorist group, joining the US and adding to pressure on European governments to follow suit.

The move means police can now charge people who materially or financially support the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and requires banks to freeze any assets linked to the organisation.

The US designated the guards, part of the Iranian military, as a terrorist group in 2019.

Britain, however, has resisted a parallel move. The foreign secretary, David Cameron, has said there is no demand for the move from the UK security services and it would almost inevitably lead to Iran cutting off all diplomatic ties with Britain.

Labour, which is ahead in polling for the UK's 4 July election, has said it would proscribe the IRGC, a move that had strong cross-party support in the previous parliament, but the proposal was not included in its recent manifesto, which may indicate that the party is aware there are competing views in the intelligence services.

Lord Cameron has said he would prefer to deal with Iranian leaders directly and not through third parties as the US is required to do by using the Swiss embassy in Tehran as its conduit.

Canada has a large and politically active Iranian diaspora, in part because it has been generous in providing visas to dissidents fleeing the regime, and the diaspora has been pressing for the move for years.

In January 2020 the IRGC shot down Ukraine International Airlines flight 752 shortly after it left Tehran airport for Kyiv, killing 176 people including many with strong ties to Canada, and in Canada the IRGC has been accused of foreign interference, seeking to threaten and intimidate members of the Iranian diaspora and of wanting to carry out cyber-attacks within the country.

Iran has said the Ukrainian plane was mistaken for a missile at a time of heightened tension between the west and Iran.

Canada had previously included the IRGC's clandestine foreign intelligence and paramilitary wing, al-Quds, on its terror group list.

In October 2022 it banned the entry of senior IRGC leaders into Canada and promised to impose sanctions on them. Ottawa severed diplomatic relations with Iran in 2010.

An Iranian activist, Nazanin Afshin-Jam, told MPs this month as they debated the listing of IRGC as a terrorist organisation: "If we do not do something now, their terror will spread like cancer and cost us even more – politically through foreign interference, economically through cyberwarfare and money laundering, and in lives through terrorism here in Canada."

The announcement was made in the middle of a convulsive presidential election campaign in Iran, after the death of Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash last month, in which a central issue is the effect of the country's difficult relations with the rest of the world on its weak domestic economy.

In response to Canada's decision, Iran's acting foreign minister, Ali Bagheri, highlighted the IRGC's role in fighting Islamic State and said Ottawa would be held responsible for its actions.

The Canadian public safety minister, Dominic LeBlanc, did not give a specific single reason why the decision had finally been taken after so much discussion, but denied it had been because of political pressure.

In a letter in December 2023, a bipartisan group of legislators urged Justin Trudeau's government to list the IRGC as a terrorist group, arguing that it had played a role supporting Hamas before and after the group's 7 October assault on southern Israel that sparked the current war taking place in Gaza.

The designation of the group on the list means that, under Canadian law, if a financial institution such as a bank has an account in the name of someone who has been publicly identified as a member of the IRGC, it will freeze, seize and restrain that account or property.

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Deadly heatwave in US and Mexico made 35 times more likely by global heating

Nina Lakhani
Climate justice reporter

The deadly heatwave that scorched large swaths of Mexico, Central America and the southern US in recent weeks was made 35 times more likely by human-induced global heating, according to research by leading climate scientists from World Weather Attribution (WWA).

Tens of millions of people have endured dangerous day and nighttime temperatures as a heat dome – a large and lingering zone of high pressure – engulfed Mexico and stretched north to Texas, Arizona and Nevada, and south over Belize, Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador.

A heatwave can be caused by several factors including a heat dome, which traps hot air close to the ground, blocking cool air and causing temperatures to rise on the ground and stay high for days or weeks. In May and early June, the heat dome hovered over the region, breaking records, and causing widespread misery and disruption, especially among the poorest and most marginalised communities.

Such extreme heat spells are four times more likely today than they were at the turn of the millennium, when the planet was 0.5C cooler, the WWA analysis found.

"Unsurprisingly, heatwaves are getting deadlier ... we've known about the dangers of climate change at least since the 1970s. But thanks to spineless politicians, who give in to fossil-fuel lobbying again and again, the world continues to burn huge amounts of oil, gas and coal," said Friederike Otto, co-author of the study and senior lecturer in climate science at the Grantham Institute, Imperial College London.



▲ *Poor workers shelter from the sun in California during the heatwave*

According to the study, without meaningful political action to stop fossil fuels, deadly heatwaves will be "very common in a 2C world".

Extreme heat increases the rates of cardiovascular, respiratory, and renal diseases, as well as threatening to overwhelm power supplies, healthcare facilities and other infrastructure.

At least 125 people died and thousands more have suffered heatstroke in Mexico since March, where the temperature hit almost 52C on 13 June – the hottest June day ever recorded in the country. The extreme heat exacerbated severe drought and air pollution in Mexico, leading to power outages, water shortages, thousands of wildfires, and a mass die-off of endangered monkeys and birds. The actual mortality and morbidity toll is unknown.

In Phoenix, 72 suspected heat deaths were under investigation by the Maricopa county medical examiner's office by 8 June – an 18% rise on the same period last year. Across the south-west US, more than 34 million people were under heat warnings and dozens have suffered heat exhaustion at political rallies.

In Guatemala's dry corridor, the hottest and driest part of the country where many work outdoors on farms, temperatures hit 45C, causing severe water shortages and a risk to crops.

In Honduras, electricity has been rationed, and smoke from uncontrolled forest fires contributed to the worst air quality ever recorded in the capital, Tegucigalpa.

The death toll from across Central America, one of the regions that is the most vulnerable in the world to the effects of the climate crisis because of its geography, high levels of poverty and inequality, poor infrastructure and governance, and a lack of heat warning systems, is unknown.

Previous studies have shown that the frequency and intensity of heatwaves, the deadliest form of extreme weather, has been increasing in recent years due to the climate crisis, caused by burning fossil fuels and other human activities such as deforestation and large-scale agriculture.

Last month was the hottest May on record globally – and the 12th consecutive month a hottest month record was broken.



◀ *The lynx population on the Iberian peninsula has risen from just 94 in 2002 to 2,021 last year*

PHOTOGRAPH: ANTONIO LIEBANA/ GETTY IMAGES

Iberian lynx off endangered list 20 years after nearing extinction

Sam Jones
Madrid

Less than a quarter of a century after the Iberian lynx was feared to be only a whisker away from extinction, populations of the animal have recovered enough across Spain and Portugal for it to be moved from "endangered" to "vulnerable" on the global red list of threatened species.

The change in status, announced yesterday by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (ICUN), is the result of a two-decade-long effort from a coalition including the EU and regional and national governments in Spain and Portugal, as well as wildlife NGOs and local people.

According to the latest census, the lynx population on the peninsula has risen from just 94 in 2002 to 2,021 last year, with the overwhelming majority – almost 86% – found in Spain.

Lynx pardinus numbers plummeted during the 20th century, as thousands were killed because of Franco-era laws to get rid of creatures deemed to be vermin.

Others died out because of the destruction of the cat's habitats and catastrophic, disease-driven drops in the rabbit populations that make up 90% of the lynx's diet.

Craig Hilton-Taylor, head of the red list unit at IUCN, said the "great success story" was down to collaborative initiatives to expand and diversify lynx numbers and populations across different areas, build up rabbit numbers, and raise awareness.

"Over the next 100 years, we can probably get to the lynx being fully recovered in its native range," he said.

"Climate change is the worrying factor because we don't know what it's going to do – we've seen an increase in fires in the Mediterranean area, so how that's going to impact on the lynx is yet to be determined.

"So this is a huge success but there's a long way to go to get the species back to where it should be."

Javier Salcedo, the coordinator of the majority EU-funded Life Lynxconnect project, said it had been astonishing to see the animal move from being critically endangered to endangered and now to vulnerable over the course of two decades.

Salcedo said he was heartened by the progress made but there was no room for complacency. "Let's not forget that there's still much to be done. And even when it's all done, we'll need to carry on working so that this doesn't all happen again."

Ten people arrested over mobile meth lab in Spain

Sam Jones
Madrid

Spanish police have arrested 10 people and seized 70kg of methamphetamine after discovering a "highly sophisticated" synthetic drug laboratory capable of producing up to 10kg of meth a day.

The Guardia Civil operation – named Heisenberg VI-Cabarna in an apparent reference to the alias adopted by the meth-making protagonist of the TV series Breaking Bad – began in February last year after officers noticed that an individual in the Basque province of Bizkaia was receiving drugs from a criminal gang based in Catalonia.

Their investigation was complicated by the fact that the mobile lab producing the drugs could be transported over long distances across northern Spain, moving from the Basque Country to Castilla y León and then to Catalonia, where it was finally seized.

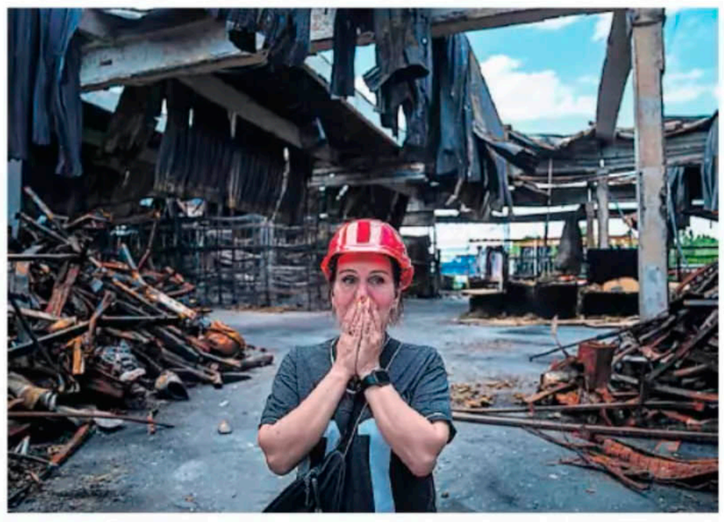
When the Guardia Civil traced the lab to a property in the city of Granollers, 20 miles north of Barcelona, they found an elaborate facility, complete with charcoal filters to get rid of any smells that could attract attention.

Officers seized 70kg of crystal and powder methamphetamine, 790 litres of methamphetamine in different stages of crystallisation and 60 litres of piperonyl methyl ketone and phenylacetone.

The drugs were distributed in Spain and throughout EU countries. Four people were arrested in Bizkaia, four in Barcelona and two in León.

‘It is all lining up’

Hope new F-16 fighter jets will give Ukraine parity in the air war



◀ *Bomb damage in Kharkiv. F-16 fighters can counter guided air bombs*

▼ *Volodymyr Zelenskiy with Belgium’s PM, Alexander De Croo, and defence minister, Ludivine Dedonder, at an F-16 training base in Brussels*



PHOTOGRAPH: DIDIER LEBRUN/PHOTONEWS/GETTY

Pjotr Sauer *Volkel military base*
Shaun Walker *Kyiv*
Dan Sabbagh

At a military base in the rural south of the Netherlands, Gen Arnoud Stallmann, a Dutch air force commander, said he expected that at some point this summer, F-16 fighter jets would finally take to the skies over Ukraine.

“Around this summertime, it is all lining up,” he said, speaking in front of two disused F-16s inside a hangar at the base, where a recent programme to train Ukrainian air force instructors in maintenance for the jets had just come to a close.

Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway have promised to provide Ukraine with about 80 US-made F-16 fighter jets between them, hardware that the Ukrainian air force has been requesting for more than a year. But the programme to get the planes in the air has been hit by delays in delivery and training.

The general said the training regimen for pilots and ground staff was not simple. “It’s not just the pilots who need training; technicians and maintainers also require thorough instruction. We’re providing comprehensive support training to ensure they can effectively maintain the aircraft. So everything has to come together.”

The Netherlands’ defence minister, Kajsa Ollongren, also said the first aircraft should be delivered this summer, and pushed back against criticism over the delays amid reports that Kyiv has been frustrated with the pace of training.

“I completely understand the Ukrainian position. They want to do this as fast as possible … We are doing the project as fast as we can. We are really stretching our capacity,” Ollongren said.

“The F-16s are really much more complicated than the systems the Ukrainian air force were using … You cannot just hop over several steps, you have to take every step of the process, but also we want to deliver them as quickly as possible,” she added.

Ukraine has been waiting for months to start using the fighter jets, and hopes their introduction will change the dynamics of the war, forcing Russia to adopt more conservative tactics in its attacks on areas closer to the border.

Anatolii Khrapchynskyi, an aviation expert and former Ukrainian military pilot, said: “The Russians will be forced to change their tactics. We will be able to target their planes and missiles more effectively, and it will be really difficult for them to keep using KAB guided air bombs, which they need to launch from 50 to 70km away.”

Russia has been using KABs extensively against the city of Kharkiv in recent weeks, launching the bombs from planes that remain inside Russian airspace. Numerous Ukrainian sources said F-16s would protect Ukraine’s second city from these weapons.

Mykhailo Podolyak, an aide to the president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said last month: “Against these, even air defence systems are not so useful, only aviation. The F-16 has a longer range than Russian MiG and Su planes.”

Ollongren said Ukraine would be able to use the Dutch-donated fighter jets to carry out attacks inside Russia, providing that the use is for defensive purposes and complies with international law. Denmark has also said Ukraine would be permitted to use its F-16s to attack targets inside Russia.

“We have seen that it is necessary for Ukraine to be able to strike inside Russia. Otherwise, Russia will always have an advantage,” said Ollongren.

While Ukraine is eager to get the planes in the sky, Justin Bronk, an aviation analyst with the Rusi thinktank, said the right time to deploy F-16s was a “risk-timeframe judgment call”. “I hope it will be made when they are tactically and operationally ready, pilots and ground crew, and not on the basis that ‘things are looking bad, we need a political win’,” he said in a recent podcast.

Bronk said tactics for flying F-16s would be completely new for pilots used to flying Soviet-designed MiG-29s or Su-27s. Those planes tend to fly with a high degree of intervention from the ground, with commanders authorising weapons releases from the base, thousands of feet below the pilot. F-16 pilots, by contrast, have a lot more autonomy in the cockpit and the planes and weapons are designed to reflect this, he said.

The F-16 is a significant advance on Ukraine’s current fleet, including the MiG-29, Su-24, and Su-25, which have been heavily strained and damaged by the conflict. Compared with the MiG-29, Su-27, and Su-25, the F-16 can carry more weapons, matching the capacity of Ukraine’s tactical bomber, the Su-24. Additionally, the F-16 has a more powerful radar system, which can help mitigate the radar disadvantage that Kyiv has experienced.

F-16s tend to be more pilot-friendly, Stallmann said, with intuitive controls and displays that allow flyers to keep their heads up.

Stallmann said each F-16 needed about 10 people to operate the aircraft, including the two pilots.

He said there are two training tracks, one to retrain experienced pilots to use F-16s, which is mainly taking place in Denmark and the US, and the second to train new pilots from scratch in Romania. “We have people who said: ‘I want to be a pilot.’ We test them and train them from zero,” he said.

In addition to the pilots, the F-16s require a complicated maintenance regimen. The instructors trained in the Netherlands are now expected to pass on their knowledge to others back in Ukraine.

Some experts warned that using the F-16s will come with challenges, noting that Nato militaries would not deploy the planes without a wide range of other aircraft such as newer F-35s. But Stallmann welcomed a decision by Sweden to provide two Saab surveillance aircraft to Ukraine, saying they would provide crucial “in-the-air oversight”.

Russia will seek to destroy F-16s deployed in airfields on the ground, requiring them to be carefully concealed and defended by anti-missile systems to avoid serious losses almost immediately after they arrive in the country.

Despite all the hurdles, Ukrainian aviation experts hope that the F-16s will be a gamechanger. “With F-16s, we can achieve parity in the sky above Ukraine and bring serious losses to Russian aviation in the border zone,” said Khrapchynskyi.

Russia and Vietnam pledge new ties during state visit by Putin

Rebecca Ratcliffe
South-east Asia correspondent



▲ *Vladimir Putin in Hanoi yesterday*

Russia and Vietnam have pledged to strengthen ties, as Vladimir Putin made a state visit to Hanoi intended to signal his country still has allies in the region.

The Russian president arrived at Hanoi airport in the early hours yesterday, and was met by the Vietnamese deputy prime minister Tran Hong Ha and the top party diplomat Le Hoai Trung. He arrived from a high-profile visit to North Korea, where he signed a defence pact with Kim Jong-un that included a clause requiring the countries to come to each other’s aid if either was attacked.

Speaking to reporters at the end of his trip, Putin said he did not rule out sending precision weapons to North Korea and accused Nato of creating a security threat to Russia in Asia.

Putin’s visit has drawn criticism from the US, one of Vietnam’s top trade partners, which has warned it risks normalising Russia’s “blatant violations of international law”.

The Vietnamese president, To Lam, had earlier said his country and Russia wanted “to push up cooperation in defence and security, how to deal with non-traditional security challenges on the basis of international law, for peace and security in the region and the world”.

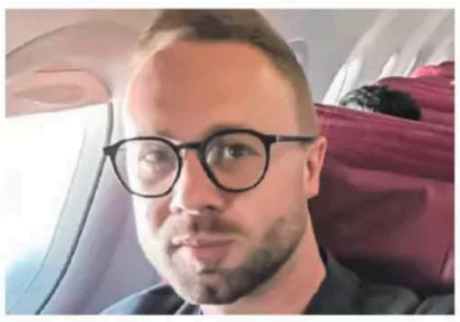
Lam and Putin signed 11 memorandums for cooperation. Putin told reporters that both sides had “identical or very close” positions on key issues. He said they discussed creating “security architecture in Asia-Pacific based on the principles of not resorting to force, and of resolving differences peacefully”.

In an opinion piece published in Vietnam’s Communist party newspaper Nhan Dan, Putin applauded Vietnam for supporting “a pragmatic way to solve the crisis” in Ukraine.

Vietnam has repeatedly abstained in UN general assembly votes relating to Russia’s war in Ukraine.

Additional reporting
Reuters and Agence France-Presse

Fears of show trial after Serbia agrees to extradite Belarusian



▲ *Andrei Gnyot, 41, said the court was 'sending me to a painful death'*

Shaun Walker
Warsaw

A court in Serbia has ruled that a Belarusian activist who was instrumental in organising an alliance of athletes in opposition to the country's dictator, Alexander Lukashenko, can be extradited to Belarus.

Rights advocates and exiled Belarusian political leaders said the ruling would lead to a show trial and a long jail sentence for Andrei Gnyot, who was arrested on an Interpol warrant issued after a request from Minsk.

"By extraditing me, the Serbian court is sending me to a painful death. And the life of my family, relatives and friends may turn into endless grief," Gnyot said in a telephone interview from Belgrade, where he is under house arrest after spending several months in jail.

Since crushing a massive protest movement against his rule in 2020, Lukashenko has cracked down further on any kind of dissent, with his regime launching numerous show trials of journalists and activists. Torture and mistreatment are rife in Belarusian jails.

Gnyot, 41, is a director of advertising videos, and his work as an opposition activist has not previously been public. But three Belarusian athletes confirmed his role in setting up a network of athletes against Lukashenko in 2020.

The network, known as SOS BY, issued letters signed by athletes who opposed Lukashenko, and put pressure on international sporting bodies to boycott the regime.

Yelena Leuchanka, a basketball player who previously played for the national team, and a friend of Gnyot, said: "We had over 2,000 athletes and people related to sport sign our letter. He was really supportive when it came to helping with the message and creating videos."

Aliaksandra Herasimenia, a swimmer who won two Olympic silver medals in London in 2012, said Gnyot had helped her record video messages in 2020. She was later accused of "damaging the image of Belarus" and sentenced in absentia to 12 years in prison. She lives in exile.

Gnyot said: "If Herasimenia ... was sentenced to 12 years in prison, I can expect 20 or 25 years ... or even more." Belarus is the only European country to retain the death penalty.

Gnyot left Belarus in 2021 and made a new home in Thailand, but frequently travelled to shoot commercials. He said he was in Serbia last August to shoot an advert for the French food company Danone and did not encountered any problems.

He arrived again in late October on a commission to shoot an advert for the communications company Tele2. He was arrested at the airport and taken to a court hearing, where he was told there was an Interpol warrant in his name for financial crimes.

"I tried to explain that the economic charges are just a smokescreen to allow Interpol to issue a warrant, because they are not allowed to issue them on political charges," he said.

Gnyot said the judge appeared to know little about the political situation in Belarus and ordered him to be held in Belgrade's huge central prison. Gynot has since been released but is only allowed to leave his apartment for one hour a day, and must wear an electronic tag

Gnyot is appealing against the extradition decision to Serbia's high court. If that is unsuccessful, the final decision on whether to extradite him will rest with Serbia's justice minister.

South African MP suspended for racism as his party enters coalition

Rachel Savage

A South African MP has been suspended by the Democratic Alliance (DA) for racist comments, less than a week after the white-led party formed a coalition government with the African National Congress.

A clip of Renaldo Gouws saying "Kill all the kaffirs" – a racial slur for black people – and then repeating the phrase using a swearword and the N-word, has gone viral online.

"Black people are discriminating against white people and the black people are singing about killing white people," Gouws, a YouTuber who was sworn into parliament on Friday, said in the video, referring to Julius Malema, leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters and previously ANC youth leader, singing the anti-apartheid song Shoot The Boer.

"So in essence this is a new apartheid and I'm the sufferer of that," Gouws said in the clip, which appears to be from 2010.

A party statement said: "The DA has established that the video, in which Renaldo Gouws uses execrable language, is in fact genuine and not a fake as initially suspected."

Gouws, a former DA councillor, has been suspended "with immediate effect while he faces disciplinary charges", it said.

The ANC, which lost its parliamentary majority in elections last month, has faced criticism for going into coalition with the DA, the second largest party. Many South Africans believe the DA favours the interests of South Africa's white minority, an accusation it denies.

On Monday, Gouws apologised "unreservedly" for a different video clip, from 2008, in which he said: "The white people in this country is going through a reverse apartheid."

"I refute any claims of racism or being a racist. I can, however, see how my message was distorted in the way it was delivered by me and I take full responsibility for the actions of my younger and immature self," he said in the post on X, the last time that he posted on the social media platform.

The DA leader, John Steenhuisen, told South African media outlets on Wednesday: "The remarks need to be seen in their context. He's apologised for them. It was 16 years ago."

It was not clear whether Steenhuisen had seen the "kill all the kaffirs" clip at the time.

Other viral video clips include Gouws using the homophobic slur "fag". In a 2024 live stream of the president, Cyril Ramaphosa's, state of the nation address, that is still on his YouTube channel, Gouws mocks a traditional praise singer, using a string of babble to imitate her Siswati language.

Demographic crisis at top of to-do list as women vie to run Tokyo

Justin McCurry
Tokyo

The race to become Tokyo's next governor has kicked off, with two women in the lead to run the world's most populous city – a rarity in a country where comparatively few women occupy high political office.

Millions of voters in Tokyo will elect their governor early next month. The successful candidate's most urgent job has a more familiar ring, however: to address the capital's accelerating demographic crisis.

The contest between the incumbent, Yuriko Koike, and Renho Murata – who is commonly known by her given name – is being seen as a proxy war between the governing Liberal Democratic party (LDP), which is backing Koike, and the main opposition Constitutional Democratic party of Japan (CDP), which is supporting Renho.

Koike, a conservative who guided the city through the Covid-19 pandemic and the summer Olympics in 2021, is seeking a third term with promises to focus on family-friendly measures.

The former defence and environment minister became Tokyo's first female governor in 2016.

Her main challenger is the centre-left Renho, a 56-year-old former swimsuit model who became the first female leader of Japan's largest opposition party in 2016.

She left the CDP to run as an independent but has the support of her former party and, controversially, of the Japanese Communist party.

Koike, 71, was a television news anchor before she entered politics, winning a seat in the lower house of parliament for the first time in 1993. Renho, too, was a familiar face on TV news programmes before she entered politics as a member of the upper house in 2004.



▲ *Renho, the opposition-backed candidate in Tokyo's gubernatorial race, unveiling a campaign poster*
PHOTOGRAPH: FRANCK ROBICHON/EPA



▲ *Japan's ageing population and low birthrate are key election issues*

Japan's low birthrate has quickly emerged as the key issue in the 7 July vote, which will see almost 50 candidates from across the political spectrum competing to lead a megalopolis of about 14.1 million people and a GDP that rivals that of the Netherlands.

Nationwide, the fertility rate – or the average number of children a woman is expected to have in her lifetime – stands at 1.2, well below the 2.07 needed to keep the population stable. The situation in Tokyo is even more urgent: at 0.99, its birthrate is the lowest among Japan's 47 prefectures.

"Candidates must offer a blueprint for managing the unprecedented demographic challenges of an ageing and shrinking population in this megacity," the Asahi Shimbun said in an editorial.

The frontrunners have clashed over their plans to lift the birthrate, with Koike promising lower rents for families and free daycare for married couples' first children.

Renho vowed to pressure companies to improve their employees' work-life balance. "I want to make Tokyo a city where young people, regardless of their circumstances, can study, work, get married and have children, and have all these life choices," she said in a recent speech, the Mainichi Shimbun reported.



Tax anger Young people in Nairobi, Kenya's capital, gathered yesterday to protest against a tax bill being debated by the government that it is widely thought would increase the cost of food and oil.

PHOTOGRAPH: SAMSON OTIENO

Jews 'questioning future in France' amid antisemitism

Lili Bayer

Many Jewish people were "questioning [their] future in France", a community leader said yesterday, after a 12-year-old girl was allegedly raped in a suspected antisemitic attack amid deepening fears over the rise of extremism before a parliamentary election this month.

"The climate is very, very difficult for Jews," Yonathan Arfi, the president of the Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions, said. "People are very, very worried about the future. People are, I would say, questioning the future in France."

On Tuesday, two 13-year-old boys were charged with the rape of a 12-year-old Jewish girl in a Paris suburb. They were also charged with issuing death threats as well as antisemitic insults and violence. The suspects beat the girl and forced her to have sex "while uttering death threats and antisemitic remarks", one source told Agence France-Presse.

The case has shocked France, drawing condemnation from across the political spectrum as the country prepares for a high-stakes parliamentary election. "Words have effects, ideas have consequences," the French prime minister, Gabriel Attal, wrote. "The fight against antisemitism must be that of all republicans."

Raphaël Glucksmann, who led a French socialist list in the European parliamentary elections, warned in a social media post yesterday that "any attempt to minimise the explosion of antisemitism is dangerous".

Antisemitic incidents have risen in France. A report by the Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions, published in January, said there had been 1,676 antisemitic acts in 2023, compared with 436 the previous year, with a big increase after the Hamas attacks of 7 October and Israel's assault on Gaza.

Last month French police shot dead a man armed with a knife and an iron bar who set fire to a synagogue in Rouen. "The situation has deteriorated very significantly after October 7," Arfi said.

> ***'The climate is very difficult for Jews. People are worried'***
>
> **Yonathan Arfi**
> *Jewish leader*

The French elections on 30 June and 7 July pose a dilemma for parts of the Jewish community in France. Some have raised concerns about antisemitism within the country's far left and the credibility of the far-right leader Marine Le Pen's claims to have detoxified her party.

In recent days, high-profile figures including the Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld have said they would vote for Le Pen's National Rally in case of a runoff with the left-green New Popular Front alliance, which includes the far-left France Unbowed.

Le Pen has courted Jewish voters, seeking to distance herself from the legacy of her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who as leader was known for his antisemitic rhetoric.

After reports of the alleged rape emerged this week, Le Pen blamed the left for stigmatisation of Jews, and urged French voters to keep this in mind when they voted.

But her party has continued to grapple with accusations of antisemitism. On Wednesday, it withdrew support for one of its candidates over an antisemitic message posted in 2018.

New Caledonia independence leader arrested over protests

Guardian staff

Police in New Caledonia have arrested a pro-independence leader, Christian Tein, and 10 others over their alleged roles in the deadly protests that swept the archipelago last month, prosecutors have said.

Tein, head of the CCAT, which organised protest barricades across the capital, Nouméa, was the only detainee named by the chief prosecutor, Yves Dupas.

He said the group had been arrested for "organised crime" offences, under which they can be held for up to 96 hours.

The prosecutor said police were investigating crimes including complicity in homicide and attempted homicide, armed robbery, arson, and membership of a group created to prepare violent acts.

Local media said the police operation sparked fear of more unrest, causing many businesses, shops and the town hall to close.

Tein was arrested at the headquarters of the biggest pro-independence political party, the Caledonian Union, as he prepared for a press conference, the party said. The building was surrounded by police and searched.

The CCAT is a branch of the union and Tein was among the pro-independence political figures who met the French president, Emmanuel Macron, during his brief visit to New Caledonia last month.

Nine people died, including two police officers, during the unrest that took place after France voted to approve reforms to grant voting rights to thousands of French residents who have lived in the French Pacific territory for 10 years. Indigenous Kanaks fear it will dilute their vote and make it harder for any referendum on independence to pass, while Paris says the measure is to improve democracy.

The Caledonian Union president, Daniel Goa, urged calm among CCAT protesters and told young people not to respond to a "provocation". The French high commission said the city centre was "free and secure", as media reported cars leaving.

The New Caledonia prosecutor's office did not comment.

Additional reporting
Reuters, Agence France-Presse and Associated Press

Indian farm worker in Italy 'left to die on road' with severed arm

Angela Giuffrida
Rome

A trade unionist has called for a crackdown against "barbaric exploitation" in Italy after an Indian farm worker died after he was allegedly left on a road by his employer following an accident that severed his arm.

Satnam Singh, 31, was injured on Monday while working on machinery on a farm in Latina, a rural area close to Rome with a large community of Indian immigrant labourers.

Singh, who came to Italy with his wife three years ago, was allegedly left on the road outside his home in Borgo Santa Maria.

Police said they were called by his wife and an air ambulance was sent to transport him to San Camillo Forlanini hospital in Rome, where he died of his injuries on Wednesday.

His Italian employer is under investigation for manslaughter, violation of workplace safety regulations and failure to provide aid.

Singh had been working on a plastic roller wrapping machine attached to a tractor when the accident occurred, according to initial investigations.

"Adding to the horror of the accident is the fact that, instead of being rescued, the Indian farm worker was dumped near his home," Laura Hardeep Kaur, the general secretary of the Frosinone-Latina unit of the FLAI-CGIL union, told Il Giorno newspaper.

"He was left on the road like a bag of rags, like a sack of rubbish ... despite his wife begging [the employer] to take him to hospital. Here we are not only faced with a serious workplace accident, which in itself is already alarming, we are faced with barbaric exploitation. Enough now."

Latina is known as an area where migrant labourers suffer exploitation. Hardeep Kaur said Singh had been working for €5 (£4.20) an hour without a legal work contract. "Foreign labourers continue to be invisible, at the mercy of ferocious bosses, often Italian," she added.

Italy's labour minister, Marina Calderone, condemned the "true act of barbarity" and said she hoped those responsible would be punished. "The Indian agricultural worker who suffered a serious accident in the countryside of Latina and was abandoned in very serious conditions ... has died," she told parliament.

The agriculture minister, Francesco Lollobrigida, said yesterday that Giorgia Meloni's government was "on the frontline ... to fight against all forms of labour exploitation".

The centre-left Democratic party (PD) condemned the man's treatment as a "defeat for civilisation", while urging the government to take action to rid Italy of the so-called "agromafias" that run migrant labouring rackets.

FTSE 100	All share	Dow Indl	Nikkei 225	£/€	£/$
+67.35	+35.07	+172.21	+62.26	1.1831	1.2685
8272.46	4508.44	39007.07	38633.02	-0.0014	-0.0047

Business

Bank of England decides to hold interest rates at 5.25%

Phillip Inman

The Bank of England has held interest rates at 5.25% for the seventh consecutive time in what it described as a "finely balanced" decision.

Dashing Rishi Sunak's hopes of a pre-election cut in the cost of borrowing, a majority of the Bank's monetary policy committee (MPC) said they wanted to see further evidence that prices growth would remain subdued.

Financial markets expected the decision, despite a fall in inflation in May to the Bank's 2% target.

Andrew Bailey, the Bank's governor, said: "It's good news that inflation has returned to our 2% target. We need to be sure that inflation will stay low and that's why we've decided to hold rates at 5.25% for now." Bailey was among seven members of the nine-member MPC who voted to leave rates on hold. Swati Dhingra and Dave Ramsden voted for a quarter-point cut to 5%.

However, for some of those who voted to freeze rates, the decision was "finely balanced", according to the minutes of the MPC meeting.

Ruth Gregory, the deputy chief UK economist of the consultancy Capital Economics said the Bank had "left the door open" to a rate cut in August. She said the minutes of the MPC meeting showed that policymakers wanted to make sure inflationary pressures were receding. "We would interpret [these words] as a sign the Bank is willing to cut rates in August, if the data evolves as it expects," she said.

James Smith, the developed markets economist at ING, said: "Assuming the next inflation report in mid-July doesn't contain any nasty surprises, the Bank will vote for a rate cut in August."

Savers will cheer the freeze, but many mortgage payers and indebted small businesses will need to take out loans at historically high levels of interest.

Millions of homeowners have been forced to refinance their loans at much higher interest rates in the past 18 months, leading to a collective bill that is likely to reach £12bn by the end of the year, according to the Resolution Foundation thinktank.

David Bharier, the head of research at the British Chambers of Commerce, said a cautious approach by the Bank was holding up business investment.

"Rate cuts, when they come, will provide welcome breathing space for the companies we represent across the UK. Our research shows that while business concern about the cost of borrowing has been easing, it remains at historically high levels. Many firms have told us they have been put off from investing due to high borrowing costs."

5.7%

Services inflation for May, down from 5.9% in April. Headline inflation for May had fallen to 2%

The Bank said its own survey of investors showed only 50% believed there would be a cut at the MPC's meeting in August. Three-quarters of respondents to the survey said they expected a cut in September.

Despite the fall in headline inflation to 2% in May, services inflation was 5.7%, down only slightly from 5.9% in April.

In the minutes of the MPC meeting, members said the economy had grown faster than they expected earlier this year, and was likely to continue doing so this year. Bank staff predict GDP growth of 0.5% in the second quarter of 2024, stronger than the 0.2% rate expected at the time of the last rates decision in May.

It said some of the growth in the first quarter was accounted for by an increase in government spending, leading to a stronger bounce-back from last year's recession.

MPC members were concerned that wages were not falling fast enough to prevent companies from putting up prices again this year. A forecast rise in energy prices in autumn could also push inflation higher again.

Sainsbury's offloads bank business to NatWest

Kalyeena Makortoff
Jane Croft

NatWest will take on most of Sainsbury's banking business in a deal that will add 1m customer accounts to the lender's books in the latest wave of consolidation in the sector.

The lender is to take on the bulk of Sainsbury's Bank assets, including its outstanding credit card, unsecured personal loan and savings accounts.

Sainsbury's Bank had been up for sale since January, when the supermarket group said it would exit its banking business after 27 years.

NatWest will acquire £2.5bn of customer assets, including £1.4bn of unsecured personal loans and £1.1bn of credit card balances. It will also take on £2.6bn of liabilities, primarily made up of customer deposits.

Unlike most takeovers, the seller is paying a significant sum to get the deal done: Sainsbury's is on track to pay NatWest £125m, with the final price to be determined when the deal is completed in early 2025.

The arrangement reflects the supermarket's desire to quickly offload its non-core businesses, and the fact that NatWest will be taking on more liabilities than assets as part of the deal. It also indicates a much wider issue, with UK banks having long been valued much lower than the assets on their balance sheets.

