Mark Cavendish powers to record-breaking win at Tour de France

Sport

'The dawn of pink everything'
Barbie: The Exhibition ★★★★

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The Guardian

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Starmer hails 'new age of hope' as Britain votes in historic election

PM's allies talk of defeat, with last polls predicting huge win for Labour

Jessica Elgot
Kiran Stacey
Anna Isaac

Keir Starmer has hailed a "new age of hope and opportunity" as millions of people prepare to vote in a general election that could deliver the biggest shake-up of British politics in a generation.

The Labour leader said he was "ready for government" and his intended cabinet would "hit the ground running" if it wins today's election. With Rishi Sunak's closest allies appearing to concede defeat for the Conservatives, and the final opinion polls predicting an unprecedented Labour victory, Starmer said he hoped Britain was about to start a new chapter.

On the last day of a fractious six-week campaign, the Guardian was told Sunak had confided to his inner circle that he was fearful of losing his own seat, and a new YouGov poll predicted 16 cabinet ministers would be voted out - potentially handing Starmer the biggest majority for any single party since 1832.

Speaking at a campaign stop in Scotland, Starmer told his activists they were "on the final few yards towards the start of a historic day".

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▲ *Keir Starmer with the Welsh first minister, Vaughan Gething, right, and local candidate Martha O'Neil, left, in Whitland, Carmarthenshire, yesterday*

MAIN HOTOGRAPH: STEFAN ROUSSEAU/PA

Biden 'absolutely not' considering quitting

Robert Tait *Washington*
Joanna Walters *New York*
Chris Michael

The White House last night insisted that Biden would stay in the election as the presumptive Democratic nominee, amid mounting pressure for him to step down over concerns he is not up to the job.

The White House press secretary, Karine Jean-Pierre, said the US president was "not dropping out" after his dire performance in the first debate of the campaign last week.

She repeatedly blamed him having a cold, brought on by overly arduous foreign travel, despite incredulous scoffs and sceptical questions from some reporters at the daily briefing.

Biden, 81, separately told staffers on a call, according to multiple reports: "No one is pushing me out" and: "I'm not leaving. I'm in this race to the end and we're going to win."

He was joined by his vice president, Kamala Harris, reiterating that they are in this fight for re-election "together", according to Associated Press. She is the likely substitute if Biden drops out, although several Democratic governors are considered rivals in that scenario.

The White House earlier said Biden was "absolutely not" considering a withdrawal of his presidential candidacy, amid a furious effort by his campaign to shore up his support, including a key meeting with Democratic governors scheduled for last night, radio interviews due to air on the 4 July holiday and a TV interview with ABC airing tomorrow evening and over the weekend as he tries to bolster plummeting confidence.

The White House also denied reports by Bloomberg that Democrats were considering calling for his withdrawal.

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Dream team
Murray and Raducanu to play mixed doubles at Wimbledon

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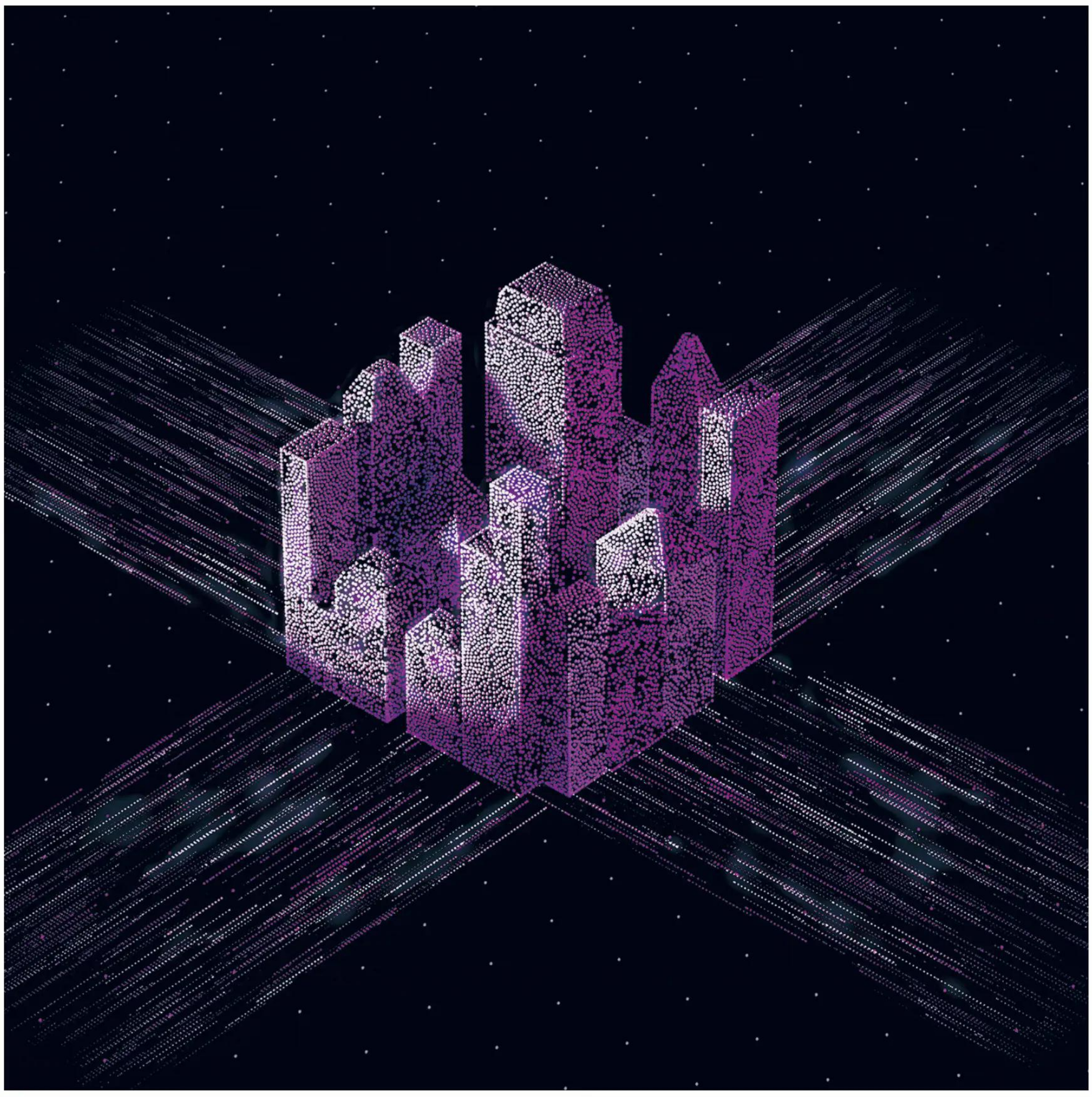

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An inquiry heard that Diane Abbott had been named in numerous reports by undercover police between 1983 and 1992
PHOTOGRAPH: JEREMY SELWYN

Undercover police 'filed reports on Abbott's anti-racism campaigning'

Rob Evans

Undercover police compiled numerous secret reports on Diane Abbott while she was campaigning against racism, a public inquiry has heard.

Abbott, who has been an MP for 37 years, has criticised the activities of the undercover officers as being racist and unjustified.

The inquiry was also told that the undercover officers had spied on another prominent black politician, the late Bernie Grant, after he had been elected to parliament, claiming that he was making "inflammatory" and "cynical" speeches that featured "conspiracy theories".

Many of the reports referred to Grant's presence at events at which his constituents were campaigning about injustices caused by the police such as deaths, the inquiry was told.

The inquiry, which is being led by the retired judge Sir John Mitting, is examining the conduct of about 139 undercover officers who spied on more than 1,000 political groups since 1968.

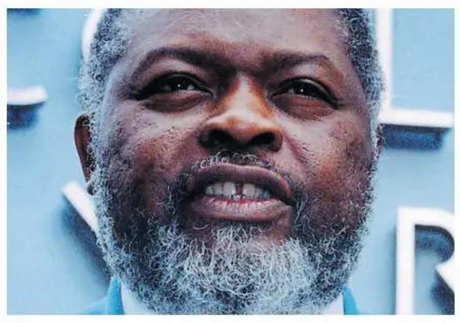
One of the issues in front of the inquiry is the extent to which the undercover officers monitored elected politicians. A round of hearings this month is concentrating on the activities of the police spies between 1983 and 1992.

Yesterday, Owen Greenhall, a barrister representing Abbott, said that documents disclosed to the inquiry revealed that "undercover officers reported on numerous events at which she spoke" during this period.

In 1987 Abbott became the first black woman ever to be elected to parliament. The former shadow home secretary is standing for Labour in Hackney North and Stoke Newington in London today.

Greenhall said Abbott featured "in reports as a speaker at events held by anti-racism campaigns. Many of the intelligence reports into groups campaigning for racial justice relate to entirely open, transparent political and campaigning events."

He said the undercover officers' infiltration of "campaigns around the deaths of black and Asian people, or the activities of black MPs, uncomfortably mirror the very complaints that campaigners were making about the disproportionate policing of black people and the lack of respect for the rights of black and Asian communities. These were groups or activists campaigning about the very issue of police racism and police accountability."



▲ *The late Labour MP Bernie Grant was the subject of a secret police file*

One undercover officer was sent to Stoke Newington and Hackney in 1983 and told to "familiarise himself ... with whatever subversive undercurrent he could detect".

Greenhall said: "This explicitly undirected deployment is symptomatic of a racist assumption that areas of London where black-led campaigns for racial justice were growing should be viewed with suspicion."

The inquiry also heard that the police maintained a secret file on Grant, another pioneering MP who was elected to parliament in 1987.

Drawing on documents released by the inquiry, Sharon Grant, his widow, said that 28 reports compiled by the undercover officers "directly mention" Grant, who was the MP for Tottenham, north London, until his death in 2000. Nine of them had been filed by an undercover officer, Kevin Douglas, who spied on groups in Haringey, north London, between 1987 and 1991.

Sharon Grant said the reports went "beyond reporting his mere presence at events, but purport to analyse the content of his speeches and his sincerity." She said one report described him as embarking "on a tour of conspiracy theories" and called him "cynical". Many reports were passed to MI5, she added.

Peter Francis, a former undercover officer who became a whistleblower, has previously revealed that he read secret police files on 10 MPs, after they had been elected to the House of Commons, during the 1990s. They included Harriet Harman, Jack Straw and Peter Hain.

On Monday, the Met apologised for using undercover officers to spy on anti-racism campaigns that were seeking to hold police to account for injustices during the 1980s and 1990s.

Ex-Post Office chair speaks of 'sincere regret' over IT scandal

Jane Croft

A former chair of the Post Office has expressed "sincere regret" for the the state-owned body's failings in the Horizon IT scandal and said it was a mistake not to show a key report on the problem to its board.

Tim Parker, who was chair of the Post Office between 2015 and 2022, told a public inquiry that he felt "deep sympathy" for the Post Office operatives affected by what MPs have described as one of the biggest miscarriages of justice in UK history.

The Post Office wrongly prosecuted hundreds of operators because of financial shortfalls recorded in their branches but it has since emerged that the Horizon IT computer system was unreliable and suffered bugs, errors and defects.

Parker said there were "failures at all levels" of the Post Office over the way it defended the high court lawsuit brought against it by Sir Alan Bates and 554 other Post Office operatives, and it "may have relied too heavily on the advice of lawyers in the way the case was conducted".

Bates' group gained a significant victory in 2019 when a judge ruled in its favour, finding issues with the IT system.

Parker said that when he took over as chair the business was in "deep crisis". He said it "absorbed billions of pounds of taxpayer money and was still losing money". He commissioned a report from the barrister Jonathan Swift looking at the Post Office's handling of complaints made by operatives about the Horizon system after ministers raised concerns.

Parker told the inquiry that, after Swift completed his report in January 2016, it was not given to the Post Office board because he had been told by Jane MacLeod, then the Post Office's general counsel, it was confidential and covered by legal privilege. "I felt erroneously that legal privilege meant that the report effectively was circumscribed," he said.

Ministers were also briefed on the report but were not given a hard copy amid fears the document could become publicly disclosable through freedom of information requests, the inquiry heard.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy wrote to Parker in October 2020 telling him it had been a "mistake" not to have shown the Swift report to the board.

"At the time I was advised and I took that advice," Parker said, adding that, in 2016, he believed he was prevented from sharing the report with other board members.

He accepted that if the Swift report had been discussed at board level it could have led to a "different approach" by the Post Office to the high court lawsuit.

"Could we have shared it? I wish we had in a way," he said. "What possible motive would I have at the time from hiding this report from my fellow board members other than receiving advice that I shouldn't share it?... I had no vested interest in trying to protect the Post Office. It was simply the advice I received and I followed it."

He added: "I would accept with hindsight [this] was a misjudgment. I am not a lawyer and I received very strong legal advice which I took ... I did that in good faith. I had no reason to deliberately hide this thing or chuck it into the long grass."

He said the board had been briefed by the former chief executive Paula Vennells about recommendations from the Swift report and the government "certainly knew of the report".

The inquiry heard that, when Parker took over as chair, he was working 1.5 days a week but by November 2017 he had asked for that to be reduced to two days a month.

"I would say I was an active, energetic chair who took a lot of time and spent time with people to understand the business," he said.

The inquiry continues.

Review

The plastic pioneer who defied her times

Barbie®: The Exhibition
The Design Museum, London
★★★★☆

Oliver Wainwright

◀ *Clockwise from left: Barbie on show; the first black doll in the series was created in 1968; Earring Magic Ken raised eyebrows in 1993*

PHOTOGRAPHS: STEPHEN CHUNG/ ALAMY; BENJAMIN CREMEL/GETTY

She has had more than 250 careers, lived in more than 50 different houses and has a shoe collection that would be the envy of Imelda Marcos . Now, at the age of 65, Barbie has taken over the Design Museum, filling its galleries with a behind-the-scenes look into the creation of her pink plastic universe.

If you're still reeling from the tidal wave of Barbiemania unleashed by last summer's hit film, don't turn away just yet. This exhibition delves deeper than Greta Gerwig's movie, exploring the fashion, architecture, design and body-image stories behind the world's most popular doll.