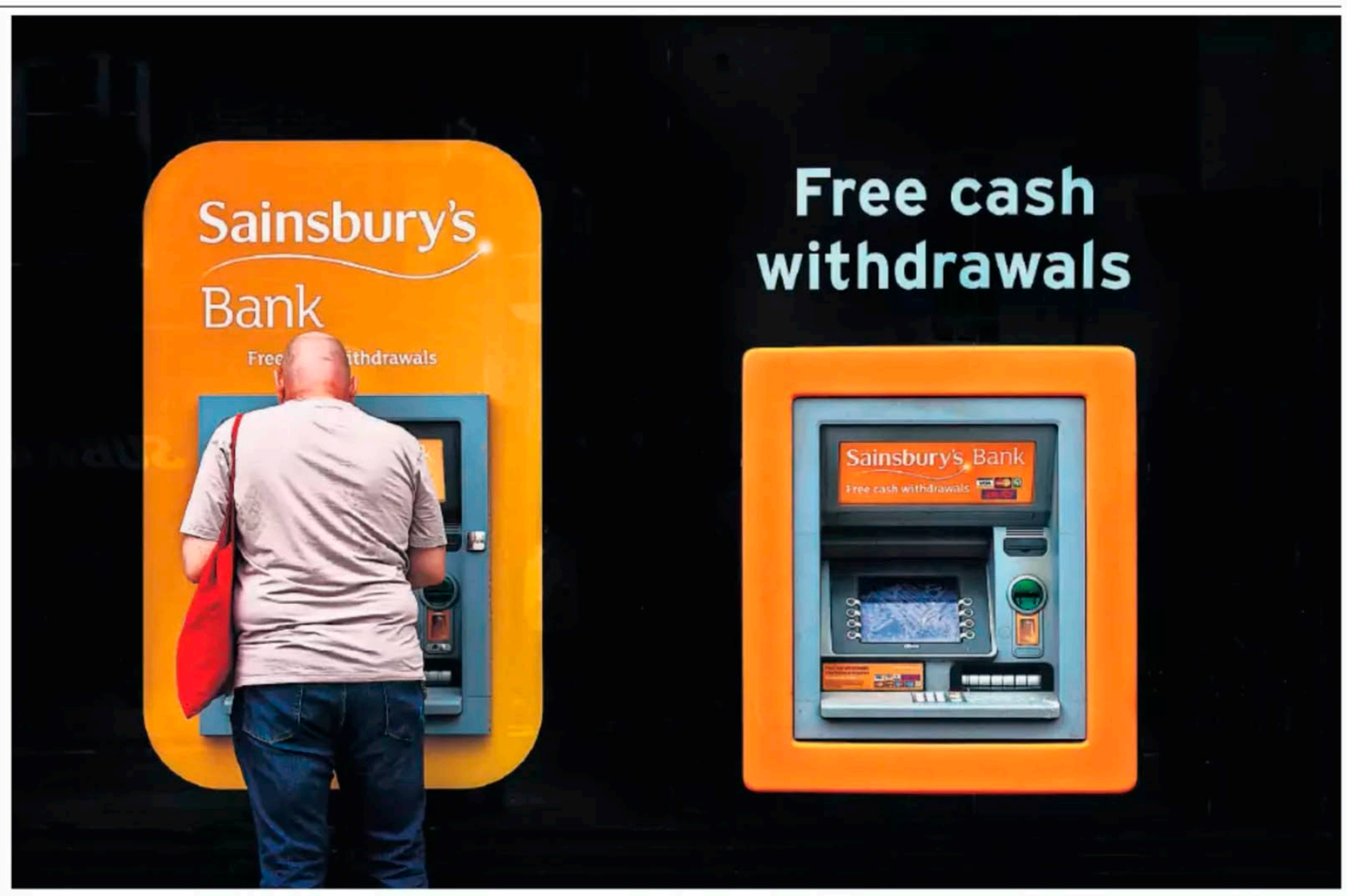
Some Tory ministers have blamed this on lingering concerns over the impact of Brexit, as well as a perception that banks face a hostile political environment in the UK, concerns that were amplified when the Conservative government pushed NatWest's chief executive, Alison Rose, to resign last year after a row with Nigel Farage.

However, investors broadly welcomed the deal. The supermarket's shares rose as much as 2.5% after the deal was announced yesterday, while NatWest was up 1.7%.

"It's no surprise the market has given the thumbs up to Sainsbury's disposal," the AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould said. "The supermarket has been on a roll over the past few years with its strategy of focusing primarily on food, and removing any distractions elsewhere in the business could help to oil the wheels."

Paul Thwaite, the new chief executive of NatWest, has indicated he will consider acquisitions if they add scale to the business. The deal does not include certain assets, such as the commission income business of Sainsbury's Bank or ATMs, insurance and travel money or Argos Financial Services. It is conditional on certain approvals, including by regulators.

Thwaite said the deal "is a great opportunity to accelerate the growth of our retail banking business".



▲ *Sainsbury's is likely to have paid £125m by 2025 to offload the bulk of its banking business to NatWest*
PHOTOGRAPH: GRANT ROONEY PREMIUM/ALAMY

Farmers urge parties to focus on food security risk

Jack Simpson

Farmers and supermarkets say the main political parties are ignoring the risk of severe food shortages, calling the issue a "worrying blind spot" in their election campaigns.

The main farming and food and drink bodies have joined forces to voice their frustration at the lack of focus on food security. A letter signed by the National Farmers' Union (NFU) and the British Retail Consortium to Tory, Labour and Lib Dem leaders said: "The basic responsibility of any government is to ensure its citizens are safe and properly fed.

"But while we have heard much about defence and energy security in recent weeks, we have heard very little about food security. The lack of focus on food in the political narrative during the campaigns demonstrates a worrying blind spot for those that would govern us."

Other signatories include the Food & Drink Federation and UK Hospitality.

Farmers have faced challenges including extreme weather and rising production costs. Between October 2022 and March 2024, England experienced its wettest 18-month period since records began in 1836, leaving many farms under water.

Analysis by the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit estimates production of wheat, barley and oats could fall by a fifth this year because of the wet weather. The NFU's annual confidence survey suggested most farmers would decrease production next year.

The letter said while the food system had remained resilient in the face of Covid, the Ukraine war and Brexit, supply chains had come under strain, leaving gaps on some shelves. It added: "It would be foolhardy to assume our food system will always withstand shocks, especially against the backdrop of increased geo-political instability and climate change."

Tom Bradshaw, president of the NFU, said while there were good elements in all the manifestos, stronger commitments were needed.

The Tories have vowed to increase the UK-wide farming budget by £1bn over the parliament, and to introduce a binding food security target. The Lib Dems say they will inject £1bn a year into the budget, and promise more consultation on trade deals.

Labour has failed to put a figure on its farming budget but has promised to publish a trade strategy to promote the highest standards in food production. Bradshaw said there were some "gaping holes" in Labour's manifesto.

Business view
Nils Pratley



Ocado's pandemic bubble has burst and it has yet to deliver as the future of food retailing

Close your eyes and you might have thought Ocado was announcing good news. Both its partners in North America, Kroger in the US and Sobeys in Canada, have announced "strong growth in digital sales" in their latest quarterly updates, the UK firm said excitedly.

But, oh dear. What yesterday's statement was really relaying was that Sobeys, like Kroger last year, has hit the pause button on more warehouses filled with Ocado's robots. A fourth Canadian "customer fulfilment centre" (CFC), due to open in Vancouver next year, will be delayed, even though it is mostly built.

Cue a 12% plunge in Ocado's share price to 310p, a level not seen since 2017, the year the UK group started signing deals with overseas supermarket chains and invited investors to start thinking of it as a supplier of whizzy automated technology to the world, as opposed to a domestic online grocer struggling to make a profit.

The pitch worked splendidly during the pandemic when everybody wanted shopping delivered to the door. As Ocado's shares soared to the heights of £29, the founder and chief executive, Tim Steiner, declared that "a dramatic and permanent shift towards online grocery shopping" was taking place.

The reality was very different. Demand calmed down post-pandemic, as the hubristic Steiner should have suspected it would. The question became one of online's progress under normal conditions. Answer: not as fast as hoped. Sobeys' parent company, Empire, spelled it out: "Once e-commerce penetration rates in Canada increase, the company will be in a position to make a decision quickly on when it will proceed with the opening of its fourth CFC."

Delay is not cancellation, obviously. On the other hand, Sobeys is also paying a small sum to end its mutual exclusivity agreement with Ocado early, which hardly screams long-term enthusiasm. Whistling cheerfully, Ocado said its group-wide target to generate positive cash flow "in the mid-term" is intact. But this latest example of delays will merely add to the impression that Ocado is a place where the medium term seems perpetually around the next corner. It feels like the company has been the future of food retailing for about 20 years already.

The short-term reality is a pre-tax loss of £394m last year, after one of £501m on the previous outing. And the entertaining public row with Marks & Spencer continues to bubble away over the final payment for the purchase of one half of the Ocado Retail UK business in 2019. Whatever the financial rights and wrongs of the quarrel, the saga is terrible advertising in Ocado's home market, the one it calls its "shop window". Meanwhile, exit from the FTSE 100 index looms.

One can, of course, take the "one more heave" view and reflect that Ocado has opened 22 CFCs around the world and still has partnerships with 12 retailers. The promised land of profits, cash generation and wonderful rates of return on mature CFCs may yet materialise. Core shareholders, note, are still showing heroic levels of patience. We can, though, say the pandemic valuation was truly absurd.



▲ *Ocado's share price has fallen 12% to 310p, a value not seen since 2017*
PHOTOGRAPH: ANDRIY BLOKHIN/ALAMY

> *Investors were invited to think of it as a supplier of whizzy automated technology to the world, rather than a domestic grocer*

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The Guardian Bookshop



▼ *Jess Christman, bothy timber supplier: 'I know people who have gone bust as a result of the loans'*

PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MACLEOD/THE GUARDIAN

'Obstacles to growth' Firms struggling with Covid loans call for new repayment terms

Jane Croft

Jess Christman, who runs a Scottish timber business, recalls that banks "were throwing money" at him during the Covid pandemic as Rishi Sunak, then the chancellor, sought to help small companies stave off collapse.

Christman, who runs Black Isle Firewood, near Inverness, which produces firewood, sawn timber and huts for the tourism market, ended up taking out a government-backed loan under the coronavirus business interruption loan scheme (CBILS) which offered up to £50,000 to companies in 2020.

However, he had been struggling to pay the money back because the economy remained "in the doldrums" until his lender Close Brothers allowed him to extend his loan from five to nine years.

"CBILs were a lifeline. I would have had to shut the business without them," he said, of the firm he founded in 2010 after he left his previous job at a housing association.

"The business had been running along fine before Covid. But since then things have not picked up. My lender was willing to extend and so I was lucky. I know people who have gone bust as a result of CBILs," he added.

CBILs were one of three main packages of £77bn of government-backed pandemic loan support disbursed under emergency conditions to pump money into small firms and prevent economic collapse. The loans by banks and other financial institutions were administered by the state-owned British Business Bank (BBB) and lenders made decisions on applications.

Four years after the pandemic, many smaller businesses are struggling to repay these loans owing to the economic downturn and higher inflation, which has reduced sales and pushed up costs in wages and energy bills.

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), a trade association, believes those who took out CBILs should be given more flexibility to pay them back.

The best known scheme was the bounce back loan programme, launched in May 2020 as a life-support for small businesses during lockdown. It offered fully government-guaranteed bank loans of up to £50,000 or 25% of turnover. Paperwork was minimal; applications were self-certified and there were no credit checks.

A quarter of all businesses made use of this scheme but it has proved controversial with £1.8bn in loans flagged as suspected fraud. British companies drew £46.59bn through the bounce back scheme, with 74% of loans by volume fully repaid or on track for repayment.

However, lenders have resorted to the government payback guarantee for about 18% of all bounce back loans by volume - with a value of about £9bn as of December 2023 - mainly because businesses have gone bust.

CBILs were offered up to £5m for businesses with a turnover under £45m and loans were 80% government-backed.

'Energy costs went up and inflation went through the roof. We have been landed with debt through no fault of our own'

Dave Hughes
Hotbox in Chelmsford

Companies drew £25.84bn with 91% of CBILs by volume currently repaid or on track for repayment. The government guarantee has so far been called on for 5.35% of the CBILs by volume.

The coronavirus larger business interruption loan scheme (CLBILS), was aimed at firms with annual turnover of more than £45m.

Businesses struggling to repay bounce back loans can access a Pay as You Grow scheme giving flexibility including repayment holidays or extending loan terms up to 10 years. Some 34% of businesses with bounce back loans have taken this option.

However, there is no such formal scheme available to businesses with CBILs - any loan extension is purely at the discretion of the bank.

Martin McTague, FSB national chair, said: "While CBILS was a vital part of the initial support brought in to help businesses stay afloat during the pandemic, we warned at the time that the lack of flexibility around repayment terms would store up problems for the future.

"We asked for CBILS loans to be offered some of the same Pay As You Grow help that bounce back loan applicants were given. Some CBILS loans had a floating rate of interest, and then interest rates have soared far higher than those taking out a CBILS loan at the time could have forecast. These higher repayment costs for thousands of small firms come at a time of higher energy bills, a rising tax burden, and increased wage costs."

Kate Nicholls, chief executive at trade body UKHospitality, agreed: "One of the many obstacles to growth for the hospitality sector following the pandemic has been the repayment of Covid-related loans, with high interest rates increasing payments ... This is yet another cost that limits investment into the sector and we continue to urge the government to allow refinancing of these loans to enable repayments over a longer time period and without penalties. This would offer affected businesses the support they need to survive."

John Donald, 73, whose Edinburgh-based firm Robop took out a £160,000 CBILS loan in 2020, began struggling when he was faced with £3,000 a month repayments from 2021.

Donald co-founded the company, which supplies a patented autonomous robot that looks like a Peregrine falcon and deters birds from nesting on buildings. Customers include Network Rail and Caterpillar.

"Up until the pandemic we were growing at 330% a year," Donald said. "We assumed it would take six months to recover from the pandemic. Once repayments started and money was not coming in we wanted to extend the terms but that did not happen."

Eventually administrators were appointed and the firm went into insolvency in 2022. Donald eventually bought back some of the assets and has set up a new firm, Robop Systems Engineering.

Some firms are still struggling to repay bounce back loans even though firms have access to a more lenient repayment schemes. The Money Advice Trust, the charity that runs Business Debtline, which helps struggling firms, said 35% of its clients have bounce back loan debt , owing an average of £25,434.

Dave Hughes, 62, who runs not for profit music venue Hotbox in Chelmsford, said he has struggled to repay a £50,000 bounce back loan partly because other costs have risen including rent.

He set up the venue seven years ago after a career in business. "The last two years have been tough. We were closed during Covid for the best part of two years ... Then inflation went through the roof and electricity costs have gone up and also people spend less. We have been landed with debt through no fault of our own."

The British Business Bank said: "Where CBILS borrowers are in difficulty, in many cases lenders can extend the original loan terms to a maximum of 10 years if they need help to reduce monthly repayments. We would strongly encourage those who need this extra help to speak to their lender."

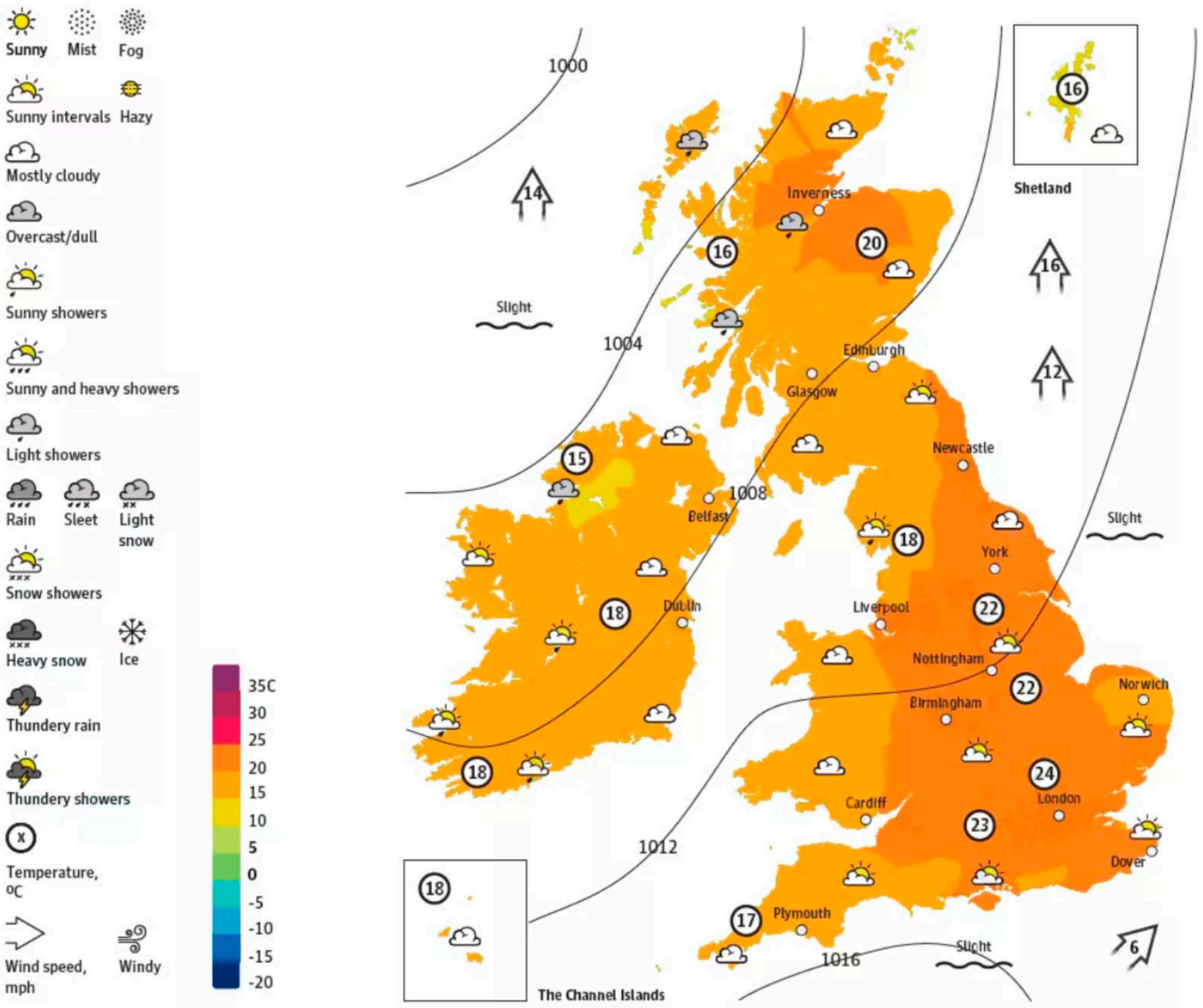
The government said in a statement: "We have amended the loan rules to give lenders the option to extend terms from six to a maximum of 10 years, to help borrowers in need of financial assistance reduce their monthly payments and repay their loan."

However, many believe further action is now needed: "What was the point of supporting these businesses through the disruption of Covid, to the tune of billions of pounds, if we allow them to go to the wall now - and with their debts unpaid?" McTague said.

"Helping them to repay their CBILS debts on a schedule that's manageable is surely much more sensible for all sides."

Weather
Friday 21 June 2024

UK and Ireland Noon today

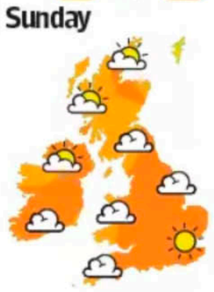


Forecast

Low 13 High 20
Tomorrow



Low 12 High 22
Sunday



Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

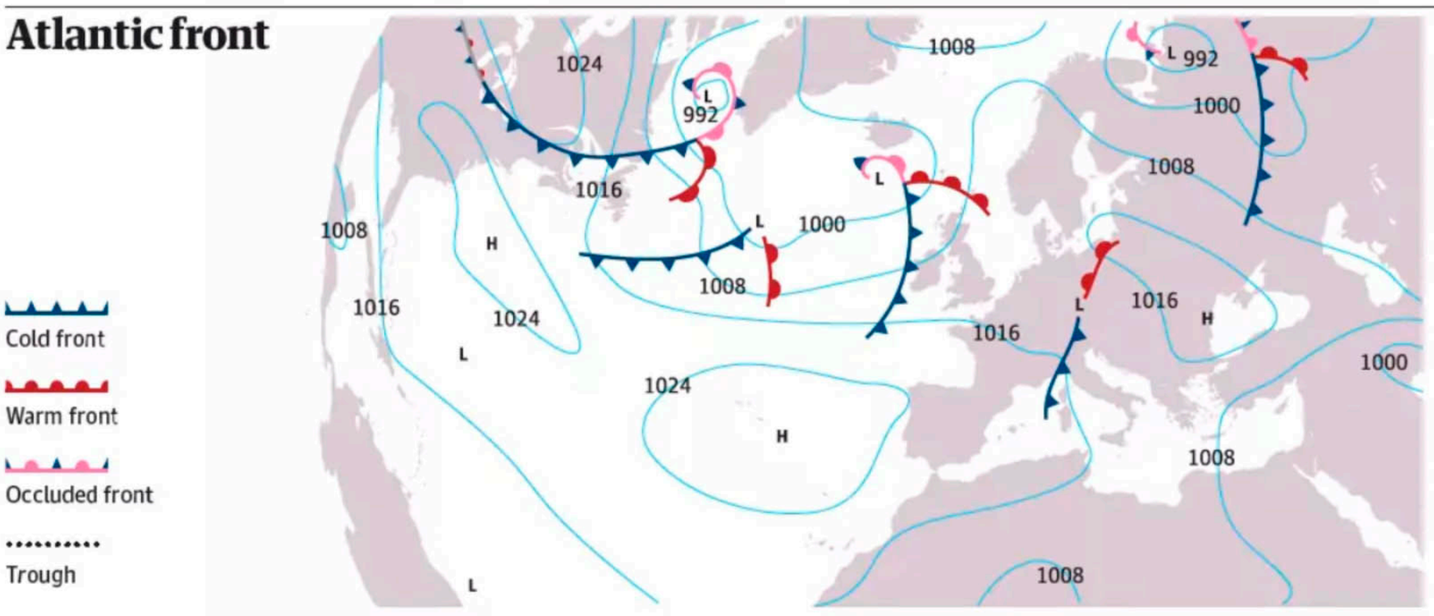
Latest	
17 Jun 2024	426.83
Weekly average	
09 Jun 2024	427.33
20 Jun 2023	424.24
20 Jun 2014	401.73
Pre-industrial base	*280*
Safe level	*350*

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

	Lows and highs	Precipitation	Air pollution
London	14 – 24	15%	Moderate
Manchester	13 – 21	25%	Moderate
Edinburgh	12 – 19	60%	Low
Belfast	9 – 18	90%	Low
Glasgow	11 – 19	65%	Low
Inverness	11 – 21	25%	Low
Leeds	13 – 22	20%	Moderate
Liverpool	13 – 21	25%	Moderate
Newcastle	11 – 21	25%	Low
Sheffield	12 – 22	20%	Low

Atlantic front



Weatherwatch

Lot 1280 in an auction in Tring, Hertfordshire, last weekend was a needlework picture of an ocean liner. Above the rather primitive portrait of a two-funnelled ship was sewn the poignant message: "In memory of the poor souls that perished on the Empress of Ireland on 29th day of May, 1914. As the ship was sinking the Salvationists sang the farewell hymn God Be With You Till We Meet Again."

The Empress had just left Quebec bound for Liverpool and was still in the St Lawrence River when it was hit by a Norwegian collier, Storstad, which carved such a hole in the liner's side that, despite having watertight compartments, it sank in 14 minutes.

The collision took place in darkness and thick fog, and 1,012 of the 1,477 people onboard died.

Among the passengers were 167 members of the Salvation Army who were travelling to a congress in London – only five were rescued. Perhaps the tragedy is so little known because it took place only months before the carnage of the first world war began.

Fortunately, modern navigation aids prevent fog, however thick, from causing another such disaster.

The picture was sold for £45.

Paul Brown

Around the world

Algiers	27	Lisbon	23
Ams'dam	18	Madrid	28
Athens	35	Malaga	29
Auckland	15	Melb'rne	12
B Aires	18	Mexico C	23
Bangkok	36	Miami	32
Barcelona	25	Milan	27
Basra	50	Mombasa	28
Beijing	27	Moscow	21
Berlin	27	Mumbai	32
Bermuda	26	N Orleans	32
Brussels	20	Nairobi	22
Budapest	35	New Delhi	41
C'hagen	20	New York	34
Cairo	38	Oslo	23
Cape Town	16	Paris	21
Chicago	32	Perth	20
Corfu	36	Prague	28
Dakar	29	Reykjavik	12
Dhaka	33	Rio de J	27
Dublin	17	Rome	32
Florence	33	Shanghai	31
Gibraltar	25	Singapore	29
H Kong	33	Stockh'm	20
Harare	23	Strasb'g	23
Helsinki	21	Sydney	17
Istanbul	30	Tel Aviv	31
Jo'burg	17	Tenerife	23
K Lumpur	30	Tokyo	25
K'mandu	29	Toronto	26
Kabul	28	Vancouv'r	23
Kingston	32	Vienna	32
Kolkata	33	Warsaw	27
L Angeles	28	Wash'ton	35
Lagos	30	Well'ton	13
Lima	20	Zurich	21

High tides

Source: © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Times are local UK times

Aberdeen	0131	3.9m	1356	3.8m	**London Bridge**	0157	6.7m	1422	6.6m
Avonmouth	0723	11.8m	1947	12.2m	**Lossiemouth**	--	--	1223	3.7m
Barrow	--	--	1149	8.3m	**Milford Haven**	0624	6.2m	1846	6.4m
Belfast	1127	3.3m	2345	3.3m	**Newquay**	0516	6.3m	1738	6.5m
Cobh	0538	3.7m	1803	3.8m	**North Shields**	0337	4.6m	1601	4.6m
Cromer	0645	4.5m	1909	4.5m	**Oban**	0602	3.5m	1826	3.6m
Dover	1122	6.1m	2337	6.2m	**Penzance**	0449	4.9m	1712	5.1m
Dublin	--	--	1202	3.7m	**Plymouth**	0600	4.9m	1820	5.1m
Galway	0527	4.5m	1740	4.8m	**Portsmouth**	--	--	1203	4.3m
Greenock	0041	3.2m	1235	3.1m	**Southport**	1101	8.1m	2320	8.4m
Harwich	--	--	1204	3.7m	**Stornoway**	0711	4.1m	1930	4.5m
Holyhead	1042	5.0m	2300	5.2m	**Weymouth**	0612	1.0m	1834	1.1m
Hull	0630	6.9m	1854	6.7m	**Whitby**	0410	5.0m	1633	5.0m
Leith	0246	5.0m	1514	5.1m	**Wick**	--	--	1147	3.1m
Liverpool	1126	8.4m	2345	8.7m	**Workington**	--	--	1150	7.4m

Sun & Moon



Sun rises	0443
Sun sets	2121
Moon rises	2144
Moon sets	0324
Full Moon	22 June

AccuWeather.com

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2024

Lighting up

Belfast	2206 to 0448
Birm'ham	2134 to 0445
Brighton	2118 to 0447
Bristol	2131 to 0455
Carlisle	2154 to 0433
Cork	2157 to 0515
Dublin	2158 to 0457
Glasgow	2207 to 0432
Harlech	2145 to 0452
Inverness	2219 to 0417
London	2121 to 0443
M'chester	2141 to 0441
Newcastle	2150 to 0427
Norwich	2123 to 0431
Penzance	2136 to 0513

Sport

Cricket

Salt and Bairstow get England's T20 party started

Page 42 →

Rugby union

England players plead for Sinfield to stay after tour

Page 44 →





▲ *The challenge is less about getting kids playing cricket or football and more about what children really need from sport*
SOLSTOCK/GETTY IMAGES

Where's the fun?

Why we need to make sure play has a bigger role in sport ... for kids and adults

Cath Bishop



A "Commission on Play" has been launched this month by the social entrepreneur Paul Lindley, partnered with the Centre for Young Lives. Set up to stimulate a national conversation about how to support children to play more, it will explore the impact of technology, access to outdoor space and parental attitudes. But in the brief, other than a glancing reference to the "no ball games" culture, there's no mention of sport as we understand it. This in itself shows how a child's experience of play has become disconnected from sport.

Now I don't think sport should be front and centre; this is a huge topic about the way we live our lives across society. But this commission offers a sharp prod up the backside of the sports world to ask itself about its contribution to the diminishing experiences of play in children's lives over recent decades.

The reality is that too much of youth sport is distanced from what children really need from sport. There can be an insufficient understanding of how sport could contribute to developing creativity, freedom and joy rather than reaching the next "level" of narrow technical skills. Or there are aims to boost participation figures short term rather than working out how to foster lifelong allegiance. Hours of activity, free play and obesity have all gone in the wrong direction over the last decade. Sport has a role to play.

The challenge is less about how we get more kids playing cricket, football or learning to row, and more about what children need from sport. When we find that out, we can then adapt our sports accordingly. Young people deserve to play freely without fear of rejection, constant assessment or other adult-devised constraints. Whether in school PE lessons or the local sports club, we've been sucked into over-organising and over-controlling sport. Although sport can talk a good game, and Sport England launched a Play Their Way campaign last year, it remains too superficial, focused too much on marketing the concept and too little on real behaviour change in sports environments.

There's a deep-rooted pervasive narrative: you start off as a novice, it's fine to have some fun and play for a while, but if you want to "progress", things get more serious and that means less fun. I remember that from my own journey from loving learning to row to becoming an Olympian: I was explicitly told this was no longer going to be about having fun. That phrase "stop playing around" has sinister undertones, particularly in youth sports environments. If a child is playing around, it's because they're bored and have a different idea they want to explore.

I see it still in governing body strategies offering "pathways" with an unquestioned assumption: as you get better, you have less fun. All the while, sports leaders scratch their heads about increasing drop-out rates in clubs particularly among teenage girls, mental health issues are rising at elite level and a majority of youngsters are concluding that sport's not for them.

I've even seen a fear of fun, particularly once you get to performance levels (which can start frighteningly young). Coaches throwing their hands up in protest at being asked to develop complex technical skills and create a fun environment at the same time. Yes, that's a challenge – and an opportunity. The mindset shift for sport is to realise that increased playful experiences of sport don't threaten performance, quite the opposite.

As spectators, we love to see a competitor who has fun in the heat of the moment. Some of the greatest of all time, from Daley Thompson to Usain Bolt to Ash Barty (after she took a break from tennis to have fun playing cricket for a while) to Ruby Tui to Ben Stokes playing "Bazball", have been those whose joy at playing shone through. Pole-vaulter Molly Caudery (bronze medal winner in the European championships) is a brilliant young talent notable for the joy she exudes when she competes. World-class pole-vaulter (and sports psychology student) Holly Bradshaw sees this as a massive strength and has been mentoring Molly to hold on to her carefree attitude in order to avoid the mental and physical damage and inherent constraints that she experienced from elite sport.

There's a big opportunity for sport to rediscover its soul this summer

Too often, children are treated as mini-adults or even mini-elite-athletes in sports. Football is a classic example where youth training typically mirrors adult training and revolves around drills, matches and leagues, with directive coaching and kids in set positions from early ages. All this despite being a sport where global legends learnt their trade playing freely in Brazilian back yards. A group of coaches and academics have recently set up the Campaign for Children's Rights in Football to return the child's voice to the heart of football.

The media has a role too. There can be an uneasiness about whether athletes are taking things seriously enough, confusion as to whether they should be lauded or criticised for any playfulness. That somehow it will come back to explain a later mistake, even though this is a world where mistakes are inevitable – even vital. The media also sells sport short by focusing too often on the joy of winning rather than the joy of playing.

The Commission on Play offers a moment to ask what children need from sport, and what needs to change as a result. Not simply how are we going to do in the Euros and where will we be in the Paris medal table. This summer offers a bigger opportunity for sport to rediscover its soul and reconnect to our lives more meaningfully and playfully.

Archer firing as England await South Africa duel

Fast bowler played central role in win over West Indies that reignited campaign but Proteas have found form too

Ali Martin
St Lucia

Jos Buttler has looked to make a virtue of staying level during this men's T20 World Cup, stressing the importance of not getting too down when, during what was supposed to be a cruisy first round, England came within one further rain shower of elimination.

Now comes the other side of the old cliché: the importance of not getting too giddy after what, in fairness, was a pretty thundering victory over West Indies to start the Super Eight phase. The turnaround is a short one, with just a day of catching up on sleep after returning to the hotel around 1am – a spot of rehab in the pool, too, perhaps – before taking on South Africa at the Daren Sammy National Cricket Stadium this afternoon.

England have also looked to park that miserable 50-over World Cup last winter but it will not have escaped them that their next opponents are the ones who inflicted the nadir in India; that 229-run drubbing in Mumbai when they ripped up their selection strategy, bowled first in a furnace based on T20 stats, and were utterly manhandled by Heinrich Klaasen. No one has uttered the word "revenge" but motivation should not be an issue.

They appear a bit better placed this time, too, with the T20 format, though far more capricious, very much their stronger suit these days due to its general ubiquity and less time for that age-old English weakness: overthinking things. Added to that are two key differences to a grim day that could easily have led to Buttler and Matthew Mott, the head coach, being ushered down the gangplank: Phil Salt and Jofra Archer.

After six years of his childhood spent living in Barbados, Salt is very much in tune with the rhythms of cricket here, those twin centuries during the tour last December now eclipsed by Wednesday night's unbeaten 87 from just 47 balls. It showed a player labelled early on as an outright aggressor has different gears; that watchful but still quick enough start, that period of consolidation, and then that jaw-dropping 30-run 16th over that shepherded poor Romario Shepherd to all parts and iced the match.



◀ *Jofra Archer showed his importance to England with an excellent 16th over against West Indies*
ALEX DAVIDSON/ ICC/GETTY IMAGES

As well as crediting Jonny Bairstow for upping the ante during that middle phase, Salt explained that the confidence to sit in for a spell came from feeling more secure about his spot. There was also tactical input from the coach Kieron Pollard here, a plan to target eight an over at one end, 12 at the other, with the cross-breeze very much in mind. Salt picked his moments masterfully, something that may well have caught the eye of Brendon McCullum as options for Test wicketkeeper this summer are considered.

McCullum, wherever he is right now, will doubtless be itching to get his hands on Archer, too, although as it stands he will have to wait. A diet of white-ball cricket in 2024 is the plan here, building up the fast bowler's hardiness for long-form cricket next year. Not that there won't be a temptation to advance this, such has been the manner in which Archer, after 14 months on the sidelines, has raced out of the traps like a thoroughbred running on Garrison Savannah back in his native Barbados.

Even on a night when Archer's first two overs leaked four boundaries and cost 21 runs in total, the pivotal 16th over sent down to the in-form and incendiary Nicholas Pooran – wide yorkers to order before finding the edge – underlined what sets him apart. "I was just glad that I executed," he said. "It was everything that we talked about in the bowling meetings. That was one of the times you nail it, the execution was almost perfect."

In all likelihood, with USA to follow on Sunday, an England victory would book a semi-final spot, even if South Africa may have something to say about this. Their tournament has witnessed five wins from five, overcoming some potentially confidence-draining surfaces in the first round before a victory against the Americans on Wednesday morning in Antigua that allowed the likes of Quinton de Kock – 74 off 40 – and Aiden Markram – 46 from 32 – to finally hit through the line unshackled.

In Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje, the Proteas also boast skill and pace. Wary of how England looked to be positive against Akeal Hosein and Gudakesh Motie – 67 runs from their eight overs combined – it may be that the left-arm wrist-spinner Tabraiz Shamsi makes way for Ottneil Baartman. A 31-year-old medium-fast who boasts some subtle variations, Baartman thought his opportunity at international level had passed him by, only for success in the SA20 to break down the door.

Steyn's advice to Baartman at the time was apparently to "stay the person you are – don't change for anything in the world". These are words that England may similarly wish to heed in a format where getting ahead of oneselves after a thumping win like the one witnessed on Wednesday night can often be followed by a backward step.

England v South Africa
Daren Sammy Stadium

3.30pm 31°

England	South Africa
Probable	**Probable**
PD Salt, JC Buttler (capt/wkt), JM Bairstow, HC Brook, MM Ali, LS Livingstone, SM Curran, JC Archer, AU Rashid, MA Wood, RJW Topley	Q de Kock (wkt), RR Hendricks, AK Markram (capt), H Klaasen, DA Miller, T Stubbs, M Jansen, KA Maharaj, K Rabada, AA Nortje, OEG Baartman

Umpires ISS Sharfuddoula (Ban)and CB Brown (NZ)
Third umpire JS Wilson (WI) **Referee** JJ Crowe (NZ)
TV Sky Sports Cricket **Radio** BBC 5 Live Sports Extra

Over-by-over Follow our coverage live on the web
theguardian.com/cricket

Yadav rescues India

Suryakumar Yadav cracked a 28-ball 53 to set India up for a 47-run win over Afghanistan in their opening Super Eights match. Yadav hit five fours and three sixes and shared a crucial fifth-wicket partnership of 60 with Hardik Pandya as India recovered from 90 for four to 181 for eight at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados. PA Media

West Indies have no answer to power of Salt and Bairstow

Ali Martin
Daren Sammy National Stadium

After a slightly soggy stumble out of the initial group stage, England's defence of the men's T20 World Cup finally kicked into life, with a clinical run chase against the highly fancied West Indies delivering the ideal start to the Super Eight stage.

Victory alone would have seen Jos Buttler's side board the bus feeling good about life given the battle to simply reach this point. But the manner in which it was secured will have put the rest of the field on notice; a target of 181 reeled in with 15 balls and eight wickets to spare thanks to an utterly ruinous 47-ball knock of 87 not out from opener Phil Salt.

Although Jonny Bairstow would probably like a word here. The Yorkshireman has been bristling this past week, irked by the criticism that followed the 36-run defeat to Australia in Barbados. Striding out with England 84 for two at the halfway stage, his unbeaten 48 from 26 was just as key to the net run-rate boost delivered. After England's next opponents South Africa could only secure a tight win over the USA earlier in the day, this could yet prove critical in the final shake-up for the top-two spots.

Bairstow had even threatened to overtake Salt at one stage, getting to within one hit of a half-century by smoking the 15th over from Akeal Hosein for 16 runs to leave 40 more required. But bar a couple more singles that was pretty much it from Bairstow. Salt, then on 49, responded by taking Romario Shepherd's follow-up over for a staggering 30 runs – 4, 6, 4, 6, 6, 4 – dousing all hope for the hosts.

Rovman Powell claimed afterwards his side's 180 for four after being stuck in at the toss was serviceable, but it always felt sub-par. On a soupy evening played out to a pulsing soca beat, this was a surface on which the West Indies captain had personally sent five sixes into the night sky – his side striking 10 in total – and thus promised much more.

That promise was broken by Jofra Archer in the 16th over. West Indies were 137 for two – albeit with Brandon King having retired hurt on 23 with a side strain – and had Nicholas Pooran, fresh from an electric 98 on this ground against Afghanistan two nights earlier, ominously poised on 32 not out. This was when an innings in the balance tipped in England's favour, Archer beating Pooran four times either side of a streaky four, before his final ball found the edge.



▲ *Phil Salt smashed an unbeaten 87 from 47 balls to lead the chase*

England's chase began in calculated fashion, a 58-run powerplay only a nudge above that of West Indies, as Salt and Buttler looked to see off Hosein. It took a smart piece of bowling from Roston Chase to remove Buttler for 25 in the eighth over, the off-spinner spotting his advance and firing one in for a simple lbw. When Moeen, promoted to No 3, perished trying to hook Russell into the wind on 10, a twist still looked possible.

Instead, Bairstow strode out chewing gum and taking names like it was a press conference, his punchy counterattack setting the stage for Salt's grand finale off Shepherd.

"It was good fun," player of the match Salt said afterwards, admitting England had "needed a game like that" after those early tournament frustrations.

Scoreboard

Gros Islet England beat West Indies by eight wickets.

West Indies		Balls	4s	6s
B A King	ret hurt	23	13	3	1
J Charles	c Brook b Ali	38	34	4	1
†N Pooran	c Buttler b Archer	36	32	4	1
***R Powell**	c Wood b Livingstone	36	17	0	5
AD Russell	c Salt b Rashid	1	2	0	0
SE Rutherford	not out	28	15	1	2
R Shepherd	not out	5	7	1	0
Extras	(b2, lb1, w10)	13			
Total	(for 4, 20 overs)	180			

Fall 94, 137, 141, 143.
Did not bat RL Chase, AJ Hosein, AS Joseph, G Motie.
Bowling Topley 3-0-26-0; Wood 3-0-36-0; Archer 4-0-34-1; Curran 3-0-25-0; Rashid 4-0-21-1; Ali 2-0-15-1; Livingstone 1-0-20-1.

England		Balls	4s	6s
PD Salt	not out	87	47	7	5
***†JC Buttler**	lbw b Chase	25	22	2	0
MM Ali	c Charles b Russell	13	10	2	0
JM Bairstow	not out	48	26	5	2
Extras	(lb1, w7)	8			
Total	(for 2, 17.3 overs)	181			

Fall 67, 84.
Did not bat HC Brook, LS Livingstone, SM Curran, JC Archer, AU Rashid, MA Wood, RJW Topley.
Bowling Hosein 4-0-35-0; Shepherd 2-0-41-0; Russell 2-0-21-1; Joseph 2.3-0-32-0; Motie 4-0-32-0; Chase 3-0-19-1.
Toss England elected to field.
Umpires Ahsan Raza (Pak) and NN Menon (Ind).
TV umpire ISS Sharfuddoula (Ban).
Referee JJ Crowe (NZ).

Accident wrecks cyclist's Olympics
Katie Archibald is out of Paris 2024 after breaking her leg in her garden *Page 23* →

'Millions-to-one' Kyprios rounds off comeback with historic Gold Cup

Six-year-old 'didn't look like he was going to live' after infection, says trainer O'Brien

Greg Wood
Ascot

The Gold Cup winner's crown at Ascot has been regularly defended since the race was inaugurated in 1807, but very rarely has it been reclaimed. Anticipation, in 1819, and Kayf Tara, in 2000, were the only previous winners of the Gold Cup in non-consecutive years. Kyprios cantered to post for the royal meeting's feature race yesterday, and it was only after an extended and memorable battle with Trawlerman, who had beaten Kyprios the last time they met, that Aidan O'Brien's six-year-old became the third name on the list.

There was no doubting Kyprios's quality before yesterday's Group One contest. He stamped himself as the outstanding stayer of his generation in an unbeaten six-race campaign in 2022, when his victories included the Gold Cup, the Goodwood Cup and a scarcely credible 20-length romp in the Prix du Cadran at Longchamp.

An injury-blighted 2023 season left his career in the balance, however, and it is the latest of a long and ever-extending list of achievements by O'Brien to have prepared Kyprios, both physically and mentally, for the rigours of a winning run in a Gold Cup.

It was a struggle that veered one way and then the other from the two-furlong pole. William Buick had set near-perfect fractions on Trawlerman, who had edged out Kyprios by a neck in the stayers race here on Champions Day last October, and after Kyprios had taken a narrow advantage, Buick had kept enough in reserve to mount a renewed effort and move alongside once again.

Kyprios, though, has an attitude to match his ability, and dug deep when Ryan Moore asked for a final push to gain a length on his rival at the line.

O'Brien suggested afterwards that it had been "millions-to-one" that Kyprios would return to Group One-winning form after his problems with a injured fetlock joint.

"It was really impossible to come back from what he came back from," the trainer said. "I think it happened because of all the people who have been around him and done so much day in, day out – they have been so committed, they communicated so well, everyone put him first.


Jockey Ryan Moore and Aidan O'Brien with the Gold Cup

"He got an infection in his joint, and it got into the joint capsule. Usually what happens is that they lose the movement in the joint, and for a while he did, but it came back.

"At one stage, it didn't look like he was going to live. Then it was getting him to stand, and then to walk, then to trot, then teaching him how to canter again, because he had to move all his body in different ways again.

"I remember when he went down to work the first time, I remember Rachel [Richardson] was riding him, and I didn't know what was going to happen.

"No horse has ever been X-rayed, scanned more in their life, than him. When he came back into training, it was every day, every day – was it moving? Was it changing? Was it getting better? It was incredible."

Moore was completing a 26-1 double on the day he had earlier passed Frankie Dettori's total of 81 Royal Ascot winners to take sole charge of the record for wins at the meeting among active riders, edging home by a neck on O'Brien's Port Fairy in the Group Two Ribblesdale Stakes.

While Moore is now pre-eminent among current jockeys at this meeting, however, he still has a long way to go to match Lester Piggott's all-time record of 116 Royal Ascot victories, which is all the more remarkable as it was compiled in an era when the meeting comprised 24 races over four days, rather than the current 35 over five.

"I wouldn't have even given it a thought, to be honest," Moore said when asked about his latest achievement.

"And the only reason I'm riding that amount of winners is I've ridden for the two most successful trainers in the history of Ascot, Aidan and Sir Michael Stoute.

"It's all about the horses, I'm just lucky to be riding them. I remember Frankie when I was a kid, riding for my grandad [Charlie] at Brighton. He's always been the best in my eyes."


▲ *Kyprios crosses the line ahead of Trawlerman after a memorable battle*
DAVID DAVIES/PA

Sport In brief

Rugby union

Former St Helens wing Grace gets Wales call-up

Regan Grace has been given a shock call-up to Wales's summer training squad. The former rugby league player, who has played only two senior games of union, could now go on the summer tour to Australia. The 27-year-old wing, who signed a contract with Bath in April, scored 89 tries for St Helens in his league career. **PA Media**

Cycling

Champion Vingegaard fit for Tour de France

Jonas Vingegaard, winner of the last two editions of the Tour de France, has recovered from injuries to his lung and collarbone and will compete in this year's race, his team Visma-Lease a Bike said yesterday. This year's Tour begins in Florence on 29 June. **Reuters**

Results

Rugby league

BETFRED SUPER LEAGUE
Castleford 12 Hull KR 13

Cricket

T20 WORLD CUP
Super Eight Bridgetown India 181-8 (SA Yadav 53; Rashid Khan 3-26, Fazalhaq Farooqi 3-33). Afghanistan 134 (JJ Bumrah 3-7, A Singh 3-36). India win by 47 runs.

VITALITY BLAST
North Group
Edgbaston Warwickshire 219-4 (JG Bethell 56no, EG Barnard 48, DR Mousley 43). Northamptonshire 129-9). Warwickshire win by 90 runs.
Headingley Yorkshire 173-8 (Shan Masood 61, JE Root 43; S Mahmood 3-41). Lancashire 166-8 (KK Jennings 46). Yorkshire win by seven runs.

South Group
Chelmsford Hampshire 166-7 (JJ Weatherley 48; BMJ Allison 3-44). Essex 170-2 (D Elgar 60no; JM Cox 45no, MJK Pepper 44). Essex win by eight wickets.
Sophia Gardens Glamorgan 140-6 (SA Northeast 46no; MD Taylor 3-21). Gloucestershire 142-8 (JMR Taylor 70). Gloucestershire win by two wickets.
Lord's Surrey 185-9 (TK Curran 48, LJ Evans 41; LBK Hollman 5-16). Middlesex 129-8 (SA Abbott 5-18). Surrey win by 56 runs.
Hove Sussex 201-7 (HD Ward 61, DJ Lamb 40; MW Parkinson 3-31). Kent 170-7 (SW Billings 51; DJ Lamb 3-37). Sussex win by 31 runs.

Tennis

ATP CINCH CHAMPIONSHIPS (Queen's Club)
Second round: T Paul (US) bt A Tabilo (Chl) 6-3 6-4; **J Draper** (GB) bt C Alcaraz (Sp) 7-6 (3) 6-3; **B Harris** (GB) bt G Mpetshi Perricard (Fr) 6-4 7-5; **L Musetti** (It) bt B Nakashima (US) 6-4 4-6 6-4.

ATP TERRA WORTMANN OPEN (Halle, Germany)
Second round: H Hurkacz (Pol) bt J Duckworth (Aus) 7-6 (3) 6-4; **J Sinner** (It) bt F Marozsan (Hun) 6-4 6-7 (4) 6-3; **M Giron** (US) bt M Berrettini (It) 3-6 6-4 6-3; **J Struff** (Ger) bt S Tsitsipas (Gre) 6-4 6-4.

WTA ECOTRANS OPEN (Berlin, Germany)
Second round: A Kalinskaya (Rus) bt M Vondrousova (Cz) 5-5 ret; **E Rybakina** (Kaz) bt V Kudermetova (Rus) 6-4 7-5; **K Siniakova** (Cz) bt Zheng Q (Chn) 6-4 6-4; **C Gauff** (US) bt E Alexandrova (Rus) 7-6 (6) 6-2; **J Pegula** (US) bt D Vekic (Cro) 6-4 7-5; **O Jabeur** (Tun) bt L Noskova (Cz) 6-7 (5) 6-3 6-4; **A Sabalenka** (Blr) bt D Kasatkina (Rus) 6-1 6-4.

WTA ROTHESAY CLASSIC (Birmingham)
Second round: Y Putintseva (Kaz) bt A Kalinina (Ukr) 6-3 6-0; **D Shnaider** (Rus) bt M Bouzkova (Cz) 7-6 (5) 6-3; **B Krejcikova** (Cz) bt H Dart (GB) 6-3 6-4; **C Dolehide** (US) bt E Mertens (Bel) 6-3 3-0 ret.

Fixtures

Rugby league
Betfred Super League
Leeds v Leigh (8pm); Wigan v London Broncos (8pm)
Cricket (6.30pm unless stated)
Third women's ODI
Sri Lanka v West Indies, Hambantota (5.30am)
Vitality Blast **North Group** Durham v Yorks, Riverside; Northants v Leics, Northampton; Notts v Derbys, Trent Bridge; Worcs v Warks, New Road (5.30pm)
South Group Gloucs v Somerset, Bristol; Hants v Sussex, Utilita Bowl (7pm); Kent v Essex, Canterbury; Surrey v Glamorgan, The Oval

Today's action
Elmalka can finish strong to beat elite field

Greg Wood
Guide to Royal Ascot TV races

The winners of the English and French 1,000 Guineas – Elmalka and Rouhiya – are both in the field for the Coronation Stakes at Royal Ascot today, but the betting suggests that Opera Singer, only third in the Irish equivalent at the Curragh, is the one to beat.

That may reflect a sense that the Newmarket Classic – in which the first five home were separated by just a length – is underwhelming, but Elmalka's winning time was respectable and Fallen Angel, the subsequent Irish Guineas winner, was among the also-rans.

Elmalka (3.45) was also one of the most lightly-raced runners in the Newmarket field and quickened sharply from well off the pace. Ascot's round mile with a stiff uphill finish should suit her ideally and she is an excellent bet at around 4-1 to follow up her Classic success.

2.30 Runners trained by Aidan O'Brien and Charlie Appleby dominate the betting but their form to date does not put either filly as far clear of the field as the odds might suggest and a potential improver like **Simmering**, a close third in a strong race at York on debut, could well spring a surprise.

3.05 Jasour's two-year-old career petered out somewhat after a Group Two win at Newmarket in July, but he was back to his best when reunited with Jim Crowley for a trial over track and trip in May and looks over-priced at around 11-2 on that form.

4.25 Lightly-raced **Shadow Dance** was a close second behind Alsakib – who ran well in the Copper Horse Handicap here on Tuesday – in the Old Rowley Cup in October and is just 6lb higher here. He has not had a prep race but Roger Varian is more than capable of readying one first time up and he looks the type to progress rapidly at four.

5.05 Joseph O'Brien's **Without Words** must have been a tricky runner for the handicapper to assess after races at Bordeaux, Toulouse and Listowel, and an opening mark of 92 could be a little on the low side. At around 14-1, she could be worth a small interest in a very open race.

5.40 Theory Of Tides has just two minor wins to his name so far but the time of his latest success at Yarmouth was strong and there are question marks over several runners at similar odds or shorter.

6.15 There should be more to come from the lightly-raced and unbeaten **Dyrholaey**, who bids to give Archie Watson a second successive win in this race.

Today's big race 3.45pm ITV1
Coronation Stakes
Group one, Class one, 7f 213y £368,615

1 (3)	Content	83	6 (5)	Porta Fortuna	85
2614-8	(40, D) Westerberg	3 9-2 AP O'Brien W Lordan	2312-2	(47, C) Medallion	3 9-2 DA O'Brien T Marquand
2 (10)	Devoted Queen	--	7 (1)	Ramatuelle	90
1-11	(35, D) Godolphin	3 9-2 C Appleby NON-RUNNER	112-23	(47) Infinity 9 Horses	3 9-2 C Head O Murphy
3 (7)	Elmalka	88	8 (2)	Rouhiya	87
1-31	(47, D) Sheikh Maktoum	3 9-2 R Varian J Doyle	31-31	(40, D) HH Aga Khan	3 9-2 FH Graffard M Guyon
4 (4)	Folgaria	84	9 (6)	See The Fire	84
111-10	(40, D) Scuderia Sagam	3 9-2 M Botti H Doyle	123-0	(47) JC Smith	3 9-2 A Balding D Probert
5 (9)	Opera Singer	89	10 (8)	Skellet	83
1211-3	(26, D) Westerberg	3 9-2 AP O'Brien R Moore	412-8	(26) Juddmonte	3 9-2 R Beckett R Ryan

Betting 6-4 Opera Singer, 7-2 Elmalka, 4-1 Ramatuelle, 13-2 Porta Fortuna, 10-1 Rouhiya, 25-1 Content, 40-1 See The Fire, Skellet, 50-1 Folgaria.

Greg Wood's tips

Market Rasen 1.35 Supreme Yeats 2.05 G A Henty 2.40 A Dublin Job 3.15 Callin Baton Rouge 3.55 Northern Bound 4.35 Climate Precedent 5.10 Spot On Soph
Redcar 1.45 Sunny Orange 2.15 Kode Secret 2.50 La Trinidad 3.30 Castle Cove 4.05 Mister Daydream 4.45 Split The Profit
Royal Ascot 2.30 Simmering 3.05 Jasour 3.45 Elmalka (nap) 4.25 Shadow Dance 5.05 Without Words (nb) 5.40 Theory Of Tides 6.15 Dyrholaey
Goodwood 5.45 Soldier's Heart 6.20 Pure Of Heart 6.50 Mr Freedom 7.25 Tactician 8.00 Dashinwhitsargent 8.35 Enchanting
Newmarket 6.03 Biniorella Bay 6.35 Global Asset 7.10 Midnight Gun 7.45 Rhetorical 8.20 Rebaatt 8.55 Wonder Kid

Tennis

Draper goes on attack to stun Alcaraz and pull off win of his life

Briton follows up Stuttgart title with statement victory over Wimbledon champion

Tumaini Carayol
Queen's Club

Even as Jack Draper began to digest his desperate first-round loss at the French Open in his press conference three weeks ago, he still managed to pair his hurt and frustration with some impressive perspective. Draper recognised that he was in the midst of a significant retooling of his game and this was the moment to continue trusting in his work.

Things can change so quickly in tennis and since that miserable moment, Draper has not lost another match. Here he continued this spectacular breakthrough run by pulling off by far the best win of his life, defeating Carlos Alcaraz, the top seed and defending champion, 7-6 (3), 6-3 in the second round at Queen's.

At a time when Andy Murray's career seems to be in its final stretch, the next leading British men's player is finally making noise at the top of the game. Draper is, incredibly, the first British man to clinch a top-two win on grass since Murray defeated Novak Djokovic in the 2013 Wimbledon final. He is also the first British man to beat the top seed at Queen's in 52 years. "Even though it's come together in the last sort of two weeks, this is not overnight," he said.

"This is years of doing it. So, really happy with how it's come together the last couple of weeks, as you said, especially at this time on the grass in front of home crowds, and hopefully I can carry on this momentum and keep on building."

Last week, Draper clinched his first ATP title in Stuttgart by defeating Matteo Berrettini, the 2021 Wimbledon finalist, in his third final. Despite immediately rushing back to London for his home tournament, he has carried the momentum forward. As he faced off against the reigning French Open and Wimbledon champion, he was fully aware that he had a great opportunity. While Alcaraz proved his quality on grass last year, this was just his second match on grass in 2024 and he was still finding his feet on the surface again.

As in recent weeks, Draper's determination to attack and dictate against opponents continues to pay off. He served brilliantly from the beginning, rolling through his service games with ease as they reached a first set tie-break. With the set on the line, Draper was the player willing to attack in neutral rallies, take returns early and to close down the net whenever possible as he quickly built a 6-1 lead. Alcaraz was far from poor, but his uncertainty was punished.

With the first set secured, Draper opened up his shoulders and played freely. He broke serve with another explosion of aggressive tennis, punching away a forehand volley to set up break point and then snapping a backhand return winner to break serve. Under pressure in his final two service games, Draper made an incredible backhand half-volley winner to save a break point at 4-2 and then he rallied from 0-30 down in the final service game with excellent serving to close out an incredible win.

Draper has now risen into the top 30 of the live rankings and he is likely to be seeded at Wimbledon. Most importantly, though, he has another match to play and a chance to make an even bigger mark at Queen's, a tournament he attended as a child. He will face Tommy Paul, the fifth seed, today for a place in the semi-finals.

"I'm not going to get too high on this win," Draper said. "Obviously it's nice to reflect on things when you're done with the week and the wins you have had, but my main priority right now is to make sure I'm doing everything I can to be best prepared for tomorrow, because everyone at this level, if you're not quite on your game, they can beat you."

> *'Everyone at this level, if you're not on your game, they can beat you'*
>
> **Jack Draper**



Jack Draper is likely to be a seed at Wimbledon after beating Alcaraz

▼ *Steve Borthwick (left) and Eddie Jones will go head-to-head in Tokyo*
DAVID ROGERS/GETTY IMAGES



Rugby union

'A bit weird' – but England braced for battle with Jones

Visitors are in confident mood while Brave Blossoms head coach is hoping to get one over his former team

Robert Kitson
Tokyo

As Eddie Jones surveyed the 40-odd reporters and six camera crews crammed into a windowless room on the fifth floor of a Tokyo tower block it almost felt like the old days. The last time he was in charge of a Test side in this city it was the 2019 World Cup final and he was coaching England. Five years on, however, it is not just the badge on his chest that has changed.

For a start, he has left two high-profile jobs and been re-hired by the Japan Rugby Football Union for a second stint in charge. And now gazing impassively across at him from the England camp is his former assistant Steve Borthwick, with whom he has worked on and off since 2008 when they were both working for Saracens. The past master is about to be reunited with a former apprentice who knows him inside out.

Maybe that is the reason why Jones opted to thrust out a big front pad to even the most innocent of pre-match questions from the crowded floor. "I know whatever I say to you is going to end up in a headline," he told the small travelling posse of UK-based writers at the back of the room. Perhaps but, let's be honest, Jones is not entirely allergic to courting publicity when it suits him. Closer to the truth, potentially, is that his latest callow crop of Brave Blossoms, featuring four debutants, could feel the force of Borthwick's revitalised England team tomorrow.

Admittedly it will be baking hot, with temperatures of 30C likely for the mid-afternoon kick-off and England set to use iced towels and cold spray to keep cool. Japan will also be mustard keen, not least their novice 20-year-old full-back Yoshitaka Yazaki who is still at Waseda University and shares a dormitory with 150 other students. But as the visitors' captain, Jamie George, made clear at his team's hotel a few miles across town this is an England team which senses real progress is now being made.

While George did concede it might feel "a little bit weird" with Jones in the opposing coach's box – "We've just got to make sure we look at the right one" – he also suggested Borthwick had been privy to enough of Jones's tactical wisdom over the years to make the battle of wits a competitive one. "You could see Steve was a head coach from the outset," stressed George. "It was something he was destined to do. He has a plan for every individual but also the way he drives standards in terms of how he wants the team to look has impressed me. He is also very good at setting the tone for the week and being clear about the gameplan."

It is true that several English players either jettisoned or put through the wringer by Jones have resurfaced as better players under Borthwick, from George Furbank and Ollie Lawrence to Ben Earl and George Martin. Tough love can improve young players but the big difference is that England are now transparently enjoying the more collegiate, positive atmosphere, allied to a more attack-minded gameplan being fostered by Borthwick and his squad leaders.

George, who has had to deal with the death of his mother earlier this year and has been hammering away without much respite since last summer's World Cup warm-up games, is among those firmly convinced the team is on the rise. "I am so excited about the group. I believe this team is going to do great things. These three Tests – one here and two in New Zealand – are an amazing opportunity to show the growth of this team."

The captain is particularly keen for his squad to build on the attacking momentum they generated in their final two Six Nations fixtures against Ireland and France. England trailed at half-time in all five of their recent Six Nations games and, with the All Blacks on the horizon, George is urging his side to stay mentally switched on against opponents who have never previously toppled England.

"They haven't played a game for a little while and, this being Eddie's first game, he will do everything he can to get them in the right emotional state to come out swinging," warned the hooker. "We will be set challenges through this tour, whether it be the heat or going down to New Zealand and playing at Eden Park with their record there. This could bring us more together ... and hopefully we'll also get a few results to show for it."

Jones, though, says he has "a really good feeling in his veins" and, with the great Victor Matfield now among his coaching lieutenants, believes Japan "will take England right to the last moment". If they do finish second, Borthwick and England will never hear the last of it.

Players want 'invaluable' Sinfield to stay

Robert Kitson

England's players are pushing for Kevin Sinfield to remain involved as a key member of Steve Borthwick's coaching staff. The former rugby league player is due to leave his role after the current tour but the captain, Jamie George, is keen for him to stay.

Sinfield, 43, has stepped back from his original job as England's defence coach following the recruitment of Felix Jones but is understood to be considering his options. George says the entire squad would like him to continue.

"I couldn't be keener for him to stay," said George. "The role he's playing at the minute is absolutely invaluable and he's an absolutely incredible man and coach. In terms of the role he's playing in this team it's been amazing to see."

George also says he can see similarities between the coaching ability of Sinfield and Andy Farrell, who will be leading the British & Irish Lions tour to Australia next year.

"He probably reminds me of Andy Farrell in that he's got such an amazing understanding of our defence and then also the attacking side of the game. That's why it made him such a good defence coach, as the attack worked so well.

"He's also become a mentor to a lot of the younger players. It can be very difficult on a tour like this when you're not selected. Kev is the person who puts the arm around the shoulder."



Jocelyn Prêcheur won the French Cup last season

London City Lionesses plan move for PSG coach Prêcheur

Tom Garry

Paris Saint-Germain's head coach, Jocelyn Prêcheur, is in the frame for a switch to London City Lionesses in what would represent a major coup for the Women's Championship club.

It is understood London City have held advanced talks with Prêcheur regarding their managerial vacancy, with the Frenchman hugely admired by the club's owner, Michele Kang.

As reported by French media in recent days, Prêcheur is set to leave PSG this summer when his contract expires, and he had been linked with London City, who finished eighth in the second tier last season.

Multiple sources have since confirmed that, while no final deal has been concluded for Prêcheur to move from Paris to London, discussions have reached an advanced stage, with potential player transfer targets for the summer having been considered by the 42-year-old.

Prêcheur has been in charge at PSG since September 2023, when he succeeded his father, Gerard Prêcheur, under whom he had previously worked as the assistant manager. Gerard Prêcheur was twice a Women's Champions League-winning coach at his former club Lyon.

Prêcheur Jr won the French Cup with PSG last season, beating Fleury FC 1-0 in the final. He also led the side to the semi-finals of the Women's Champions League, where they lost 5-3 on aggregate to Lyon, who, like London City and Washington Spirit, are owned by the American businesswoman Kang.

Kang purchased London City last December and has set her sights on the club winning promotion to the Women's Super League.

The former Reading, Aston Villa and Birmingham City midfielder Remi Allen was head coach on a short-term contract signed in March. In May, the club announced Allen was leaving.

Prêcheur has also worked in China as head coach of Jiangsu Suning Ladies FC, where between 2019 and 2022 he won four trophies. He was previously an analyst at various clubs while separately working on sports performance assessments as a designer at a software company in Paris. Earlier in his career he had spells as an analyst for both PSG and Lyon.

Mbappé could be fit to face Netherlands, reveals Deschamps

France's captain has a custom-made mask after breaking nose versus Austria

Ben Fisher
Berlin

Didier Deschamps has suggested Kylian Mbappé could feature against the Netherlands today, in a surprise turn of events after the France captain suffered a broken nose against Austria on Monday. Mbappé has not required surgery and while doubts remain over his involvement in the rest of the group stage, Deschamps insists "everything is going in the right direction".

The France manager confirmed a custom-made mask will be fitted so that Mbappé can return but it is unclear if he will risk his captain. Mbappé was limited to non-contact exercises at training on Wednesday but trained again yesterday before France's meeting with the Netherlands in Leipzig. The Real Madrid forward wore a mask in his country's tricolour colours and emblazoned with his initials.

"I can confirm that Kylian is feeling better," Deschamps said at his pre-match press conference. "Everything is going in the right direction after this major shock he had, with the consequences, of course."

Asked whether Mbappé would wear a mask, Deschamps replied: "Kylian will be wearing a mask, yes, we don't really need to know the details about this mask ... I think you have enough moles to find out where the mask is coming from anyway."

Much of the discourse surrounding the France team has centred on the upcoming political vote after the president, Emmanuel Macron, called a snap election, with several players, including Mbappé, asked for their opinions, but Deschamps insists it has not been a distraction.

"Before the first game [against Austria], at the first press conference seven and a half of the eight questions were not about football," he said. "Maybe people are trying to use this, use Kylian to drive debate. It is not creating disruption in the group. Things are happening as best as they possibly can. Kylian is with the team. Within the group we are calm."

Antoine Griezmann, who could captain France in the absence of Mbappé, said it was important not to compare the 25-year-old with other decorated players. "I think Kylian is living his own career, what Cristiano [Ronaldo] is doing is unprecedented but you need to see them as two separate people and stop trying to compare different players, even Leo [Messi] as well," Griezmann said. "Everybody has their own style of play, their own place in history."

Asked about Mbappé's condition, Griezmann said he is improving. "Kylian is doing well, the swelling has gone down on his nose," the 33-year-old said. "We'll see in the last minutes how he is feeling. We are in the competition now and we are ready to continue. We want to win the trophy."

Griezmann added: "Having one of the best players in the world on the pitch or not definitely changes things. We will see how it goes but we always have to adapt to each match and that is what I love to do. It doesn't matter what the tactical choices are, we always have to adapt. That is what makes us stronger. We know it's going to be a physical game. We have to make sure we turn up."

Meanwhile, the Netherlands could welcome back the Ajax striker Brian Brobbey, who missed their opening-round victory over Poland. Ronald Koeman must decide whether to promote Burnley's Wout Weghorst to his starting lineup after his late winner in Hamburg. Weghorst could replace Memphis Depay.

France have won seven of their past eight meetings with the Netherlands. "Maybe I've just been lucky," Deschamps said, smiling. "Our first objective is to create issues for them on the pitch and then to limit their offensive play. We expect to have the ball more than the opponent – that is what we hope – and we have to make them suffer as well, that's my objective."

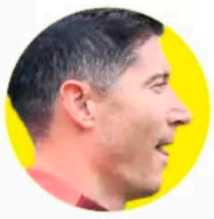


▲ *Kylian Mbappé sported a tricolour mask at yesterday's training session*

JENS SCHLUETER/UEFA VIA GETTY IMAGES

Today at the Euros

Big day for Robert Lewandowski



Risking a star player after injury? The **Poland striker** may not have the drama of Mbappé's mask but it would be a significant return to action if he shakes off his thigh injury for the side's most winnable group match, against Austria. Coach Michal Probierz says the medical staff will decide.

Centre stage Düsseldorf Arena

The **47,000-capacity** stadium staging Slovakia v Ukraine has already witnessed high drama: Mbappé broke his nose here on Monday. Also hosted the 2011 Eurovision Song Contest – British boyband Blue came 11th.

Look out for Inseparable TV studios

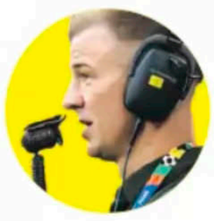
The punditry for Poland v Austria comes from **ITV**'s Berlin studio on the fourth floor of the Academy of Arts next to Brandenburg Gate. The BBC used this spot for the 2006 World Cup. Look into the square to the right of Laura Woods and you can see the blue-clad structure housing the BBC's current studio.



36

Years since the Dutch last played a Euros match in Düsseldorf. You might recall it – **Marco van Basten** scored a hat-trick in a 3-1 win over England, and the Netherlands would go on to lift the trophy.

Pundit watch Joe Hart



Whirlwind times for the **BBC** pundit doing Slovakia v Ukraine: winning the Double with Celtic, retiring from the game and heading to Germany. His appearance alongside Kelly Somers on Sunday left some viewers intrigued by his tattoos, which he refers to simply as his "armour".

Did you know?

Poland's **Bartosz Slisz** is nicknamed "the vacuum cleaner", so good is he at cleaning up in midfield. The 25-year-old plays Major League Soccer for Atlanta.

Football In brief

Leicester

Cooper joins as manager on three-year contract

Steve Cooper has been appointed Leicester's new manager on a three-year contract. The 44-year-old succeeds Enzo Maresca following his departure to Chelsea. It is Cooper's first job since being sacked by City's East Midlands rivals Nottingham Forest in December. Cooper led Forest to promotion back to the Premier League in 2022 and had to contend with plenty of off-field turbulence before leaving the City Ground with the club 17th in the top flight. "I am really excited and proud to be appointed Leicester's manager," said Cooper. "This is a fantastic club with a rich history and passionate supporters. I am excited to work with such a talented squad and I'm looking forward to the challenge of achieving our shared ambitions in the Premier League." Leicester were keen on appointing Graham Potter, who they previously targeted after sacking Brendan Rodgers, but moved to wrap up a deal for Cooper after Potter stalled on the move. They also considered Carlos Corberán, who is under contract at West Brom. **Ben Fisher**

Manchester United

Ratcliffe: 'Rules could ruin Premier League'

Manchester United's minority owner, Sir Jim Ratcliffe, has said he understands why rivals Manchester City are challenging Premier League financial rules, and warned the competition faces "ruin" if regulation goes too far. City are suing the league over its associated party transaction rules, which are designed to ensure commercial deals linked to a club's ownership are done for fair market value. "I can understand why they are challenging it," Ratcliffe told Bloomberg. "You can understand why they would say that they want an open market, a free market." Ratcliffe said the Premier League needed to be "careful" not to end up in "an endless legal wrangle with lots of clubs". Everton and Nottingham Forest were docked a combined 12 points for breaching the league's profitability and sustainability rules last season, while City face a hearing in the autumn charged with 115 breaches of Premier League rules. Ratcliffe said: "We have this expression in northern England: 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If you're not careful the Premier League is going to finish up spending more time in court than it is thinking about what's good for the league. We have got the best league in the world, don't ruin that league for heaven's sake." **PA Media**



▲ *Callum McGregor wants a repeat of the energy shown against the Swiss*

Scotland can make history if we stay calm, says McGregor

Ewan Murray
Garmisch-Partenkirchen

Callum McGregor insists Scotland's players must temper excitement over potentially reaching the last 16. The 1-1 draw with Switzerland means the Scots should qualify for a finals knockout stage for the first time with a win over Hungary on Sunday but the Celtic captain has warned his teammates there remains significant work to do.

"Over the next few days everybody will be buzzing," McGregor said. "We just need to stay calm and recover. We have two days of recovery and then we can plan our way into the game, stay calm, and when we arrive everyone will be desperate for us to get through. We are the same, but we have to bring a level or performance that matches that ambition.

"It can't just be constant running, running, running; you have to control the game as well. We have to do a lot right on Sunday. Hungary have been good. Their two games have been tight. A physical side but they can play as well.

"We have to recover and bring the same energy level and the same tempo and the same aggression as we did against Switzerland."

Scotland's players were castigated for their showing in the tournament's opening game against Germany. Steve Clarke always felt the Switzerland and Hungary matches were likely to provide Scotland's best opportunity for points. McGregor agrees but accepts the criticism that followed the 5-1 hammering against the hosts.

"That is football and we understand that everybody just wants us to do so well," said the midfielder. "When you get a bad result, perspective goes out the window a little bit. When the draw was made you were probably targeting the last two games.

"It was probably the manner of the defeat the other night which made everyone feel a bit sore and not great. As footballers, you have to deal with that. You have to try to put it right. We made the first step of putting it right and we arrive into the game on Sunday now with belief that if we play equally as well, if not better, we give ourselves a right good chance."

Scotland would have taken this Group A position before a ball was kicked. "Absolutely," agreed McGregor. "I think if you asked anybody, they would."

Spain impress and progress after Calafiori calamity

Spain	**1**
Calafiori 55og	
Italy	**0**

Possession
Spain 56% | Italy 44%

Shots on target
8 | 1

Total attempts
20 | 4

Sid Lowe
Arena AufSchalke

Luis de la Fuente had described Spain v Italy as a *clásico*, a game that could easily be the final; watching this, he might have been half right. The team he coaches beat Italy by an own goal to top the Group of Death with a fixture to spare but that doesn't tell the story, nor even begin to express the way they took Italy apart. In fact, that the *seleccion* ultimately needed Riccardo Calafiori to deflect the ball past Gianluigi Donnarumma to win this was absurd. The scoreline could and probably should have been five times that.

The surprise was not that Luciano Spalletti's side lost here but that they lost so narrowly, that there was any point in their goalkeeper going up for a corner in added time. And that Spain had to suffer any nerves at all towards the end of a night in which they had appeared untouchable, utterly fearless. Reaching the final, on this evidence, is no fantasy.