It is a 29cm-tall tale of shifting attitudes to women's career choices, domestic tastes, waist-to-hip ratios, furniture fads, hairstyles and more, as viewed through the savvy eyes of America's most cunning marketeers.

It shows how pre-teen aspiration has been cleverly honed, manufactured, packaged and monetised. And it reveals the unlikely influence that Barbara Millicent Roberts has had on the world around us.

If our homes are a reflection of ourselves, there is nothing more revealing of Barbie's inner psyche than the evolution of her Dreamhouse. The first was launched in 1962, three years after Barbie appeared, as a canny way to get people to buy more accessories.

But it also became a powerful symbol of independence. At a time when women were denied mortgage applications on the basis of their sex or marital status in the US, Barbie owned her own home, complete with a carrying handle.

It might have been made of cardboard, but it was a chic one-room bachelorette pad, with no kitchen in sight. While other children's toys were geared towards teaching future wives domestic skills, this was very much a place for a well educated single woman to have fun on her own.

Barbie's urban aspirations grew in the 1970s in the form of the Townhouse, its sleek modernist furniture reflecting the height of 70s style. And she embraced her more rural ambitions in 1978, with a breezy A-frame house, which the curator Danielle Thom credits partly to the influence of Frank Gehry, who designed an (unbuilt) home for Mattel's founders Ruth and Elliot Handler.

It was the last gasp of modernity before Barbie's reactionary turn in the 1980s and 1990s, when the Dreamhouse ballooned into a series of inflated McMansions - signalling the dawn of pink everything.

"This was the socially conservative era of Reagan and Thatcher," says Thom. "We see Barbie's world become much more suburban and opulent, reflecting upper middle class aspirations of the time."

Barbie's wardrobe follows a similar path. Her clothes evolve from 1950s swimwear and kitten heels, to hippie Californian surfer chic, to power-dressing business suits of the 1980s and lavish ballgowns worthy of the Met gala.

Kenneth Sean Carson's name might never appear on the Dreamhouse title deeds, but there is a small section dedicated to Barbie's dream man in the show. Just like the Barbie doll, it shows how attitudes to masculinity have changed, from the dawn of chiselled-jaw, broad-shouldered New Good-Lookin' Ken of the 1960s to the decidedly ambiguous Earring Magic Ken of 1993. Dressed in a pink mesh T-shirt, he is the best-selling Ken doll of all time - primarily thanks to an enthusiastic audience of gay men.

The big shiny ring on a chain around that Ken's neck prompted particular mirth, although Mattel's then marketing manager, Lisa McKendall, insisted that any erotic allusions were unintentional. "We're not in the business of putting cock rings into the hands of little girls," she said at the time.

A revealing line-up of dolls shows how facial features and body types have evolved, from the first black doll, Christie, in 1968, to the influence of Barbie's English friend, Stacey, released the same year.

But it wasn't until 2016 that Barbie's body became (slightly) more realistic, with the release of "petite, tall and curvy" versions, launched with the tagline: "Imagination comes in all shapes and sizes". By 2019 the range had expanded further, with prosthetic limbs, hearing aids, and wheelchairs, while last year saw the first Down's syndrome Barbie.

The black female president Barbie was released in 1992, and the Miss Astronaut Barbie launched in 1965 - four years before the first man stepped on the moon.

"You can't say Barbie is radical," says Thom. "It's a mass-produced, corporate product. But there is an element of progressivism to it."

Until 23 February

A rare first edition of an original 1959 Barbie

Hippos might fly: beasts can get four feet off ground, study shows

Ian Sample
Science editor

It takes a scientific mind to see the grunting hulk of a hippopotamus and wonder whether, given sufficient motivation, such an improbable beast might ever become airborne.

And so to researchers at the Royal Veterinary College in North Mymms, Hertfordshire, whose painstaking work reveals that when the hefty herbivores reach top speed they do indeed take off.

▲ *Researchers said the work helped reveal the evolution of locomotion*

Video showed hippos got all four feet off the ground at once up to 15% of the time when thundering along at full pelt, often to chase off rivals.

"I've struggled to get any work done on hippos before because they're so hard to access," said John Hutchinson, a professor of evolutionary biomechanics who led the research. "They're incredibly dangerous, they tend to be most active at night, and they spend a lot of their time in the water."

After finding no satisfying answer to the question in the scientific literature, Hutchinson dispatched a student, Emily Pringle, to Flamingo Land resort in North Yorkshire, where the resident hippos have room to run. She videoed the animals brought back the footage for analysis.

The researchers went through it, and more gathered from YouTube, frame by frame to see whether hippos ever managed to get all four feet off the ground at once. Writing in PeerJ, they conclude that, unlike other large mammals, hippos typically stick to a trotting movement whatever speed they are moving at, but can become airborne in a rush.

Elephants have a standard walking gait even at high speed and never fully leave the ground. Rhinos can walk, trot and even break into a gallop. The hippo footage showed that the animals, which can reach more than 2,000kg, typically trot, a movement that involves diagonally opposite legs moving in synchrony.

"It's important for our understanding of what it means to be a big animal and move on land," said Hutchinson. The work also helps researchers piece together the evolution of locomotion in large land animals, all the way back to the giant dinosaurs.

Hutchinson said the study was "as simple as biomechanics research can get", but had its challenges: clicking through stacks of videos frame-by-frame was not for everyone. "It's mind-numbing," he said. "It's one of the things in my work that I hate the most. It's really boring. Agonising."

▼ *Keir Starmer and the Scottish Labour leader, Anas Sarwar, at an eve-of-poll event in East Kilbride*
PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MACLEOD/THE GUARDIAN

Labour leader hails 'new age of hope' as Britain votes in historic election

Continued *from page 1*

"This is a great nation, with boundless potential. The British people deserve a government that matches their ambition. Today is the chance to begin the work of rebuilding Britain with Labour."

He promised a flurry of activity should he enter No 10, saying he would push back the parliamentary recess to get his legislative programme under way. He said he had told his shadow cabinet they would not be forgiven if they did not show results immediately.

In a rare sign that he is mentally preparing for victory after a deeply cautious campaign, he said: "I'm really pleased four and a half years of work is being vindicated because this has not been an easy gig."

Sunak spent the day campaigning in safe Conservative seats in the south of England. Sources told the Guardian he had privately confided his own vote in Richmond and Northallerton was too close to call.

In 2019, he won with a majority of more than 27,000 and 63% of the vote. One source said: "He is genuinely fearful of a defeat in Richmond: the risk that it could be tight has hit him hard. He's rattled - he can't quite believe it's coming so close."

Tories including the sacked home secretary Suella Braverman and the work and pensions secretary, Mel Stride, also made clear that defeat appeared inevitable. However, Sunak brushed aside the idea that the Tories had accepted defeat, claiming "millions and millions" of voters had still not made up their minds and people should "separate the frustrations which they understandably have about me, the party and the past" from their decision. "There are lots of things that you'd like to do, but the reality is that you're dealing with the situation in front of you. That's very much been the story of my political career in the last few years. You've got to play the cards that you've been dealt," he said. Asked if he would take full responsibility for whatever the election result was, he replied: "Yes".

The Tories suffered yet another blow last night as the Sun made an abrupt volte-face, putting its support behind Labour for the first time since 2005. After years of fiercely critical coverage of Labour and attacks on the leader it had called "Sir Softie", the Sun endorsed Starmer yesterday, saying: "It is time for a change ... Which means that it is time for Labour."

In Essex, where the Reform UK leader, Nigel Farage, is making an eighth attempt to enter parliament, the Tory candidate defending the seat made a last-ditch appeal to stop what he described as "the populist juggernaut". Giles Watling said that the atmosphere in the constituency had changed since the arrival en masse of Farage supporters.

He described the Reform leader's rallies as "chilling" and alleged that people had been intimidated by canvassers for the party, including a shop owner who he said had been told that "it wouldn't be a good idea" if she put up a Tory placard in her window.

Farage led a rally in the centre of Clacton to chants of "we want our country back" as he again sought to make immigration the centrepiece of his campaign. "How are you getting on for dentists in Clacton? Well then you should have come by dinghy," he said, after arriving at the rally on a military-style vehicle to the sound of Without Me by Eminem.

Labour strategists are still tense about the prospect of shocks in some unpredictable constituencies - including those where the Reform vote is surging and where Labour is facing a challenge from the Greens or independents campaigning on Gaza.

The party is braced for a number of upsets, including losing the shadow culture secretary Thangam Debbonaire's Bristol Central seat to the Greens and in places with large Muslim populations, including Birmingham Ladywood, Bethnal Green and Bow, and Dewsbury and Batley. Islington North, where the former leader Jeremy Corbyn is running as an independent, is said by party insiders to be too close to call.

Yesterday Starmer visited Wales, Scotland and England, ending at a rally in the Midlands where Labour is hoping to take seats from the Conservatives. In Glasgow, he mocked the Scottish National party for urging voters to vote for them to "send a message" to Westminster. "I don't want Scotland to send a message; I want Scotland to send a government," he said. Labour is on course to regain dozens of seats from the SNP.

Last night, the SNP first minister, John Swinney, said it was a foregone conclusion Labour would win. "The only story left in this election is in Scotland, where seats across the country are on a knife-edge," he said.

Starmer also warned against paying too much attention to Tories downplaying their own prospects. "They're trying to invite people not to exercise their democratic right to go out and vote, trying to dissuade people from voting," he said. "A once-respected party is now saying with 24 hours to go nothing that is positive, everything is negative, effectively, to run a campaign to suppress the vote."

Additional reporting **Peter Walker Journal** **Angela Rayner** *Page 4 →*

Bigger than Blair?
Sizing up a 'supermajority'

With hours to go before the polls opened, the parties' expectation management machines went into overdrive. Cabinet minister Mel Stride conceded his party faced electoral oblivion. Meanwhile, Labour activists warned of jitters over swathes of "shy Reformers" backing Nigel Farage's party.

Three final polls forecast big Labour wins, while the Tories are projected to tot up their worst ever losses with a series of long-held records set to be broken.

An MRP (multilevel regression and post-stratification) prediction from Survation said it was 99% certain that Labour would win about 484 seats, up astronomically from 206. Even the "lower end" of expectations gave Labour 447 seats, leaving the Tories on a mid-point of just 64, down vertiginously from 345.

YouGov projected Labour would win 431 seats with a majority of 212 – the biggest for any single party since 1832. More in Common suggested Rishi Sunak's party would have 126 seats and put Labour on 430.

With every poll for years, let alone the last few weeks, putting Keir Starmer's party on course for victory, we examine possible outcomes for a Labour majority and what they would mean for the party in government.

A moderate majority
0-80 seats

According to the polls, this would be the least likely outcome for a Labour majority, meaning Starmer would have at the very best matched Boris Johnson's 2019 victory, which was itself the highest Tory majority since 1987. If the majority is at the lower end of this range, there could be some battles ahead for Starmer on big issues within his party such as workers' rights, NHS reform and civil liberties. The smaller the majority, the greater the challenge for the administration to push new laws through.

A Blair-style landslide
80-179 seats

This would be a solid win for Labour, running up to Tony Blair's landslide 179-seat majority in 1997. While Labour could still lose a small number of seats in this territory, for example Thangam Debbonaire's Bristol Central constituency, which is under threat from the Greens, it would be substantially cheered by securing a majority of this size and would find it relatively straightforward to get a lot of legislation through the Commons.

A 'supermajority'
More than 179 seats

If Starmer wins what has been dubbed (mainly by Conservatives) a "supermajority", he would make history by beating Blair's historic 1997 win – taking his party from a record defeat to a dramatic victory in just one term. Not only would he be able to pass controversial legislation, it would be done with ease.

However, a majority of this scale would mean that Labour had pulled together such a broad coalition of constituencies – the most pro-immigration and the most anti-immigration, for example – that it would be a challenge to keep all of his MPs happy, or his voter coalition together at the next election.

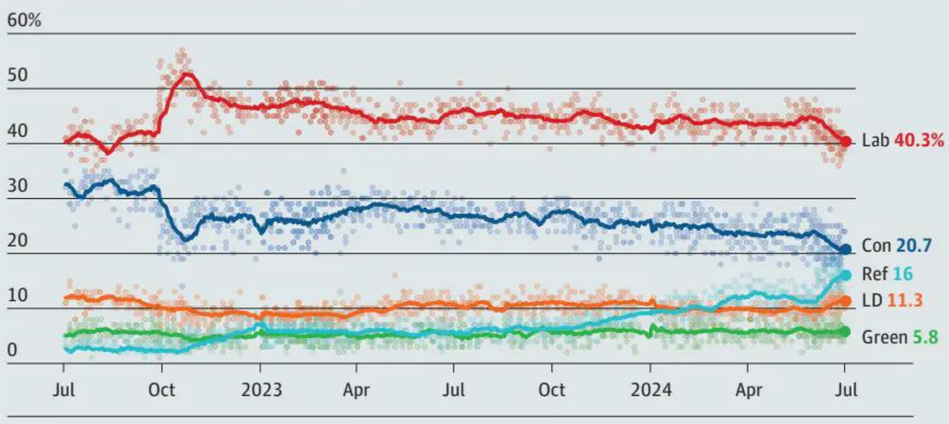
As with any government, the larger a prime minister's majority, the more scope there is for big rebellions. So a supermajority could become both a blessing and a curse for Starmer.

In the event of a supermajority and a corresponding Conservative wipeout, voters could enjoy months, or even years, of watching the Conservative party scramble to rebrand itself, including a potentially acrimonious contest to find a new leader. Starmer would also hope the economy improves quickly enough to make some substantive change across the country, with investment and reform of public services after 14 years of Tory rule.

Luke Tryl of More in Common said: "The fact that I can say Ed Davey's chance of being leader of the opposition isn't zero is extraordinary. Such a result will be predominated with questions over the future of the Tories and how strong an opposition they could form."