What a performance: 20 shots, 50 attacks, and illustrious opponents sliced to pieces almost from beginning to end, when Ayoze Pérez came on and added two more clear opportunities to a catalogue of them.

The *seleccion* were relentless, impeccable but for the finishing, a plan coming together almost perfectly. After one superb effort, 16-year-old Lamine Yamal gestured for fans to get on their feet, but they already were. Italy, Spalletti said, could not live with Spain's "speed, freshness and brilliance", which was exactly the way their opponents had wanted it.

In the buildup to this match Lamine Yamal had talked about the value of taking on the full-back, going one on one from the start and refusing to let up; football, he said, is a "psychological game". If you beat him the first time, you can feel the fear. And if you don't, well, then you go back and do it again until you do.

That was the theory, the idea his coach drove into the two young wingers who are doing so much to make this a different Spain; here it was put into practice.

The game was only 85 seconds old when Nico Williams raced past Giovanni Di Lorenzo and delivered a glorious cross from which Pedri forced the first of eight saves from Donnarumma. Williams had gone outside that time. He would come inside the next time. The third time, he went outside again. Poor Di Lorenzo, it was a wonder his legs weren't tied in a cartoon knot.

Di Lorenzo wasn't alone in his suffering, either. Over on the other side Federico Dimarco had almost as bad a time. Lamine Yamal delivered the first dangerous ball on four minutes, a warning that he too was not going to let up. Nico and Lamine, Lamine and Nico, again and again: two wingers who are younger than Jesús Navas put together and will appear in Italian nightmares.

There was an ooh when Williams pirouetted, an aah when Lamine's outrageous touch helped him escape Lorenzo Pellegrini's wild lunge. Above all, there was attack after attack.

Nor was it just them. Marc Cucurella was superb. Rodri ran this, only he never seems to actually run. Pedri and Fabián Ruiz played wonderfully. Álvaro Morata, the perfect pivot, provided a superb ball to the far post from where Williams nodded another clear chance wide. Williams then skinned Di Lorenzo again before Lamine Yamal spun, left three men on the floor and found Morata who drew a sharp save from Donnarumma. Next a gorgeous, clean exchange between Pedri, Ruiz and Dani Carvajal set up Rodri. At half-time they had had nine shots to Italy's one and that had not come until added time, a decent chance sliced over by Federico Chiesa.

Still, Spain came; still, the chances went. Cucurella pulled back for Pedri to sidefoot wide from seven yards. He fell to the floor, unable to believe it. Italy, though, could not hold out for ever. In fact, they scored Spain's goal for them. Again, Williams did it, accelerating past Di Lorenzo. Morata got only the slightest touch on the cross, as did Donnarumma. Calafiori got more of one, deflecting into the net.

Spain led but did not rest. Morata's shot was saved. Robin Le Normand's header was cleared off the line. Lamine Yamal curled past the far post from 20 yards; what a goal that would have been. What a goal *this* would have been too: from the other side, Williams swung a shot off the bar. Still it was only one and there had been a reminder that it wasn't over when Bryan Cristante sent a low cross through the six-yard box where Mateo Retegui just failed to make contact. Then Donnarumma was sent up right at the death but a goal then would have been ridiculous, and this was silly enough as it was.

Spain
4-2-3-1
Simón; Carvajal🟡, Le Normand🟡, Laporte, Cucurella; Rodri🟡, Ruiz (Merino 90); Lamine Yamal (Torres 71), Pedri (Baena 71), Williams (Pérez 78); Morata (Oyarzabal 78)

Italy
4-2-3-1
Donnarumma🟡; Di Lorenzo, Bastoni, Calafiori, Dimarco; Jorginho (Cristante🟡 ht), Barella; Chiesa (Zaccagni 64), Pellegrini (Raspadori 82), Frattesi (Cambiaso ht); Scamacca (Retegui 64)

Referee Slavko Vincic (Svn)



Italy's Riccardo Calafiori buries his head in the pitch after scoring an own goal
CARMEN JASPERSEN/ REUTERS

Analysis
Jonathan Wilson



Italy had a chastening evening, a time for chasing and hoping. At least they kept the score down

Scorelines can be great deceivers. At half-time it was 0-0 but that made little sense. It didn't make much sense it was only 1-0 at full time. There was one side playing deft, modern football and there was one clinging on. Because that side was Italy, and because of their history and reputation, the thought lingered that perhaps they could somehow see it through. They could not.

These meetings have become something of a Euros tradition. Spain beat Italy on penalties in the quarter-final in 2008, a game that, given their complex about the Italians, was seen as a pivotal psychological moment in Spain's ascent to winning three tournaments in a row, and since then the nations have met at least once in every Euros. They drew in the group then Spain won 4-0 in the final in 2012, Italy won 2-0 on the day England lost to Iceland in Euro 2016, and then Italy put Spain out on penalties in the semi-final three years ago. Which perhaps justifies the Spanish paranoia about the Italian capacity to defy logic and find a way: Italy had won only one of their previous 11 meetings and yet had somehow eliminated them in each of the past two Euros.

For Italy, meanwhile, the sense of these games at five successive Euros is of pre-eminence lost - they were the reigning world champions at the time of the quarter-final defeat in Vienna - and then, at least before yesterday, a slow closing of the gap as the Spanish philosophy fell out of fashion; even Spain don't play like Spain these days. Not since the 60s have grand theories been the Italian way; Coverciano continues to produce implausible numbers of first-rate coaches but they tend to be pragmatists rather than ideologues.

In that regard this was Italy's biggest game since the final of the last Euros, less for the result than for the performance and the opportunity to measure themselves in proper competition against an undisputed member of the elite. Although there have been decent results in the Nations League, notably wins over England, Hungary and the Netherlands, they failed to qualify for the last World Cup and were twice comprehensively beaten by England in the qualifiers for this tournament.

The second of those defeats, it should be said, came just a couple of months after Luciano Spalletti had stepped in as coach following the resignation of Roberto Mancini and the sense has been of gradual improvement since. But it's one thing to hold Ukraine to a 0-0 draw, to secure qualification or to overcome an early shock to beat Albania in the first group game, quite another to take on Spain.

Italy are, notoriously, slow starters, but that used to mean in tournaments as a whole rather than in every game. Having fallen behind after 23 seconds against Albania, they allowed both Pedri and Nico Williams free headers from six yards out within the first 10 minutes. But that was no aberration; that was just the pattern of the game.

Once the brain had readjusted after England's 1-1 draw with Denmark to watching two teams who could actually pass a ball, the supremacy of Spain was obvious. Poor Giovanni Di Lorenzo was given a terrible chasing by Williams, with Federico Chiesa's attempts to cover just inviting Marc Cucurella forward. It quickly became apparent that for Italy this was about survival.

But that's not a position with which Italy are unfamiliar. Even against the new, more direct Spain the likelihood was always that they would have less possession. In a sense the start just simplified matters. Dig in, hope Gianluigi Donnarumma could keep making saves and get up quickly after clearances to support Gianluca Scamacca. Even the best can start to lose belief if you can thwart them for long enough.

But the red waves kept coming after half-time. This was a chastening evening for Italy, a night of chasing and hoping. Somehow they applied some late pressure with a couple of corners, but they could have taken a hammering. The only good news is that they did keep the score down. A draw with Croatia in the final group game will take them through. Yet the result of the quadrennial test was clear, and from an Italian point of view, it wasn't pretty.



Nico Williams made it a difficult night for Giovanni Di Lorenzo



▼ *Luka Jovic celebrates the goal that keeps Serbia's hopes alive*
MICHAELA STACHE/REUTERS

Serbia get late lifeline as their fans pelt players with plastic bottles

Slovenia	**1**
Karnicnik 69	
Serbia	**1**
Jovic 90+5	

	Slovenia	Serbia
Possession	40%	60%
Shots on target	4	4
Total attempts	11	15

Nick Ames
Munich Football Arena

Serbia clearly fancy sticking around after all. The buildup to this tense, increasingly watchable encounter was dominated by their threat to pull out of Euro 2024 but nobody had told Luka Jovic to throw in the towel. They would have been gazing down the barrel of another major tournament letdown if the substitute had not intervened in the most dramatic way possible, sending Slovenia's players crumpling to the floor by equalising with the final act of the game.

What glorious late chaos this was, and how unlikely it had felt during a closing spell that Slovenia were seeing out in relative comfort. As five minutes of added time dwindled, a number of Serbia's supporters had decided their best bet for entertainment was to shower Jan Oblak, along with any of his teammates who ventured within range, with bottles. A smoke bomb had recently been set off for good measure when, with the referee Istvan Kovacs checking his watch one last time, Serbia loaded the box in search of salvation.

A Hail Mary from deep brought a corner that Ivan Ilic - with goalkeeper Predrag Rajkovic sprinting upfield to provide an additional target - bent in devilishly. Perhaps Rajkovic's presence at the near post distracted a previously resolute Slovenia back line, but the delivery was on point and Jovic, standing his ground amid a thicket of bodies, flashed a header into Oblak's far corner. There was barely time to restart.

"Serbs do not die so easily," said their manager, Dragan Stojkovic, who had paced the touchline in frustration at a team whose ideas appeared to have run out. "We do not give up, and nor will we. We believe all the way to the end, and the reward came for believing."

A win against Denmark will almost certainly bring a first knockout place in their country's existing form. Slovenia must recover quickly from this gut punch. They had a foot in the round of 16 when Zan Karnicnik, their impressive right-back, seized on a loose touch from Mijat Gacinovic and embarked upon a 50-yard surge from his own half. He slid the ball left to Timi Max Elsnik and continued his run, appearing at the far post to slide in and cap what was in effect a long-range one-two.

Karnicnik plays for Celje in Slovenia's low-profile league and it was easy to reflect at the time that, unlike Serbia, his side are resoundingly greater than the sum of their parts. Matjaz Kek's side have lost only once in their last 14 games and only a fool would underestimate them from here. They defended compactly and picked their moments to land a blow. Rather than strike a downbeat note, Kek maintained that fortune will turn their way in Cologne against England.

"We've shown that we have a place here at the European Championship," he said. "Football can be cruel but I believe karma will do its part for this team. We played a fair game in an atmosphere for the ages."

He was certainly correct about the volume from the stands. This match was the day's undercard to most neutrals, but two small countries packed out one of Europe's great venues in yet another high-octane occasion.

Of course, as so often when Serbia are involved, there were caveats. It took only five and a half minutes for choruses claiming control of Kosovo to ring out, and this may not be the last anyone hears about the torrent of plastic missiles that followed later. The apparent chants from Albania and Croatia fans that caused Jovan Surbatovic, their general secretary, to raise the prospect of their withdrawal were utterly reprehensible, but Serbia must own the misdemeanours that occur in their name too.

Stojkovic flat-batted questions about Surbatovic's comments, which will be rendered irrelevant if Uefa hands down charges to Albania and Croatia as expected. He was keener to focus on a game Serbia started slowly, struggling to locate pockets for the recalled Dusan Tadic and finding themselves exposed on the flanks. Elsnik, the tidy former Derby midfielder, hit a post eight minutes before the interval and Serbia were fortunate that Benjamin Sesko's bearings were awry from the rebound.

That miss had the effect of lifting proceedings. From there it was a lively affair, Aleksandar Mitrovic twice thwarted by Oblak and hitting the bar soon after Karnicnik's goal. Sesko, who departed with cramp, also forced Rajkovic to save at full stretch and both contenders ultimately entertained en route to fighting another day.

Uefa investigates chants

Uefa launched an investigation after Serbia demanded it punish Croatia and Albania, accusing their fans of chanting "Kill, kill, kill the Serb" during their Euro 2024 clash in Hamburg. Jovan Surbatovic, general secretary of the Football Association of Serbia, said Serbia, themselves charged for incidents during their defeat by England on Sunday, could withdraw from the tournament unless action was taken. Agencies

Slovenia	Serbia
4-4-2	**3-4-2-1**
Oblak; Karnicnik, Drkusic, Bijol, Janza🟡; Stojanovic (Verbic 76), Gnezda Cerin, Elsnik (Brekalo 90), Mlakar (Gorenc Stankovic 64); Sporar, Sesko (Vipotnik🟡 76).	Rajkovic; Veljkovic, Milenkovic, Pavlovic; Zivkovic (Birmancevic 82), Ilic, Lukic🟡 (S Milinkovic-Savic 64), Mladenovic🟡 (Gacinovic🟡 ht); Tadic (Samardzic 82); Vlahovic (Jovic🟡 64), Mitrovic.

Referee Istvan Kovacs (Rom) **Attendance** 63,028

Analysis
Barney Ronay *Frankfurt Arena*



Two things leap out: this team look terrified and Southgate has a midfield that does not work

In the search for positives from an afternoon of ghost football in Frankfurt, you did at least have to give England one thing. This team has so far shown complete electoral neutrality in Germany. England are both laboured and conservative. Is there time to fix it?

Two things about this England team leap out at this stage. Frankly, they look like atomised, shot, terrified. And second, the most obvious problem England have had is a complete lack of centre ground. This is a tournament semi-favourite without a functioning midfield. It is something Gareth Southgate took into this tournament, tinkered with, worried away at, and which he has not been able to fix.

It was evident in Frankfurt from the opening moments. And it was from here that the sense of doubt has spread.

At times early on at the Frankfurt Arena, England's players seemed to be sinking into the ground, literally bogged down in the turf. It was in its own way oddly authentic, a return to something fond and half forgotten, like a family Christmas, to see an England team produce a tournament display shot through with such anti-energy, limb-weariness, heaviness of spirit, even while hoovering up a point that nudges them closer to qualification for the last 16.

There is a German word for the dark energy of this England team over 90 minutes against a worthy Denmark team. *Weltschmerz*, weariness of spirit. Energy has leached from this entity. Outside of Jude Bellingham's 45-minute game within a game in Gelsenkirchen last Sunday, a bolt-on tube of nitrous oxide, England have played like a team with a migraine.

Is this structural, or just a matter of time passing? We are now in the late Southgate era, with a sense of something becoming slightly over-ripe, ready for final things and divvying up. The battle is against entropy. In Frankfurt, England looked all played out.

There was no sense of chemistry, of either Alexander-Arnold or Rice enjoying this shape. Was it ever likely to work?

First, the fear. Where does it come from? Gravity, renewed expectation, eight years of the same voice? Things fall apart. Southgate talked a lot about eradicating the toxic noise, the weight of expectation, which was his trick when he first came into the job. Does that work? Talking a lot about it. He had special meetings to say, hey, don't feel any pressure.

Does that work? Does this feel a bit like the moment in Groundhog Day where Bill Murray self-consciously tries to recreate his perfect day, hurriedly throwing snowballs, ticking off a happy laugh. Well, it worked then.

Indeed at times here England looked like their pre-Gareth iteration. This was a shout back to Iceland in Nice eight years ago. An ill-fitting star player in the centre. An opponent that feels your weakness. The sense the ball is suddenly square, a ticking bomb. You half expected to look up and see Harry Kane taking corners.

And the fear was there from the start. In the opening seconds Denmark cut through the left side of England's midfield with no sense of resistance, no gristle, nothing there. Declan Rice almost booted the ball out of play. Phil Foden tried. He wanted the ball. He moved more centrally. It didn't last.

Midfield is the key to a tournament team. And England's is a huge problem. The feeling in Germany is of spaces opening up. Has Southgate ever really understood, or really loved his England midfield, made it an object of special care? It helps if you have great midfielders, something his England never have.

It was Trent Alexander-Arnold, who started again in the key position next to Declan Rice. He played without any intensity here. There was no sense of chemistry, of either part of the central pivot enjoying this shape. Deep midfield is such a hard role to master. The angles are endless, the demands of timing, space, of always being on, always seeing every possibility around you.

Was it ever likely to work, simply slotting a very talented passer into that role, without a run of games or time to groove it? Conor Gallagher replaced him on 54 minutes and was eager and effective, playing as ever like he's just been stung by a wasp. Perhaps both will be blamed for England's poor showing. But this was Southgate's gambit. It has failed here so far.

Consider also Declan Rice. Has he ever played as badly in the last three years as he did here? He looked lost, given too much space to cover, unsure of what the patterns were. This is Southgate's midfield, one he saw coming, which he knew had to be built from off-cuts and parts.

The midfield is a defensive problem first of all. Denmark's goal after Harry Kane had opened the scoring came right through the rump of this England team. Midfield is also an attacking problem. England used six attacking players in this game.

They had La Liga's top midfield scorer, the Bundesliga top scorer and the Premier League player of the season. They looked utterly confused over what an attack should even look like, what angles to make, how to build pressure.

Radical action is needed here. The fear has spread from that absence, from the centre, from the lack of control, the spaces in between. It will require a feat of management to build a midfield on the hoof; something that really should have been done before now.



▼ *Declan Rice, here tackled by Pierre-Emile Højbjerg, lost the battle in midfield*
TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

England hit new low with display far too bad to be boring

Such was the amusing ineptitude from both sides this felt like a Woolworths football blooper video

Jonathan Liew
Frankfurt Arena

So you probably already watched that, which means that if you're still reading this you're either a masochist, a sadist or a Scot. Is it really worth kicking this twitching corpse any further? Of course it is. We may have lost two hours of our lives, but in return we have gained five days of rich, delicious discourse. England: proudly taking with one hand and giving with the other since autumn 1966. Fingers on temples. Let the bloodletting begin.

And what was most immediately arresting about this performance was that it tasted a little different to the usual tournament gruel. Normally when England draw against a smaller nation in the group stage – think the United States in 2022, Scotland in 2021, Russia in 2016 – they are more guilty of being boring than bad, lacking in inspiration and invention rather than possessed of any particular malignance.

But this was a performance that was actually too bad to be boring, a performance that actively courted our disapproval, a thin gruel laced with rat poison and carpet tacks. There were enough moments of amusing ineptitude on both sides to engage and titillate the neutral: Declan Rice passing the ball straight out of play for a corner, Marc Guéhi almost gift-wrapping Denmark a winning goal, Victor Kristiansen essentially forgetting that Kyle Walker existed.

There was an opening goal scored essentially by accident, and an equalising goal that was aesthetically perfect. There was a pitch that cut up like a shepherd's pie. There was a roof that was left closed in sticky 25C heat. There was a Christian Eriksen free-kick from 45 yards that failed to clear the first man. It was essentially like watching one of those video cassettes they used to sell in Woolworths in the 1990s, with Danny Baker narrating, and a title like Oops! Football Bloopers 3.

Yet these were not the only grounds for the disorienting disposition of this encounter. Every time the men in white took possession of the sphere in



Kieran Trippier failed to disguise he was going to turn back inside

▼ *Phil Foden looked a left-footed player uninterested in playing on the left wing*
TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN



the proximity of the left wing, they were consistently forced to funnel it, in turn, to the centre of the pitch, rendering most of their offensive efforts tortured, even disjointed. The side in red could simply defend their territory in the middle with impunity, secure in the knowledge their opponents were powerless to hurt them on their right verge.

That's a pretty terrible paragraph, right? But that's what happens when you wilfully restrict your options. You have Kieran Trippier, a right-footed left-back who doesn't even bother trying to disguise the fact – no feint, no shimmy, no darting eyes – that he's going to turn back inside. You have Phil Foden, a left-footed player with very little interest in playing on the left wing, who always wants to come short into the central areas. England are essentially a team playing on 70% of the pitch, which is like trying to write an entire paragraph – like I did above – without using the letter A.

England's lack of natural left-backs is a long-standing issue, and will remain one until Luke Shaw returns. Which makes it all the more important that your left winger can supply width on that flank.

Instead Foden did his best work moonlighting in the right channel: an early shot that skimmed just over the bar in the first half, a fierce effort against the post in the second.

Jude Bellingham wandered over to the left a few times in the second half, but he wasn't really interested in being there either. Eberechi Eze came on with 20 minutes remaining and immediately looked overawed, carrying a kind of heavy energy around him. Because after a while self-prophesy begins to take over. The patterns are drilled and hard-wired. England's left wing becomes the sporting equivalent of The Zone in the sci-fi novel Roadside Picnic: a dangerous and forbidden area swarming with radioactive surfaces, deadly gunges and mysterious mutilations, where no incursion ever goes unpunished.

And, of course, there are no quick fixes or magical solutions here. Perhaps we might wonder what an on-song Raheem Sterling or Jack Grealish might have offered in that area, or perhaps even the pace of a peak Marcus Rashford, but none of them really advanced much of a case to be here over the last few months of the season. Anthony Gordon is the only specialist left-winger in the squad, able to cross off either foot, but is yet to emerge from the bench in two matches so far. Beyond which we are basically into the novelty options: Saka, Trippier as wing-back in a back five, Paul Scholes being hauled out of retirement for one last insult to his talent.

This performance actively courted our disapproval, a thin gruel laced with rat poison and tacks

But we are where we are. And this is where England are: a team with game-changing individuals and grave imbalances in a competition where success is often defined by your weakest rather than your strongest link. There were loud boos at full time, but nobody who was paying attention to England over the last six months can possibly argue that this was a performance unrepresentative of them.

Indeed, if this game allows them to reset expectations and go back to pragmatic basics, it may well have been the only positive consequence of the evening.

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 Two, Frankfurt

Scotland v **Hungary**
Sunday 23 June, 8pm, BBC One, Stuttgart

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Spain Q	2	2	0	0	4	0	+4	6
Italy	2	1	0	1	2	2	0	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 1 – **Italy 0**
Calafiori 55og

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	2	1	1	0	2	1	+1	4
Denmark	2	0	2	0	2	2	0	2
Slovenia	2	0	2	0	2	2	0	2
Serbia	2	0	1	1	1	2	-1	1

Slovenia 1 – **Denmark 1**
Janza 77
Eriksen 17

Serbia 0 – **England 1**
Bellingham 13

Slovenia 1 – **Serbia 1**
Karnicnik 69
Jovic 90+5

Denmark 1 – **England 1**
Hjulmand 34
Kane 18

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**
Friday 21 June, 5pm, ITV1/STV, Berlin

Netherlands v **France**
Friday 21 June, 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**
Friday 21 June, 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 Republic**
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 Republic 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

** BBC or ITV channel showing match to be confirmed*

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

'The team did not function' Southgate takes blame for struggles

Continued from back page

biggest possible stage and if I don't hit the level that's needed, then we have to accept what comes our way," he said. "We have to find the best way to solve that. Of course we need the fans. But I have to say they've been brilliant. What I would say is these boys are not lacking effort at the moment. It's not a case that they're not trying. If anything at the moment we care too much."

After the game, Prince William went into the England dressing room to speak to the players.

England have taken a lot of inexperienced players to Germany and it was put to Southgate that some are struggling to deal with the pressure of international football. "We're in an environment where we have to deliver," he said. "We have to walk towards that challenge. I intend to walk towards it, whatever the reaction is. I'm not going to avoid going over to the fans at the end of the game. We confront it head on."

Southgate admitted England lack balance with the right-footed Kieran Trippier deputising for Luke Shaw at left-back. He said he has not found a replacement in midfield for Kalvin Phillips, although he defended Trent Alexander-Arnold's performance. Alexander-Arnold, who started again in the middle, was the first England player to be substituted.

"One of our biggest problems was we weren't pressing well enough as a team so he had a lot of problems to solve and most of those he did really well," Southgate said. "We are looking at a team performance and the team didn't function today and that is my responsibility."

Southgate, who refused to blame the state of the pitch for the stodginess, faces a huge task to make his players believe that they can become European champions.

"The challenge is to do something that has never been done before so it couldn't be any bigger," he said. "We know we have had a lot of issues but we are where we are now and we have to find the best way forward."

Southgate was pressed on whether Kane is fit after returning from a back injury. The captain was taken off when England were chasing a goal in the second half. "He has only had one 90 minutes in the last five or six weeks and it took a lot out of him."

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
England	2	1	1	0	2	1	+1	4
Denmark	2	0	2	0	2	2	0	2
Slovenia	2	0	2	0	2	2	0	2
Serbia	2	0	1	1	1	2	-1	1

Tuesday 25 June
Denmark v Serbia (8pm)
England v Slovenia (8pm)

Denmark equaliser halts England



Morten Hjulmand lets fly, his shot going in off Jordan Pickford's right-hand post
TOM JENKINS/ THE GUARDIAN

England lose control after Kane goal as Hjulmand's rocket earns draw

Denmark	**1**
Hjulmand 34	
England	**1**
Kane 18	

Possession
Denmark 53% | England 47%

Shots on target
7 | 4

Total attempts
16 | 12

David Hytner
Frankfurt Arena

"England, England, It's Never Coming Home." The chant from the Denmark support – to the tune of Yellow Submarine – had been heard outside the stadium in the hours before kick-off and it would reverberate inside it during a highly stressful 90 minutes. On this evidence, it was the understatement of Euro 2024 so far.

Gareth Southgate can highlight the point, which moved England closer to the job-done territory of qualification for the last 16. It must be said there is precious little jeopardy around that. The jeopardy was to be found in the England performance. They might have nicked the win, Phil Foden hitting a post in the second half; a few other assorted flickers. But, equally, they might have lost because Denmark had their chances. There was a last-ditch quality to England's defending and when Pierre-Emile Højbjerg shaped a curler for the far corner in the 85th minute, England's hearts were in their mouths. Fortunately, the shot was off target.

England lacked structure and progressive patterns in midfield, with all three of Southgate's starters – Trent Alexander-Arnold, Declan Rice and Jude Bellingham – enduring difficult games. The manager raised eyebrows when he withdrew his front three of Bukayo Saka, Harry Kane and Foden on 70 minutes but the first two could not complain. Is Kane fully fit? Foden was bright enough. Jarrod Bowen, Ollie Watkins and Eberechi Eze brought something in their places.

For England, the control was not there and nor was the belief. They looked edgy, the pressure weighing heavily. The worst thing that could be said was they looked less than the sum of their vaunted parts. The hope had been when Kane put them ahead that they could settle but they did not. Southgate had demanded care with the passing. It did not happen. It was horrible to see how poor they were in this department.

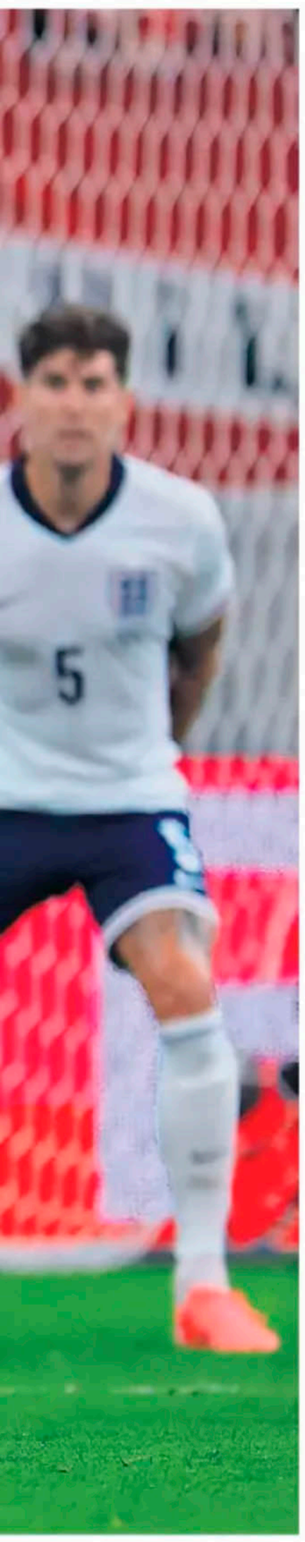
After the 1-0 win over Serbia on Sunday, which featured a second-half retreat, it was a backwards step for England, Denmark good value for the draw, which they secured with Morten Hjulmand's scorching 30-yard drive just after the half-hour. The hope remains that England can put their problems behind them and grow into a tournament that they started as one of the favourites. Who was buying that in Frankfurt?

England were ragged at the outset, making errors, so many loose passes. There was a lack of cohesion when it mattered on the ball while many of the players had problems with the turf, which cut up noticeably.

Kyle Walker was one of them, slipping over twice in the early running, rolling his ankle on the second occasion, which looked bad. Fortunately, he was able to continue,



Gareth Southgate berates his players from the touchline





▲ *Harry Kane stretches out his left leg to score his first goal of the tournament but he had few other chances*
TOM JENKINS/ THE GUARDIAN



▶ *The pitch at the Frankfurt Arena cuts up under the boots of England's Kyle Walker*
JOHN SIBLEY/REUTERS

changing his boots before he returned to the pitch. Walker would be key to the move for the breakthrough goal.

Quite how Victor Kristiansen, the Denmark left wing-back, was unaware of Walker stealing up on his outside was a mystery. Maybe it was because any shouts from teammates were impossible to hear amid the remorseless din under the closed roof of an excellent venue.

Kristiansen just did not see him as the Dane pondered a backpass and, when Walker robbed him, England felt the surge of possibility. Their luck was in, Walker's low cross, seemingly intended for Foden, deflecting first off Jannik Vestergaard and then Andreas Christensen to break perfectly for Kane. It was a done deal at that point.

Denmark did not panic. They had given up a couple of flickers at 0-0, Foden slipping away from Højbjerg after a Walker cutback only to shoot wildly; Kane seeing a shot blocked after Rice had won the ball high up. But it was Denmark who looked the more cohesive.

It was worrying to see how much space they were able to enjoy, England's midfield looking open against the ball. The pressing simply did not click. Denmark pushed, with England forced to defend with a degree of desperation.

There were an alarming number of situations where England had no options on the ball and Kane was guilty of trying to force a crossfield pass from the left inside his own half for the Denmark equaliser. It went straight to Kristiansen and when he moved it to Hjulmand, he unleashed his rocket, watching the ball glance in off Jordan Pickford's right-hand post. The power and precision were extraordinary.

Foden would slice past a couple of challengers on 41 minutes only to ignore Kane and shoot weakly and England were the happier to hear the half-time whistle.

Southgate made a move on 54 minutes, introducing Conor Gallagher for Alexander-Arnold, whose performance will deepen the debate about the balance of the England midfield with him in it. Before the Liverpool player departed, he had pumped a long ball forward for Saka, which the winger almost made something of, waiting for the bounce and looping a header just off target.

England sought greater intensity, Gallagher helping, although he would tread a fine line after being booked for a stamp on Christensen. Foden almost scored with his best moment, a couple of touches followed by a rasping low drive from distance that rattled the upright.

Southgate made a triple change and Watkins got on to a Bellingham pass and forced a save from Kasper Schmeichel. The closing stages were frantic, Marc Guéhi dispossessed by the substitute Alexander Bah after a bad Rice pass but he raced back to make a crucial tackle. From the corner, Christensen went close and so did Højbjerg shortly afterwards. England got away with it.

Don't panic – yet

The nation's shoulders slump after an uninspiring group game ... but England have been here before and things didn't work out too badly in the end:

1966 World Cup Oft-forgotten 0-0 draw against Uruguay in tournament opener, as the visitors park bus and Alf Ramsey's side find no way through. Go on to win tournament.

1990 World Cup Imagine how fans felt after draws with Republic of Ireland (1-1) and Netherlands (0-0). Still make it to the semi-finals.

Euro 96 After excited build-up as hosts, underwhelming 1-1 opening draw with Switzerland, who score with 83rd-minute penalty. Go on to semi-finals.

2018 World Cup Lose 1-0 to Belgium in lifeless encounter to qualify second in group. Progress to the semi-finals.

Euro 2020 Sluggish in 0-0 Wembley draw with Scotland. Go on to reach the final.



Player ratings

Denmark
3-4-1-2

Kasper Schmeichel 6
Beaten at close range by Kane when England took the lead. Fine save from Watkins.

Joachim Andersen 7
The Crystal Palace defender was smooth. Then again there was not much threat on his side.

Jannik Vestergaard 7
Booked for a trip on Saka. Fought to contain Kane. Smart distribution helped his team.

Andreas Christensen 7
An assured presence. Slipped the ball into midfield. Outnumbered when England scored.

Joakim Mæhle 7
Had run of the right flank during first half. England had nothing on the left side of the pitch.

Pierre-Emile Højbjerg 7
Allowed to take grip on midfield. Stepped forward and changed the game with his power.

Morten Hjulmand 7
Walloped the ball in from 30 yards for 1-1. Intelligent passing gave Denmark a foothold.



Victor Kristiansen 5
Caught napping by Walker when England scored. Nervy when Saka ran at him, but improved.

Christian Eriksen 6
Skipped into some menacing positions and England struggled to pin him down. Still got it.

Jonas Wind 6
Worked hard and occupied England's centre-backs. Part of an old-fashioned front two.

Rasmus Højlund 6
Caused problems with his movement. Strong and quick, but he lacked incisiveness.

Subs Yussuf Poulsen (for Højlund 67) 6
Alexander Bah (for Kristiansen 57) 6
Mikkel Damsgaard (for Wind 57) 6
Andreas Skov Olsen (for Eriksen 82) 6
Christian Nørgaard (for Hjulmand 82) 6

England
4-3-3

Jordan Pickford 6
Could not be faulted for Denmark's equaliser. Saved a few shots. One nervy punch.

Kyle Walker 6
Shook off a knock and created the goal. More ambition, overlapping a lot, but made errors.

John Stones 7
It was hard to pick holes in his performance. Will possibly be annoyed with his passing.



Marc Guéhi 6
Up and down. Some accomplished moments. Huge recovery tackle late on – after he lost the ball.

Kieran Trippier 5
His defending remains as aggressive as ever. Problem is his inability to offer natural width.

Trent Alexander-Arnold 4
Vanity project is not working. No control, no awareness, bypassed too easily.

Declan Rice 4
Overwhelmed, with too many holes to plug in his part of the pitch. Poor in possession.

Jude Bellingham 4
Sloppy. Lost the ball too much, wanted too much time, lacked urgency. A wake-up call.

Bukayo Saka 6
Forced the ball on for the opener. But Denmark closed down the passing avenues to him.

Harry Kane 5
Faded after scoring. Furious with himself after giving away the ball for Denmark's equaliser.

Phil Foden 6
One super run. Bright in the middle, less effective on the flank. Hit the post from 25 yards.

Subs Conor Gallagher (for Alexander-Arnold 54) 5
Eberechi Eze (for Saka 69) 5
Ollie Watkins (for Kane 70) 6
Jarrod Bowen (for Foden 69) 5

Referee Artur Soares Dias (Por) **Attendance** 46,177

Jacob Steinberg

Sport

The Guardian
Friday
21 June
2024

Euro 2024

Denmark	England
1	1
HJulmand 34	Kane 18



TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

Laboured and conservative

Southgate admits 'the level has to be higher' as lacklustre England misfire

Report and analysis *Pages 48-51 →*

Jacob Steinberg
Frankfurt Arena

Gareth Southgate accepted the blame for England's turgid 1-1 draw with Denmark, but he suggested that his players must cope better with the weight of expectation on their shoulders at Euro 2024.

Southgate, whose team were booed off after labouring in their second match of the tournament, found himself unable to paint a positive picture after a disappointing evening at the Frankfurt Arena.

England were outplayed after going ahead with an early goal from Harry Kane, who went on to fall below his usual standards before his surprising substitution in the second half, and were fortunate to escape with a point that keeps them on track to win Group C.

Southgate, who also saw a retreat during Sunday's 1-0 win over Serbia, felt his players did not press well enough and admitted he needed to find solutions before facing Slovenia next Tuesday.

"We are disappointed with the two performances we've had so we've got to go and analyse that in depth and find some solutions to addressing the issues that we have," the England manager said. "We know the level has to be higher. Maybe the biggest thing is we have to accept the environment that we're in and the expectation around this. We are going to have to walk towards that challenge. At the moment we're falling a bit short of that. Ultimately that's my responsibility. I'm the manager and I've got to guide this group in the best way possible. To achieve extraordinary things, you have to go through some difficult moments."

Southgate, who called the performance anxious and criticised the poor passing that led to Morten Hjulmand's equaliser, was asked about England's fans jeering near the end of the game and at full time.

"We're in the environ-

50 →

'The most obvious problem England have is a complete lack of centre ground'
Barney Ronay
Page 48 →

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9 770261 307354

Draper stuns Alcaraz British No 1 defeats top seed at Queen's in greatest win of his career *Page 44 →*

What really matters to us *Our panel's verdict, page 3*
Why I might sit this election out *Shaniya Odulawa, page 4*
The fishy choice facing voters *Corb Calow Davies, page 4*

G2 Daily pullout life & arts section *Inside*

Youth Takeover Journal

The Guardian Friday 21 June 2024

Opinion and ideas



TikTok

Water slides

'Nigel'

We put seven young people in a group chat to discuss the election. This is what happened next

What's been on your minds this election campaign?