Aletha Adu
Political correspondent

Voting intention over time
Latest average of all polls over a moving 10-day period, showing Great Britain voting intention as of 2 July 2024



Source: Polling companies listed by the British Polling Council. Polls exclude 'don't knows'

EU UK will not rejoin in my lifetime, says Labour leader

Kiran Stacey
Political correspondent

Keir Starmer has insisted the UK will not rejoin either the EU, the single market or the customs union within his lifetime, in his firmest pledge yet that Labour will not seek much closer relations with Europe for as long as he is prime minister.

The Labour leader told reporters yesterday he did not think Britain would go back into any of the three blocs while he was alive, all but ruling out rejoining even if he wins a second term in office.

In recent days, the Labour leader has begun talking more freely about what his party would do in power, as polls continue to suggest it is heading for a landslide victory. He also said yesterday, for example, that he would seek to extend the parliamentary timetable immediately after the election to allow more time to legislate before the summer recess.

Starmer has largely avoided talking about relations with the EU during the campaign, as Labour seeks to avoid the mistakes it made in 2019 when it alienated leave voters by promising a second referendum.

Some have suggested this reluctance to talk about the issue masked a desire to pursue re-entry to the customs union or single market during a second Labour term, something other senior figures in the party have failed to rule out. Starmer insisted yesterday that this was not the case.

Asked whether he could see any circumstances in which the UK would rejoin the single market or customs union within his lifetime, Starmer said: "No. I don't think that that is going to happen. I've been really clear about not rejoining the EU, the single market or the customs union – or [allowing a] return to freedom of movement."

He repeated, however, his view that Labour could achieve better trading arrangements with the EU in certain industries. "I do think we could get a better deal than the botched deal we got under Boris Johnson on the trading front, in research and development and on security," he said.

Starmer spent his final day on the campaign trail travelling around the UK, starting with a stop in south Wales attended by dozens of Labour activists and candidates.

On the subject of Labour's legislative programme, he said: "How much legislation we will be through by the end of July I think is questionable, because the timetable is very tight, although it seems obvious to me that we'll have to extend the [parliamentary] timetable," he said. "We will be working very hard."

▲ *The Labour leader said some trade deals could be revisited*

Starmer's first days in office are likely to be spent battling various crises – including the one in Britain's full-up prisons, which the Institute for Government suggested yesterday could be alleviated by cutting average sentences.

Starmer suggested yesterday he was open to such an idea, saying: "In terms of the specific things that we will do, we'll have to wait and see what that is, but I can't stand here and pretend to you or everybody else that we can build a prison in 24 hours after the election result is called.

"We have to get on with the hard yards of sorting this mess out, but it is one massive mess."

As well as the immediate crises with which he will be grappling, Starmer has also begun to talk about the long-term challenges facing a Labour government, including taking on the threat of rightwing populism. He told reporters he saw it as part of his job as a progressive leader to combat the appeal of parties such as Reform UK, and even suggested he would be willing to work across party lines to do so. Such a scenario is playing out in France, where candidates from centre-left and centre-right parties are dropping out of the legislative election to make sure they do not stand in the way of others defeating Marine Le Pen's hard-right Rassemblement National.

Starmer said: "The very many challenges here in Europe and across the world will have to be met, in my view, by progressive answers. And it falls to us to make that argument – and to work with others to make that argument."

Harassment
Cooper angry over abuse of candidates

Kiran Stacey

Yvette Cooper has condemned the harassment of Labour candidates and canvassers, amid reports of intimidation in some pro-Palestinian areas across the UK.

The shadow home secretary warned about "intimidation, abuse and harassment", as pro-Palestinian activists in seats including Bethnal Green and Birmingham Ladywood clashed with Labour supporters.

Videos circulating on WhatsApp show anti-Labour activists following and shouting at supporters of the Labour candidate Rushanara Ali in Bethnal Green, east London, while another image shows a fake Labour leaflet depicting her with devil horns.

In Birmingham, supporters of Labour's Shabana Mahmood called the police twice over the weekend to complain about being harassed while out canvassing.

In Stoke, some worshippers at the Stoke Central mosque demanded that Labour supporters resign from its committee, warning they would start regular protests in the mosque if they did not.

Cooper said: "We cannot allow intimidation, abuse and harassment of candidates or volunteers to undermine our democracy. People can debate and disagree in a serious way without disgraceful intimidation or threats that damage communities. Everybody must be able to take part in our democratic processes free from fear, intimidation or abuse."

Labour is under pressure in many areas with high pro-Palestinian populations because of its previous stance towards the conflict in Gaza, including refusing to vote for a Scottish National party motion calling for an immediate ceasefire there.

Many Labour frontbenchers who followed party orders and abstained on that vote have since been targeted in their constituencies for doing so.

▲ *Yvette Cooper said threats aimed at candidates put democracy at risk*

The party has since changed its position and passed a separate motion through the Commons calling for a ceasefire.

The pressure has increased in recent days after comments by Keir Starmer, the Labour leader, who singled out Bangladeshis as among those who are not being deported if their asylum claims fail owing to backlogs in the processing system.

In Bethnal Green and Bow, home to one of Britain's largest Bangladeshi populations, Ali is running against a high-profile independent candidate, Ajmal Masroor.

Masroor is supportive of the Tower Hamlets mayor, Lutfur Rahman, and has the endorsement of George Galloway, who is standing for re-election in Rochdale. Masroor recently posted a video falsely claiming Starmer had a policy of "fast-track deportation to Bangladesh".

On Tuesday night, Labour volunteers in Bethnal Green said they were confronted by people who shouted: "You are Rushanara's slave. You're a fucking disgrace."

The situation had got so tense that the local Labour party emailed supporters this week urging them to continue canvassing.

Masroor said: "I do not condone the harassment and intimidation of my opponents."

▲ *Rishi Sunak on This Morning yesterday with Becky Holt, 'the most tattooed mum in Britain'*
PHOTOGRAPH: KEN MCKAY/ITV/REX

Sunak fears losing seat and is weighing return to finance or US, sources claim

Anna Isaac

Rishi Sunak has confided to members of his inner circle that he is fearful of losing his Yorkshire constituency at the general election.

The prime minister, who would be the first sitting leader of the country to lose his seat, told confidants before a Conservative rally on Tuesday that he thinks the vote in Richmond and Northallerton tomorrow is too close to call.

In 2019, he won the seat with a majority of more than 27,000 and 63% of the vote.

One source said: "He is genuinely fearful of a defeat in Richmond. The risk that it could be tight has hit him hard. He's rattled, he can't quite believe it's coming so close."

Another source added: "He's taken so much friendly fire from his own side I'm amazed he's had the strength to keep going."

A Conservative source denied the prime minister feared losing in his constituency. "The PM is confident he will hold his seat," they said.

Sunak is weighing a return to the financial services industry, whether or not he stays on as an MP, the Guardian understands. A former colleague has offered him office space in Mayfair, west London, a hotspot for hedge funds. He has also discussed spending more time in California, where he has a home, although he has no immediate plans to relocate there full time, sources said.

However, a Tory source said Sunak had "no interest" in going back into financial services and planned to stay in Yorkshire "come what may".

No incumbent prime minister has ever lost their seat, and only 12 serving cabinet ministers have lost their seats since 1974, according to the Institute for Government.

Most polls have suggested that Sunak is likely to retain his seat even in the midst of a landslide victory for Labour across the country. Analysis by the polling bodies Savanta and Electoral Calculus for the Telegraph suggests he could indeed lose in Richmond, however.

Conservative activists in Sunak's seat have been particularly alarmed by a drop-off in support among the farming community, some of whom have cited challenges arising from Brexit to their businesses and a failure to control illegal immigration, sources said.

Sunak backed Brexit and his government has failed to reduce small-boat crossings in the Channel.

Activists fear that low turnout for the Tories, rather than a swing to Labour or an outbreak of support for Reform, may prove the greatest risk for the prime minister.

Yesterday Sunak rejected claims that the election is all over, arguing that the votes of just 130,000 people could be enough to deprive Labour of a majority. He told ITV's This Morning: "I'm fighting hard for every vote … We just saw some analysis which showed that just 130,000 people can make the difference in this election. So everyone watching who thinks 'Oh, this is all a foregone conclusion' – it's not."

Mel Stride, a close ally of Sunak, said Labour was likely to win "the largest majority any party has ever achieved".

Stride, the work and pensions secretary, conceded that defeat in today's election appeared inevitable and said it was "highly unlikely" the polls were wrong.

Last month, the Guardian reported four sources' claims that activists in other parts of Yorkshire had been diverted to campaign in Sunak's seat.

Broader efforts to support cabinet members' campaigns are also under way, with activists diverted to Braintree, where the home secretary, James Cleverly, is defending his seat. Similar operations are in progress in Hertsmere for the deputy prime minister, Oliver Dowden, and in North East Cambridgeshire for the environment secretary, Steve Barclay. All were won, like Sunak's, with majorities of more than 20,000 at the last general election.

'Exit polls spoil the fun'

David Dimbleby, the BBC election broadcast grandee, has said exit polls are "the worst invention ever" because they take the fun out of election nights.

The veteran broadcaster announced to the nation the result of 11 exit poll projections as host of the BBC's general election coverage from 1979 to 2019. But speaking to the BBC's Newscast podcast, he said he had never liked them.

He said: "The exit poll is the bane of the broadcaster's life. It's the worst invention ever brought in – it's like a thriller and you're given the answer before we've even started on page one."

However, Dimbleby said the sound of the BBC's election night theme tune, which he hummed, still "sends a shiver down my spine". Matthew Weaver

Sketch

John Crace

You know it's all over for the Conservatives when even the PM's fall guy goes rogue

There was one man missing from the group of cabinet ministers who shuffled into the National Army Museum in Chelsea for Rishi Sunak's London farewell. Even Jeremy Hunt, Steve Barclay and Lord Big Dave had made the effort to rise from the dead for one last hurrah. To say their final goodbyes to the political stage. To hear Boris Johnson trash what passes for their government's legacy.

It wasn't pretty. No one has done more than Johnson to debase the office of prime minister; the man who slept and partied while others died only had kind words for himself. Rish! did not rate a mention. This was yet another leaving party Johnson was not going to miss. A final chance to put the boot in.

The man who had gone awol was Mel Stride. Sunak aside, no one has done more in this election to fight the mediocre fight for the Tories. Time and again, the work and pensions secretary has been required to go on the TV or radio and explain away the latest fuck-up. How leaving the veterans on the beaches was a sign of respect. How betting on the election date was normal. That sort of thing. But Stride had done enough pretending. The smiling though gritted teeth ended right here, right now.

Yes, the Tories had lost. They were going to take a hammering. He sounded almost pleased, as if his party deserved it

Sunak must have gone to bed relatively content on Tuesday, safe in the knowledge that his go-to fall guy would be picking up the pieces on yesterday morning's media round. There was nothing in Emma Barnett's voice that she expected anything out of the ordinary as she started interviewing Stride for Today on BBC Radio 4. Except he broke the politician's fourth wall. Instead of dead-batting "The only poll that counts is on 4 July", he wouldn't shut up. Yes, the Tories had lost this election, he said. They were going to take a hammering. He sounded almost pleased, as if his party deserved everything it had coming.

Barnett wasn't the only one to be wrongfooted by this. Labour were too. Keir Starmer sensed a ruse to lure voters into thinking it was all over. To get them to stay at home out of a sense of inevitable futility. Only this wasn't a directive from Tory head office. Has there been anything about this campaign that would lead you to imagine the Conservatives could come up with such sophisticated messaging? The truth is much more prosaic. With less than 24 hours before polling day, Stride had discovered some self-worth. He'd realised he didn't have to talk shit just because some No 10 teenager had told him to. He could tell the truth. No wonder Sunak looked so stressed on the This Morning sofa later. If you've lost Mel, you've lost everything.

Even Ben Shephard and Cat Deeley – not the fiercest of interviewers – seemed to take pity. Almost apologetically, Shephard brought up the Mel Stride interview. "It's over, isn't it?" he said. Think of the lovely things you can do once you're out of No 10. He could spend more time with Britain's most tattooed lady, another guest on the show. Or have a cookery show on Channel 5. Sad face from Rish!. He wasn't interested in food. His favourite meal was a sandwich.

It's hard to know if what we are left with is delusion or denial. Shephard mentioned Johnson's appearance the night before. "Yes," said Sunak. "It was great to have the Conservative family back together." How can a man so misread the room?

Carla Denyer

Key times How election night will unfold

After six weeks of campaigning, election day is here. Here's how the evening could unfold after polls close at 10pm:

10pm

The appearance of the exit poll is the first moment of the election night to produce a tangible sense of where the voters stand.

Used since 2005, the poll, devised by election guru John Curtice and statistician David Firth, is based on voters in about 130 polling stations, who are asked to cast a second replica ballot as they leave polling stations in England, Scotland and Wales.

The results are shared with the BBC, ITV and Sky. In the past five general elections, the margin of error has ranged between 1.5 and 7.5 seats. In 1992 and 2015, it predicted a hung parliament with the Tories as the largest party, but the Conservatives ended up with majorities on both occasions.

11pm

Based on initial estimates, only about eight results will be in by 1am tomorrow morning. Blyth and Ashington, and Houghton and Sunderland South, both in north-east England, are expected to be first at about 11.30pm tonight, and are forecast to be Labour holds.

Midnight to 3am

The quietest period of the night. About 85 seats are expected to be declared over the three hours, of which only a handful are "ones to watch" for upsets and bellwethers.

Basildon and Billericay, in Essex, is expected to declare at about 12.15am. The Tory party chair, Richard Holden, was controversially selected to run there after serving the last five years as MP for North West Durham, nearly 300 miles away.

George Galloway

Jacob Rees-Mogg

Rochdale, where George Galloway won a chaotic byelection in February for the Workers party, is expected at about 2.30am. Some polls have suggested Galloway is in for a shot at holding the seat against a challenge from the political journalist Paul Waugh, who is standing for Labour.

3am to 5am

This window is the busiest and arguably most significant of the night. Results are expected for 443 of the 650 constituencies, meaning that by 5am, roughly 530 seats will have declared and there will be a clear direction of travel.