Shaniya Odulawa, 23, graduate, Bexleyheath, London: The major parties are failing to engage with what people really want. They're constantly missing the mark.

Hassan Ali, 19, student, east London: So true. It shows they're either lazy, or avoiding the real issues.

Daniel Cadel, 23, student, Cheshire: Does concern me that Labour are more centre-right at the moment and the only leftwing parties are Lib Dem and Green.

Niall Hignett, 21, student, Durham: The arguments about Labour lurching to the right are a bit overhyped. Labour's manifesto seems fairly convincing

SO: What part is convincing to you? For me, many policies seem unfunded or not feasible.

Paris Haigh, 22, student, East Kilbride: On the environment they sound OK, eg GB Energy. But they already watered down their £28bn green pledge and have U-turned on most previous commitments, so I cannot trust them.

NH: The housing policy I'm behind. I don't think it's uncosted (I'd understand criticism of it being unambitious). Encouraging capital investment in infrastructure could be huge for young people.

DC: It's insane there's been no real pushback at Nigel saying they want zero net migration. Not only is it terrible policy, it clearly isn't possible. Half the issue is presenters not countering these claims.

PH: It's scary how many reminders I've seen under videos saying "vote Reform".

Bethan Williams, 23, account executive, Cardiff: I see this on TikToks all the time.

Tiger-Lily Snowdon, 19, student, Devon: It's really scary, especially with polls showing such an increase in support. I didn't believe people would vote Reform at first, but they've built a substantial base.

SO: When I click on the profiles there's nothing ever there. Even if they're bots, they still drive engagement.

BW: I definitely interact with a lot of political TikToks. My friend who doesn't care about politics sent me a video of Ed Davey on the water slide the other day.

NH: Labour plans to build on the "grey belt". Field mice and car parks shouldn't come above affordable housing.

SO: There doesn't always need to be a focus on building when we have properties already there. Not enough has been said about renters. I don't think I'll be able to comfortably leave home until I'm 30.

TS: If they want to attract youth voters, tackling the renting crisis would be a sensible move.

SO: When I compare my early 20s to my mum's, I can't help feeling a bit robbed.

BW: The money I pay back on student loans this year I could be using to save up for a deposit on a house.

NH: I'm estranged from my family and can't just live at home. The situation is terrifying. Under-25s don't qualify for full benefits or housing support.

SO: Finishing uni is supposed to be exciting, but I'm full of dread.

BW: Removing "Mickey Mouse degrees" won't help.

ILLUSTRATION: EDITH PRITCHETT

← Continued from front

SO: People who do "Mickey Mouse degrees" create the things we love. Movies, TV shows, music.
BW: It's so frustrating how the Conservatives have handled this. They've belittled certain degree subjects but failed to provide alternatives. I studied history, which at times has been referred to as a Mickey Mouse degree. Now I work a Stem job – there is no set pathway.
NH: I think the honest answer (and I know this isn't popular) is fees need to go up – 78% never repay in full anyway. Upping fees means unis don't go under, and it won't affect most people, just those who borrow the least and earn the most.
DC: It doesn't help that board members have extreme salaries when they don't seem to do much.
BW: During the university staff strikes, my friends couldn't understand where their money was going if university staff weren't getting paid enough.
TS: The education system, especially how it works for people with special educational needs, must change. I was out of school for a long period and finally got the support I needed at a medical inclusion school – but because of lack of funding and spaces, I had to wait ages. I was disappointed by the lack of suggestions to improve Send education in the manifestos.
PH: I had a similar experience and because I was out of school for so long, I sank into depression. I know the SNP are planning on passing a neurodivergence bill. They met with neurodivergent people who had input on the bill. If it passes it should be in every manifesto.
SO: Does everyone know who they are voting for?
DC: Lib Dem, as their manifesto is the most interesting. I trust Keir and Reeves as far as I could throw them.
BW: I'll vote tactically as I have an awful Conservative MP, meaning I'll likely vote Labour. But I'm more aligned with the Green party or Plaid Cymru.
TS: I'm torn. I was most impressed by the Lib Dem manifesto, but I really don't want my Conservative MP to get back in – so Labour may be better.
PH: I'm considering Greens. My candidate seems really good. I would have voted SNP but since they dropped their climate targets I can't trust them.
NH: I'm definitely voting Labour. The Lib Dem manifesto is a bit all over the place. The Greens strike me as unrealistic. The anti-nuclear power thing seems so counterproductive. Both go for Conservative voters in the home counties and liberal voters in the cities – and it doesn't work for coherent policy.
SO: I'm not convinced by any party. It's usually Labour or Green but I've lost faith, especially since the Greens' statement on Palestine – if you can't fully condemn a genocide what do you stand for?
PH: Something every party needs to be doing right now is calling for an immediate ceasefire.

Do young people feel spoken to by any of the parties?

DC: I wouldn't say so. The fact I align Lib Dem when their base is middle-aged, southern and middle-class and I'm not really shows that.
PH: I only really feel spoken to by independents, tbh. And they aren't even running in my area. The climate group I'm a part of, Green New Deal Rising, is endorsing some really cool independents!
BW: I'm a young person who first engaged in politics under Jeremy Corbyn – he developed some really strong policies aimed at us that others parties haven't. Corbyn brought the green new deal to mainstream politics, which was radical and gave us a path for the future. GB Energy is largely uninspiring.
DC: The oil giants cutting their pledges when their profits grew massively shows decisive government action is needed to combat climate change.
PH: I tried to talk to Keir at his green pledge launch in Edinburgh and he completely ignored us despite us waiting 3 hours. It was horrible.
NH: It's just perception that young people are completely turned off by Labour. Hyper-politically engaged people want more progressive policies, but lowering car insurance rates and building houses engage far more young voters than any other policy issue (anecdotally they do!). Young people (18-24) are voting something like 60% Labour in most polls.
This conversation was conducted over a messaging platform. It has been condensed for length

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'Comment is free... but facts are sacred' CP Scott

North Korea

Putin and Kim have signed a worrying pact. How far are they willing to take it?

A shiny, sanctions-busting Russian limousine for Kim Jong-un. A fawning, rapturous reception for Vladimir Putin. These grand gestures may be welcomed by the North Korean and Russian leaders, but are intended as much for their global audience as for each other. The real prize is the strategic partnership treaty that they signed during Mr Putin's first visit to Pyongyang since 2000. The question is what it will mean in practical terms.

The relationship has been reinvigorated by events outside Asia, but hopes of containing it lie within the region. The proximate cause is evidently Russia's invasion of Ukraine: an isolated and impoverished Pyongyang is already believed to have supplied millions of artillery shells in return for cheap oil, food and other sorely needed goods. Russia might also benefit from North Korean manpower, though much more likely for labour than combat.

Further back lies Donald Trump's disastrous wooing and dismissal of Mr Kim. Entirely predictably, by handing him a top-level summit without any realistic strategy to improve relations in the long term, the then president ensured Mr Kim gave up on improving relations with the US and looked elsewhere. He also prompted Mr Putin and Xi Jinping, who had kept Mr Kim at a distance, to hug him closer.

The revival of a Soviet-era pledge of mutual support against "aggression" sounds primarily symbolic given North Korea's nuclear prowess. More disturbing is Mr Putin's remark that the partnership could include "military technical cooperation". US intelligence officials have said that they believe Russia is providing nuclear submarine and ballistic missile technology, though it is likely to extract a high price for such expertise and to have mixed feelings about North Korea's advances. At a minimum, Russia – which signed up to sanctions in the Obama years – is now obstructing diplomatic action to restrain North Korea.

The west has long feared a stronger relationship between Pyongyang, Moscow and Beijing. The launch of the Australian, UK and US (Aukus) security pact, a reaction to China's growing forcefulness in the Asia-Pacific region, has in turn raised Beijing's hackles. But China does not regard the others as peers and does not want to be seen as part of a trilateral axis with two pariah states, hence the lack of a Beijing stop on Mr Putin's Asian tour itinerary. It would also like to retain primacy in managing North Korea, and to limit its weapons development. It does not want the US to become more active in the region and is concerned that it is growing closer to Japan and South Korea, which are also increasing their defence capabilities. Mr Kim's shift from the long-held commitment to unification with the South to stressing hostility has not helped.

South Korea also said explicitly that it will consider sending arms to Ukraine in reaction to the Russian-North Korean deal, spelling out the message to Moscow. Until now, Seoul has limited direct support to non-lethal supplies, though it has signed hefty arms deals with allies of Kyiv. Russia, which has also ramped up its own arms manufacturing at speed, may in the longer term seek to rekindle relations with South Korea and Japan anyway; their large economies compare strikingly to the limited attractions of North Korea. That too offers hope that this deal could be constrained both in extent and duration. The danger is how much damage is caused in the meantime.

Climate crisis

This election shows the next government must raise its green ambitions

There are voters for whom the climate crisis is the most pressing issue in this general election. But for most people, immediate cost of living pressures and concerns about the health service come first. Last week, more than 400 climate scientists wrote a letter to party leaders in which they said it was disappointing that global heating, and policies to tackle it, are not more prominent in the campaign. They called for much stronger action, including a clear path to net zero in 2050 and a halt to new fossil fuel development in the North Sea.

They are right that politicians should raise their ambitions. The disconnect between climate science and climate policy grows more and more alarming. Last month, a Guardian survey of hundreds of leading researchers found that 77% expect global temperatures to reach at least 2.5C above preindustrial levels – a dangerous level of heating pointing to massive disruption and conflict. A report this week revealed that last year saw the highest-ever fossil fuel consumption globally, as well as record wind and solar power generation.

Labour's abandonment in February of a pledge to spend £28bn a year on greening the economy was a grave error. Still, the party retained its ambitions. Labour wants the UK to be the first major economy in the world to ensure that all power comes from cheaper zero-carbon electricity sources by 2030. The party's plan for a publicly owned energy company is also a good one, particularly the commitment to finance small solar and onshore wind schemes as part of the mix. Unfortunately, Labour's retreat on investment set the stage for a campaign in which climate policy is nowhere near as prominent a theme as it ought to be.

Attempts by rightwing politicians to weaponise climate politics, and to undermine public support for net zero by suggesting that the transition will be at the expense of the poor, are concerning in the UK as they are elsewhere. The spike in gas prices that followed Russia's invasion of Ukraine is one reason for the cost of living crisis. But rather than making the case for reduced dependence on gas, and investment in renewables as a route to increased security, Rishi Sunak set the UK back in climate terms.

Nevertheless, the UK's offshore wind industry is thriving and popular. The Green and Liberal Democrat manifestos contain ambitious climate pledges, with the Lib Dems – who some polls suggest could become the official opposition – committing to an earlier net zero target, new aviation taxes and a zero-carbon standard for new homes. The Green party promises to end new and recent oil and gas licences, introduce an escalating carbon tax and establish large-scale ecological protections.

Yesterday, a supreme court decision that planning decisions must take account of future greenhouse gas emissions raised the likelihood of more legal challenges to fossil fuel infrastructure. Caution has been the watchword of Labour's campaign. Rulings like this should make it easier to be bold. The biggest-ever climate opinion poll this week showed that 80% of people in the world's biggest fossil-fuel-producing countries back a swift transition. The next UK government needs to face down the cynics and lobbyists. The scale of the climate threat and the injustice it encompasses – including the implications for children and young people everywhere – should make the case for ditching fossil fuels irresistible.

What matters in this election and why? Our panel's verdict

Bethan Williams

Labour's GB Energy plans are vague and insubstantial



In 2019, Jeremy Corbyn's Labour party embraced the concept of the green new deal, a comprehensive set of integrated policies ranging from creating green jobs to improving home insulation. A concrete programme for tackling the climate crisis was the push I needed to vote Labour in my first general election.

It's been a long five years. During this time, I have graduated twice, and worked full-time for 10 months. Meanwhile, the Labour party has undergone significant transformations, many of which I believe are for the better. However, these changes have resulted in the demise of the green new deal in mainstream UK politics.

In February, Labour announced that it would cut its £28bn green investment pledge by half. GB Energy dominates its promotional material, yet it's a concept I struggle to make sense of, even as someone working in the renewable energy industry. It feels as if I'm reading a proposed policy where every other line is missing.

The green new deal provided a practical, tangible roadmap for tackling the largest problems facing Britain. In contrast, Labour's current plan to tackle the climate crisis seems vague and insubstantial. I am pleased that Labour is committing to achieving clean energy by 2030, but we can't settle for a piecemeal approach when the survival of our planet is at stake.

Bethan Williams lives in Cardiff

Niall Hignett

Labour seems to be serious about building homes



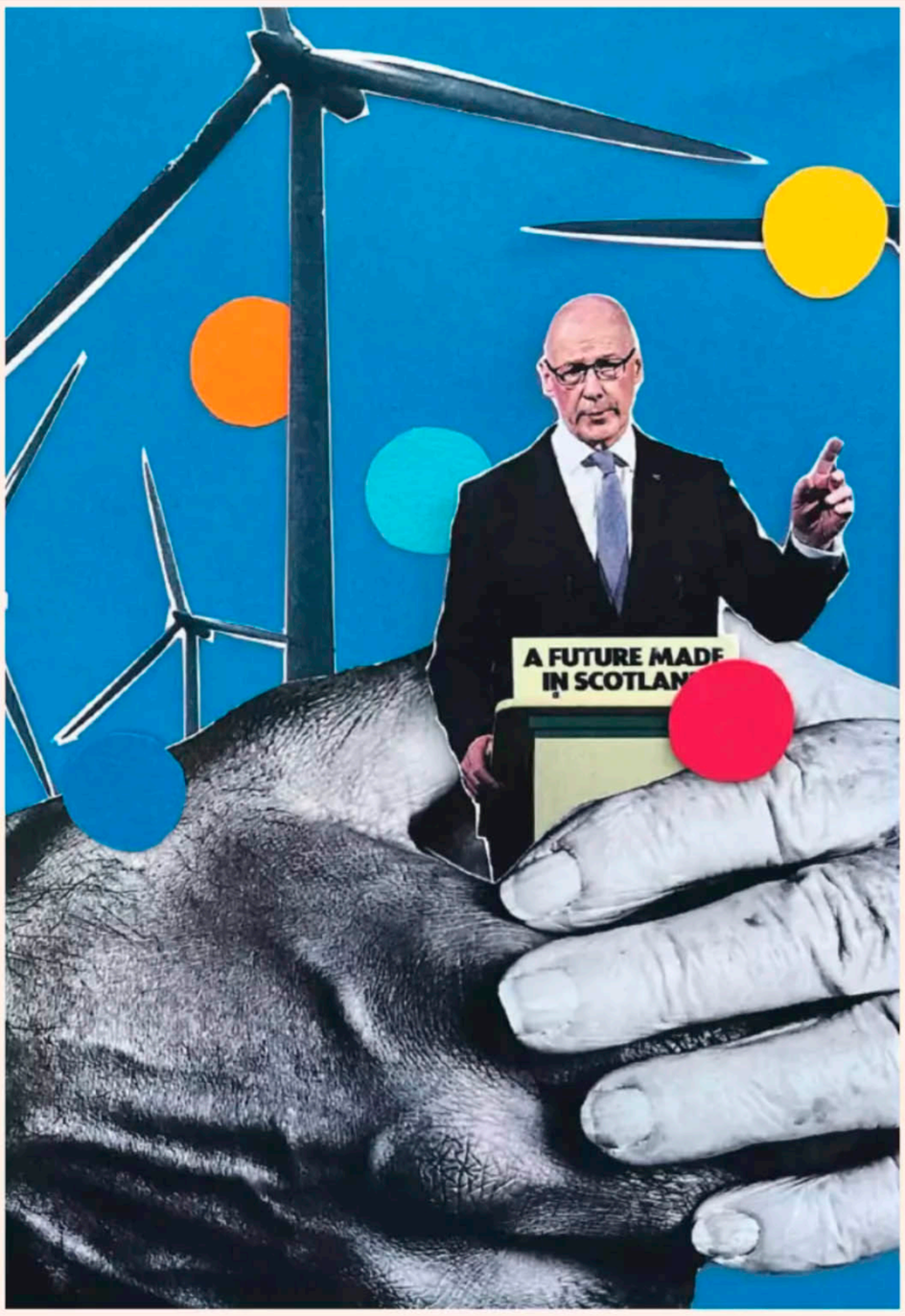
My biggest issue going into this election is the housing crisis. The reality is, we aren't building enough homes. Tinkering around with renting rules isn't going to fix it. As things stand, I'll probably never be able to own a home, and renting will probably eat up more than half my take-home pay.

The Tories have already failed many of their own housebuilding promises over the years. Ed Davey tried to dump the Liberal Democrats housing targets last year. The Greens are cosplaying as a radical party of the young without any substance to back it up. Their one MP spent 14 years objecting to nuclear power, HS2 and housebuilding.

That leaves Labour. I only have to look to Andy Burnham's record in Manchester to be convinced the party is serious about sorting out the housing crisis. Its target of 1.5m homes strikes me as unambitious, but it's at least presented with conviction. Starmer is even a self-professed yimby.

So I'll be voting for the chance of affordable rent and eventually home ownership. Starmer's Labour will get my support on 4 July.

Niall Hignett is a student and freelance writer based in Durham



COMPOSITE IMAGE: GUARDIAN DESIGN/ GETTY IMAGES

* *The Guardian worked with several organisations to access a representative sample of young people. They include: UK Youth, Citizens UK, Shout Out UK and Green New Deal Rising*

Hassan Ali

Starmer's lack of backbone on Gaza will cost him votes



Where world events are concerned, Labour stances – particularly on Gaza – leave a lot to be desired. I grew up watching the adults around me supporting Labour, because as the mantra states, it was the party for the many, not the few. Much of the Muslim community felt not only heard, but listened to, and there was a tangible connection between the needs of the masses and the solutions actioned by the party. Now, the connection seems to be hanging on by a thread, if at all.

Keir Starmer's weak position on Gaza is costing him in constituencies in the north, and will quite frankly be costing him across the country. I cannot in good conscience vote for a leader who can sit comfortably while condoning the deprivation of power and water while so many suffer. Despite later taking it back, I still find it ironic that someone who was once a human rights lawyer could make such a remark.

Had he instead shown some backbone and spoken out against Israel's actions, or perhaps called for an unequivocal ceasefire earlier, he might have re-engaged voters. Instead he remained complicit, ducking and swerving any real accountability for his words.

Although my local seat is a safe Labour one, I will vote. I encourage others feeling similarly disenchanted to vote as well. At the end of the day it's these numbers that matter to parties the most. Spoil your ballot if you must, but the onus is on you to make sure you're using your vote, even if it is just to say "I'm disappointed in the whole lot of you".

Hassan Ali is a student from east London

Paris Haigh

Many young voters have lost faith in the SNP



The SNP has always been good at saying the right things, but not actually following through on its promises. Just last year, with fellow activists from Green New Deal Rising, I spoke to several SNP politicians, including former first minister Humza Yousaf, who told me himself that there is no future for Scotland in oil and gas. Yet earlier this year the SNP announced that the first decade after independence will be bankrolled by oil and gas revenue. The science is clear: if young people are to have a livable future, no more oil and gas projects can be allowed to go ahead. It's not just the climate crisis that's endangering our future, but also the lack of funding for education.

We want to know that we can trust our leaders to secure our futures. The SNP isn't offering us that. Many young people have lost faith in the SNP, so it will have to prove to us that it will do everything in its power to protect our futures if it is to earn our votes.

Paris Haigh is a student and organiser with Green New Deal Rising, living in East Kilbride

Tiger-Lily Snowdon

I've witnessed the impact of the social care crisis



Social care is in crisis. Across the country, thousands of hospital beds are occupied by people waiting for care to be put in place. Roughly 62% of people currently or previously providing unpaid care say they had no choice in taking on the role because no other options were available. This is an issue close to my heart both as a young disabled person and as someone who has watched family members become unpaid carers and older relatives go through the care system.

The Liberal Democrats' pledges to introduce free personal care, a higher minimum wage for care workers, and to help unpaid carers are impressive. The Green party has also prioritised this issue, with similar pledges including free personal care and increased rates of pay for carers.

It's disappointing the two major parties are leaving it to the smaller parties to propose the bold moves needed. It's undeniable that social care is expensive, but budgets will need to be increased to cope with our ageing population. Our health and social care systems have crumbled under the Conservatives and one cannot be fixed without improving the other.

Tiger-Lily Snowdon is a student and lives in rural Devon

Daniel Cadel

Our relic of a voting system urgently needs reform



A significant flaw of our democracy is the continued use of first-past-the-post (FPTP) voting in elections. This system has led to a two-party state. The result of this for the country is that both Labour and the Conservatives have become lax and unimaginative.

Reforming this system in favour of proportional representation or another voting method would remove the need for tactical voting. I believe fixing our democracy will lead to a brighter future for us all.

With FPTP, the politicians who have overseen the cost of living crisis, partied during Covid, and gave us the Rwanda scheme, still have a chance of remaining as MPs. If this relic of a system was reformed, all these people would face the deserved consequences for their actions.

Daniel Cadel is a student and freelance writer based in Cheshire

~~Opinion~~ Youth Takeover

▼ **Corb Calow Davies** *was the under-18 winner at the 2022 Young Cartoonist of the Year awards*



I might sit this election out – and here's why

Shaniya Odulawa



I've had this sinking feeling in my stomach about the direction of British politics since I was 15. Silence overtook our geography classroom, in a multicultural school in south-east London, as we watched the results of the Brexit referendum. Before then, I believed everyone thought as I did: sure, there were a few racists in the country, but immigrants were needed in this country, right? Brexit shook that. Overt racism and abuse grew, and for the first time I felt unsafe in my own country.

I'm part of the generation whose first vote happened after Brexit. It's no secret that people my age vote less than others – a growing trend since the 1990s. A few of my friends don't know who to vote for, or will begrudgingly vote Labour simply to get the Tories out this election. One proudly proclaimed she hadn't voted since Jeremy Corbyn's leadership and is planning to abstain. I would like to berate her, but I can't. What options do we have? With Rishi Sunak threatening national service and Keir Starmer having a go in the Express about "yobs terrorising our town centres", it feels as if my age group is not just forgotten but actively vilified. And it's not just young people: this election is set to be the most unequal in 60 years, with those in the poorest areas, ethnic minorities and people who don't own their homes forecast to turn out in the lowest numbers.

I never thought I would consider abstaining in a national election. I'm not ignorant – I've studied politics since I was 16. I've been taught that voting is one of the easiest ways to express your opinions in a democracy, and I believe that. I'm definitely not lazy – I worked as a carer and a cleaner alongside studying for my politics degree, hoping eventually to make my way into journalism. The hours were long, the pay was meagre and the work was hard. Now I realise those conditions might not be temporary. Despite growing up under politicians like Tony Blair and David Cameron promising university would make ours a less unequal society, it's hard to feel that way when tuition fees have rocketed and much of my degree was spent learning online.

I was once hopeful about politics. Under Corbyn, I believed a better Britain was possible. As a person who grew up working class, I found that his desire to scrap tuition fees really spoke to me: I would love the financial worry that I have around my university debt – now about £60,000 – not to be a constant distraction from my actual education. Nationalised railways would have meant I could afford the commute to work. What's more, he had a clear stance on Gaza.

With Starmer, I haven't felt remotely the same. I've lost count of how many times he has backtracked, sat on the fence or mentioned his mum was a nurse (we get it already). His faux relatability as a working-class person does nothing for me when he won't commit to raising NHS worker pay above the measly £12 an hour he has promised. Starmer could oppose the language of the far right. Instead, he claims the Tories are too lenient with their immigration policies – the exact rhetoric that first caused that sinking feeling in my stomach, only being spouted now by a party I once loved.

I don't feel young people are asking for much. If I were a politician trying to appeal to people like me, I'd focus on the basics. Without stronger demands for real rental reform (which, to be fair, the Greens have offered), we face a life of spiralling, unaffordable rents and making landlords richer while never owning anything ourselves. We want to access decent healthcare without waiting months or even years – and yet Labour's solution seems to be limiting migration, when we all know migrants make up a huge proportion of the NHS workforce. It's too easy to write us off as an apathetic demographic when the main parties seem to be trying to lose our vote. We are engaged in politics: we protest, we volunteer, but we don't vote, because we are offered nothing.

Taking our vote for granted now could seriously hurt party leaders in the future, particularly the Labour party. The political scientist Timur Kuran writes that often revolutions take everyone by surprise, even those who participate in them. With all this political passion bubbling up in young people but with nowhere for it to go, I feel one is inevitable. It doesn't have to be this way. We're desperate for something to vote for – we just need an option.

✻ **Shaniya Odulawa** *is a graduate from Bexleyheath, London*

Letters

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Established 1906

Country diary

Wedmore, Somerset

At a secret location on the Somerset Levels, I peer into a deep tank. The air is cool and smells fishy, filters hum. Elvers – each as long as my little finger – squirling through the water in precise calligraphic strokes, like a single letter endlessly repeated. My friend Hannah fishes some out and decants them carefully into a plastic bag like fairground goldfish. These fish are far more precious. Once abundant here on the Levels, they are now critically endangered, and one of the most trafficked animals in the world.

We load our precious cargo into the Eelmobile, a van full of tanks, filters and assorted kit, and driven by Hannah Strode, who heads a marvellous initiative called, simply, Eels in the Classroom. She has spent the past few months cold-calling schools, asking if their children would look after baby eels until they are ready to be released. Every single school – 59 of them – came back with a resounding yes. I mean, eels in the classroom? Come on!

The life cycle of the European eel is best described as insanely unlikely meets totally random. They hatch in the Sargasso Sea in the North Atlantic – nowhere else on the planet. For their first few years, they look like tiny willow leaves, and were once thought to be a totally different species. These drift wherever the ocean's currents take them until, at some point, they morph into freshwater-dwelling glass eels – and start to swim upriver, ending up in places like the Somerset Levels. At some point (no one knows what triggers this), they mature into adults, and at some point (no one knows what triggers this either), they swim back to the Sargasso to mate and die.

The year 4 children are fizzing with their own questions for the Eel Lady (which sounds like the name of a superhero and, by the looks on their faces, she is one). How many are there? Are they boys or girls? How old are they? Do they sting?

Hannah will be back in a few weeks to help with the releases: restocking the rivers above the weirs and sluices that stand in their way. Until then, "the elvers will learn from the children, and the children from the eels. The young teaching the young: what could be better than that?"

Anita Roy

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Shakespeare disputes are much ado about nothing

Sir Derek Jacobi is a giant of stage and screen. That is no reason for giving credence to the baseless conspiracy theory, which he and Margo Anderson advance in their letter, that William Shakespeare did not write the works that bear his name (The Merry Wives of Windsor offers strong evidence that Shakespeare was not its author, theguardian.com, 13 June). The proposition that the true author was Edward de Vere, an aristocratic wastrel and minor poet, is intrinsically absurd.

Why, after all, would a concealed author not just leave their name off the title page rather than adopt an allonym, with all the risks of exposure? In the 175-year history of this bogus controversy, no one has yet offered even a plausible theory for this notion, let alone a shred of documentary evidence to associate De Vere or any other putative authorship candidate with Shakespeare's works.

Jacobi and Anderson rely on the ahistorical notion that a literary work must be an expression of the life story of the author, and on a strained and completely imaginary interpretation of The Merry Wives of Windsor as reflecting De Vere's autobiography. Scholars of Elizabethan and Jacobean literature almost unanimously treat such denialism with derision. So should a responsible newspaper.

Oliver Kamm
London

● I revere Sir Derek Jacobi, who starred as a superb Benedick in the first Shakespeare production I ever saw, but in claiming that Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford, wrote The Merry Wives of Windsor, he is denying one of his own. Merry Wives, Much Ado and the rest were written by a man of the theatre, someone who knew his company and its resources intimately through working with them day in, day out, for 20-plus years, as attested by his friends and fellow players John Heminges and Henry Condell in the First Folio – not some hobbyist aristo dialling it in from the court. That idea is strictly for the Ninky Nonk.

Adrian Blamires
Reading, Berkshire

● I was interested to read the letter from Derek Jacobi and Margo Anderson. I fully expect that long after the Beatles have passed from living memory – perhaps around the year 2250 – similarly qualified academics will be explaining how the songs credited to John Lennon and Paul McCartney were written by Prince Charles or some other suitably high-born person, on the grounds of some slight similarities in their biography to themes in the songs, and that, surely, no one of such modest origin could have wrought such beautiful music.

Rik Edwards
Chorleywood, Hertfordshire

● In The Winter's Tale, Autolycus sings: "another ballad of a fish, that appeared upon the coast on Wednesday the four-score of April".

If 1 May is 31 April, then fourscore April is 80 April – or 19 June. This week, we had Wednesday 19 June, the fourscore April. This date comes around on average once every seven years. The probability of a given date being Wednesday 19 June is less than 1/2,500.

Why would Shakespeare be interested in this date? King James I of England was born on Wednesday 19 June 1566. Why should he chose to mention the king's birthday in this way? That's a big question, and I invite others to answer it. Another question is why has anyone failed to spot something so simple until now.

Peter Nockolds
London

I've got cancer and I see how NHS is failing

Last time I wrote to the Guardian was the day before the last election, when I was sitting with my daughter who was about to start cancer treatment. In that letter (12 December 2019), I said: "Save [the NHS] please, by voting tactically to avoid another minute of Conservative misrule."

Unfortunately, I am yet again in hospital, this time as the patient starting chemotherapy. My GP saw me the day after I felt a lump, I was seen by the surgeon within the two-week cancer wait, and my diagnosis and treatment was planned within the next two weeks. But then I was told I would have to wait eight weeks to start chemotherapy.

There were not enough day-case places to treat me earlier due to a lack of funding and nurses. Imagine waiting eight weeks when you know your cancer has already spread.

All the NHS staff I talk to feel that this government is allowing the NHS to fail so it can persuade the public that the system set up by Nye Bevan should be replaced by a private system. How many more people will have their lives shortened before the NHS problems are sorted?

As a retired GP, I sadly feel that primary care is almost beyond repair because of the reducing number of GP training posts available and because financial support is available to any clinician (physicians assistants, pharmacists etc) to work in general practice other than GPs. Clear evidence exists that patients seeing their usual GP are better treated, need fewer referrals and have better outcomes than patients seeing clinicians they don't know and who do not have the extensive training that GPs have.

A lack of funding and beds means that hospitals are following closely behind. The fact that the government has not sorted out the junior doctors' industrial action is also unbelievable.

Anyone who has seen the misery and financial ruin faced by patients in the US will know that our NHS is as important as relieving poverty. More tax for those able to afford it is the only way to ensure adequate support for the poor, for better education and the NHS.

We are not the selfish nihilists the Conservatives think we are. Labour needs to be careful that it doesn't match the government too closely. Taxing the rich has to make sense.

Dr Amanda Platts
Millbrook, Cornwall

West End critics are wrong about tickets

Re your report (Top-price West End tickets rise 9% in a year with musicals reaching £300, 14 June), a record 17.1 million people attended a West End show last year, thanks to stellar performances and smart pricing. Since 2019, ticket prices have dropped by 9.26% in real terms. Most tickets sold are under £55, with nearly a quarter below £30. Less than 5% exceed £150.

However, headlines and articles that highlight the top ticket prices of a few hit shows can mislead potential audiences about the availability of affordable tickets. Despite production costs outpacing inflation, theatre producers remain deeply committed to accessibility and to cultivating a new generation of theatregoers. The sector runs numerous initiatives to help those who face barriers to attending events or lack prior engagement with the arts. Campaigns such as Theatre for Every Child aim to bridge that gap.

Instead of deterring potential audiences with fears of high prices, let's celebrate the many affordable options and tackle the real barriers to accessibility, to ensure everyone can experience the magic of live theatre.

Patrick Gracey
Board member,
Society of London Theatre

Corrections and clarifications

● An analysis piece said that John Major's Conservative party won 178 seats in the 1997 general election (How the poll works – and what it means, 19 June, p7). This was in fact how many seats it lost, having held 343 before the election and 165 after.

Editorial complaints and corrections can be sent to guardian.readers@theguardian.com or The readers' editor, **Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU.** You can also leave a voicemail on **020 3353 4736**

Overstretched staff at Environment Agency

The long read (13 June) does a disservice to the Environment Agency's dedicated and loyal but underpaid staff that I represent. Although it is a category one responder – equivalent to the emergency services – its incident response services are woefully underfunded, relying on depleted volunteers. To safeguard its future, we need to see commitments for increased resourcing, continued independence and a reversal of the recruitment and retention crisis.

Sue Ferns
Senior deputy general secretary, Prospect union

● Zoe Williams writes: "This should be the climate crisis election … Instead, we're in fantasyland" (G2, 18 June). Indeed it should, and can, be. This Saturday, Extinction Rebellion will be in central London – with all the flair, intelligence and fun the public has come to expect – to ensure that what follows is a climate election. Get there if you can. If not, join your local XR branch and help turn dream into reality.

Caroline Roaf
Oxford

● It says a great deal about the state of the world that the G7 agreed to send $50bn to help Ukraine protect itself from Russian aggression (Report, 14 June) on the same day that an already unbelievably wealthy man was given almost the same sum for a year's work (Tesla shareholders back Musk's record-breaking $45bn pay deal, 14 June).

Adrian Riley
Sheffield

● Haven't we suffered enough? The Bookseller has announced that HarperCollins is to issue Boris Johnson's memoir, Unleashed, in October. Unhinged, more like.

Gill Jackson
Etchingham, East Sussex

● How ironic that the front-page picture in Wednesday's Guardian featured Rishi Sunak in a small boat, hoping to secure a better future.

Gary McGregor
Garvald, East Lothian



Harold Snoad

Producer and director behind hit sitcoms such as Keeping Up Appearances and Ever Decreasing Circles

Harold Snoad, who has died aged 88, was a prolific sitcom producer and director for the BBC whose greatest personal success was his swansong, Keeping Up Appearances (1990-95).

When Roy Clarke created it, he had no one in mind to star as the snobby Hyacinth Bucket, who insists her name is pronounced "Bouquet" and attempts to impress her neighbours - but is brought down a few pegs by her husband, Richard (played by Clive Swift), and her working-class sisters, who turn up despite her best efforts to keep them away.

Snoad put Patricia Routledge in the lead role, explaining: "I wanted the character of Hyacinth to be a sort of stately galleon. I didn't want somebody lightweight, either in size or vocal terms."

Clarke regarded the casting of Hyacinth as "perfect", although his own relationship with the producer-director was fractious. "I watched on occasions and found scenes I hadn't written and that's, of course, death to a writer," he said. Snoad admitted to rewriting "large chunks" himself when he considered that elements of the script did not work, adding: "At times, we weren't the best of mates." A script editor was brought in to act as peacemaker.

Despite these battles, Keeping Up Appearances was a hit on screen with viewers in Britain - and around the world, where it became the BBC's biggest export, including being remade for an Indian audience as Kauva Chala Hans Ki Chaal ("The Crow Who Tries to Walk Like a Peacock") in 2003.

Born in Mill Hill, Middlesex, Harold was the son of Irene (nee Janes) and Sydney Snoad, who worked in advertising. During the second world war, his father was stationed with the army in Bath, where the family enjoyed visits to the Theatre Royal.

When Harold was 12, they moved to Eastbourne, East Sussex, to run a hotel, and he went to Eastbourne college, where he acted in shows. He also worked backstage at the town's Devonshire Park theatre during the holidays. On leaving school, he trained at Florence Moore Theatre Studios in Brighton.

Patricia Routledge and Clive Swift in the BBC sitcom Keeping Up Appearances, directed by Snoad, below, pictured on the set of the 1976 film Not Now, Comrade

AJ PICS/ALAMY; STUDIOCANAL

After two years of national service with the RAF, during which time he staged productions, Snoad moved to its Brighton recruiting centre, where he was asked to devise an entry for the air force's annual window display competition. Coming up with a theme based on the popular BBC TV gameshow What's My Line?, he contacted Gilbert Harding, who helped him to obtain photographs of himself and fellow panellists.

When the display won, Harding suggested that on demob Snoad look for a job in TV rather than return to the theatre. As a result, he joined the BBC as a floor assistant in 1957.

He worked on programmes such as the classic TV sitcom Hancock's Half Hour in 1960, and then became a production assistant, a role he took on the first four series of Dad's Army (1968-70), for which he was responsible for choosing the Norfolk location for filming the fictional town of Walmington-on-Sea. During that time, the producer David Croft - who created the Home Guard comedy with Jimmy Perry - gave Snoad the chance to direct five episodes. Perry called him "the bravest man I know" when Snoad once told the cast they had not learned their lines well enough.