Will the justice secretary, Alex Chalk, hold his seat in Cheltenham? Will the former Tory leader Iain Duncan Smith return in Chingford and Woodford Green, where he has been MP since 1997? In Bristol Central, will Labour's Thangam Debbonaire's chance of returning to parliament be scuppered by the Green party gaining its second ever MP in co-leader Carla Denyer? We will find out between 3am and 4am.

In Glasgow, a flurry of seats between 3am and 4am across the city will give us a flavour of how Labour and the Scottish National party are performing in Scotland.

In Wales, Plaid Cymru has its biggest hopes pinned on the Ynys Môn and Caerfyrddin constituencies, both expected to declare between 3am and 4am.

Elsewhere around 3.30am, Jeremy Hunt will find out if he is returning to parliament as MP for Godalming and Ash, a newly formed constituency.

Then it is over to the Nigel Farage show in Clacton, where at about 4am we will find out if the Reform UK leader will finally be elected as an MP after seven failed attempts.

At about 4.30am, Jacob Rees-Mogg will see if he is elected to represent North East Somerset and Hanham.

Rishi Sunak will learn his own fate in the newly formed constituency of Richmond and Northallerton around 4am. The remaining seats should be declared by 7am.

7am

By this time we should know whether time is up for the Conservatives, whether the pollsters were right, and whether Labour lived up to expectations, and whoever is set to form the government will be preparing various addresses from podiums.

Jamie Grierson, Jim Waterson and Ashley Kirk

'Time for a change' The Sun backs Labour in late switch

Alexandra Topping
Jim Waterson
Tom Ambrose

The Sun newspaper made an abrupt volte-face on the eve of the general election, supporting Labour for the first time since 2005.

It comes as the Times, another News UK title, also offered cautious support for Keir Starmer, albeit seemingly as a result of the newspaper accepting Labour will win anyway.

After years of fiercely critical coverage and personal attacks on the leader it dubbed "Sir Softie", the Sun endorsed Starmer yesterday with the simple message: "It is time for a change ... Which means that it is time for Labour."

The move was welcomed by the Labour leader, who said: "I am delighted to have the support of the Sun. It shows just how much this is a changed party, back in the service of working people, and that is the change on offer tomorrow."

In an editorial, the Times told readers that "democracy requires change", stopping short of urging people to vote Conservative to keep a potential Labour administration in check.

The newspaper said Starmer was "clearly a sensible man, flexible and pragmatic", and praised the shadow health secretary, Wes Streeting.

While saying the paper "wants the next government to succeed", however, it said Starmer's party "has yet to earn the trust of the British people" and had been "sparing with the truth about what it will do in office".

Speculation about who the Murdoch-owned newspapers would support has been rife since Rishi Sunak called a surprise general election on 22 May, with the Sun leader of that day calling his decision an "almighty punt". But with less than 24 hours before polling stations open, the Sun changed the main story on its website to its newspaper front, featuring a picture of a football pitch, a small picture of the England manager, Gareth Southgate, and the headline: "As Britain goes to the polls it's ... time for a new manager (And we don't mean sack Southgate)."

The leader starts by praising Sunak but says "the Tories are exhausted".

It goes on to argue Reform is a "one-man band which at best can win only a handful of MPs", while the Liberal Democrats are dismissed as "a joke".

This, it adds, "means that it is time for Labour". It praises Starmer for changing "his party for the better", saying he has rooted out anti-semitism, been solid in support for Ukraine and Israel, and has promised to build the "new houses and infrastructure we need".

The Financial Times, Sunday Times, Guardian, Observer, Daily Mirror and Sunday Mirror have backed Labour. The Daily Telegraph, its Sunday edition, the Mail, Mail on Sunday, and Daily and Sunday Express have pledged their support to the Tories.

The campaign rollercoaster

Winners and losers after a long six weeks

Esther Addley

The general election campaign is nearly finished at last, and we trust you've enjoyed the ride. Soon it'll be all over bar the counting - but, for now, who and what were the real high and low points of the past six weeks?

On the up

Camera doorbells

Knock, knock. Who's there? Theresa May. Theresa May who? Ba-dum tish, etc.

No, really, it's Theresa May, and could I give you a leaflet?

Be honest, who had cold-calling former prime ministers going viral on their election bingo card? Unexpected or not, both May (in Perth and Kinross-shire) and David Cameron (in Hamble Valley, Hampshire) have been captured on video doorbells leaving messages for homeowners who were either not home or crouching behind the sofa with the TV hastily muted.

Creating new former Conservative prime ministers, to be fair, is one of Britain's last great manufacturing industries, so there are a lot of them to go around. (Although the campaign contributions of Liz "I'm not the worst PM ever" Truss and Boris "two holidays" Johnson have arguably been less helpful.)

Not that everyone welcomes the advent of Ring doorbells. In Kingston and Surbiton, one camera recorded two Tory canvassers apparently discussing the number of immigrants on the street, while Labour's candidate in Aberdeen South was filmed telling a resident the party "didn't bother at all" in 2019 to help the Tories win.

Maybe best stick to just popping through a leaflet, eh?

Ed Davey's best life

Is it statesmanlike? No. Has it got anything remotely to do with potentially being the third largest party in Britain's lower parliament, or with any of the problems facing the country? Not even slightly.

But for sheer relentless abandon in tossing his dignity to the four winds, and then doing it again and again for six long weeks, Ed Davey's campaign on behalf of the Lib Dems has been a thing of giddy joyfulness. Which is not something one ever said about Tim Farron.

From the campaign launch on Windermere (number of wholly accidental tumbles into the lake - five) to a look-Mum-no-hands bike ride in Wales to playing giant Jenga in Stockport to having a makeover on This Morning (there were many, many, many more), Davey has been putting the fun back into fundamental reform of the health and social care system. And who's to say "I'm daft, me!" can't be a winning electoral strategy?

It concluded with a bungee jump from an Eastbourne crane and the most surreal photo in political history. Will anyone ever want to tour factories in a hard hat again?

Mel Stride

If there's something catastrophic in your polling numbers, who you gonna call? Mel Stride! If there's something weird about the way all your other cabinet colleagues have gone awol, who you gonna call? Mel Stride!

Yes, not to jump the gun or anything, but if anyone deserves a head-pat in Rishi Sunak's resignation honours it is surely Stride, the hardest-working man in British broadcasting. Day after day at Tory campaign HQ, faced with some cock-up or dodgy bet or other, it was Stride who leapt up to declare: "I ain't afraid of no Mishal Husain!"

On the morning of 26 June alone, Stride appeared on Times Radio, GB News, Sky News, BBC Breakfast, BBC Radio 4, LBC and Good Morning Britain, the last of which had even made a little montage comparing his fashion choice with his five previous appearances.

Fair play to the man - anyone who can describe Labour's 20-point lead to Sky News as "wafer thin" has an assured career in PR ahead whenever his constituents wish him to take it up. "How big are the wafers in your house?" scoffed an unconvinced Kay Burley.

Stride seem to change tack slightly yesterday, telling the Today programme that Labour is likely to win "the largest majority that this country has ever seen".

Has the wind has been knocked out of his sails at last? More likely he's hoping to persuade people they needn't bother going out to vote.

Metaphors

British voters are not the most subtle of thinkers - at least, politicians evidently believe so. How else are we to interpret the leaden reliance on very, very literal metaphors to make their points? Take the Tory manifesto launch at Silverstone race track, accompanied by leaflets reading: "Revved up and ready to go." Do you get it?

◀ *A rain-soaked Rishi Sunak announces the general election on 22 May. He went on to head the 'worst campaign of all time'*

▶ *Nigel Farage is hoping to copy the success of the Reform party of Canada, which wrecked the Conservatives in 1993 and then took them over*

Granted, it's not quite as literal as Davey at the Lib Dem manifesto launch at Thorpe Park - "I've been told that an election is a rollercoaster so I'm going to go on a rollercoaster. Thank you" - but Sunak did his best, telling the assembled photo-fodder activists that the choice of venue illustrated that "the economy has turned the corner" and had the "hi-tech and oomph" that Britain needs. Yes, thank you, Paul Verlaine.

(Labour has carefully steered Keir Starmer away from doing anything overly metaphorical, or indeed interesting - although they did crack in the past week and issue nightmarish "attack pillows" warning against waking up to a Tory government.)

The problem with leaning into metaphors, though, is that everyone else gets to have a go, too. The wheels are coming off! They're the pits! He's crashed and burned! Most pressingly - did no one point out that turning a corner at Silverstone just brings you back to where you started?

◀ *Will Rishi Sunak pull off a last-gasp Jude Bellingham-style scissor kick to win a surprise victory? (No)*

PHOTOGRAPH: MATTHIAS SCHRADER/AP

Plunging down

Toolmakers

On the plus side: it worked. In April, just 11% of people knew what Starmer's dad, a toolmaker, did for a living (he was a toolmaker); by June, after a relentless campaign of talking-about-the-toolmaker-thing, it was 27%, according to More in Common.

One might argue that at the point when audiences began laughing when Starmer mentioned his father's job (toolmaker), the repetition thing had perhaps backfired. On the other hand, toolmaker's son Starmer is clearly proud of his father, Rod, a toolmaker, and his toolmaking job making tools.

Is the problem that no one knows what a toolmaker actually is? Maybe we need to talk more about toolmakers, something the electorate would no doubt welcome at this stage.

Or perhaps Starmer missed a trick in not re-upping his joke from his 2021 conference speech: "My dad was a toolmaker. Although in a way, so was Boris Johnson's."

The Liberal Democrat leader, Ed Davey, lives his best life on the campaign trail in Edinburgh

PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF J MITCHELL/GETTY IMAGES

Canadian politics

Nigel Farage is many things, but an original thinker is not necessarily one of them. When it came to rebranding the Brexit party in 2020, he looked to Canada and the example of the insurgent rightwing party – called Reform – that almost obliterated the governing Progressive Conservatives in 1993 before in effect taking them over.

Some have long warned of potential parallels, but it wasn't until Farage declared a month ago his ambitions both to stand as an MP and to inflict the same thing on the Tories that the broader political establishment scrambled to beef up on grunge-era Canadian federalism, Saskatchewan oil and wheat revenues and the influence of Québécois provincialism for clues as to what could happen. "People often think: 'Well, things can only get so bad,'" one Canadian political expert told the Guardian. "No, things can get really bad – and then worse." Oh great, because there was I thinking there was too much good news around.

The England men's football team

Let's leave aside Switzerland for the time being. England's footballers have had a challenging time of it at the Euros so far, creaking under the weight of national expectations and held back by the apparent lack of a single left foot among them. The last thing they need is a bunch of politicians piping up.

Well guess what, England! Consider yourselves co-opted into an election campaign.

For Sunak, that meant a post on X, immediately after the team's dramatic last-minute rescue from defeat by Slovakia on Sunday, reading: "It's not over until it's over." Evidently emboldened by the Times' description of his trip over a ball early in the campaign as a "Cruyff turn", he now invites us to picture him performing a 94th-minute scissor kick to reverse his party's fortunes. And I for one can totally see him pulling it off.

Starmer, too, posted on X after the match, his own message reading: "Never in doubt," suggesting things always go exactly as predicted and that thing that everyone expects to happen always, always happens.

Davey, meanwhile, has restricted himself to the briefest of messages in his football posts during the campaign: "Get in!" (16 June). "Back of the net!" (20 June). "What a comeback!" (30 June). The message: "I love my country, but right now I am rolling downhill into a bath of jelly while wearing a sumo suit. Let me know if anyone scores."

'Failing is important': good advice from the artist Marina Abramović

Performance art

Look, it's not been a great one for the Conservatives, has it? That's not the pinko Guardianista viewpoint – just ask Bloomberg ("the worst election campaign in living memory") or Huffpost ("Are the Tories running the worst election campaign of all time?") or the former prime ministerial aide who called it "political Dignitas".

From the washout Downing Street launch to the Titanic-themed press conference, from asking the Welsh whether they were looking forward to England in the Euros to failing to feed sheep, from fleeing D-day commemorations to losing his own campaigns director over alleged bets on the election date – Sunak has had an absolute shocker.

"If I woke up on the morning of 5 July to find out that it had been an elaborate performance art piece instead of a genuine campaign, I would not be surprised," one senior Conservative told Huffpost. To which performance artists reply as one: Don't blame us, guv.

As it happens, arguably the most famous of their number, Marina Abramović, was at Glastonbury at the weekend where, dressed as a giant couture peace sign, she led a vast Pyramid stage crowd in seven minutes of absolute silence.

She had been "terrified" before the performance, she told the Guardian. "I could completely fail ... but I want to take the risk. Failing is also important; you learn from failing as well as succeeding."

Just maybe there will be a lesson there for some people for the coming days.

Photo ID

What voters need to know about the new requirements

Martin Belam

What photo ID do you need to vote?
There are 20 acceptable forms of valid ID for you to be able to cast your vote, of which the principal ones are a passport or driving licence.

Passports can be issued by the UK or any EU country, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein. Passports from any of the 56 Commonwealth countries are also accepted.

A driving licence is acceptable if it is a UK or Northern Ireland photocard or issued by an EU country. Licences from Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, the Isle of Man or any of the Channel Islands are also accepted.

A Northern Ireland electoral identity card is also valid, as are national identity cards issued by EU countries, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein.

Also accepted are a Pass card, a blue badge, a biometric residence permit, a defence identity card (MoD form 90), a voter authority certificate and an anonymous elector's document. Photo ID from university or college enrolment is not considered valid. But several types of concessionary travel documents are accepted.

Which types of concessionary travel documents are valid?
A range of travel documents issued to older people and disabled people are valid. They are: Older person's bus pass; Disabled person's bus pass; Oyster 60+ card; Freedom pass; Scottish national entitlement card; 60 and over Welsh concessionary travel card; Disabled person's Welsh concessionary travel card; Northern Ireland concessionary travel pass.

What if I don't have any of these?
You can apply for a photo ID for elections in England, Scotland and Wales, called a voter authority certificate, but the deadline for this election has passed.

What if my valid form of ID has expired?
The government says you can still use your ID even if it has expired, provided that the photo still looks like you.

What ID do I need if I am using a proxy vote?
If you are going to vote on somebody's behalf, you need to take your ID with you.

Why has photo ID for voters been introduced?
It appears to be trying to solve a problem that did not really exist. Data from the Electoral Commission said in elections in 2022, there were seven allegations of personation at polling stations, as the offence is officially known.

What has the impact been?
About 14,000 people were turned away from polling stations at May's local elections in England because they lacked the right ID, with the overall number likely to be considerably higher, the elections watchdog has said.

Full house?

Voters plan night of Tory wipeout bingo

Sarah Marsh
Consumer affairs correspondent

Eyes down for a full house tonight: a "Portillo moment" at this election could cause people across the country to leap out of their seats crying "bingo!" as a range of games and wallcharts have been released to celebrate a potential Conservative wipeout.

Products on Etsy include a Tory 2024 Meltdown wallchart, which awards bonus points for any losing MP made a sir or dame by their party. The wallchart has several lines of Conservatives ranked from "the inevitable", including Jonathan Gullis, to "there is a God", including Suella Braverman and Jacob Rees-Mogg.

One set of bingo cards, on sale as a digital download for £2.39, urges: "Have fun with friends on election night, as the results come in and you see the Tory losses racking up!" while another selling for £4.98 for 10 cards says: "Even if you lose the game, you still win!"

Labour is on course to win the biggest majority of any postwar government, according to an Ipsos poll.

On some games players just need to mark off Tories as they are voted out, while on other versions players have to spot a Labour majority of more than 100, the sound of D:Ream or any mention of Boris Johnson.

Chris Barker, an artist who has sold more than 2,200 of his Conservative Wipeout Bingo cards, said: "What I wanted was a bingo card where you could cross off all the Tories as they lost their elections as a sort of therapeutic and cathartic thing."

He said he had spent hours making a note of candidates standing. "I got them all together and sold 10 cards in the first 10 minutes. I thought – 'this is big' – so I carried on."

He said even though the printed version could not be delivered in time for the election if ordered now, people were still buying it. "People may want it as a souvenir as well," he said.

He has also set up an online version, which will go live tonight, at Portillogeddon.com, in a nod to the 1997 election when Michael Portillo lost his seat. Secret features mean that if, for example, Liz Truss lost her seat, a lettuce would fall from the sky.

General election 2024

'Political vegetable broth'

Public sector workers give their views on Labour leader

David Batty

The Labour leader, Keir Starmer, pledged in an interview with Sky news last month, that a Labour government "will properly fund our public services. I believe in our public services".

But to what extent do grassroots public sector workers believe in him? The Guardian has spoken to doctors, teachers, social workers and local government officials who mostly expressed muted support for Starmer. Many said they wanted a bolder and more radical vision from Labour after years of austerity.

Others said they were planning to not vote for Labour for the first time, because they believed Starmer had moved the party too far away from its traditional leftwing values.

Amanda Lyons, 66, a children's social worker in Cardiff, said while she was previously a loyal Labour voter, she would not vote for them this time. While this was partly due to the vagueness of Labour's plans for public services, the key factors for her were Starmer's failure to condemn Brexit and to acknowledge the genocide in Gaza.

Lyons said: "Starmer's trying to make Labour as big as possible, by widening the party so much that it can include anybody. But if you're not going to take [a stance] about important moral values and issues, what does it say about him and his party? He's so obsessed about getting into power that he's just not prepared to say anything that's going to maybe wind any particular group up.

"I don't want a Tory government but my conscience won't let me vote for Labour."

Andrew Lynch, 70, a semi-retired primary school teacher from Mitcham, London, said he respected that Starmer was playing a "careful game" in order to get elected, and was "desperate not to make any mistakes".

Lynch, who works for a multi-academy trust in London, added that he saw Starmer's bland reputation as a positive after the Conservative leaderships of Boris Johnson and Liz Truss. "Frankly, after the buffoons we've had governing us over the last few years, I feel that what we need is grown-up government. He might be quite quiet. He might not be fiery, but he is authentic."

Louise, 40, a deputy headteacher from Essex, said she thought Starmer was wise to set out quite careful and cautious policy positions. "I do feel quite positive because I think he's managing expectations," she said.

However, she hoped that his seemingly bland vision was just the starting point for a Labour government. "What I hope is that he does become bolder as the situation improves."

Margaret, 50, a town planner from Kent, felt similarly. "Starmer's political vegetable broth," she added. "The Tories have been sugar-laden cakes and jellies and foie gras and caviar, and we've all got a sore tummy. We need some bread and butter, and some plain soup."

Dr Jason Holdcroft, 42, a consultant NHS psychiatrist from Derbyshire, said he was "deeply disappointed by [Starmer's] rejection of the radical and transformational plans and values that he campaigned for in 2019", when Starmer was serving as the shadow Brexit secretary under Jeremy Corbyn.

However, he hoped that this was simply political pragmatism. "I hope that's not too charitable an assessment: that he's tied himself up by going all out to win this election, which is understandable."

On a more positive note, Holdcroft said he thought Starmer had genuine concern for the welfare of the less fortunate. "I hope I'm not deluding myself," he added, "but I do think he genuinely wants to see tax reform to be able to properly fund public services. I am confident that we will at least see some genuine integrity and not the shameless profiteering of the Tories."

Georgia Nicholls, 25, a local government officer from Grantham, said while Starmer "doesn't really come across as a visionary or particularly charismatic", she respected that he was being strategic in order to win power.

▲ *Lauren Ellis, a teacher, said Starmer's vision was 'unambitious'*

▲ *Dr Jason Holdcroft was 'deeply disappointed' by Starmer's direction*

Nicholls had voted Conservative in 2019, partly because she did not feel comfortable voting for Corbyn. She praised Starmer's focus on making Labour more electable, adding that his pragmatism had made it harder for the Conservatives and the media to score "cheap points", such as accusations that Corbyn did not bow properly at the Cenotaph.

Jamie, 28, a firefighter from London, said his support for Labour in this election was largely based on its commitment to repeal the Conservatives' anti-union laws.

While he said he had initially thought Starmer would be neoliberal like Tony Blair, he now thought Starmer would be more focused on improving the welfare state, due to policies such as a national wealth fund.

However, he is still not clear what Starmer stands for: "I've seen him have a party political broadcast with [the football pundit and former player] Gary Neville. I don't know what that was all about - are you trying to get tradesmen who watch football to vote Labour? But he didn't really say anything about public services, or what he's actually going to do to make England feel like a nice place to live."

Lauren Ellis, 45, a secondary school teacher from Kettering, Northamptonshire, said she would only be voting tactically for Labour to get the Conservatives out in her constituency. "Starmer's vision is so unambitious. There is no more 'left' in the Labour party, Starmer has made sure to stamp it out. The poor, the disabled, the young, the vulnerable and all the other groups that need help have no one to advocate for them."

Andy, a sixth-form lecturer from Stoke-on-Trent, said he thought that Starmer had unduly received "harsh treatment for being boring". He said the Labour leader should "own that rather than trying to prove he's not".

However, he was also concerned at Starmer's willingness to abandon radical reform in favour of positions "that are going to get more centre to right Conservatives, and maybe even some Reform voters on board".

Although the teacher feels more attuned to the Greens and the Lib Dems, he felt supporting them would be a wasted vote in his constituency. He added: "I probably will end up voting Labour. But I'll need a shower after I've done it."

A tale of two elections

Voters in Calais and Dover find themselves united by sea of despair

Jon Henley
Calais and Dover

It was raining in Calais on election day. A thin, penetrating, miserable drizzle blowing in off the Channel that was entirely in keeping with the mood of a great many voters as they headed to the polls in France's most momentous ballot in living memory.

"It's all going to shit," said Xavier Hembert, voting with his son Arthur on the rue Philippine de Hainaut, named after Edward III of England's French-born wife, much loved here ever since she persuaded him not to decapitate the port's burghers in 1347.

"No one's happy, we're going round in circles. It feels like we've tried everything and now we're lost," Hembert added.

"But people are right not to be happy. They vote, then nothing changes. So now we're going to get the extremes. Whereas *you're* coming to your senses."

Twenty-four hours later and 30 miles away, Sue King, in Dover, was unconvinced. "I'm fed up with them everywhere," she said outside a charity shop on a (briefly sunny) Biggin Street. "I'm annoyed and frustrated. They're the same - in America, France, here."

Politicians spent their time "slagging each other off", King said. "They don't tell us the truth. Promise they can wave a magic wand and fix it all." A staunch Conservative, she will vote Green this time. "The planet. Something that really matters," she said.

France and the UK - close neighbours, historic rivals, impossible friends - vote this week in elections likely to confirm a tidal wave of discontent against governments led by smartly dressed forty-something men overwhelmingly perceived as toxic and out of touch.

There, though, the similarities may seem to end. In France,

▲ *Dover's White Cliffs tower over a town whose residents feel abandoned by politicians. Under rainy skies in Calais last Sunday, left, ballots were cast with little enthusiasm*

PHOTOGRAPHS: GRAEME ROBERTSON; GUILLAUME BINET/THE GUARDIAN

Emmanuel Macron saw his centrist coalition relegated to a distant third place in a first round won convincingly by the far-right, anti-immigrant National Rally (RN) of Marine Le Pen. A left-green alliance dominated by the radical insurrectionists of France Unbowed (LFI) came second, and the only real question left for Sunday's second round is the size of the far right's majority and whether it will be relative or absolute.

In the UK, a moderate Labour party led by an earnest if uncharismatic lawyer is on track for a crushing victory that should topple Rishi Sunak's government after 14 years of tumultuous and increasingly radical Conservative rule defined by Brexit and its aftermath.

> ***'Both votes are being driven more by anger and resentment than for something'***
>
> **Philippe Marlière**
> *Professor of politics*

"It's hard not to conclude," said Mujtaba Rahman, an analyst with Eurasia Group, "that as the UK is emerging from politically dysfunctional chaos with a strong government and coherent leadership, France is about to leap headfirst into its own."

Clément Beaune, a former Macron minister, warned this week that the far right in power would be "dramatic, not for the president or his party but for all the French. As our British friends turn the page on nationalist demagogy, let's not go there ourselves."

But regardless of the elections' radically different likely outcomes, a cross-Channel hop found voters on both sides expressing remarkably similar concerns.

Philippe Marlière, a professor of French and European politics at University College London, said: "Both votes are being driven more by anger and resentment than actually *for* something. The vote in France is overwhelmingly anti-Macron. Yes, there's that fear of status loss, of the future, that makes immigration a big issue – often via housing, healthcare, education – in both countries. But look, in France it's about seven years of Macron. In the UK, it's about 14 years of the Tories."

In Calais, where many locals regularly encounter some of the ugliest consequences of Europe's unresolved migration crisis, and a sitting centre-right MP, Pierre-Henri Dumont, is trailing behind his far-right challenger Marc de Fleurian after the first round, voters of all persuasions concurred.

"So many of us are just fed up," said Nolwenn Le Berre, a port office worker voting for the leftist alliance New Popular Front (NFP). "This government has had it. It's been about doing things that help the wealthy. People want real, demonstrable solidarity."

Mickael Bouchard, 42, was voting RN, for similar reasons. "I've had enough of politicians who say the same things then do nothing," he said. "We've tried everyone else: the right with [Nicolas] Sarkozy, the left with [François] Hollande, the centre with Macron."

Even on two salaries, Bouchard said, he and his wife were in trouble. "Everything's gone up. Everything." By most measures France's economy is faring relatively well, but Macron's pro-business policies and autocratic style have played disastrously here.

"There's just so much to be fed up about," Bouchard said, listing Macron's changes to the retirement age and unemployment benefit, as well as the rising price of diesel and electricity, a lack of doctors, shuttered shops. Plus, he stressed, "insecurity. Of course immigration's a big problem."

Yann, 28, a docker and unionist, summed it up. "A damn good kicking, so maybe things will finally move," he said. "Stopping this endless coming and going of parties that couldn't care less about working people. These arrogant bloody … politicians."

Vincent Boulanger, 43, a production manager and loyal centre-right voter, said he had spoiled his ballot. "I voted, but for the right to vote," he said. "But I can't bring myself to vote for any of them. They won't listen. France's politics are in real, deep crisis."

Dominique, 46, said: "My feeling is just one of sadness. I voted left, without conviction. But I think we're headed far right. That's populism, nationalism, lies. I'm a customs agent, I see many Brits. You know well where all that leads."

Many others said the same. On the ferry to Dover, tucking into a £10 breakfast box of sausage, bacon and beans and giving every appearance of appreciating it, Manfred Bär, 63, part of an affable tour group of German senior citizens, made a joke.

"So, we are going from France to Britain," he beamed. "For once we can say that we are jumping out of the frying pan, but not also into the fire, can we not?"

'They don't tell us the truth.' Sue King

'This government has had it.' Nolwenn Le Berre

'It's all going to shit.' Xavier Hembert and son

'They won't listen.' Vincent Boulanger

'People in Dover are very unhappy.' Lakmir Kaur

But across the Channel, in one of the most deprived towns in Kent, sentiments felt strikingly similar to those in Calais. "Things need to change," said Anik, a taxi driver. "Look around. Dover is going down. We used to have a lot of tourists, now very few.

"The politicians haven't helped, have they?"

Behind the counter of her gift shop, Lakmir Kaur agreed. "I've been here 11 years and I'm not interested in politics," she said. "But people are very unhappy. Before Brexit, before lockdown, it was busy. Lots of people came. And people were happy."

Dover, where Labour's candidate, the military veteran Mike Tapp, is hoping to overturn the 13,000 majority won by the controversial former Conservative MP – and Labour defector – Natalie Elphicke in 2019, handles more than 70% of the UK's overseas goods trade but sees precious little of the benefit. It has also witnessed the arrival of many of the 120,000-plus people who have crossed the Channel in small boats since 2018.

Zen Pullen, dressed in pink in her wheelchair, said she had not yet made up her mind who to vote for but it would not be the Conservatives. "They've knocked people like me," she said. "Offering vouchers instead of money. So many families in poverty."