> **I wanted Hyacinth to be a sort of stately galleon. I didn't want somebody lightweight, either in size or vocal terms**

Later, Snoad and the actor Michael Knowles adapted 67 Dad's Army television episodes for BBC radio (1974-76). They also wrote a sequel series, It Sticks Out Half a Mile (1983-84), for radio, relocating Sergeant Arthur Wilson (John Le Mesurier), Private Frank Pike (Ian Lavender) and the former chief ARP warden Hodges (Bill Pertwee) to a seaside resort after the war to restore a decrepit pier.

Snoad had made his debut as a director on Hugh and I Spy (1968), an espionage sitcom starring Terry Scott and Hugh Lloyd, then worked with Eric Sykes on Sykes and a Big, Big Show (1971).

His career as both producer and director began in 1969 with Oh, Brother!, starring Derek Nimmo. He followed it with His Lordship Entertains (1972), featuring Ronnie Barker. Snoad's first meeting with Barker, who was recovering from a throat operation, consisted of the actor responding to Snoad's questions by writing his answers on paper. In 1973, he made Casanova '73, with Leslie Phillips .

He was then given the chance to take charge of the second run of the department store comedy Are You Being Served? (1974), Croft's creation with Jeremy Lloyd. However, Snoad later told the author Richard Webber: "The second series was very successful, and the next thing David said to me was, 'Thanks for your help. I'll have it back now!'"

His long sitcom career also included Rings on Their Fingers (1978-80), The New Adventures of Lucky Jim (1982), Tears Before Bedtime (1983), the third series of Brush Strokes (1989), Ever Decreasing Circles (1986-89) and Don't Wait Up (1983-90).

In 1974, Snoad took over as producer and director of The Dick Emery Show, revamping it to feature one main scenario alongside some sketches. In 1982, a year after it ended, he oversaw the star playing a detective in Emery Presents: Legacy of Murder, a light comedy thriller series. Snoad's one chance to direct a film, with its writer, Ray Cooney, was the 1976 farce Not Now, Comrade, featuring an array of comedy stars including Phillips, Lavender, Windsor Davies and June Whitfield.

He wrote the BBC Television training manual Directing Situation Comedy (1988) and the inside story of Keeping Up Appearances, It's Bouquet - Not Bucket! (2009).

His 1957 marriage to Anne Cadwallader ended in divorce. He is survived by his second wife, Jean (nee Green), whom he married in 1963, and their daughters, Helen and Jeanette.

Anthony Hayward

Harold Edward Snoad, producer and director, born 28 August 1935; died 2 June 2024

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Other lives



Peter Searby

iDedicated school teacher who went on to become a history lecturer at the University of Cambridge

Peter Searby, who has died aged 93, began his working life as a school teacher and later became a lecturer in history at the University of Cambridge and a fellow of Fitzwilliam College.

There he embarked on his 10-year endeavour that resulted in the publication in 1997 of A History of the University of Cambridge, Vol III, 1750-1870, a magisterial account of its development during a period of great change.

I had the good fortune to be Peter's pupil when he was head of history in the 1950s at one of the new comprehensives, Caludon Castle school, in Coventry. I was later to teach at the Liverpool Institute high school, which Peter had attended during the second world war. This created a common bond between us which, when we met again 20 years ago, led to many subsequent happy meetings.

Peter was born in Liverpool, the son of Arthur, a shipping clerk, and Elsie. Following a history degree from Liverpool University he taught in the city, and in 1959 moved to Coventry to take up his post at Caludon. Even as a young man, he combined a quiet authority with a genuine concern for individual pupils. From there he went to lecture at the City of Coventry teacher training college and, in the mid-60s, did a PhD at the recently opened Warwick University under the supervision of the acclaimed historian EP Thompson. Peter himself developed a keen interest in the Coventry Chartists and became chair of the local branch of the History Association.

In 1956 he married Norma Griffiths, and in 1968 they and their young family moved to Cambridge. There he continued his work on Victorian Coventry and started his research on the university history.

After leaving Cambridge in 1994, Peter was a visiting professor at Greenwich University, in London, for two years. In later life, his academic interests shifted to the home front during the second world war. With Robert Malcolmson, he edited two Mass Observation diaries, and was the sole editor of a third, Cambridge at War: The Diary of Jack Overhill, 1939-1945 (2010).

Peter is survived by Norma, their children, Catherine, Shelagh and Joe, and three grandsons.

Martin Brayne

Vincenzo Ruggiero

Expert in critical criminology and adviser to the UN on organised crime and human trafficking

My husband, Vincenzo Ruggiero, who has died aged 73, was a leading figure in the academic field of critical criminology, a discipline that examines the genesis of crime and the nature of justice, particularly in relation to class structures.

He wrote 23 books on the subject, including Crime in Literature (2003), which delved into the world of literature to draw links between organised crime, drugs and political corruption.

In 1998 he was seconded to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna, heading up groundbreaking research on organised crime and human trafficking, and in 2014 he won the lifetime achievement award from the American Society of Criminology.

Vincenzo was born in Ferrara, northern Italy, to Neapolitan parents, Assunta (nee Capozzi) and Antonio, travelling sales reps who had moved there for work. Throughout his adolescence the family relocated a number of times, returning to Naples when he was 16.

After attending various secondary schools Vincenzo went to Parma University, where he studied English and French before becoming a teacher of English in Bologna and Rome. Eventually he settled in Turin, where his teaching extended to evening classes for workers at the local Fiat factory. It was in Turin that he had his first books published.

He and I met in 1988 when we were on separate trips to



Barcelona; the following year he sold his flat in Turin and moved to London, where I lived, and we were together thereafter, finally formalising our union through a civil partnership in early 2024.

Vincenzo began lecturing in sociology at Middlesex University, later becoming a professor of sociology and director of social and criminological research.

He is survived by me, our daughter, Lucia, and his siblings, Maria, Luigi and Anna.

Cynthia Winifred

Claire Seymour

Lecturer, musician and writer with specialisms in Thomas Hardy and the operas of Benjamin Britten

My partner, Claire Seymour, who has died unexpectedly aged 53, brought a passionate intensity, precision and perfectionism to her work as an educator, reviewer and musician.

Born in London, Claire grew up in Broadstairs, Kent, where her parents, Richard and Barbara, owned a convenience store. She attended Clarendon House grammar school for girls in Ramsgate.

The connection between words and music lay at the heart of Claire's intellectual life. After graduating from King's College, Cambridge, in music in 1991, she pursued postgraduate studies in English at the University of Kent, earning an MA in modern literature followed by a doctorate. Her published thesis, The Operas of Benjamin Britten: Expression and Evasion (2004), the first book to analyse all of the operas, remains on university reading lists.

In 1999-2000, Claire was the first woman appointed visiting lecturer in British studies at the University of Tokyo. Following this she embarked on a 15-year school teaching career, initially at Dover college, where she and I met, and then at Queen's college, London. As head of sixth form she mentored students through university applications.

Alongside her school teaching, Claire tutored on the postgraduate opera studies course at Rose Bruford College, taught on Open University summer schools for music, and edited The Thomas Hardy Society Journals (2005-08). Her contributions included editing Wordsworth editions of Hardy and Henry James.

In 2017, while continuing as an examiner in English with the IB, CIE and AQA boards, she became a full-time associate lecturer with the OU. Recognised as a talented and dedicated tutor in literature and music, she made a major contribution in securing the high rating of the department's 2021 Research Excellence Framework submission, subsequently becoming an honorary associate. Claire also found great satisfaction in supporting prisoners to improve their lives through OU studies.

Her passions extended to reviewing classical music and theatre. In 2012, she became British editor for Opera Today, and contributed to other publications, including Opera magazine, subscribed to since her teenage years. She wrote programme articles for Glyndebourne and Wexford; edited for Plumbago's Defining Opera series; contributed chapters for essay collections on Britten and Hardy; and appeared on BBC Radio 3's Music Matters.

For relaxation, Claire was a semi-professional violinist. She played with Oare String Orchestra for 28 years, was a member of Kent

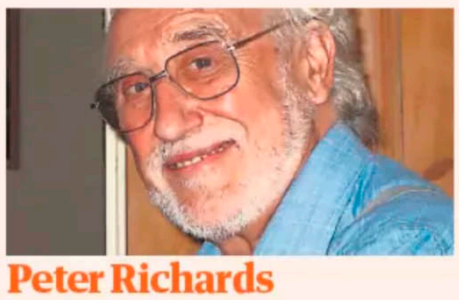


Concert Orchestra and the Peycelon Quartet, and often accompanied choral societies. She performed with the Lambeth Orchestra at their 40th anniversary concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, and cherished playing with them at Britten's Snape Maltings in Suffolk.

Personally modest, Claire celebrated literature and music; her dedicated teaching inspired others to share her passion.

She is survived by her parents and her brother Daniel.

David Butler



Peter Richards

Conservation officer at Essex county council who led the restoration of the medieval barns at Cressing Temple

The role of a local conservation officer is much misunderstood and maligned. My father, Peter Richards, who has died aged 94, did much to place the discipline on a proper professional footing and demonstrate what it could achieve.

He headed a multidisciplinary team at Essex county council from 1974 to 1994, and led the restoration of important historic buildings and their gardens for public use, such as the Grade I medieval barns at Cressing Temple near Witham – one of which is believed to be the oldest standing timber-framed barn in the world – and Copped Hall, Epping.

Peter combined sound conservation principles, a pragmatic approach and integrity. He was a founder member in 1982 of the Association of Conservation Officers, which in 1995 became the Institute of Historic Building Conservation. He also served on English Heritage's historic building committee for six years.

He was not afraid to fight for a difficult cause, as he showed when supporting legal action in 1995 against the then Conservative MP Teresa Gorman, who undertook work on her listed house without permission. He persuaded the Conservative-led Essex council to support Thurrock council (then Labour) in pursuing their local MP, a case that ended with Gorman losing and being fined.

In the 1960s and early 70s, Peter worked in Southend borough architects department at an exciting time of municipal confidence and expenditure. He worked on Southend's civic centre (opened in 1967), a new health centre and the pedestrianisation of Southend High Street.

Peter was born in Smethwick, West Midlands, and grew up in Worcester, the only son of Charles, a local businessman and election agent for the Liberal party, and Edith (nee Fieldhouse). He won a scholarship to the King's school, Worcester, but his further education at the Birmingham School of Architecture was interrupted by national service in Egypt (1947-49). He resumed his architectural studies while working as a draftsman, achieving his full RIBA qualifications in 1957.

He married Wendy (then known as Joan) Brooks, from Southend, in 1952 and they went on to have three children, Paul, Ruth and me.

In the early years of their marriage they lived in Tempsford, Bedfordshire, and on a wet night in 1955 they invited two rain-soaked hitchhikers into their home to dry out. They were Bradford Art School students, David Hockney and Norman Stevens, travelling to London for an exhibition. Both would become regular overnight guests in Tempsford, a convenient hitchhiking stopover, and made artworks for Peter and Wendy as marks of their friendship. Hockney sent them a 60th wedding anniversary card from his iPad.

Following his retirement in 1994, Peter served on the Copped Hall Trust and as chairman of the Chelmsford Diocesan advisory committee for six years. He was a great fan of jazz, amassing thousands of records and CDs, and from 2018, wrote prolifically for an online jazz magazine.

Wendy died in 2012. Peter is survived by his second wife, Ann Husselbee, whom he married in 2019; and by his three children, three granddaughters, and two great-granddaughters.

Sam Richards

Birthdays

Prince William of Wales, 42; **Brian Barwick**, former chair, Rugby Football League, 70; **Judith Bingham**, composer and mezzo-soprano, 72; **Don Black**, lyricist, 86; **Sir Ray Davies**, singer and songwriter, 80; **Lana Del Rey**, singer and songwriter, 39; **Lord (Terence) Etherton**, former master of the rolls, 73; **Brandon Flowers**, musician, 43; **The Right Rev Olivia Graham**, bishop of Reading, 68; **Lady (Kate) Hoey**, former Labour MP and minister, 78; **Ian McEwan**, novelist, 76; **David Morrissey**, actor and director, 60; **Pierre Omidyar**, founder of eBay, 57; **Sir Malcolm Rifkind**, former Conservative MP and minister, 78; **Lord (Maurice) Saatchi**, businessman, 78; **Lalo Schifrin**, composer and pianist, 92; **Edward Snowden**, whistleblower, 41; **Lana Wachowski**, film director and screenwriter, 59.

Yesterday's solutions

Killer sudoku
Easy

1	2	6	3	5	4	9	8	7
5	8	4	2	7	9	6	1	3
9	7	3	6	1	8	2	5	4
4	1	8	5	9	6	3	7	2
2	9	5	7	3	1	4	6	8
6	3	7	4	8	2	5	9	1
7	4	1	9	6	3	8	2	5
8	6	2	1	4	5	7	3	9
3	5	9	8	2	7	1	4	6

Medium

2	7	1	5	8	9	3	6	4
9	5	8	3	4	6	1	7	2
6	4	3	2	1	7	8	9	5
8	2	9	6	5	4	7	1	3
1	3	4	9	7	2	5	8	6
5	6	7	1	3	8	2	4	9
4	1	5	7	9	3	6	2	8
7	9	6	8	2	5	4	3	1
3	8	2	4	6	1	9	5	7

Codeword

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T	W	A	D	D	L	E	■	S	W	I	R	L												
U	■	R	■	I	■	C	■	T	■	B	■	O												
S	K	Y	J	A	C	K	S	■	F	I	S	T												
■	■	N	■	C	■	■	P	■	O	■	■	T												
S	A	X	E	■	B	R	O	C	C	O	L	I												
L	■	■	D	■	A	■	R	■	A	■	■	N												
A	Q	U	I	L	I	N	E	■	L	O	N	G												
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Cryptic crossword
Solution No. 29,414

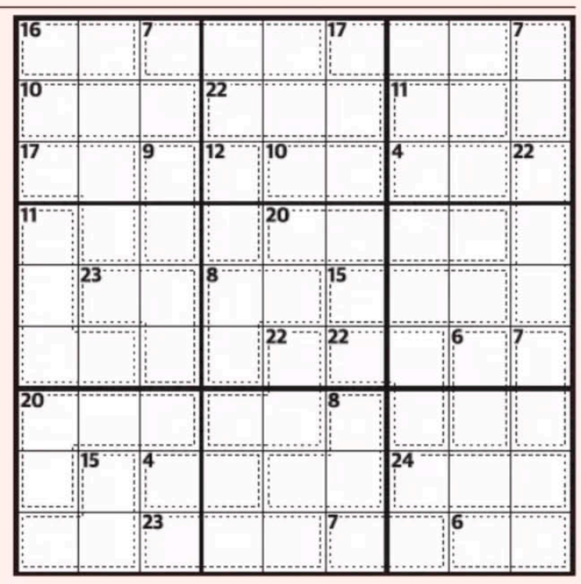
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E	■	C	R	■	S	U	■	T	■	O	■	O		
B	A	R	R	I	S	T	E	R	■	H	Y	P	E	R
I	■	U	■	T	■	A	■	N	■	E	■	R	■	S
T	A	B	L	E	■	I	N	T	E	R	P	O	S	E
E	■	■	■	H	■	R	■	H	■	■	B	■	S	
D	I	N	G	O	E	S	■	E	A	S	I	L	Y	■
■	■	O	■	M	■	■	■	I	■	E	■	■	■	
■	A	T	R	E	S	T	■	R	E	N	A	M	E	D
B	■	H	■	■	O	■	A	■	E	■	■	O	■	
R	A	I	N	C	L	O	U	D	■	P	R	A	N	G
I	■	N	■	H	■	R	■	I	■	R	■	B	■	T
E	A	G	L	E	■	D	I	S	H	O	N	O	U	R
F	■	T	■	E	■	E	■	H	■	L	■	U	■	O
S	N	O	O	K	E	R	■	■	B	E	A	T	I	T

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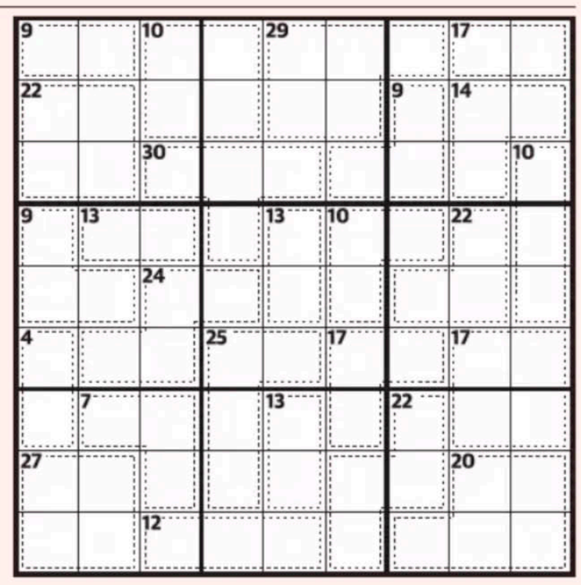
Killer sudoku

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

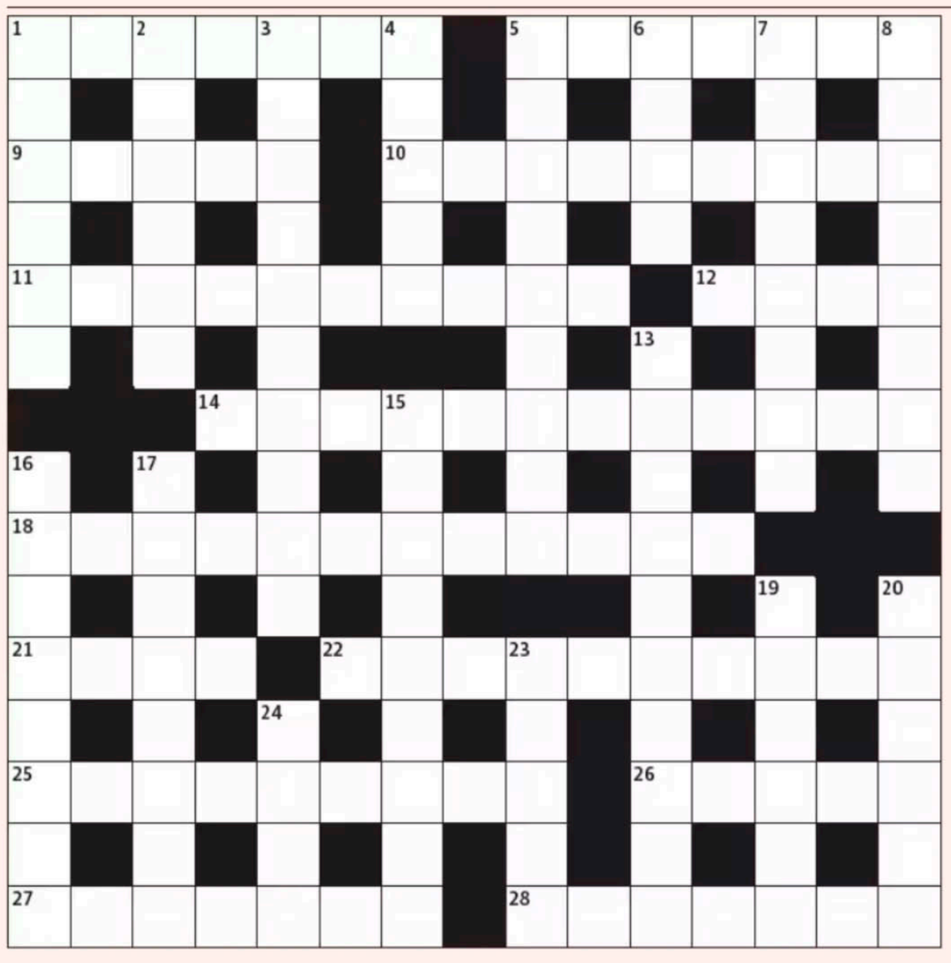
Each letter of the alphabet makes at least one appearance in the grid, and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. The letters decoded should help you to identify other letters and words in the grid.

■	3	■	26	■	9	■	24	■	25	■	22	■												
20	22	26	14	17	8	22	15	■	26	25	5	1												
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17	13	26	9	■	1	23	12	4	13	16	12	7												
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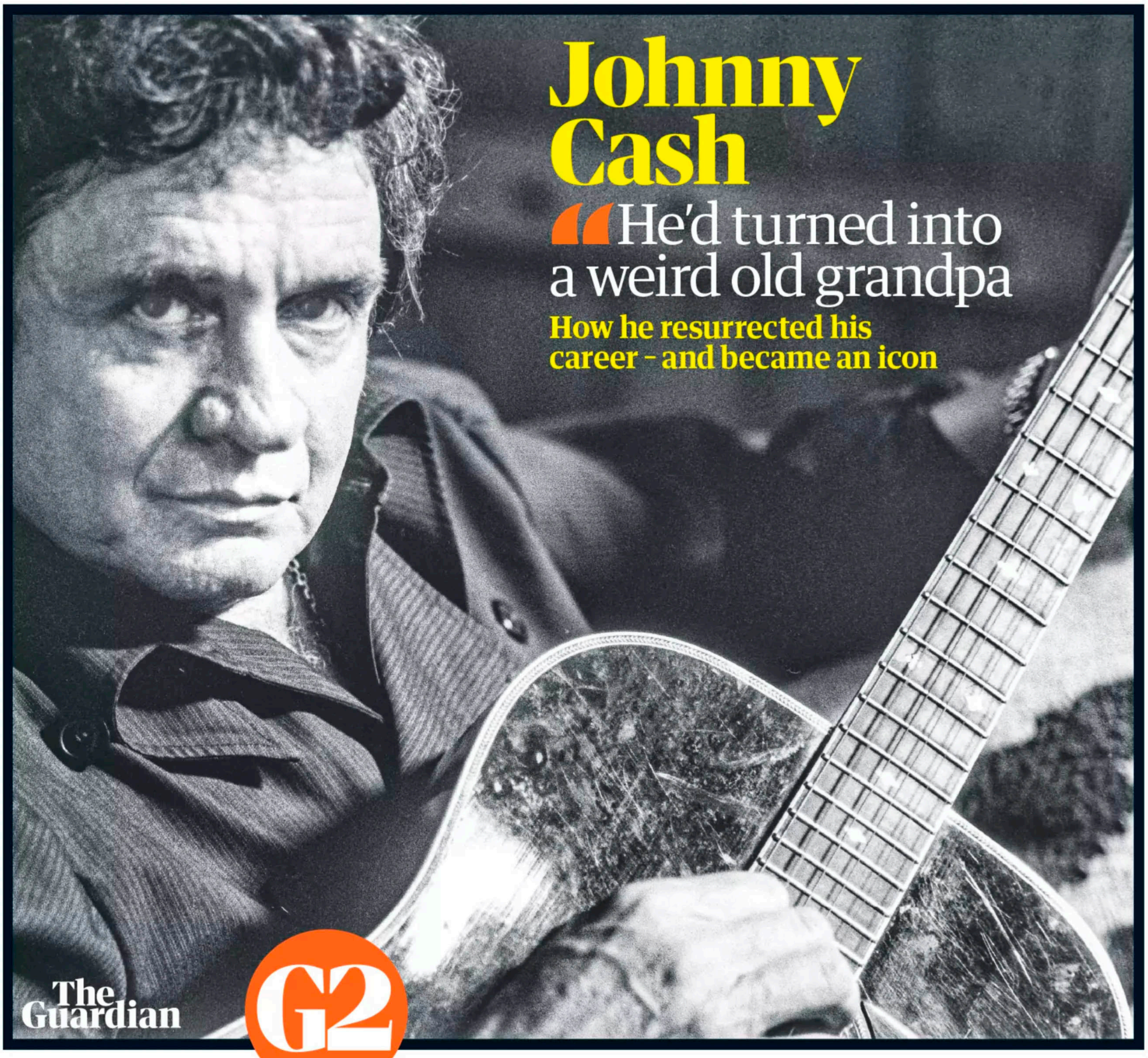


Across

1 Revolutionary soldiers with guns, repelling city police (7)
5 Something huge in women's cricket? (7)
9 Character overshadowing book gets cut (1-4)
10 Worn-out bear for the most part, very attractive (4-5)
11 Rye port is working to protect old warehouse (10)
12 Somewhat user-friendly one is bound to work (4)
14/18 Be opportunistic - Ted Talk's introduction's enthralling as long as the man's hiding brightness (4,3,5,3,3,6)
21 Whistleblower taking on European bank (4)
22 Astounding - this writer's not actively resisting having made a case for resistance! (10)
25 Electronic signal getting gangster moving (9)
26 Newspaper discovered hairdressers maybe starting to get off the ground (5)
27 Keeper probably very near the batsman - losing focus in a boisterous way (7)
28 Sanitise driver's competition, taking motorway out during second half of race (7)

Down

1 On the subject of act making comeback (6)
2 Hanging ordinary work in flat (6)
3 One looks sweet in dashing Cuban heels (7,3)
4 Check retired multimillionaire's imprisoned (5)
5 Confusing extra wait for harbour transport? (5,4)
6 Occasionally seeing couple in public (4)
7 Feeble old man the jerk pursued ... (8)
8 ... pursued quickly - one delivering a tirade inspires a following (3,5)
13 Row 9 potentially called in lottery? (10)
15 A walk in the park means a healthy 1 down without much exertion (4,5)
16 Swimmer's temperature taken by ship's doctor (8)
17 Climbing records cycling club could be topping (8)
19 Deny 1 down's contrived (6)
20 Finally Madness chose It Must Be Love for Chesterfield, say (6)
23 Church assuming priest remains (5)
24 Caribbean location's housing provided internet connection (2-2)



Johnny Cash

“He’d turned into a weird old grandpa

How he resurrected his career – and became an icon

The Guardian

G2

Friday 21/06/24

Film & Music

It’s complicated
Avril Lavigne songs – ranked!
page 2

Peak practice
Hiking with a film-star Sherpa
page 5



Ranked! Avril Lavigne songs

As she gears up for Glastonbury, Alexis Petridis rates the Canadian rabble-rouser's bangers, ballads and brattiest moments



10
Don't Tell Me *(2004)*
Neatly done Alanis-esque bitterness and fury hooked to a lyric that preaches sexual abstinence – or at least the benefits of not being pressured into sex – to Lavigne's female teenage cohort, Don't Tell Me occasioned a degree of mockery on release, but she was writing about something directly relevant to her fans' lives.

9
Keep Holding On *(2006)*
Written for the forgotten fantasy movie Eragon – which co-starred, if you can believe this, Joss Stone as a witch with a pet werecat called Solembum – Keep Holding On has a suitably epic end-credits feel that works as well as the final track on The Best Damn Thing as it would in a cinema.

8
Sk8er Boi *(2002)*
An idea so simple you wonder why no one had done it before: perky pop-punk aimed squarely at tweens, with lovelorn comic-strip lyrics, don't-judge-by-appearances moral at the end, a little rounded-edge rebellion in the video and a neat fourth-wall-breaking twist in the final verse.

7
Nobody's Home *(2004)*
One suspects Lavigne might have been listening to the mid-90s Cranberries before coming up with Nobody's Home – just listen to the swooping, very Dolores O'Riordan-esque vocal. Regardless of what influenced it, it's a fantastic song, a saga of a teenage runaway that surges into an in-your-face chorus.

6
What the Hell *(2011)*
In a sense, this Max Martin co-write feels like a dry run for the songwriter/producer's subsequent work with Taylor Swift: a 21st-century pop take on new-wave rock, not a million miles from Swift's 1989. There's a hint of 60s garage in the reedy organ sound and the chorus is great.

5
When You're Gone *(2007)*
Lavigne had a tendency to present her third album, The Best Damn Thing, as evidence of her new auteur status – "I did this record on my own, I didn't have anyone involved but me" – which was a bit rough on its team of co-writers and producers. But no matter. When You're Gone is a fantastically polished, lighters-out stadium anthem.

4
I'm With You *(2002)*
There was a lot of straightforward US rock on Let Go. That was something Lavigne and her co-writers were skilled at and there's a compelling argument that the power balladry of I'm With You is far more potent and convincing than the album's lunges towards Green Day territory.

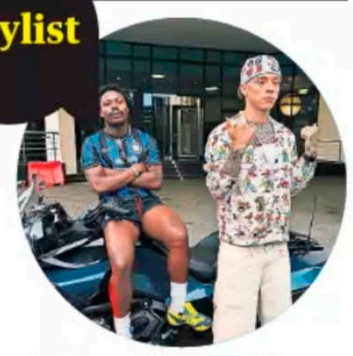
3
My Happy Ending *(2004)*
Growing up in public was always going to be tough for Lavigne – eventually, she just gave up trying – but her darker-hued second album suggested she might make it work. My Happy Ending is its highlight; a killer post-grunge rock ballad, emotionally tougher and bleaker than anything on her debut.

2
Girlfriend *(2007)*
Girlfriend is the kind of bubblegum pop that songwriting duo Chinn and Chapman would have been proud to put their name to in the 70s. It's heavily indebted to Toni Basil's cheerleading banger Mickey – with a sprinkling of Suzi Quatro and the bratty Blondie of Rip Her to Shreds – and stuffed with hooks. A fabulous single.

1
Complicated *(2002)*
You may have assumed that Avril Lavigne's success would be short-lived. Twenty-two years later, she's still here. Her ability to transcend novelty appeal had less to do with Sk8er Boi's clever contrivance than it did with songs like Complicated. It repurposed grunge angst for a tween audience, but was far more melodically and emotionally powerful than its mall-rat video suggested.

See full list of 20 at theguardian.com/music

Playlist



1 **Asake and Central Cee**
Wave
One of Nigeria biggest stars teams up with one of the UK's and it's a dynamite combo: Central Cee sounds superb rolling over this sinewy amapiano beat.

2 **Fontaines DC**
Favourite
Powered by a truly classic riff, this is the biggest, poppiest song from the Irish band yet, though none of their poignancy, poetry and keen portraiture is sacrificed: it's staggeringly good.

3 **Tinashe**
Nasty (Jane Remover remix)
The lascivious Nasty has been a huge hit and the new remix EP is expertly curated, with amapiano, techno, Jersey club and chopped'n'screwed versions plus Jane Remover's chaos.

4 **The Dare**
Perfume
While Harrison Smith makes absolutely zero effort to venture beyond 00s downtown NYC pastiche here – paging LCD Soundsystem – his howls of "that's my perfume!" are infectious. Plus, cowbell!

5 **WaqWaq Kingdom**
Yaren Soran
"Min'yō footwork" is about as obscure as genres get but don't miss this Japanese duo's track: an extremely special blast of lapping, soothing vocals and wasp-like percussive clatter.

6 **Cold Cave**
Hourglass
The New Order influence is pronounced, but this anthemic song is so beautifully produced that it scarcely matters, with synths and rhythm guitar in perfect galloping sync.

7 **King Krule**
Time for Slurp
Archy Marshall apologises for his "bad communication" amid guitar that simmers and rumbles, stretching the latter word to a sneer and a roar to try to stretch its expressive potential.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: WWW.ALANMESSER.COM/ALAN MESSER
THIS PAGE: TIM KONEY/GETTY IMAGES

The reader interview

'I'm a weak man. I'd betray someone quickly'

The actor, comic and doctor **Ken Jeong** on his worst heckles, playing a chicken and why Dick Van Dyke made him cry



What's your opinion on the adage about not working with animals and children, considering you've worked with Crystal the capuchin monkey several times? *fandango87*
I've worked with Crystal on a dozen projects - The Hangover, the TV show Community and another movie, The Zookeeper. She is just a miracle. For example, in The Hangover, [director] Todd Phillips would give a direction and I'd need three or four takes. Crystal could literally do it on the spot. I was upstaged by a monkey, and now I'm at peace with that.

You had a brief but memorable role on the US Office as a member of Michael Scott's improv class. How accurately did that improv class reflect your real experiences? *RedCraig30*
It gave me goosebumps because my favourite comedy of all time was the UK Office. It's probably my favourite guest-starring role of my career. The improv class was surreal. It was strikingly similar because Steve Carell and the other actors would improvise on top of the scripted scenes. It was very real and very genuine. You get to watch Steve - one of my favourite actors - from the best seat in the house. It was a masterclass.

Is laughter the best medicine? *CaptainLib*
Medicine is the best medicine. Laughter helps you through life. But - speaking as a proper physician - medicine is the best medicine.

When did someone last say: "Is there a doctor in the house?" *TopTramp*
I was on a plane and someone was having some discomfort and there was concern. The flight attendant went to the front of the cabin and said: "Is there a doctor on the plane?" I literally said - this is honest-to-God true - "Well, um, you know, I used to be a doctor." Luckily, there was a happy ending because the person was completely fine and the flight attendant and I had a good laugh afterwards.

You're in My Spy and the upcoming My Spy: The Eternal City. Would you make a good spy in real life? *richpelley*
I would make a horrible spy. I have no spy skills. I'm a weak man. I have a very weak spirit. I would betray someone very quickly if threatened. I'd talk too much and reveal too many secrets and plans.

I loved your reaction when Dick Van Dyke was revealed on The Masked Singer US. What was it like seeing a comedy hero? *YodaknowsAll*
That's probably my favourite reveal. I believe he was 97 at the time, so when he did Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious as part of his farewell elimination song, Nicole Scherzinger and I teared up. Appearing on the UK Masked Singer was amazing. I grew up on Jonathan Ross, so it was amazing to hang out with him, Davina McCall, Rita Ora and Joel Dommett. I've always admired UK panel shows; they are so pioneering in terms of unscripted television.

> **In real life, my bachelor party was just a bunch of doctors going: 'We're drinking. Wow!'**

Is Donald Glover really that cool, funny and talented? *IscoBusquet*
Donald Glover is perhaps the most talented person I've ever worked with. He's this incredible actor, comedian and then obviously there's his music. We shared a trailer during Community. The Childish Gambino albums were written in his trailer. My daughter's favourite artist is Childish Gambino - I score a lot of cool points with her saying I worked with him.

What's the most memorable heckle you've had performing standup, and how did you handle it? *VerulamiumParkRanger*
Silence is the worst heckle. When something doesn't land, there's a reason they call it "dying on stage" when you're left with ... what's the opposite of love? It's not hate. It's apathy. Apathy is very hurtful, but that onstage training preps you for the apathy of showbusiness. You have to get a thicker skin and learn to keep moving on and performing.



Jeong with Crystal in The Hangover Part II

Have you ever been on a bachelor party that ended up as badly as in The Hangover? *TurangaLeela2*
I got married 20 years ago, way before The Hangover. It's our anniversary in September. My bachelor party was in Vegas and it couldn't have been more tame. Who knew that five years later I would be part of the biggest Vegas movie of all time and everyone would associate me with the raunchiness of it all? In real life, we were just a bunch of doctors going: "We're drinking. Wow!"

You play a chicken in the new advert for the mobile game Squad Busters. How did you get into character? *richpelley*
I would love to say I did a lot of research, but the only research that I did was the fitting to get into the big chicken outfit. Everyone looked at it and said: "You must have been so hot inside." It was actually well ventilated, which was quite liberating.

Why does there seem to be such a natural connection between medicine and comedy? *trp981*
All my life, I thought I would be a physician. Then, in college, I took my first acting class and I was hooked. I felt I had an aptitude and a passion for it, but training to be a doctor and wanting to do comedy made me feel like such a weirdo. So to go back full circle and do my own sitcom as a doctor [ABC's Dr Ken] gave me a sense of completion. My wife was talking about this the other day. She randomly said: "I don't think you'd have achieved the level you've achieved now had you not been a doctor." Maybe it means I can look at my showbiz life with a sense of maturity that I wouldn't have possessed otherwise. The older I get, the more grateful I am for the past that I have, because when it comes to art commenting on life, you need to have lived a life in order to be an artist.

As told to Rich Pelley

Squad Busters is out now on Android and iOS. My Spy: The Eternal City is on Prime Video from 18 July.

Send us your questions for next week's interviewee
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‘My heart does not have any other job’

When she’s not scaling Everest, Nepal’s greatest female climber cleans houses. **Robyn Vinter** meets the star of Mountain Queen



View from the top … Lhakpa Sherpa in the Peak District

When Lhakpa Sherpa was a small child growing up in a tiny village in the Himalayas, her mother warned her that if she didn’t behave herself, the yetis would come and snatch her away.

It was a hollow threat – or so she thought. Then, one day as she played outside with her friends, she saw them: very tall, with blond hair and blue eyes, climbing up the hill in her direction. The children screamed in panic and scattered. When Sherpa’s mother heard the commotion and saw the figures reaching the village, she too screamed and ran. It was their first encounter with western tourists.