Sitting outside the Prince Albert, Alfie Gardner said he would not be voting. "No point," he said. "They sent me the papers but I never bothered. If Labour get in they'll only be there 18 months. They haven't got the wherewithal to fix this mess, no one has."

In the bed store he owns and runs, Chris Getliffe, 50, a Conservative voter in recent elections, said his choice would be motivated by "a complete lack of trust in the government we have, and the simple fact I'm fed up with being lied to".

He hoped Labour might make some difference but felt it would be an uphill battle. "I have a young family and getting a doctor's appointment's impossible," Getliffe said. "The lack of investment's so obvious, everywhere you look; I've never known the roads so bad. But the country's in so much debt now."

On Dover beach, Diane, 71, was sitting sunning herself after an early afternoon swim with a friend. She, too, was a Conservative voter of many years standing, but not this time. "I've already voted, a postal vote. It was for [the Reform party of] Nigel Farage," she said. "He speaks his mind and he says what a lot of us feel," said Diane, who preferred not to give her surname. "We're a small island, people are falling off the edges. The schools can't cope, nor the NHS. He won't get many seats. But it's how I feel."

Waiting at Dover Priory station for a (twice-delayed) train to London Victoria, Stephanie Yates, 46, a beautician, said politicians needed to "stop acting, stop playing stupid games with each other, stop making promises they can't keep. Just tell it to us like it is. And, please, fix the stuff that matters to us."

She could have been in Calais.

The Tory years

How it all went down – and down, and down, and down …

Esther Addley

Come with me to another country far away, where things are a little bit different. In this fantastical land, young people can live and work in any country in Europe. You can swim in a river without catching Weil's disease, you can see your doctor when you need to.

Things aren't perfect in this country, but 40,000 people rely on food banks instead of 3.1 million in Britain today. People live half a year longer. Five-year-olds are taller.

Reader, you'll never guess: that country *is* Britain! Or it was until 2010, when a parade of five Conservative prime ministers, seven chancellors and eight home secretaries (two of whom were Suella Braverman) climbed behind the wheel of Britain's temperamental but mostly reliable family hatchback, and drove it into a hedge.

If you're feeling nostalgic, or just possibly a little angry, here is a recap of the lurches, plunges and nausea of 14 years on the Tory rollercoaster.

2010 A coalition?

On 6 May 2010, the election delivered a hung parliament, ushering in frantic horse-trading in which Nick Clegg's Liberal Democrats emerged the winners as kingmakers. (Or possibly, judging by the party's near wipeout five years later, the losers.) They joined David Cameron's Conservatives in coalition.

It would be characterised, their leaders said in their loved-up appearance in Downing Street's rose garden, by "freedom, fairness and responsibility". Which may or may not be how you recall that particular government.

A significant achievement was the legalisation of same-sex marriage. One notable victim of the coalition arrangement, on the other hand, was the Lib Dem pledge on tuition fees, for which the party is still apologising.

Austerity – don't blame us

Talking of saying sorry, whose abject apology for their "crass", "stupid" and "bloody offensive" actions made them "burn with shame" for years afterwards? No, not Cameron and Clegg for imposing the biggest slash-and-burn deficit-reduction programme of any advanced economy since the second world war, but rather Labour's Liam Byrne, whose ill-judged joke to his successor as chief secretary to the Treasury was still being flapped about by Cameron five years later. Byrne's one-liner – "I'm afraid there is no money" – became the coalition's fig-leaf to blame Labour for an ideological programme to slash public services, with savage social consequences.

"We're all in this together," George Osborne, the chancellor, told the Tory party conference in 2012. Odd, then, that austerity hit disabled people nine times harder and cut the incomes of the poorest by a tenth, while – oh look! – making no difference to the richest.

2012 London's Olympic party

A year after the capital and other parts of England rioted following the police shooting of Mark Duggan, prompting agonised handwringing about the state we were in, London hosted the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, allowing everyone to decide that actually, weren't we great?

The rosy glow didn't quite spread to the politicians – Osborne was booed while presenting medals – but 29 golds and new national heroes in Mo Farah and Jessica Ennis-Hill cemented Britain, we absolutely, definitely knew, as a modern, outward-looking, internationalist nation, for ever committed to its NHS and delighted by its multiculturalism. Right?

Also, Boris Johnson, then London's mayor, made a prat of himself dangling on a wire. Oh, how we laughed.

2014 Scotland the brave?

Should Scotland be an independent country, yes or no? Keep the pound or kick the PM? Better off together, or eff off Westminster? A febrile and at times ill-tempered referendum followed, in which Scots were warned they would lose many BBC services and the pound, Labour MPs commandeered a train, and oil-rich Shetland threatened to secede from Scotland if it left the union. Commentators seriously discussed whether the second pregnancy of the then Duchess of Cambridge could tip it for the no vote. And who knows, maybe it did, as ultimately, Scotland opted to stay in the UK.

▲ *When everything was rosy: David Cameron and Nick Clegg coalesce. Below, Theresa May's weird moves*

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHER FURLONG/AP

2015 Tories, uninterrupted

Another election, another surprise: not the ousting of Cameron, as the polls had suggested, but an outright win for the Tories. Labour's Ed Miliband had been undone by a bacon sandwich, his multiple kitchens and his own oversized gravestone, though the collapse of Labour's Scottish vote didn't help.

His replacement, by Jeremy Corbyn, delighted Labour's left – and many Tories. Five years to come of Cameron and Osborne, this time unhindered by coalition partners. Voters had voted for stability with them, rather than chaos with Miliband. What could possibly go wrong?

2016 Brexit

So – that stability. There's nothing like winning one referendum to convince you that you can breeze through another, though a bucketload of Etonian self-confidence doubtless doesn't hurt. Euroscepticism had convulsed the Tories for decades, but Cameron believed he was the man to finally stop them "banging on about Europe" with a referendum on Britain leaving the EU.

To be fair, when he confirmed the date in February 2016, bookies were offering odds of 2/7 that Britain would stay, and even as results were coming in after the vote, many thought a leave win was inconceivable. But EU inflexibility, remainer complacency and Johnson goofing around the country in a big red bus covered in lies worked their magic.

And an MP, Jo Cox, was murdered with a week to go.

Leave won, surprising campaign outrider Nigel Farage, who had briefly conceded defeat, and arguably even Johnson, who was booed outside his house the next day. Cameron said toodle-oo, and a lot of people reposted his stability tweet thinking they were the first. (Retweets to date: 51,000.)

The London 2012 Olympics. There were few winners in the political sphere – right, Dominic Cummings on his way out

PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN; HENRY NICHOLLS/REUTERS

▲ *Matt Hancock, the face of Britain's response to the Covid-19 pandemic*

2016 The Maybot

Who would be Tory prime minister No 2? (Don't worry, they speed up.) Not Johnson, after his former supporter Michael Gove declared him unfit, not Gove, after everyone else declared him an absolute bastard, and not Andrea Leadsom, though she came close. Ultimately it was Theresa May who would survive and inherit the throne, for a while at least. May said she would lead a "one nation" government and unite the country, which was nice, and went to Washington to hold Donald Trump's hand, which was as weird as her dance moves.

Leading by 20 points in the polls, inspiration struck her on one of her favourite walking holidays, in Snowdonia, and she called an early general election. Which, it turns out, is not always a good idea.

2017 The worst election decision ever (part one)

"At this time, more than anything else, the country needs a period of stability," May said as results were coming in from her snap election. Pity that. It turned out the polls had – yet again – been wildly wrong. May had lost her small majority of 12, and had now found herself forced to suck up to "our friends and allies in the Democratic Unionist party" to have a working majority. They, quite reasonably, thought they were about to have some things go their way. Bless.

2017-2019 Brexit negotiations

What's your favourite deal – Australian-style, Canada plus, Norway, or just no? Do you prefer your votes indicative, meaningful or people's? Windsor framework or Chequers deal? Article 10 or article 50? And could somebody please explain the backstop?

Did anyone actually understand the complexities of Brexit? The electorate certainly didn't. (As it happens, neither did Johnson, according to Whitehall officials. May did her best to knit a deal out of the tangle of options, but was thwarted by Tory zealots, an EU that had run out of patience, ceaseless manoeuvring from her rivals, and her lack of political deftness. Unable to forge an agreement, May tearfully resigned.

▲ *Liz Truss, with Kwasi Kwarteng, was given the chance to press the button on the new economic boom – and it did go boom* PHOTOGRAPH: STEFAN ROUSSEAU/PA

▲ *All rules during Covid were followed, said Johnson, despite pictures to the contrary. He was found to have misled MPs* PHOTOGRAPH: SUE GRAY REPORT/PA

2019 The Johnson omnishambles

How to sum up the three-year Johnson premiership? Well, one of his first acts as PM, you'll remember, was to unilaterally prorogue parliament, which the supreme court would later call "unlawful, void and of no effect", and one of his last was to admit he had known a Tory whip was an alleged groper when he had appointed him, despite having previously said he hadn't. It took the resignations of a mere 57 of his ministers before he finally agreed to step down.

Between those dates, after winning a majority in yet another general election, Johnson did manage to get a Brexit bill past parliament and steer Britain out of the EU, winning him lingering adoration in sections of the Tory right and costing the country £100bn a year in lost output.

2020 Covid, Cummings, PPE

A few other things happened too. It was Johnson's curse and Britain's great tragedy that when a terrible new virus emerged, he was the person in charge. Once he could be persuaded to pay attention, he ignored the risks, delayed lockdown, flirted with "herd immunity" and scandalously failed to protect people in care homes.

▲ *Rishi Sunak gets stuck in at the Big Help Out for the king's coronation*

His chief adviser, Dominic Cummings, broke the rules, but was roundly backed by his boss, detonating the government's credibility to enforce them for anyone else. The urgent scramble for PPE, of which health workers were woefully short, was tackled by setting up an (unlawful) scheme that favoured politicians' mates with multimillion pound contracts.

2020-2021 Party, party, party

"All guidance was followed completely." "People in this building have stayed within the rules." "I certainly broke no rules." "Those people [drinking together in the garden] were at work." Johnson's denials of rule-breaking parties at Downing Street were repeated and emphatic, even as evidence mounted of more and more (and more) boozy knees-ups.

The parliamentary privileges committee would later find Johnson deliberately misled MPs in his denials, and was complicit in a "campaign of abuse and attempted intimidation of the committee" as it tried to investigate him.

2022 Liz Truss v the lettuce

As the new King Charles III put it at his first audience with Johnson's replacement: "Back again? Dear oh dear." A little over 80,000 Conservative party members had imposed Truss on the nation after Johnson's eventual removal; two days after appointing her as prime minister, Queen Elizabeth died.

It meant Truss's first significant act was to read a lesson at the funeral; her second, four days later, was to present with her chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, a radical mini-budget so wild it plummeted the pound to its lowest ever level against the dollar, caused a catastrophic surge in mortgage rates, and earned a stinging rebuke from the International Monetary Fund. She has blamed the "deep state" and "groupthink" for the fiasco, but after 49 days she was gone, for ever to be associated with a Daily Star stunt that livestreamed a slowly wilting lettuce to see which of them would last longer. It was a win for the greens.

2022-present Ready for Rish!

And so, it was the man even Tory members rejected who Britain was lumbered with next – multimillionaire plus-one Rishi Sunak. Would the saviour of food-bank Britain, a country in which 8 million adults and 3 million children are going hungry, prove to be a former investment banker who is richer than the king? Hmm.

In the sense that he has already lasted 12 times as long as his immediate predecessor, Sunak at least steadied the ship. He has reiterated Britain's firm support for Ukraine and trumpeted falls in inflation as proof his policies are effective.

Rising immigration numbers and relentless pressure from his right flank prompted Sunak to double down on Tory plans to export people seeking asylum to Rwanda. The supreme court dismissed the wheeze as unlawful, ruling that Rwanda wasn't a safe country. The government then introduced a new law to declare that it was.

The scheme will cost £1.8m per person sent to Rwanda, official figures show; so far precisely no one has been compelled to leave.

2024 The worst election decision ever (part 2)

Or will it be? Sunak's decision to go to the country six months early provoked his MPs' fury, but maybe he knows something they – and every poll that puts his party a consistent 20 points behind Labour – do not. If the pollsters are right, it could be goodbye to the Tories today. But if we've learned anything from the last 14 years, it is that nothing is predictable. And it is certainly not the case that things can only get better.

▲ George Cottrell, left, was with Nigel Farage in Clacton when the Reform leader had a milkshake thrown at him PHOTOGRAPH: CARL COURT/GETTY IMAGES

'Like a son'

The convicted fraudster at Farage's side

Emine Sinmaz
Dan Sabbagh
Rowena Mason

It's an enigma at the heart of Nigel Farage's general election campaign: why has a 30-year-old businessman, self-confessed high-stakes gambler and convicted fraudster flown in from a glamorous Balkan resort to act as his unpaid aide?

George Cottrell was at Farage's side when the Reform UK leader got milkshaked on the campaign trail in Clacton, and was on a private helicopter flight with him from Ashfield in Nottinghamshire to London. Cottrell was there at a London hotel, ear glued to his phone, as Farage hosted a press conference. He also pitched up in Merthyr Tydfil for the party's manifesto launch in Wales.

Reform says Cottrell is just one of many party volunteers on the campaign trail, but his extravagant lifestyle and past controversies raise some awkward questions for Farage. Those who have followed the election campaign in the Essex coastal town of Clacton, where Farage is making his eighth attempt to become an MP, describe Cottrell as integral to the operation – frequently physically close to the leader and his security detail.

One photograph from earlier in the campaign shows Cottrell in a beer garden in Clacton with Farage. Both men are in similar poses: smoking and on the phone.

The British locations are a far cry from Cottrell's usual lifestyle. He is said to drive a £300,000 Lamborghini, to stay in an £8m townhouse when in London and to have taken Westminster friends including Farage out to his home in Montenegro by private plane from London's Biggin Hill airport.

Cottrell, who was born in Britain, moved to the tiny Balkan country some time after 2017 when he was convicted in the US and then spent eight months in an American jail after being accused of offering money-laundering services on the dark web. He served time for a single count of wire fraud after 20 other charges were dropped as part of a plea deal.