She tells this story to illustrate how far she has come: from Makalu – a verdant, temperate and sparsely populated Nepalese region on the doorstep of Mount Everest – to the slightly less atmospheric northern English city of Sheffield, where we meet during DocFest to talk about the documentary Mountain Queen: The Summits of Lhakpa Sherpa.

The film details the extraordinary life of a 48-year-old single mother working in a supermarket in the US state of Connecticut, who also happens to be one of the best mountain climbers in the world.

“Look like Makalu,” she says generously, gazing out of the bus window at the wet green hills, as we wind our way up into the Peak District, the location for our interview. We’ve chosen this spot because, as the first woman to summit Everest and survive – one of a dozen world records she holds – Sherpa feels more comfortable walking while we talk.

Whip-smart, she speaks a poetic personal English dialect that her friends call “Lhakpa-ese”. English is one of seven languages she speaks and she understands more, learned while working as a guide.

“People say: ‘Why you going Everest?’ My heart want. My heart does not have any other job,” she says, maintaining a steady pace in the frigid Yorkshire weather as we hike up to Bamford Edge. A steady pace is the secret to scaling mountains, she says – and she would know, having summited Everest 10 times and conquered the world’s second-highest peak, K2. “That is my sport. I want to see this beautiful mountain changing in the dynamic looks.”

Though her name might suggest otherwise, she is the first in her family to climb. Her parents were yak farmers and she grew up during a time when girls in Nepal were not educated. Sherpa would carry her younger brother two hours each way to school but was not allowed to go inside. She still cannot read or write.

Though she was expected to become a housewife, Sherpa wanted to be out in the mountains. “I’m a little bit looks like a tomboy type,” she says.

As European tourists began to return each year, she watched young men from the village get work as porters, carrying supplies and equipment through the Himalayas. Though she was stronger than some of the boys, they wouldn’t hire a girl. She cut her hair short, donned a hat and secured her first job, carrying loads as heavy as 100kg.

“My secret life. I love it,” she says. She worked her way up from “kitchen boy” to becoming a guide, using the encyclopaedic knowledge she gained. She knows the Everest trails without a map, understands the weather and how quickly it can change – the kind of experience that can be life-saving. Despite a spate of deaths of Sherpas in recent years, she doesn’t feel the work in itself is exploitative. But she laments how it can seem like a good career path to young people in her village, who don’t have other options.

“In Makalu, young Sherpas, they not educated, they always coming, they wanna go Everest with no training,” she says.

As well as a fee for the trip, it is customary for Sherpas to be paid a summit bonus, of between $4,000 and $10,000, for getting a client to the top, she explains. It means “they work so hard”.

> **She carried her brother to school but was not allowed in. She still cannot read or write**

“This year, a young Sherpa die, it take me my heart down,” she says. “Young Sherpa need more training. A sherpa life is very, very difficult.”

In the film, we meet Sherpa as she climbs a steep, icy rockface to Everest Camp Four – the start of the death zone, whose altitude makes it impossible to breathe without supplies of oxygen – where she camps in below-freezing temperatures, a fierce wind raging against the sides of the tent.

Her 15-year-old daughter, Shiny, waits anxiously at Base Camp, as the adults attempt to contact Camp Four on a radio. “How many tanks of oxygen does each person have?” she asks. She is not reassured by the reply, and neither are we.

The film made its debut to standing ovations at the Toronto film festival and was picked up by Netflix to be released globally later this year. With momentum, it seems ripe for Oscar nominations.

Eight years in the making, involving technical and perilous shooting conditions, it is a feat by British director and two-time Oscar nominee Lucy Walker. More remarkable than Sherpa’s physical achievements, though, is the depth the film goes to in revealing her personal life: first, a relationship with a philanderer who looked down on her and left her with a baby son, causing shame so immense she felt unable to return to her village.

In particular focus is her relationship with her daughters’ father, Gheorghe Dijmărescu, a fellow climber, who became controlling, cheating and violent. When he hospitalised her in 2012, a social worker helped move Sherpa and the girls to a refuge, leaving behind all their possessions. He died from cancer in 2020.

“You know, I not have good men come my way. All the time bad men come my way,” she says. “Maybe they see me tough, I don’t know.” Her mindset has got her through a lot. “Whatever happen bad things, I stay positive,” she says. “People say why you so strong mentally, physically? Because I work so hard.”

The film hasn’t changed anything tangible for Sherpa yet – she cleans houses in Connecticut to make ends meet and crowdfunded her last Everest summit, as sponsors are not easy to come by. Companies that might be expected to fiercely compete to be associated with her, such as US outdoor brands Patagonia, North Face and Mountain Hardwear, turned her down. As did her former employer, Whole Foods.

“I don’t know why they ignore, I’m a *great* climber,” she says, as if being the holder of the world record for the most Everest summits by a woman needed further explanation. “I’m chasing my dream because I want my children to go college and changing a little bit better life. I try my best, you know?”

After Sheffield, Sherpa is heading for London, Copenhagen and then Berlin, promoting Mountain Queen. “This two, three months, I look like queen. I’m not really queen – but I take it,” she smiles, as we descend the hill.

Mountain Queen is released on 26 July.

PHOTOGRAPH: GARY CALTON/THE GUARDIAN

The man comes around

In the early 90s, Johnny Cash was uncool and unsigned – but writing some of his best material. His son and bandmates tell **Michael Hann** how his lost songs can finally be heard

In the early 1980s, Johnny Cash was at a low ebb. The Man in Black – who once sang to an audience of prisoners that he "shot a man in Reno just to watch him die" – had become little more than a family entertainer. "He'd turned into a weird old grandpa and he didn't like that," says the guitarist Marty Stuart. Stuart had just joined Cash's band and "expected to see that guy who made Folsom Prison Blues and San Quentin. Cash was living a lifestyle that called for a certain amount of money – but I think he knew that there was a cool guy buried back in there."

But by the early 1990s, that cool guy still hadn't re-emerged. Prior to being resurrected by a partnership with legendary producer Rick Rubin, Cash's career looked like it might be over. In 1986, he had been dropped by Columbia, the label he had helped make one of the greats, and a spell with Mercury had not worked out. He had also spent the previous decade in and out of rehab, due to a longstanding addiction to amphetamines. At the start of 1993, a 61-year-old Cash, Stuart and others went into LSI Studios in Nashville and began recording songs from the previous four decades that Cash had kept in his back pocket. But since Cash didn't have a record deal, the tracks never got released, and lay ignored and incomplete for years.

Eleven of those songs make up the new album Songwriter, with Cash's original vocals transposed on to freshly recorded instrumentals. "These songs are some of the best compositions he ever did, important songs," says Cash historian Mark Stielper. "It's a shame they weren't heard at the time."

The songs reveal the Cash so admired by Bob Dylan for being "what the land and country is all about". She Sang Sweet Baby James is a tender portrayal of a young single mother consoling herself and her baby by singing James Taylor; Drive On is a lament for Vietnam veterans ("Well, a mortar fell 20ft away / And I carry shrapnel to this day / I came home, but Tex did not / And I can't talk about the hit he got"); and I Love You Tonite is a startlingly direct declaration from Cash to his wife, June Carter.

But the 1993 recordings were "really rough", says the album's engineer, David Ferguson. "He probably only let the band do it once, or until he had something he thought he could work with later. He'd say: 'OK. We'll fix it. I'm leaving.'"

Sensitive new arrangements, made with Cash's son, John Carter Cash, as producer, do the songs justice. But was it hard, knowing that you are engineering a record by a man who can have no input, for an audience with clear expectations of what a Cash record should sound like?

"I learned a long time ago that I'm not trying to make a record for an audience," says Ferguson. "I'm trying to make it for me and the group that's working on it. But yes, I was trying to do something that, if he were here, he wouldn't be embarrassed by – that he would be proud of. I owe it to him to do my best work."

Stuart says Cash had a set routine for recording during the 1980s. "He would drop John Carter off at school, then head straight to Jack Clement's studio and have the engineer turn on the

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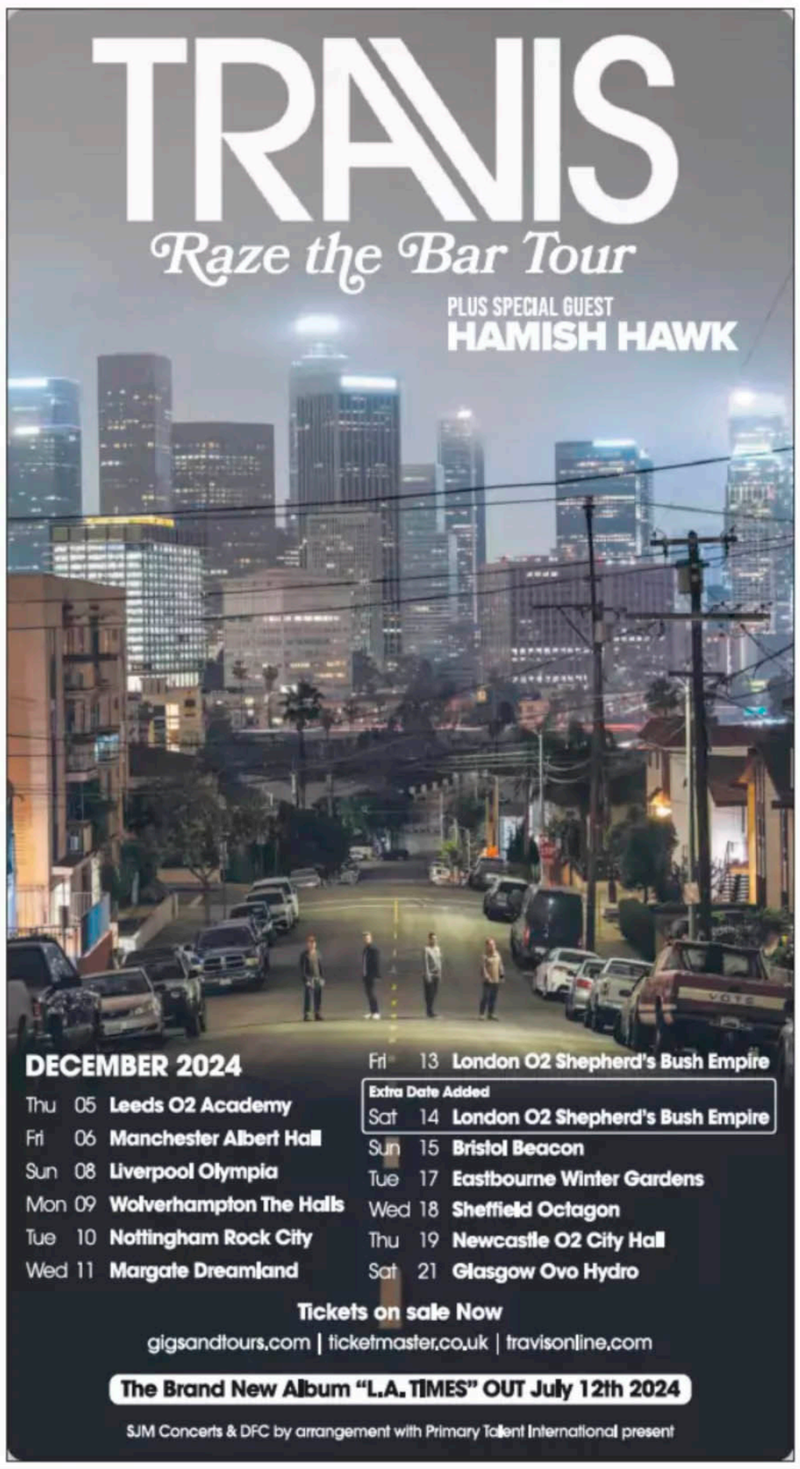
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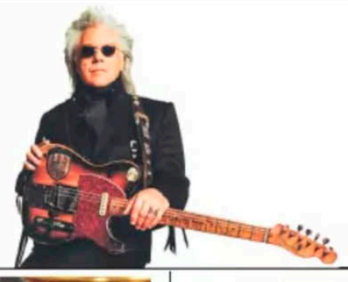
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> My father's was a life of ups and downs. When Songwriter was recorded, he was at a great 'up'

Cash's son, John Carter Cash (right), co-produced the new album, which features Cash's long-time band member Marty Stuart (top)



microphone. He would sing five, six, seven songs, whatever he had on his mind, into the microphone, get up and leave." Then, with collaborators such as Ferguson and the bassist Jimmy Tittle, Stuart "would stay late at night, take those tapes and Johnny-Cash-ise them". They took this approach again for Songwriter.

By the early 90s, John Carter had grown up and joined his father, Stuart et al as a guitarist, playing frequent residencies with them at the country entertainment hotspot of Branson, Missouri. "We played six days a week, with two shows on two nights," says John Carter. "But by '91, '92, the Branson shows were getting a little old to him. He had always been on the road, always travelled. So it was hard being in a theatre and sometimes getting a lacklustre reaction.

"But he never lost his drive and he never lost his faith in music itself. My father lived his life, then he would be alone and he would have a period of creativity, a thrust that gave him material. You didn't see him on the bus playing guitar. He was reading. He was studying scriptures."

Stielper suspects the decisions Cash had made over the previous decade, from his Branson gigs to cultivating a family-friendly image, were the result of insecurity – and a need to prove he could be part of the mainstream country establishment. "He wanted the legitimacy; he had always felt inferior. And when he had the opportunity to have a network variety TV show [which ran from 1969 to 1971], then by definition it was going to be a family show. He felt that was a vindication."

Come 1993, Cash was unsigned. Stuart and Stielper disagree about the effect being without a label had on him. "I don't think it put much of a dent in his character, because he was Johnny Cash and he was bigger than all of them," Stuart says. But Stielper says: "He was embarrassed. He was very hurt he didn't have opportunities. He had many opportunities, when contracts ended, to leave Columbia over the years – but he didn't, because he felt a loyalty to them."

Stielper believes it makes the sessions that led to Songwriter significant. "This is probably on a par with the moments right before he recorded Johnny Cash at Folsom Prison in 1968. Many people will tell you this was a fallow period, but I don't necessarily agree with that. It was a quieter period, but the man was 61 years old – most people of 61 in his profession have already done what they were going to do. And these were his last recordings before he met Rick Rubin."

Cash's biographer Robert Hilburn backs up that conclusion in his magisterial Johnny Cash: The Life. "What proved to be the most important 30-day stretch on Cash's career since Folsom began in February 1993 with an encounter in Dublin with the Irish rock band U2 and ended with his meeting an admiring record producer in California," he writes.

The meeting with U2 led to Cash singing The Wanderer on their 1993 album Zooropa and was followed by the link-up with Rubin. It completely revitalised him: he rediscovered the Man in Black and began making stark, grave records that confronted mortality and pain. And it took going outside Nashville to do that. "A lot of people in the industry in Nashville had preconceived ideas about what Johnny Cash was supposed to be and what the country sound of the day was supposed to be," Stielper says. "Rick Rubin didn't have any of that. He said to Cash: 'You just be you. Let me hear what you've got to say.'"

The American Recordings albums Cash made subsequently with Rubin completed his redemption arc. He had committed himself to his love for June, he had found sobriety and a measure of inner peace – and with Rubin he had found artistic renewal. For the last decade of his life, Cash's mythology, life and status were all of a piece.

"He could see something in humanity and he knew how to tell a story and describe it in a few words," says Ferguson. "That's the real challenge of songwriting: how much can I get out of this sentence? You know, there were a lot of Johnny Cashes, but they were all based on this kind-hearted family man. He was a religious man, but he loved dirty jokes."

John Carter says: "My father's was a life of ups and downs. He hit some pretty hard rock bottoms. He wound up in hospitals and in rehabs. But at the point when Songwriter was recorded he was at a great 'up' in his life. He was focused, clear, sober. Everybody gives Rick Rubin all the credit in the world [for what came next] – and Rick was brilliant. But it was bound to happen."

Stielper says: "We're not sitting here talking about George Jones or Porter Wagoner," referring to a couple of other country music greats. "When we say Johnny Cash, it transcends music. There's a statue of him in the US Capitol building – there are 100 statues representing the 50 states, saying: 'This is the best of us.' And Johnny Cash is one of those people."

Songwriter is released on 28 June on Mercury Nashville/UMe.



With his wife, June Carter, at Wembley in 1979

PHOTOGRAPHS: BETH GWINN/REDFERNS; JOHANSEN KRAUSE/SONY MUSIC ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES



Peter Bradshaw's film of the week

The Bikeriders



Butler and Hardy shine in ode to 60s bikers

★★★★★

Dir *Jeff Nichols*

Starring *Jodie Comer, Tom Hardy, Austin Butler*

116 mins **Cert** *15*

Jeff Nichols's motorcycle movie is inspired by the immersive 1968 study of Chicago bikers by photojournalist Danny Lyon. It opens up the storytelling throttle with a throaty growl, delivering the doomy romance of an old-fashioned western and the thrills of a mob drama.

Tom Hardy plays Johnny, truck driver, family man and founding head honcho of the 60s Chicago motorbike club the Vandals. His leather-clad guys have monikers like something from West Side Story: draft-reject Zipco (Michael Shannon), beefy Cockroach (Emory Cohen), loyal lieutenant Brucie (Damon Herriman), California recruit Funny Sonny (Norman Reedus) and dependable footsoldiers Corky (Karl Glusman) and Wahoo (Beau Knapp).

But the toughest, most smoulderingly badass of them all is Benny, played by Austin Butler, the only one of the Vandals who directly takes on the law and whose violent altercation with civilian locals results in a gruesome injury that Johnny will have to avenge. This leads to his gang's mutation into a quasi-crime mob, attracting starstruck wannabe joiners from all over the country, including Vietnam veterans with serious drug habits, making the burden of leadership all but intolerable.

Benny is also deeply in love with Kathy, played by Jodie Comer with tough pugnacity and an outrageous northwestern accent with which you could slice a chrome tailpipe in two. Like Lorraine Bracco's Karen in Scorsese's Goodfellas, Kathy is a respectable working-class woman who never intended to get drawn into this world, but found Benny very attractive. She can see how her Benny is going to die one day in the service of this crazy group, and so a duel for possession begins between her and Johnny.

The Bikeriders is in its way like Kathryn Bigelow's The Loveless (1981) in depicting the grain of their empty world, while stopping short of showing us their places of employment. What we're watching is a weekend existence, like that of army reservists.

The biker's way of life is not precisely ironised or satirised, nor does the film question its heterosexuality (the kind of gay biker images which were to become an underground US pop culture staple do not feature), and Johnny and Benny's relationship is more like father and son. With Comer's fierce twang, Butler's soft purr and Hardy's sibilant Brandoesque drawl, there is such potency and impact in everything they do on screen.

Green Border

★★★★☆

Dir *Agnieszka Holland*

Starring *Jalal Altawil, Behi Djanati Atai, Maja Ostaszewska*

152 mins **Cert** *15*

At 75, Polish film-maker Agnieszka Holland has lost none of her passion – or compassion – and this angry drama, in sombre black and white, is recognisably the work of the same director who made Europa Europa in 1990. It is about the "green border" exclusion zone between Poland and Belarus, which is now the location for an apparently unending ordeal for refugees.

With sly malice, Belarus president Alexander Lukashenko has in recent years permitted the admission of refugees, cynically encouraging their hope of getting from there on foot across the border into Poland and the EU via the Białowieża forest – but only as a way of punishing the European Union for its anti-Belarus sanctions. The resentful Polish border force avoid the necessity of feeding and housing these incomers in camps and just throw them back over the barbed wire fence, where they live and die in the forest wasteland.

Holland's drama covers a mosaic of people caught up in this nexus of desperation: there are refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and Africa, a Polish border guard who is having qualms about the brutality he is expected (illegally) to dish out and a Polish psychotherapist horrified and radicalised by witnessing the death of a refugee child. The result is a sombre, yet gripping movie in what feels like two separate genres: a film about the eastern front in the second world war or perhaps a post-apocalyptic drama in which the forest is the site of some frantic survival struggle.



When the refugees first stumble euphorically into Poland, believing that their worries are now over, they still feel like human beings. But this is eroded by the pure absurdist horror of being brutally evicted back to Belarus and then thrown back into Poland. Green Border is a tough watch: a punch to the solar plexus, in fact. But it is a vital bearing of cinematic witness.

Strike: An Uncivil War

★★★★☆

Dir *Daniel Gordon*

With *Tyrone O'Sullivan, Gareth Peirce, Nick Jones*

111 mins **Cert** *15*

British schoolchildren are taught that the last full-scale military engagement on their soil was the battle of Culloden in 1746. But this should change: on 18 June 1984, the battle of Orgreave, the subject of Daniel Gordon's documentary, was the bitterest moment of the miners' strike of 1984-85. It was the last stand for both sides, a brutal and chaotic confrontation of about 5,000 pickets determined not to let trucks get through to pick up coke for the Scunthorpe steelworks, versus about 6,000 police officers, some mounted and armed with new shields and batons.

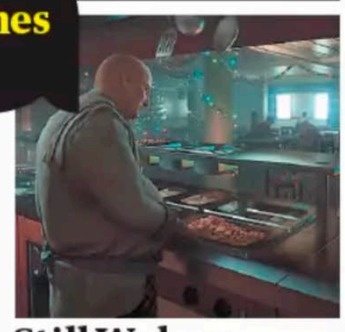
Unlike the Hillsborough case, the policing at Orgreave has never been fully scrutinised.

Gordon speaks to pickets who are still clearly traumatised by the events of Orgreave and by the strike in general. What emerges is the enduring bitterness that some felt towards those who returned to work; I flinched when one miner tells Gordon that his union-stalwart dad never forgave him for going back. When a reporter at the time asked whether he wouldn't mind his son going to his funeral, he replies: "I'd rather go to his."

This is a valuable film about one of the nastiest moments in postwar British history. Since 1985, the debate about fossil fuels has changed. But it is still staggering that a government planned wholesale mine closures with no thought for what would happen to the communities affected.



Games



Still Wakes the Deep

PC, PlayStation 5, Xbox

★★★☆☆

The premise here is a genre classic: one day, workers on an oil rig hit something with their drill that they shouldn't have, and a nameless horror descends on the ship and picks off the crew one by one. When it happens, Glaswegian electrician Cameron "Caz" McCleary is already on his way off the rig. It's his work boots we step into as he desperately searches for an escape.

The setting is probably the most realistic oil rig in any media to date, with its hundreds of hissing valves. Even without an encroaching horror from the deep, the rig is the game's most outstanding character. This is also the most Scottish game you'll ever play, right down to a staggering amount of swearing. The dialogue is a fantastic example of how natural conversations should sound. But since this is a short game, there isn't time for character work beyond perfunctory introductions, making it difficult to feel much for them.

The game is more interactive than previous releases from developer The Chinese Room. But its gameplay design has one big problem: me, the knowing player. Every device has been used in games before: the first time I saw yellow paint splattered on a ledge I was supposed to grab on to, I couldn't help but groan. Too often the game tells me what's coming so clearly that there's not much left for me to do as a player but follow the path.

Still Wakes the Deep succeeds in creating an atmospheric portrait of an everyman trying to stay alive in an inhospitable environment – but there aren't enough real scares or engaging moments to make it memorable beyond that.

Malindy Hetfeld



Alexis Petridis's album of the week

Mabe Fratti Sentir Que No Sabes



Spellbinding cello-pop from a true original

Experimental

Label Unheard of Hope

★★★★★

A recent magazine feature described Mabe Fratti as "the best avant garde pop cellist since Arthur Russell". It's hard to know whether to take that as laudatory superlative or faint praise. Russell has certainly seen his star rise in recent years: an overlooked figure at the time of his death in 1992, he has posthumously become a very hip name to drop. Equally, the world hasn't exactly been bursting at the seams with avant garde pop cellists since Russell's passing.

But, listening to the Guatemalan musician's fourth solo album, you understand why Russell's name is being invoked in the same breath. It's not that Sentir Que No Sabes sounds like anything in Russell's lauded oeuvre – it doesn't – but then it doesn't really sound like anything else either. Even after scanning Fratti's inspirations, you struggle to come up with anything to pin her music to. Talk Talk circa Laughing Stock? Only in so far as the brass arrangements lean more towards jazz than rock or pop. Cult French post-punk artist Lizzy Mercier Descloux? There's certainly a disjointed funk feel to some of the rhythms, but you wouldn't have volunteered her name without Fratti's own prompting. The opening track seems to be named after Lenny Kravitz and features a distorted funk-rock bassline, but there the similarity ends. You might as well chuck Russell's name into the ring: at least they share an instrument and a delightfully off-message approach to songwriting.

The latter aspect of what Fratti does feels important. It's easy to read her press, conclude that she deals in austere experimentation and abstraction and decide on that basis whether her music is for you or not. But the improvisation feels full-blooded and emotionally driven rather than an intellectual exercise. The drones of Elastica I give the impression that her cello is being heavily amplified, that she's playing sparsely but at immense volume so that every movement of the strings is attended by squeals of feedback. Elastica II and Kitana feature Fratti alternately scraping the instrument's strings and hitting them like a cimbalom, the former lending the sound a further layer of weirdness by manipulating the recording, slowing slightly, then speeding up.

But Fratti seems most interested in using her avant garde background as source material to make pop that's completely devoid of cliches. Her songs are abundantly melodic and her melodies surprise without jarring. Alarmas Olvidadas starts out darkly dramatic before spiralling euphorically upwards. She has a fantastic voice, high and airy, but with an intimacy and toughness that means she sounds as if she's striding rather than floating through the album's improbable landscapes. Kravitz is punctuated by horns and piano that slide in and out of earshot, not discordant so much as based around intervals you never normally hear in pop. Márgen del Indice shifts from a thick, ominous, vaguely industrial sound and a rhythmic sprechgesang vocal into an utterly beautiful melody, accompanied only by drums and cello.

Fratti seems intent on warping the sound of her cello until you aren't entirely clear if what you're listening to *is* a cello: is that it, played in a way that makes it sound like fretless bass on Pantalla Azul, or providing the fuzzy low-end on Kravitz? Is it linked to that unplaceable sound that keeps appearing in Quieras O No, which is a little reminiscent of a vocodered voice, but nothing like any vocodered effect you've heard before?

This is rich, rewarding, spellbinding music. It's unequivocally original – whatever influences it has, it transcends in a way that makes you realise how much music in 2024 is the sum of its inspirations. It's also unequivocally fantastic. Without wishing to sound like the bearer of more inadvertently faint praise: if you only buy one pop album by an avant garde Guatemalan cellist this year, Sentir Que No Sabes should definitely be it.

Released on 28 June



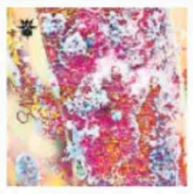
Contemporary album of the month

Artist QOA

Album Sauco

Label Leaving

★★★★☆



Musicians have long tried to incorporate the sounds of nature into their compositions. Think of Olivier Messiaen or Ottorino Respighi transcribing birdsong and arranging it for orchestra, or George Crumb's whale music. Composer Nina Corti, AKA QOA, is the latest musician to work in this area. Based in Los Angeles, she makes electro-acoustic music inspired by the flora and fauna of her native Argentina. Sauco is a slightly insane collage: the title track is a lovely synthetic jewel suspended in amniotic fluid, featuring babbling brooks, while Liquen is a symphony of dripping water and synth drones, and Yatei features oriental-sounding pentatonic riffs trickling like a mountain stream. Senna, with its slowly unfolding drones, is as close as we get to meditation music; for contrast it's followed by Anartia and Zafiro del Talar, all galloping tribal drums, martial synth riffs and rave-like samples. But QOA is more comfortable making quiet, arrhythmic beauty from the most arbitrary areas of nature's sonic universe. **John Lewis**

Indie

Artist Kate Nash

Album 9 Sad Symphonies

Label Kill Rock Stars

★★★☆☆



Singer turned actor Kate Nash's fifth album is another about-face: with lush string arrangements inspired by old Hollywood, it feels more of a piece with Bridgerton than the wrestling ring of her Netflix show Glow. Kitsch Horsie has a twinkly piano melody brought crashing down to earth by lyrics about crying in a DIY store. Ray is similarly upfront about mental health, stripping back Nash's frills to reveal simple acoustic guitar. There's further fortitude as Wasteman extols self-worth in relationships – but the transition from school-assembly piano to funky house isn't her slickest; it's one of a few wayward moments. This album won't revolutionise Nash's mainstream fortunes, but her old spark lights up the best of this crinoline reinvention. **Jenessa Williams**

Classical

Artist Bertrand Chamayou

Album Cage²

Label Erato

★★★★★



It was Arnold Schoenberg who rather glibly characterised John Cage as "not a composer but an inventor – of genius". But in the music that Bertrand Chamayou includes in this revelatory collection, Cage the inventor seems indivisible from Cage the composer. He wrote his first piece for the instrument that he had devised, the prepared piano, in 1940, placing a variety of felt, metal and rubber objects under or between the strings of a grand piano, drastically modifying its tone and creating a new sound world. While his later, more challenging music still arouses so much suspicion and controversy, it's good to be reminded of his sheer originality. In its own way each of these pieces is a brightly coloured gem, and Chamayou's performance of all of them is exemplary. **Andrew Clements**

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New you ... Laurence Llewellyn-Bowen with one fantasy home owner

Review Outrageous Homes, Channel 4

Mellow Laurence Llewellyn-Bowen design show is extravagant fun

★★★★☆

Lucy Mangan



Either I've toughened up or, like the paint on a statement wall, Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen has calmed down since he was last on our screens. In the old days, when he and Linda Barker were mostly destroying the nation's living rooms and all semblance of peace in suburbia as everyone began to fear returning home lest they find their perfectly acceptable three-bed semi suddenly covered inside and out with gold spray paint and plastic crystal chandeliers, I couldn't find the off switch fast enough. The cuffs, the hair, the performative suffering of Handy Andy – it was hard to avoid entirely in the early years of this century, but I did my best.

LLB hasn't exactly gone away since then, but he took small parts rather than central roles. You could, with a modicum of care, let him fade from memory and – despite a brief Changing Rooms return that involved building, oh Jesus, a *hair wall* that I still see when I close my eyes at night – begin to heal.

Now he's back, presenting Outrageous Homes. The title and accompanying publicity makes it sound like more of the late-90s, early-00s thing. Crazy decor! Eccentric owners! Extreme tastes! The spirit quails until you're about halfway through the first episode and you realise it's actually something quite different.

This is a mellow LLB – still a charismatic presence, but content to let his natural wit and intelligence shine through. As a result, he has become a warm and rather effective interviewer. And the homes and their owners are not (at least on the evidence of the opening episode) occasions for ridicule or figures of fun.

Some of the homes are pure self-expression, owned by exuberant people happy to be living their best life. Most emblematic of the mood is Billy, a retired IT assistant in Cheshire who inherited his childhood home when his parents died. "I woke up one morning," he says, "and thought: 'I want a wild west ranch.'" About £500 and a lot of hammering later, his dream was realised. It looks great. Part film-set, part Disney theme park, he plans to add a saloon, a water mill and – if funds and carpentry skills allow – a fort. He already has a line in moonshine production. He samples the illegal wares. "Not good, that," he says happily. "Not good at all."

Then there is the modest terrace in the West Midlands almost fully lined with gorgeous mosaics by artist Caroline. "I'm never going to stop!" she says cheerily, and why should she? A similar vibe attends landlord Jack's transformation of his own home into Atlantis. He has meticulously constructed 11 giant water tanks over the last 19 years that now dominate the house from bedroom to basement. He has filled them with the marine life that has fascinated him since he was first taken to an aquarium as a child. The engineering involved seems to make him as happy as the fish do, and that is very happy indeed.

The two main set pieces, however, are a trip around the house built by publisher, poet, performer and legendary bon vivant Felix Dennis. It was designed as the party pad to end all party pads, to reflect his love of pirates generally and Treasure Island specifically. It has an indoor lagoon, real palm trees preserved in resin, internal rigging, walkways, and a crow's nest, cannon and anchors in the garden, as well as a seashell-lined toilet throne and – though I don't think Robert Louis Stevenson covered this – roof access to a hot-air balloon launch pad. It has been bought by Dawn and Derek, who don't like parties. This only makes everything more amazing. They do have extravagant taste in sofas, and LLB compliments them on how well their furniture goes with the new house. Dawn says a polite thank you and we all leave. I love it.

Finally LLB gets to talk real design with Estelle, the owner of a Manchester terrace house that is an immaculate recreation of the 70s, put together with unmistakable confidence and style. She and LLB are kindred spirits and commune about colours, moulded furniture and the era's energy with increasing delight.

Outrageous Homes and the modern incarnation of LLB are together an absolute tonic. And not a hair wall in sight.

Isle of Wight Festival 2024
7pm, Sky Arts



Festival season is here – but with the likelihood of it being a washout year for many events, it might be best to stay at home and watch the highlights on TV. The Isle of Wight's all-night run has a (very male-heavy) lineup that includes the Streets, the Darkness, the Prodigy, Pet Shop Boys, Green Day and the Pretenders.

Hollie Richardson

Gardeners' World
8pm, BBC Two
In the absence of a British summer, Frances Tophill explores a transformed walled garden at Powderham Castle in Devon, and plants fruit trees and beans. Toby Buckland, meanwhile, takes in the "quintessentially English" gardens at Wollerton Old Hall in Shropshire. **Ali Catterall**

Dispatches: Rubbish Tip Britain
8pm, Channel 4
A lucrative and dangerous world of waste crime is on the rise in the UK, according to this exposé. It speaks to insiders and accesses alarming new figures to find out about everything from illegal fly-tipping to banned waste being dumped for years in major landfill sites. **HR**

Paranormal: The Village That Saw Aliens
9pm, BBC Three
Foreboding electronica is everywhere as presenter Sian Eleri continues to tour rural Wales on the trail of the truth behind a 1970s alien encounter. She is hunting down sightings of mysterious orbs of light. Might they be plasma? What even is that? And will she ever get to the truth? Probably not. **Alexi Duggins**

The Walking Dead: The Ones Who Live
9pm, Sky Max
After being separated for years, traumatised parents Michonne (Danai Gurira) and Rick (Andrew Lincoln) finally get some proper alone time to have a lacerating heart-to-heart – they just had to bail out of a crashing helicopter to do it. The result is a cathartic two-hander, written by Gurira, that justifies this entire spin-off. **Graeme Virtue**

The Nevermets
10pm, Channel 4
The cringe-inducing yet strangely addictive reality series in which long-distance couples finally meet continues with thirtysomething Matt visiting his virtual girlfriend of three years, Maria. Meanwhile, will Jgoy be able to visit Sarah in the United Kingdom? **HR**

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) (R) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) **1.0** News (T) **1.15** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.25** News (T) **1.30** Euro 2024 (T) Slovakia v Ukraine (kick-off 2pm). **4.15** Antiques Road Trip (T) (R) **4.45** Antiques Road Trip (T) (R) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **6.55** Party Election Broadcast (T) **7.0** The One Show (T)

7.30 Euro 2024 (T) Netherlands v France (kick-off 8pm). Coverage of the Group D match from Leipzig Stadium, as two former champions face each other in an eagerly awaited encounter. Gary Lineker presents, with commentary from Steve Wilson and Jermaine Jenas.

10.10 News (T)
10.40 Regional News (T) Weather
10.50 FILM **Ant-Man** (Peyton Reed, 2015) (T) A thief finds a suit that gives him the power to shrink. Superhero adventure, starring Paul Rudd and Michael Douglas.
12.40 Euro 2024 Match Replay (T) **2.20** Weather for the Week Ahead (T) **2.25** News (T)

BBC Two

6.15 **Homes Under the Hammer** (T) (R) **7.15** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Mammals (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** Digging for Britain: The Greatest Discoveries (T) (R) **7.30** Beechgrove Garden (T)

8.0 Gardeners' World (T) Frances Tophill explores Powderham Castle in Devon.
9.0 Chinook: Zulu Delta 576 (T) Part two of two. In the wake of the 1994 helicopter crash in the Mull of Kintyre, the RAF blames the pilots, leading to a 14-year campaign to clear their names.

10.0 QI (T) (R) With Rosie Jones and Henning Wehn.
10.30 Newsnight (T) Weather
11.05 The Stormtrooper Scandal (T) (R) Documentary.
12.35 Sign Zone Panorama (T) (R) **1.05** Springwatch (T) (R) **2.05** David & Jay's Touring Toolshed (T) (R) **2.35** On Thin Ice: Putin vs Greenpeace (T) (R) **3.05** This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV1

6.0 **Good Morning Britain** (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.0** News and Weather (T) **1.20** Local News and Weather (T) **1.30** ITV Racing Live: Royal Ascot (T) **4.15** Euro 2024 (T) Poland v Austria (kick-off 5pm). **7.30** Emmerdale (T)

8.0 Coronation Street (T) Kevin gets caught on camera, Steve orders Cassie to toe the line at No 1, and Joel picks Sabrina for his new target.
9.0 Beat the Chasers (T) (R) Bradley Walsh hosts as more contestants take on Darragh Ennis, Mark Labbett, Jenny Ryan, Issa Schultz and Shaun Wallace.