He is now a familiar figure in the luxurious coastal resort of Porto Montenegro, where he mostly lives, with its gleaming marina a haven for the super-rich and their shiny mega-yachts, upmarket restaurants and designer shops such as Dior and Rolex.

Sources told the Guardian that he has entertained friends at a villa during trips to the country, with one particular bedroom favoured by Farage, although he reportedly owns a more modest apartment at the five-star Regent Porto Montenegro hotel.

Cottrell's time in Montenegro has not been without controversy. Last month, he reportedly lost a staggering €20m (£16m) in a single poker game, which prompted a public row with his former girlfriend Andjela Vukadinovic, the reigning Miss Montenegro.

▲ Cottrell spent 8 months in a US jail after facing 21 fraud charges in 2016

Speaking to the Guardian in Montenegro a fortnight ago, the 23-year-old said Cottrell and Farage were "very close".

"[George] respects him so much. He always talks about him like Nigel is No 1 for him. So it's all about Nigel. I mean earlier, it wasn't that much, like he was mentioning him every day, but it was fine for me. But the last three, four months he mentions him all the time," said Vukadinovic, a Miss World hopeful.

Cottrell is also known for his links to the political scene of Montenegro, including the country's now prime minister, Milojko Spajić, and his Europe Now! movement. As Spajić was on the brink of power last year, a search and arrest warrant was sought against Cottrell in relation to accusations that he was illegally financing the party. His lawyers said a presiding magistrate rejected the request as being without basis and "part of a political game", and described the episode as part of a political disinformation campaign because of Cottrell's links to the insurgent politician. Vukadinovic said Cottrell had been close to Spajić, who she had previously met in Porto Montenegro but that they had drifted apart this year.

"I don't know why, what happened there. [George] doesn't want to speak about that – I asked him a few times, which is weird for me," she said.

Cottrell's business in Montenegro is registered as a company called Private Family Office, set up under the name George Co. He used the same name on a passport when he flew by private jet last summer, according to the Montenegrin newspaper Vijesti. Lawyers for Cottrell said he had official permission to use the shortened name for reasons related to his personal safety.

Cottrell, born in Gloucester into an aristocratic family, was privately educated on the luxury Caribbean island of Mustique followed by Malvern College in Worcestershire.

Nicknamed "Posh George" by the Brexit campaign donor Arron Banks, Cottrell was previously a volunteer for Farage in 2016, at the age of 22, after being introduced by his uncle Lord Hesketh, a former treasurer of Reform's predecessor party Ukip, according to Banks' memoir.

He was with Farage on the night of the Brexit referendum, when he sensed a gambling opportunity. "At 10pm, I couldn't believe I was still getting 9/1 [for a majority leave vote]," he told the Telegraph newspaper afterwards. "We were in our campaign office and I was tracking all the major stock indices, the dollar and pound currency markets. When it got to 3am, I was getting my managers out of bed to get me another 50 grand on here, another 50 grand there, to short sterling. I just couldn't help myself." Cottrell claimed to have won a six-figure sum from shorting the pound – betting it would fall on the referendum result – but said that he had promptly "lost most of it the next day" on a horse.

Later that year, Farage was present when Cottrell was arrested on money-laundering charges in the US as they were preparing to return to Britain after the Republican convention. Banks' memoir recalls that Cottrell was

▲ Ex-girlfriend Andjela Vukadinovic says Cottrell is very close to Farage

▼ *Cottrell and Farage in 2019; they were together on the night of the 2016 Brexit referendum*

PHOTOGRAPH: MARK KERRISON/ALAMY

initially detained on the way out and they thought it was because he was "from a very wealthy family and routinely carries around thousands of pounds".

After the arrest, Banks wrote: "Nasty shock today as Nigel got Posh George's full rap sheet. It's not pretty. He's been indicted on 21 counts of crimes including money laundering, wire fraud and blackmail." He added that he thought Cottrell was "very young and I suspect he's been caught up in something way over his head".

Cottrell was jailed for eight months by a judge in Arizona after ultimately pleading guilty to one count of wire fraud in a plea deal under which the other charges were dropped. The crime was committed in 2014, before he worked for either the anti-EU party or Farage, who once described Cottrell as "like a son to me".

In an interview with the Times in 2017, Cottrell's mother, Fiona, said reports that her son was wealthy enough to have a £250m trust fund were "ridiculous, absolute rubbish". After coming out of prison, Cottrell talked about having made his living before 2016 working for offshore banks, including "enabling and promoting aggressive tax avoidance programmes".

His lawyers have said he does not have access to family money, but has made his considerable wealth by working since the age of 17 – and that he no longer works for offshore banks on tax avoidance schemes but has a portfolio of investments.

After the 2017 conviction, Farage appeared to distance himself from Cottrell, saying he could not be accountable for everything people around him got up to. But the pair have been photographed together several times since then, once in Montenegro at a polo match in 2019, again having lunch in west London in 2021 with Cottrell's former on-off girlfriend Georgia Toffolo, a reality star and influencer, and again at Scott's restaurant in Mayfair this year.

Vukadinovic said Cottrell had been gearing up to support Farage over the last few months but that she had no idea what his role was. "It's something about Nigel's campaign, that's all I know because I don't ask too much. I'm not really interested in that job. So he's full time there [in the UK] preparing Nigel for that, I guess," she said.

Vukadinovic, who met Cottrell at a bar in Tivat, Montenegro, three years ago, said she was present after he lost €20m in the Triton poker series, a high-stakes tournament held at the five-star Maestral casino resort in Budva on the Adriatic coast.

She said he gambled away the money over several hours in the VIP room, emerging a few times to update her. She said she left after trying to warn Cottrell, who admitted in an interview with the Telegraph in 2017 to having a gambling problem in his youth that he later kicked.

Vukadinovic said she believed Cottrell had been playing against Chinese billionaires and celebrities. "It was maybe five, six, seven hours, he was all the time on the same table [playing poker] in the private room," she said. "He was like losing, winning, losing, winning. And I was like, 'this is gonna be a disaster' – and it was."

He has also been a regular customer at the Salon Privé, a private members' club and casino in Tivat, and has brought friends from Britain to the casino. Last year police tried to raid the casino, looking for a crypto machine. Such machines are used to buy and sell cryptocurrencies like bitcoin.

The casino's lawyers told the Vijesti Online publication at the time that the crypto machine had been legally acquired for legitimate cryptocurrency trading.

Cottrell has repeatedly said he has no financial ties to the casino and company records show it is owned by a Malaysian accountant from London. Cottrell's lawyers said he was aware of reports that a crypto machine had been imported but that he had never operated such a machine.

Cottrell declined to comment on the record. Reform and Farage were also approached for comment.

▲ *Cottrell lives mostly at the luxury Adriatic resort of Porto Montenegro*

Labour
Party activists fear squeeze from Reform

Jessica Elgot
Deputy political editor

Labour candidates and activists are privately braced for a surge in support for Nigel Farage's hard-right Reform UK in north-west England and the Midlands, with some forecasting a margin of fewer than 2,000 votes between the two parties in some seats in today's general election.

In certain Conservative-held seats, campaigners told the Guardian that the Tories were likely to be pushed into third place by Reform, with one citing the phenomenon of "shy Reformers" affecting the results.

In some more diverse constituencies, there has, in effect, been a double splintering of the vote, with candidates on the left or campaigning on Gaza appealing particularly to BAME voters, coupled with growing Reform support among white voters who might have otherwise have been targeted as Tory switchers to Labour.

"Our target voters are vulnerable," one candidate said. "A last-minute issue could sway them to Reform."

Reform UK – whose central pitch is a crackdown on immigration, and several of whose candidates stand accused of making racist remarks – started the campaign polling at about 11%, but after the surprise return of Farage as leader, support for the party rose to an average of 16% last week.

One Labour organiser in the East Midlands said it was possible Reform could win a Labour-held seat in northern England or the Midlands. They said it was almost impossible to track the party's support via their canvassing data and compared the phenomenon to 2015, when Labour had no way of measuring the scale of the vote for Reform's predecessor party, Ukip. "I expect some shocks," the activist said.

Seats where activists are understood to have raised concerns about Reform include two in Oldham, as well as Leigh and Atherton, and Makerfield. Other places where Reform is expected to perform well are Bolsover and Sherwood Forest, and in Barnsley.

A senior organiser in the Midlands said Labour would comfortably win their Tory-held seat but that Reform would "definitely come second".

▲ *Labour party activists said it was hard to track support for Reform UK*

They said they were concerned the Reform vote was higher than expected because of the high rate of postal vote returns. Those who vote by post are likely to be older and therefore skew to the right.

"Our postal vote turnout is 80%. That means that some of those former Tories are still voting – and I don't think they are all voting Labour," they said. "We're holding back Tory attacks in the last day because we think it might shift people to Reform."

The organiser said they did not rule out a shock defeat for Labour in one or two seats, particularly those with a majority white population. "We have some very weak candidates in some places, especially where we are challenging Tories," they said.

Activists said they had seen little evidence of an effective Reform ground campaign but that they suspected many of the undecided white voters they were encountering were breaking for Reform, especially where a local issue was at play, such as a hotel for asylum seekers or the imposition of electricity pylons.

Most candidates and activists still believe Labour is on course for a comfortable victory but say efforts will be made immediately to persuade senior Labour strategists of the need to devote significant attention to Reform come the next election.

"It has all the makings of a Ukip effect of taking votes off us and the Tories 50-50, making Farage more influential," the activist said. "We seem to be sleepwalking towards it, with lots not realising the huge shift that is about to happen."

Male voters
'I may be part of the Andrew Tate trend'

Ben Quinn

Nigel Farage has said he is part of a "similar phenomenon" to the misogynist influencer Andrew Tate, as he claimed that there were forces in society trying to "stop young men from being young men".

The Reform UK leader used the last day of campaigning before the general election to appear alongside Derek Chisora, the boxer and Reform UK supporter, in a boxing gym in Clacton, where he is making his eighth attempt to be elected as an MP.

Farage spoke of what he described as the feelings of "emasculation" among young men, saying: "Look at the football. You know, they're told: Go to Germany. Please don't drink more than two pints of beer. You what? Don't chant at the football matches. You what?

"Oh, and don't tell jokes that might offend the Germans. I mean, come on. We are trying to stop young men being young men. That's why Tate got the following he got. So maybe I'm part of a similar phenomenon."

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.

The Reform UK leader's comments come against the backdrop of concerns about the rise of role models and influencers associated with a model of toxic masculinity.

A poll of 200 people by JLP found this week that Reform UK was the top choice of political party among 23% of those aged 16 to 17. However, among young men it was on level pegging with Labour, on 35%.

Farage's appearance came a day after a second Reform candidate defected to the Conservatives. Georgie David, who had been Reform's candidate for West Ham and Beckton, said the vast majority of people standing for the hard-right party were "racist, misogynistic and bigoted".

Liam Booth-Isherwood, who had been the candidate for the Erewash constituency in Derbyshire, also cited "reports of widespread racism and sexism in Reform" as his reason for defecting to the Tories last week.

35%

Proportion of Reform supporters among young men – level pegging with Labour in the same age group

Farage defended his appearance alongside Chisora – who was given a 12-week suspended prison sentence in 2010 after being found guilty of assaulting his then girlfriend.

He was mobbed by young boxers at the gym in Clacton where he appeared with Farage.

Asked if Chisora was a good role model, Farage replied: "You show me someone who has lived a perfect life and never been in trouble. For these young kids he's a fantastic role model. He's got a huge following in the country. And yeah, he is a good role model. Imperfect as we all are."

After taking part in a mock sparring with Farage for the cameras, left, Chisora reluctantly answered questions about his own past, but insisted he was "born again".

Young men who spoke to the Guardian at the gym – which was run by a supporter of Farage – cited his social media presence as one of the factors why he had prominent following.

"You feel there has been a massive decline, so maybe he's the change we need," said one who cited Farage's position on immigration and opposing supposed "woke" culture.

"I think the world is way too woke and it's past the point of repair. You have to be careful about anything you say. Even supporting him can cause you to be labelled a racist."

But in a sign that other policies had cut through, another approvingly cited Reform UK's proposals to lift the income tax personal allowance to £20,000.

Higher Covid vaccine rates 'may reduce symptoms of child asthma'

Anna Bawden
Health and social affairs correspondent

Higher Covid vaccination rates could help protect children against asthma attacks, according to research.

While past studies have shown vaccination helps prevent Covid illness, the authors believe this is the first study to assess whether Covid inoculation is associated with reductions in asthma symptoms, by preventing viruses in children with asthma.

US researchers examined parent-reported asthma symptom prevalence in more than 150,000 children in the National Survey of Children's Health between 2018-19 and 2020-21, broken down by US state. The data was then compared with the proportion of people aged five years and older who were vaccinated in 2020-21, as well as age-adjusted Covid mortality rates and any face mask requirements.

Researchers then calculated any changes in reported childhood asthma symptom prevalence.

With each increase of 10 percentage points in Covid vaccination coverage in US states, there was a 0.36-point reduction in the rates of child asthma symptoms as reported by their parents, the study calculated.

Dr Matthew Davis, the chief scientific officer at Nemours Children's Health and the lead author of the study, said: "We found that states with higher population-level vaccination rates against Covid-19 were more likely to have larger decreases in the proportion of parents reporting that their children had asthma symptoms, compared to prior to the pandemic."

Asthma flares are often caused by a viral respiratory infection. Studies of flu vaccination indicate that asthmatics who are vaccinated against flu are less likely to have asthma attacks that require hospital admission.

Seif Shaheen, a professor of respiratory epidemiology at Queen Mary University of London, said that the results should be treated with "extreme caution", as there were likely to be multiple factors associated with childhood asthma.

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12%
Fall in British fruit yields from 2022 to 2023, according to Defra data. Vegetable yields were down 4.9%

PHOTOGRAPH: JILL MEAD/ THE GUARDIAN

Farmers call on next PM to act after disastrous crop yields

Helena Horton
Environment reporter

Fruit and vegetable production has plummeted in Britain as farms have been hit by extreme weather.