10.0 News (T) Weather
10.35 Local News (T) Weather
10.45 Euro 2024 Highlights (T) Action from the latest matches in Germany.
11.50 Adam Lambert: Out, Loud & Proud (T) (R) Documentary.
12.50 Shop on TV 3.0 The Larkins (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 Dispatches: Rubbish Tip Britain (T) A look at how banned waste has been dumped for years in a major landfill site, seemingly unnoticed by the authorities.
9.0 Celebrity Gogglebox (T) With Mo Gilligan, Andi Oliver, Rylan Clark, Sara Cox, Stephen Mangan and Gyles Brandreth.

10.0 The Nevermets (T)
11.05 FILM **The Inbetweeners 2** (2014) (T) Comedy sequel, starring Simon Bird.
12.55 FILM **Mortal Engines** (Christian Rivers, 2018) (T) Fantasy adventure. **3.0** 24 Hours to Hell and Back (T) (R) **3.45** Come Dine With Me (T) (R) **5.55** Sunday Brunch Best Bits (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) **2.15** FILM She Went Missing (Danny J Boyle, 2022) (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** Lidl: Middle Aisle Secrets & More (T) (R)

8.0 Dalgliesh (T) A young doctor is set on fire in the grounds of his family museum. Everyone who works there comes under suspicion – including his own siblings. Crime drama, with Bertie Carvel, Carlyss Peer, Sorcha Cusak and Anastasia Hille.

10.0 Live Championship Boxing: Arthur vs Cameron (T) Light heavyweight bout at Bolton Whites Hotel.
12.05 FILM **The Warriors** (Walter Hill, 1979) (T) Action adventure. **1.45** Live Casino Show (T) **3.45** Britain By Bike With Larry & George Lamb (T) (R) **4.30** Call the Bailiffs: Time to Pay Up (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 Top of the Pops (T) (R) With Gina G and 2Pac with Dr Dre. From 1996. **7.30** Top of the Pops (T) (R) From 1996, with The Cure, Mark Morrison and Manchester United FC.

8.0 Top of the Pops (T) (R) With Take That, the Orb and Utah Saints. From 1992.
8.30 Top of the Pops (T) (R) From 1978, with Heatwave, San Jose and Thin Lizzy.
9.0 Studio 54 (T) (R) Ian Schrager, one of the two people behind the NYC venue, tells the story of how the nightclub was created.

10.35 Disco at the BBC: Volume 3 (T) (R) A selection of disco classics from the 1970s and 1980s.
11.35 Disco: Soundtrack of a Revolution (T) (R) A look at how disco fell victim to a violent backlash.
12.35 Glastonbury Anthems (T) (R) **2.05** We Love Glastonbury (R) **3.05** Top of the Pops (R)

Other channels

BBC Three

7.0pm FILM Emma (2020) **8.55** The Catch Up **9.0** Paranormal: The Village That Saw Aliens **9.30** Paranormal: The Village That Saw Aliens **10.0** FILM Booksmart (2019) **11.35** Ladhood **12.0** Ladhood **12.25** Peacock **12.55** Peacock **1.25** Confessions of a Teenage Fraudster **2.10** Ladhood **2.35** Ladhood **3.0** Paranormal: The Village That Saw Aliens **3.30** Paranormal: The Village That Saw Aliens

Dave

6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Yianni: Supercar Customiser **7.35** Yianni: Supercar Customiser **8.0** Special Ops: Crime Squad UK **9.0** Top Gear Winter Olympics Special **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 Spanish Christmas **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 **2.40** Live at the Apollo: Christmas Special **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 **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **6.0** The Big Bang Theory **6.30** The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Come Dine With Me **8.0** Dance Moms **9.0** FILM Mission: Impossible (1996) **11.10** Naked Attraction **12.15** The Big Bang Theory **12.50** The Big Bang Theory **1.20** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **1.50** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **2.15** Modern Family **2.40** Modern Family **3.05** Dance Moms **3.55** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **4.45** The Neighborhood **5.10** The Neighborhood

Film4

11.0am FILM Carry on Regardless (1961) **12.50** FILM The 7th Voyage of Sinbad (1958) **2.35** FILM Jason and the Argonauts (1963) **4.45** FILM The Golden Voyage of Sinbad (1974) **6.55** FILM Sister Act (1992) **9.0** FILM Kingsman: The Secret Service (2015) **11.40** FILM Tropic Thunder (2008) **1.45** FILM Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey (1991)

ITV2

6.0am CITV **9.0** World's Funniest Videos **9.30** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **10.0** 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** Catchphrase Celebrity Special **7.0** Deal Or No Deal **8.0** The Masked Singer US **9.0** Love Island **10.05** The Stand Up Sketch Show **10.35** Family Guy **11.35** American Dad! **12.35** The Sex Lives of College Girls **1.40** Celebrity Karaoke Club **2.40** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping

Sky Max

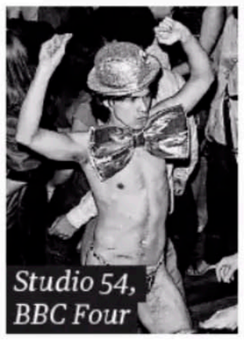
6.0am NCIS: Los Angeles **7.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **8.0** The Flash **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** NCIS: Los Angeles **12.0** The Flash **1.0** MacGyver **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** A League of Their Own: Mexican Road Trip **9.0** The Walking Dead: The Ones Who Live **10.0** Never Mind the Buzzcocks **10.45** The Walking Dead **11.45** We're Here **1.0** Road Wars **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** Highway Patrol

Sky Arts

6.0am Cirque Du Soleil: Zaia **7.0** Classic FM Rising Stars With Julian Lloyd Webber 2023 **8.0** The Joy of Painting **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **10.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Michelle Pfeiffer **12.0** The Joy of Painting **12.30** The Joy of Painting **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **1.30** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** National Treasures: The Art of Collecting **3.0** Cleo Laine: The Unseen Home Movies **4.0** Discovering: Mel Gibson **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** Isle of Wight Festival 2024 **1.0** Live from the Artists Den **2.15** Led Zeppelin: In the Light **3.30** Cheltenham Literature Festival **4.30** Auction: Shakespeare Special **5.0** Auction **5.30** Auction

Sky Atlantic

6.0am Urban Secrets **7.55** Six Feet Under **10.10** Gomorrah **12.20** Game of Thrones **1.50** The Sopranos **4.05** Six Feet Under **6.25** Gomorrah **7.30** Game of Thrones **9.0** The Pacific **10.10** House of the Dragon **11.20** The Wire **12.25** The Time Traveler's Wife **1.25** Euphoria **2.35** Game of Thrones **4.0** Urban Secrets


Studio 54, BBC Four

Radio

Radio 3

6.30am Breakfast **9.30** Essential Classics **1.0** Classical Live. Sibelius's Symphony No 7 in C minor, Op 105, from the Radio France Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Mikko Franck. Plus Petr Popelka conducts the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra and violinist Tai Murray in Telemann's Fantasia in A minor, TWV 40:25, No 12, and Suk's Fairy Tale, Op 16. **4.0** Composer of the Week: Dvořák (5/5) **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** Friday Night Is Music Night. Katie Derham introduces Richard Balcombe conducting the BBC Concert Orchestra and singers Katie Birtill and Lance Ellington in dance-related light music, live from the BBC Maida Vale Studios. **9.45** The Essay: The Sounds of Tyne. Poet Jake Morris-Campbell evokes the spirit of ancient Newcastle god Antenociticus. (R) **10.0** Late Junction **11.30** 'Round Midnight **12.30** Through the Night

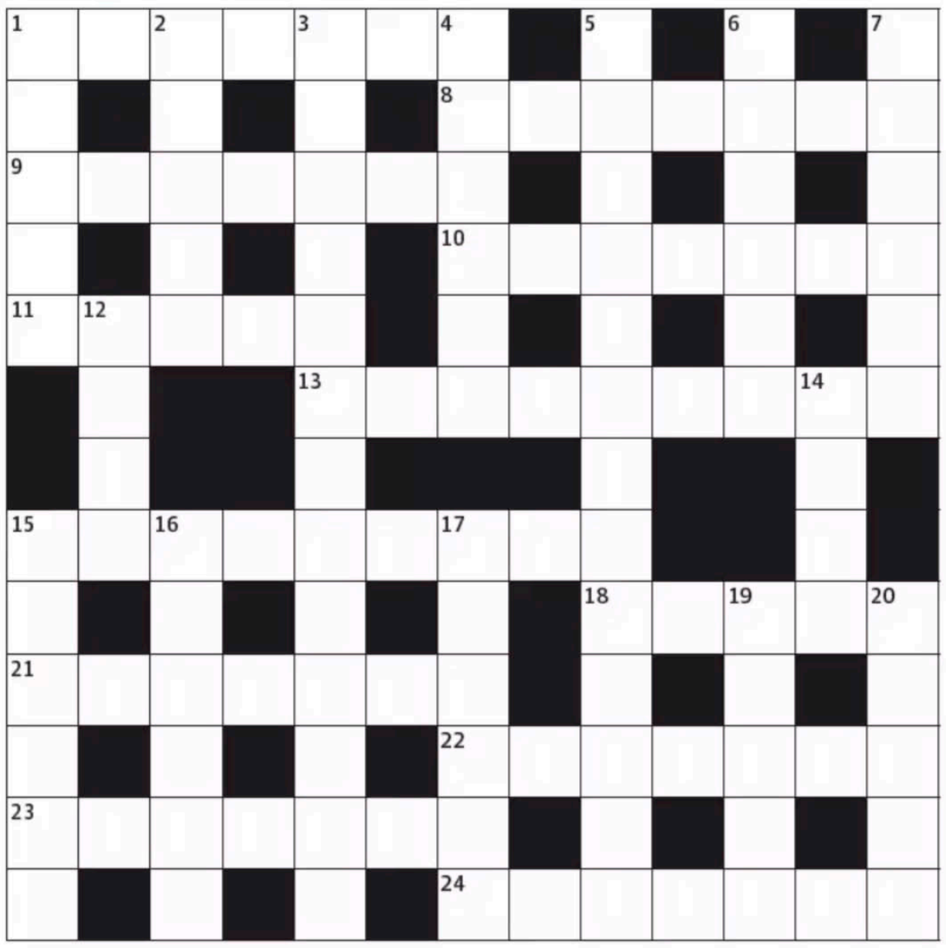
Radio 4

6.0am Today **9.0** Desert Island Discs: Clive Myrie (R) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** The Food Programme. Sheila Dillon investigates a new strain of E coli that is affecting food producers. **11.45** Book of the Week: The Stalin Affair. By Giles Milton. (5/10) **12.0** News **12.04** Rare Earth. How wildlife and the environment are treated in the various parties' election manifestos. (3/10) **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** Understand: The UK Election (10/10) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** The Specialist. Drama, by Matthew Broughton. As the illness accelerates at breakneck pace, Ged starts to crack. (4/6) **2.45** Communicating With Ros Atkins. Guests reveal the best ways to communicate, beginning with actor Rob Brydon. (1/8) **3.0** Gardeners' Question Time **3.45** Short Works. The Shooting Drill, by Benjamin Markovits. **4.0** Last Word **4.30** More Or Less (R) **5.0** PM **5.57** Weather **6.0** News **6.30** The News Quiz (3/7) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Add to Playlist. Sitar player Jasdeep Singh Degun and composer Anne Dudley add five more tracks to the playlist. (5/6) **8.0** Any Questions? **9.0** Free Thinking (12/13) **9.59** Weather **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: Jensen. By Heidi Amsinck. (5/5) **11.0** Americast **11.30** The Beauty of Everyday Things. Poet Ian McMillan goes on a tour of ordinary places that fascinate him. (R) **12.0** News and Weather **12.30** Book of the Week (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** Exercise Clever (R)

Radio 4 Extra

6.0am Boxer and Doberman (2/2) **6.30** Letters of Introduction (5/6) **7.0** The Older Woman (6/6) **7.30** The Burkiss Way (4/7) **8.0** Says on the Tin (6/6) **8.30** Diary of a Young Naturalist (5/5) **8.45** Exile (10/10) **9.0** Michael Spicer: No Room (7/10) **9.15** Michael Spicer: No Room (8/10) **9.30** Self Drives: The Trabant (5/5) **9.45** Daily Service **10.0** Soul Music (2/4) **10.30** The Number 1 Ladies' Opera House **11.0** Boxer and Doberman (2/2) **11.30** Letters of Introduction (5/6) **12.0** The Older Woman (6/6) **12.30** The Burkiss Way (4/7) **1.0** Says on the Tin (6/6) **1.30** Diary of a Young Naturalist (5/5) **1.45** Exile (10/10) **2.0** Foul Play (3/6) **2.30** Arrested Development (3/4) **3.0** Brideshead Revisited (4/4) **4.0** Soul Music (2/4) **4.30** The Number 1 Ladies' Opera House **5.0** Boxer and Doberman (2/2) **5.30** Letters of Introduction (5/6) **6.0** The Older Woman (6/6) **6.30** The Burkiss Way (4/7) **7.0** Says on the Tin (6/6) **7.30** Diary of a Young Naturalist (5/5) **7.45** Exile (10/10) **8.0** Foul Play (3/6) **8.30** Arrested Development (3/4) **9.0** Brideshead (4/4) **10.0** Michael Spicer: No Room (7/10) **10.15** Michael Spicer: No Room (8/10) **10.30** Laura Solon: Talking and Not Talking (4/6) **11.0** The Problem With Adam Bloom (5/6) **11.30** The Casebook of Max and Ivan (1/4) **12.0** Soul Music (2/4) **12.30** The Number 1 Ladies' Opera House **1.0** Boxer and Doberman (2/2) **1.30** Letters of Introduction (5/6) **2.0** The Older Woman (6/6) **2.30** The Burkiss Way (4/7) **3.0** Says on the Tin (6/6) **3.30** Diary of a Young Naturalist (5/5) **3.45** Exile (10/10) **4.0** Foul Play (3/6) **4.30** Arrested Development (3/4) **5.0** Brideshead (4/4)

Quick crossword no 16,888



Across

1 Act (7)
8 Hole (7)
9 Outside the body (as fertilised egg) (2,5)
10 Killer 'sparkling' for Agatha Christie (7)
11 Decoration (5)
13 Municipal record keeper (4,5)
15 Typeface – evil cheat (anag.) (9)
18 Significant other? (5)
21 Green liquid food (3,4)
22 Space (7)
23 Country on the Pacific coast of South America (7)
24 Husky and rasping (7)

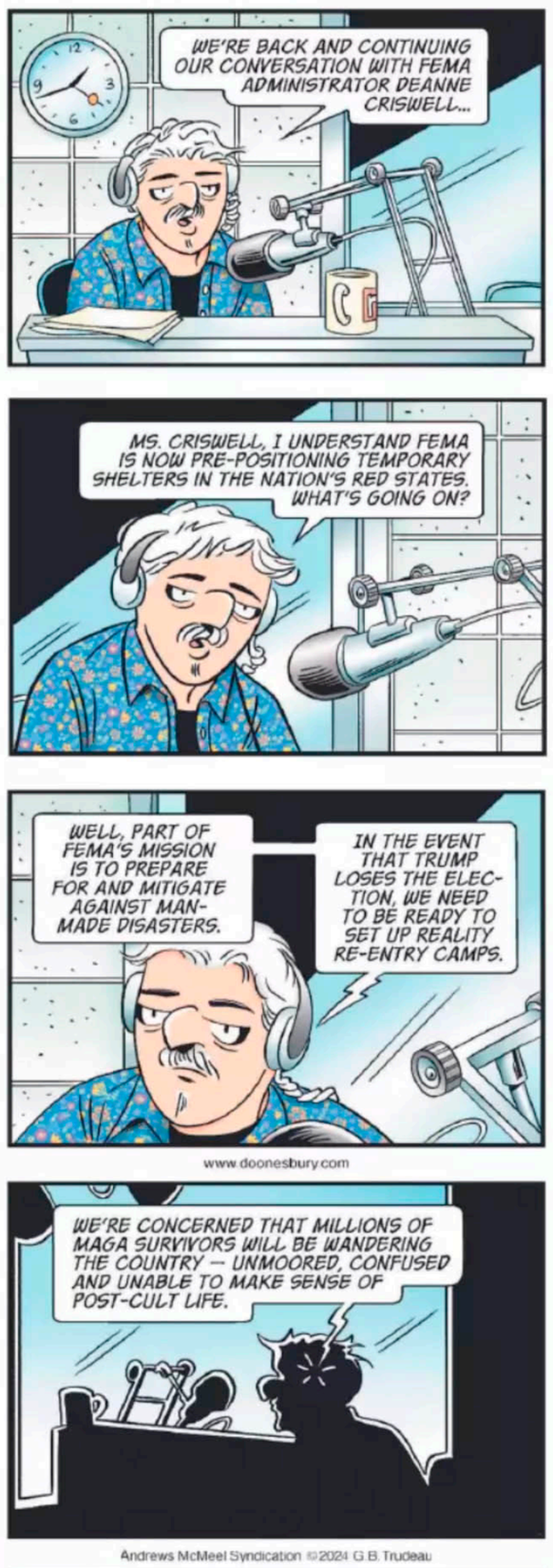
Down

1 Refracting polyhedron (5)
2 Pin (5)
3 No longer in mortal danger – away from trees? (3,2,3,5)
4 Bovine animal (for children) (3-3)
5 Fiscal period (9,4)
6 Interact (6)
7 Adorn (6)
12 Wind instrument (4)
14 Incantation – ancient Germanic character (4)
15 Beer plant gatherer (6)
16 Union – nautical measure (6)
17 Significance (6)
19 Ta-da! (5)
20 Rucks and scrums sport (5)

Stuck? For help call 0906 200 83 83. Calls cost £1.10 per minute, plus your phone company's access charge. Service supplied by ATS. Call 0330 333 6946 for customer service (charged at standard rate).To buy puzzle books, visit guardianbookshop.com or call 0330 333 6846.

Garry Trudeau

Doonesbury



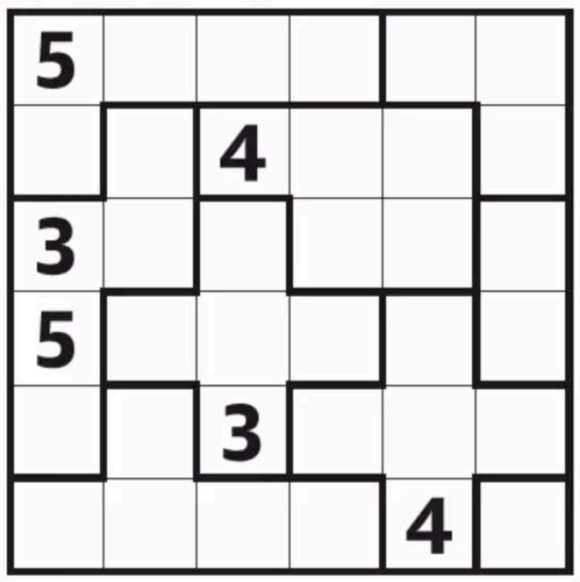
Sudoku no 6,522

Hard. Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9.

		1		5				3
					4			
9	6			8				
			3				1	
4			8			6		9
3			5	4				
	1					4		2
	5	4	2	7		9		
7								

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.



Wordsearch

Can you find 15 words connected with motorways in the grid? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight, unbroken line.

X	S	E	U	E	U	Q	Q	D
L	N	O	I	T	C	N	U	J
Y	O	S	P	E	E	D	Y	C
Y	A	R	P	O	T	G	E	A
R	S	W	R	E	N	H	N	M
T	E	E	H	I	T	I	R	E
N	M	X	N	G	E	R	U	R
A	M	R	I	A	I	S	O	A
G	A	S	O	T	L	H	J	L
W	P	P	O	L	I	C	E	T
D	E	L	A	Y	S	C	D	A

Yesterday's solutions

Sudoku no 6,521

6	3	8	7	5	9	4	1	2
1	5	9	8	2	4	6	3	7
2	7	4	1	6	3	9	5	8
5	4	7	9	3	8	1	2	6
3	9	1	2	4	6	8	7	5
8	2	6	5	1	7	3	9	4
9	8	3	4	7	5	2	6	1
4	1	5	6	9	2	7	8	3
7	6	2	3	8	1	5	4	9

Suguru

1	3	2	3	1	4
2	4	1	4	2	3
1	5	3	5	1	5
3	2	1	4	3	2
1	4	5	2	1	4
2	3	1	4	5	2

Wordsearch



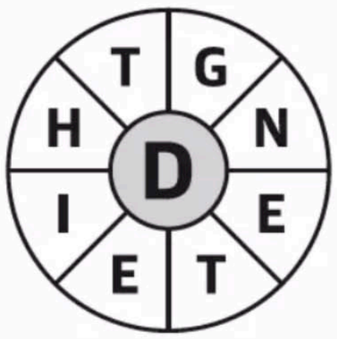
Solution no 16,887

A	F	T	E	R	M	A	T	H	■	C	■	S
■	A	■	U	■	E	■	A	■	P	L	O	T
Q	U	A	R	T	E	R	L	Y	■	O	■	R
■	N	■	O	■	K	■	K	■	E	C	H	O
S	■	C	■	P	L	A	I	T	■	K	■	N
C	E	L	E	R	Y	■	E	A	R	W	I	G
H	■	I	■	O	■	■	P	■	O	■	A	
O	C	C	U	L	T	■	B	E	A	R	E	R
O	■	K	■	E	A	T	E	R	■	K	■	M
L	O	B	E	■	G	■	E	■	O	■	M	
R	■	A	■	P	I	M	P	E	R	N	E	L
U	N	I	T	■	N	■	E	■	A	■	N	
N	■	T	■	P	E	T	R	O	L	E	U	M

Word wheel
BARTERING

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-28. Good-23. Average-17.



Trivia corner



For which of these films was Tom Cruise not Oscar nominated?

a. A Few Good Men
b. Magnolia
c. Jerry Maguire
d. Born on the Fourth of July
Answer top right

TODAY'S TRIVIA CORNER ANSWER **A FEW GOOD MEN**

ANALYSIS
UNITED STATES

Legal challenge
Despite ruling, battle over abortion pill is far from over

By *Carter Sherman*

The US supreme court last week rejected an effort by anti-abortion activists to roll back access to a common abortion pill – but the battle over the pill is far from over, both in the courts and in legislatures.

In a 9-0, unanimous decision, the US supreme court ruled that anti-abortion activists did not have standing, or the legal right to sue, over the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) regulation of mifepristone, one of two drugs typically used in a US medical abortion. But because the case turns on an interpretation of legal doctrine, the justices left open the possibility that someone else may challenge mifepristone in the future.

Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, a federal judge in Texas, has allowed Missouri, Idaho and Kansas to join the case as plaintiffs.

Although the supreme court declined to let those states join the case once it was before the court, the states may continue litigating it at a lower-court level. The anti-abortion group SBA Pro-Life America has already emphasised that possibility in its statement on the ruling. "The pro-life states of Idaho, Kansas and Missouri are seeking to take up the challenge based on harms suffered by women in their states," the group said.

Mary Ziegler, a professor at the University of California who studies the legal history of reproduction, noted: "This ruling doesn't preclude anyone else from bringing the same claim. Until or unless the supreme court actually rejects these claims on the merits, they're not going anywhere," she said.

As medical abortion now accounts for more than 60% of all US abortions, cutting access to it has become a goal of the anti-abortion movement since the supreme court overturned Roe v Wade.

If anti-abortion advocates are not able to curb access to mifepristone through the courts, they may be able to do so through the White House. A Donald Trump administration could, for example, try to direct the FDA to change its approach to mifepristone. Last week's ruling, written by Justice Brett Kavanaugh, seems to touch on this possibility.

Elizabeth Sepper, a professor at the University of Texas at Austin, said: "I think there's a very strong signal in the opinion that, well, if and when Donald Trump wins the presidency, [he will] head straight to the administration and ask them to change the approval of mifepristone."

Still, Nicole Huberfeld, a health law professor at Boston University's school of public health, is not convinced such an effort would be successful. "It's not as if the president can just wave his hand and have things happen at the FDA," she said.

A future Trump administration could also target mifepristone using the Comstock Act, a 19th-century anti-vice law that, some anti-abortion activists argue, bans the mailing of all abortion-related materials. The Biden administration has disagreed with that interpretation, issuing guidance arguing that the Comstock Act only bans such materials if the sender intends to use them to break the law, but a Trump administration may take a more hardline approach. Without involving Congress, Trump could use the Comstock Act to outlaw the mailing of mifepristone – which would result in a de facto ban on the pill. Project 2025, a playbook written by the influential conservative thinktank the Heritage Foundation, recommends that a future conservative administration do just that.

During oral arguments in the mifepristone case, both Justices Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas – the most conservative justices on the supreme court – brought up the Comstock Act. However, there was no mention of the law in either last week's majority opinion or a concurrence by Thomas.

Sepper suspects the omission was a canny play by the conservative faction of the supreme court.

"There's been concerns in the conservative legal movement that admitting Comstock would be revived in a Trump administration would be a poor political play. And so not mentioning Comstock at all is just wise strategy," Sepper said.

CARTER SHERMAN IS A REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH REPORTER FOR GUARDIAN US

> ***"Until or unless the supreme court rejects these claims, they're not going anywhere***



◀ Pro-choice activists rally outside the supreme court in Washington

SAUL LOEB/AFP/GETTY

The confidence question
More from our series on voters' perceptions of the US economy in the run-up to the presidential election



Economical with the truth

When voters' preferred party is in the White House, they're more likely to boast of a booming economy – even if the facts suggest otherwise. Why is that, and what can Joe Biden do about it?

UNITED STATES

By *Joan E Greve*

When he delivered his State of the Union address in March, Joe Biden framed the American economy as a true success story, pointing to the historically low unemployment rate and falling inflation as signs of the country's robust recovery from the early days of the pandemic.

"I inherited an economy that was on the brink. Now, our economy is literally the envy of the world," the US president said. "And it takes time, but the American people are beginning to feel it."

As Biden frequently boasts, 15m jobs have been created since he took office, and unemployment stands at 4% after 41 consecutive months of job gains. Inflation has also cooled, after the annual consumer price index hit a peak of 9.1% in June 2022. Stock markets have hit new highs, with the Dow Jones industrial average passing 40,000 points for the first time. The International Monetary Fund predicted last month that the US economy was on track to grow at double the rate of any other G7 nation this year.

But so far, many Americans are not buying what Biden is selling. According to a Harris poll last month, 56% of Americans wrongly believe that the US economy is in a recession, even though the country's GDP has grown in recent months. Republicans were more likely to hold that belief, with 67% of them saying the economy is in a recession compared with 49% of Democrats and 53% of independents.

The survey continued a trend of Republicans reporting higher levels of pessimism about the nation's finances since Biden took office. But the relationship between political identity and consumer sentiment has been documented for decades, intensifying alongside partisanship in recent years.

56%

Proportion of Americans who wrongly believe the country is in recession, a view shared by 49% of Democrats

With less than five months left before election day, Biden must find a way to break through the gloom and sell his vision of economic success.

The partisan skew in perceptions dates back at least to the Reagan administration, as the University of Michigan's national consumer confidence data shows. With a Republican in the White House, Republicans are much more likely than Democrats to say the economy is strong, and the same principle applies when a Democrat takes office.

The correlation appears to have grown stronger in recent years. One study from the University of Florida found state residents who had voted Republican started expressing more

GUARDIAN DESIGN

optimism about their personal finances within a month of Donald Trump winning the presidential race in November 2016.

Hector Sandoval, a programme director at the university's Bureau of Economic and Business Research, said the shift took place "between October and November". "That's kind of striking because nothing has really happened," he said. "The change in power isn't until the next year, in January. But already by then you see how the consumer sentiment is changing a lot."

Although Democrats' consumer attitudes have also been found to vary depending on the national political environment, Sandoval's research found this shift to be particularly pronounced among Republicans. Ryan Cummings, who previously worked for Biden's council of economic advisers, and Neale Mahoney, who served as an adviser to the Biden administration's national economic council, call this "asymmetric amplification".

According to their analysis, partisan bias on consumer sentiment is roughly two and a half times larger for Republicans compared with Democrats. Mahoney, now an economics professor at Stanford University, summarised the finding by saying that Republicans "cheer louder and boo harder" when their party controls the White House.

Cummings and Mahoney found asymmetric amplification accounted for roughly a third of the gap between predicted consumer sentiment, based on current economic conditions, and observed consumer sentiment. In the Harris poll, Republicans were indeed more likely to incorrectly say that the economy is in a recession, but notably, nearly half of Democrats believed the same. That has left economists – and many frustrated members of Biden's team – searching for answers.

Greg Ip, a Wall Street Journal columnist, has attributed the pessimism to "referred pain". "Just as one part of your body can hurt because of injury to another, pessimism about the economy may reflect dissatisfaction with the country as a whole," Ip wrote last year. "Lately, there has been a lot to be dissatisfied about: intensifying political and cultural conflict and intolerance, the pandemic, the border, mass shootings, crime, war in Ukraine and now the war in the Middle East."

Another explanation touches on the role of the media, with some experts arguing that coverage of the economy has become skewed towards bad news. A third school of thought addresses inflation. Although CPI data found that prices rose by 3.4% over the past 12 months, prices have increased by roughly 20% since 2019. So even as inflation has fallen, Americans are still adjusting to the overall rise in the cost of living over the past few years.

A separate analysis from Cummings and Mahoney found the impact of inflation on consumer sentiment fades out with a decay rate of about 50% per year". "The impact of inflation this year is half as big as the impact last year, which is half as big as the impact in the year before," Mahoney said. "But it takes two to three years for most of the impact of inflation to no longer show up in an analysis."

That lingering effect can dramatically alter views on the economy. Research by Stefanie Stantcheva, an economics professor at Harvard University, found that high inflation triggered feelings of anger, fear and injustice. "[That anger] tends to be directed at businesses [and] quite a lot at the government," Stantcheva said.

Behind Americans' doubts are statistics that go beyond jobs and inflation rates. Despite the overall economic improvement, persistently high interest rates have increased the cost of carrying debt, adding to the burden of credit card bills and auto loans. Mortgage rates have come down marginally since autumn, when they reached a 23-year high, but their elevation has added to Americans' concerns that the goal of homeownership has moved permanently out of reach.

Underlying these statistics is the grim reality of how they disproportionately affect lower-income families. Stantcheva's research offers some insight into Americans' thoughts on building a fairer economic system. Respondents displayed broad support policy proposals including raising taxes on corporations and the wealthiest households. Biden has called for such changes to the tax code, although he has struggled to get them approved by Congress, and he has incorporated his support for tax reform into his campaign messaging.

The messaging could help Biden bridge the divide between his story of economic success and the reality that many Americans are not yet feeling the benefit of the recovery.

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The vibes, to put it lightly, are off. The election is proof that the country remains divided, with fault lines so deep that we struggle to collectively define the crises themselves, let alone what has caused them or would offer solutions.

Our current dissonance comes on the tail of past, enduring traumas. A virus took our loved ones, and we fought over masks. A shooter massacred children in a classroom, and we fought over guns. A Black man was suffocated by the police, and some asked if it mattered.

In the years since we last voted for a US president, the supposed protectors of justice took away a pillar of reproductive rights from half the country, and are threatening to roll back civil rights achieved by and for millions more in the 1960s. Meanwhile, there is little consensus over what constitutes fact.

There hasn't been a moment to pause, or a moment to heal, in many years. And so the angst that American voters face is palpable, manifesting in our minds and bodies and collective choices.

Our new series, American psyche, seeks to examine that angst, to define it. The US and its people are unsettled, simultaneously depleted and ready to fight.

It is with this conflict, in and among ourselves, that we will choose our next president. It's our hope that its stories capture this moment, and that this moment, in turn, becomes an inflection point in the long road back to a thriving democracy.

Ankita Rao

For more on this series
Scan the QR code or go to: theguardian.com/us-news/series/american-psyche



With less than five months left before election day, Biden must find a way to sell his vision



◀ Teddy Siegel, 25, whose @got2gonyc account rates New York's public toilets, outside the facilities at Bryant Park
TEDDY SIEGEL

UNITED STATES

Sigh of relief

The quest to find a public bathroom in New York

By *Alaina Demopoulos* NEW YORK

Why is it so hard to find a public bathroom in New York? The city of more than 8 million people operates a paltry 1,000 toilets – that's one for every 8,000 New Yorkers. Anyone running errands in one of the five boroughs who doesn't want to pay for an overpriced bottle of water in exchange for a cafe's bathroom code must brave a decades-old public toilet that might be poorly lit, out of paper, or covered in … something.

Now Mayor Eric Adams has a plan … well, sort of. This month, Adams launched Ur In Luck (get it?), an initiative to expand access to public restrooms across all five boroughs. According to the plan, the city's department of parks and recreation will build 46 new restrooms and renovate 36 existing ones, adding stalls, improving accessibility and implementing energy-efficient features. In the meantime, the city has introduced a Google Maps layer that New Yorkers can add to their phones and use anytime they are on the hunt for a toilet.

The feature replicates one created by Teddy Siegel, a 25-year-old opera singer who earned viral fame as the poster behind @got2gonyc, which chronicles the good, and very bad, public restrooms of the city to more than 549,000 social media followers.

"It's a step in the right direction," Siegel said of the mayor's plan. "But the plan is only about 82 bathrooms in total, for a city with over 8.5 million people and millions of tourists. That's not really going to cut it."

Many of the city's bathrooms date back to the 1930s, when the Works Progress Administration and Civil Works Administration added more than 2m restrooms across the country. Today, from the outside, it appears that little has changed about these structures.

Siegel started her crusade when she couldn't find a free public toilet near Times Square, nearly having an accident inside a McDonald's. Since then, she's received messages from all kinds of New Yorkers detailing their struggle to use the restroom with dignity.

One formerly unhoused woman told Siegel that when she and her husband lived on the streets, cafes denied them bathroom codes, even if they offered to buy something, because of how they looked. An expectant mother said she had peed herself inside a Starbucks because staff wouldn't let her use the restroom. A camp counsellor said she had been forced to change children's nappies inside a Prospect Park toilet that was smeared with human faeces.

"These are the [scenarios] people deal with," Siegel said. "It shouldn't be something we're embarrassed to talk about because it's one of the most unifying parts of the human experience."

Yes, everybody relieves themselves, but some have it easier than others. "If you want to use the bathrooms, it really helps to be middle class," said Lezlie Lowe, author of No Place to Go: How Public Toilets Fail Our Private Needs. "If I need to use the restroom and have to buy a Starbucks muffin, fine, I will take that hit. But not everybody has that ability."

One public toilet worthy of note is Bryant Park. Described as "the most luxurious public bathroom in New York", it's funded by private donors, inside a beaux arts building just steps away from the main branch of the public library. An attendant beckons guests inside, where they'll hear classical music playing, view bespoke art and smell fresh flowers posted near the door and sink. Siegel lists Bryant Park as one of her favourites, with a big caveat. The bathrooms are small – just three toilets each for men and women – and gendered. This means that women languish in line while men breeze in and out.

Everyone I spoke to described Bryant Park as some sort of crown jewel, but it failed to impress me. The orchids were nice, and so are toilet seat covers that automatically change at the press of a button. But the music and frosted windows reminded me of a funeral home, and, yes, the lines were long.

Still, Bryant Park's bathrooms operate from 8am to 10pm – some of the longest hours of any restroom in New York. It turns out, the city that supposedly never sleeps does shut its bathrooms quite frequently, with most operating from 8am to 4pm.

One more go-to restroom in New York: Trump Tower, which, despite the former president's security detail theatre, is shockingly easy to just walk into and use. Siegel made a TikTok about her experience visiting the toilet last year, giving it a 10 out of 10.

"Trump is not known for his generosity, so I was not surprised by the one-ply toilet paper, but this bathroom is definitely one of the cleaner ones I've ever been in," Siegel said in the video, adding, "If you need to take a shit in New York City, I highly recommend doing it in Trump Tower."

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Number of public restrooms in New York, which in a city of more than 8 million people, works out as roughly 8,000 New Yorkers per bathroom