The country suffered the wettest 18 months since records began, spanning the 2023-24 growing year, leaving soil waterlogged and some farms totally underwater. The impact on harvests has been disastrous. Data from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) shows year-on-year vegetable yields decreased by 4.9% to 2.2m tonnes in 2023, and the production of fruit decreased by 12% to 585,000 tonnes.

Scientists say that climate breakdown caused by the burning of fossil fuels is likely to bring more extreme weather to the UK, including more frequent floods and droughts.

Farmers said they were unable to plant owing to the wet weather, and statistics showed that the growing area of vegetables was down by 6.5% to 101,000 hectares. Last year's dry early summer meant those who could not irrigate found it hard to plant.

Wet weather in autumn and winter meant the planted area of brassicas decreased by 3.1% to 23,000 hectares, leading to a 0.4% fall in broccoli yields and a 9.2% year-on-year fall in cauliflower. Onion volumes were down by 13% with a fall in production area of 3.6%. Carrot yields fell by 7.2%.

Farmers said the next government needed a plan for food security as the climate became less predictable.

Guy Singh-Watson, the founder of Riverford fruit and vegetable boxes, said the data was a "wake-up call", adding: "We urgently need a long-term and legally defined plan from government - not just on the environment, but to tackle the exploitative practices of supermarkets and their suppliers. It's high time we reinstated honesty and decency in our supply chains."

The chair of the National Farmers' Union horticulture and potatoes board, Martin Emmett, said: "These stark statistics are sadly not a surprise. Recent shortages of some of the nation's favourite fruit and vegetables shows we cannot afford to let our production decline and that we must value our food security.

"The UK horticulture sector has the ambition to produce more and is an area ripe for growth, but it needs investment from the next government to match our ambition by backing our horticulture strategy."

Julian Marks, the group chief executive of Barfoots Farms, told the Grocer: "The latest set of Defra stats highlight the challenges growers have faced in the last 12 to 18 months with weather-related risk and extraordinary levels of input cost inflation."

The UK government recently published its first official food security index, which said the UK's status was "broadly stable" but faced "longer-term risks" from climate change.

The issue is briefly mentioned in the manifestos for today's election. The Conservatives pledged a UK where the "national, border, energy and food security are put first" and said they would introduce a binding target to enhance the UK's food security, while Labour similarly said in its manifesto that "food security is national security" and that the party would "champion British farming while protecting the environment".

The Liberal Democrats promised to put an extra £1bn a year into the farming payments schemes.

Defra was contacted for comment.

Marta Kostyuk

Naomi Osaka

Coco Gauff

The top crops

Female players push boundaries at Wimbledon

Emine Sinmaz

Forget stuffy traditions, Wimbledon's female tennis players have been pushing the boundaries this year with their imaginative on-court outfits.

Coco Gauff, the world No 2, has worn a custom-made, cut-out dress that fans have said is reminiscent of Serena Williams' 2019 Wimbledon outfit. The 20-year-old US Open champion said she had asked New Balance for a design featuring cut-outs, which gave her dress the appearance of being a two-piece.

Speaking after defeating Romania's Anca Todoni in straight sets yesterday, Gauff said she had tried to be creative with her on-court style while sticking to Wimbledon's strict all-white dress code. "I mean, honestly, Wimbledon there's not too much you can do in the colour department. We just tried to do something different with the cut of the dress. I like to wear crop tops a lot. That cut is kind of supposed to be like a crop top, [in] an elegant Wimbledon-type way," she said.

She added: "I just think of Wimbledon as a tradition. Even with my nails, I always usually get like French or white here just to match that elegance of it, so I think that was the inspiration from it. The only thing you can really do here is play with the texture."

Gauff, who has previously said she planned her grand slam outfits a year or two in advance, said her dress was not inspired by Williams. "Serena has just done every iconic dress fit in the game that unintentionally you can have something inspired by her," she said.

Naomi Osaka, the four-time grand slam champion who returned to the tour this year after the birth of her first child, also wore a distinctive custom-made set as she battled the American Emma Navarro, 23, on Centre Court yesterday. Osaka was defeated 6-4 6-1 in the second round match.

The 26-year-old former world No 1's Nike two-piece, featuring asymmetric ruffles and a pleated skirt, divided fans. But Wimbledon described it as "an elaborate outfit that wouldn't have looked out of place at the Met Gala".

Meanwhile, Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk wore a white V-neck outfit inspired by her own wedding dress, during her first-round triumph against Rebecca Šramková.

The 22-year-old 18th seed's sleeveless, open-backed Wimbledon dress was designed by Wilson, the Chicago-based sports equipment and apparel brand that designed her wedding dress.

It featured a short underdress under a long silk organza gown with hand-appliquéd flowers.

Wimbledon's all-white dress code dates back to the late 19th century, but the fashion has evolved over the years. In 1965, Italy's Lea Pericoli wore a mini dress with a floral detail, while the American Anne White wore a Lycra unitard 20 years later.

Raducanu's election plans

Emma Raducanu yesterday said she did not realise voting for the general election was happening today, and that she would be having a lie-in instead.

The 21-year-old former US Open champion was asked about her plans after she thrashed Belgium's Elise Mertens 6-1, 6-2 yesterday and moved into the third round of Wimbledon.

At a press conference, Raducanu was asked if she would vote before practising today, and if she would keep an eye on the general election in the evening.

"No," she replied, smiling. "I think I'll have a lie-in, then I'll come to practise.

"I didn't even know it was tomorrow, to be honest! Thanks for letting me know." Emine Sinmaz

Study links use of weight-loss drug to higher risk of serious eye condition

Tobi Thomas *Health and inequalities correspondent*

People who have been prescribed a weight-loss injection could be at a higher risk of developing an eye condition that can lead to blindness, a study has found.

The study found people with diabetes who were prescribed semaglutide, most commonly known under the brand names Wegovy and Ozempic, were more than four times more likely than the general population to be diagnosed with non-arteritic anterior ischemic optic neuropathy (Naion).

Naion is a disorder in which the arteries that supply blood to the optic nerve in the eye become blocked. The condition can lead to loss of eyesight as a result of subsequent damage to the optic nerve. There is no known treatment for the condition, which affects 10 out of 100,000 people in the general population.

The research, published in the journal JAMA Ophthalmology and conducted at Harvard University, looked at data from 16,827 patients at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Harvard teaching hospital, who received treatment over a six-year period.

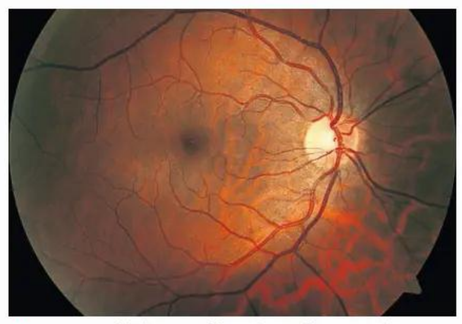
Of the patients included within the study, 710 had type two diabetes, with 194 of those patients having been prescribed semaglutide. The study group also included 979 patients who were overweight or living with obesity, with 361 of these having been prescribed semaglutide.

Of the people included in the study with type 2 diabetes, 17 Naion events occurred in patients who were prescribed semaglutide, compared with six who were on other diabetes drugs.

Over three years, 8.9% of these people on semaglutide had Naion compared with 1.8% on the other drugs, the researchers found.

Prof Joseph Rizzo, a professor of opthalmology at Harvard Medical School, said: "Our findings should be viewed as being significant but tentative. This is information we did not have before and it should be included in discussions between patients and their doctors, especially if patients have other known optic nerve problems."

Novo Nordisk, the manufacturer of Wegovy and Ozempic, has been contacted for comment.



▲ *A condition affecting the optic nerve was tracked by researchers*

Archaeological survey detects two Roman villas in Shropshire

Esther Addley

An archaeological survey of more than 1,000 hectares (2,400 acres) in Shropshire has identified a wealth of previously unknown features, including two grand Roman villas and multiple earlier iron age farmsteads.

The geophysical survey, the largest ever conducted by the National Trust, used ground scanning technology to map undetected features close to the site of the Roman city of Wroxeter, near modern-day Shrewsbury.

As well as the two buried villas, characterised on the scan by their highly distinctive shape, and eight prehistoric farms, archaeologists also found evidence of a Roman cemetery, Roman road network and new features associated with a previously identified Anglo-Saxon great hall.

The National Trust, which owns the land, said the "one of a kind" survey had been carried out to help it plan for future nature conservation and tree-planting schemes across the landscape, as part of its ambitious targets to address climate change.

Viriconium Cornoviorum or Wroxeter was the fourth most important city in Roman Britain, and experts fully expected the grounds of the stately home Attingham Park, near to the city's ruins, to be archaeologically significant, said Janine Young, an archaeologist with the trust. Crop marks on the landscape in dry summers had also hinted at buried sites.

However, the extent of the discoveries was a surprise, she said. "It's a very rich area archaeologically speaking. I look after other National Trust properties as well, and there's no way you would get such a level of occupation [elsewhere]. The landscape had quite dense occupation throughout history, and it's that continuous occupation that is very exciting."

Only six other Roman villas – the equivalent of large country estates – are known in Shropshire, making the two new sites particularly significant, said Young. Though there are no immediate plans to excavate, she said it was "entirely possible" that the features could include elaborate mosaic floors and the remains of underfloor heating systems.

"Villa sites are usually decorated with mosaic floors, and they were often heated by hypocausts."

Goldsmiths 'determined to shut black British literature course'

Geneva Abdul

Goldsmiths, University of London has been accused of being "determined" to close its black British literature course after selecting its co-founder for redundancy as part of a cost-cutting programme. On Monday provisional redundancy notices were issued to 97 academic staff across 11 departments, the Guardian understands, including Prof Deirdre Osborne.

This comes after the university's U-turn in May to maintain the programme for two years following a backlash from students and writers, including the Booker prize-winning author Bernardine Evaristo.

Prof Catherine Rottenberg, a Goldsmiths University and College Union executive committee member, said: "What's clear to me is that the media pressure worked initially to get them to at least commit to not closing the programme completely, but what's also clear is that they're determined to close these programmes."

A spokesperson for Goldsmiths said the university remains "fully committed" to delivering courses after the recent review, including the black British literature MA and the queer history MA.

They added: "Universities across the UK are having to make difficult decisions to navigate unprecedented financial challenges. This is a painful time for us all as we take steps to make our finances sustainable. We consulted staff and unions over our plans but unfortunately this did not result in viable ways forward which would have avoided or reduced the number of redundancies."

Prominent writers and students have raised concerns over how the programme will continue without its co-founder and about the wider knock-on effect on black British literature in academia.

The publisher and editor Margaret Busby said she was "gobsmacked" after learning the university was making Osborne redundant, months after stating the course would be maintained.

Expressing her shock at the decision, the poet Patience Agbabi said the university decision-makers were "shooting themselves in the foot".

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Woman admits helping end life of terminally ill son more than 40 years ago

Harriet Sherwood

A woman has admitted giving her terminally ill seven-year-old child a large dose of morphine to end his suffering more than 40 years ago.

Antonya Cooper said her son, Hamish, had been experiencing "horrendous suffering and intense pain" as a result of his stage 4 cancer and "beastly" treatment.

"On Hamish's last night, when he said he was in a lot of pain, I said: 'Would you like me to remove the pain?' and he said: 'Yes please, mama'," Cooper, 77, told BBC Radio Oxford. "And through his Hickman catheter, I gave him a large dose of morphine that did quietly end his life."

Cooper, from Abingdon, Oxfordshire, made the admission to help efforts to change the law on assisted dying. Helping someone to die is illegal in England, but Keir Starmer and Rishi Sunak have both promised to give parliamentary time to debate the issue. In 2015, MPs rejected an assisted dying bill by 330 votes to 118. But support for change has grown significantly among MPs and the public. Opinion polls have shown 75% of the public back legalising assisted dying.

Cooper is now terminally ill and said her diagnosis had reinforced her views on assisted dying and leaving people to die in pain. "We don't do it to our pets. Why should we do it to humans?" she said.

Hamish was diagnosed with neuroblastoma, a rare cancer that mostly affects children, when he was five. He was initially given a prognosis of three months. After 16 months of treatment at Great Ormond Street hospital, his life was extended but he was left in great pain, his mother said.

Cooper was asked during the interview if she believed her son knew she was intending to end his life.

She said: "I feel very strongly that at the point of Hamish telling me he was in pain, and asking me if I could remove his pain, he knew, he knew somewhere what was going to happen ... I was not going to let him suffer, and I feel he really knew where he was going." She added: "It was the right thing to do. My son was facing the most horrendous suffering and intense pain, I was not going to allow him to go through that."

She said she understood that she was potentially admitting to manslaughter or murder. "If they come 43 years after I have allowed Hamish to die peacefully, then I would have to face the consequences. But they would have to be quick, because I'm dying too," she said.

In parts of the UK and British Isles, steps are being taken towards legalising assisted dying. The Isle of Man – a crown dependency with its own legislature – could become the first jurisdiction to change the law with a bill progressing through the Tynwald. Assisted dying could be legal for residents from 2025.

Jersey, another crown dependency, will vote on legislation next year. If it passes, an assisted dying service for residents would likely be in place by mid-2027. In the Scottish parliament, a bill to allow assisted dying for terminally ill adults could have its first vote this year.

Last year, the TV personality Esther Rantzen reignited debate when she disclosed she was considering travelling to Dignitas in Zurich in the face of a stage 4 lung cancer diagnosis. She said: "I know palliative care can be wonderful in this country, but it cannot guarantee the dignified, pain-free death we terminally ill patients all hope for."

Antonya Cooper with her son, Hamish, in Great Ormond Street hospital in 1980 during his treatment for neuroblastoma

Help NHS by loosening rules on private deals, says health leader

Denis Campbell
Health policy editor

The NHS must be given the green light to partner with private health firms and property developers to build new hospitals to slash the care backlog, a health service boss has said.

The last Labour government was widely criticised over controversial private finance initiative (PFI) deals to build new NHS facilities that led to vast profits for major corporations.

But in a major intervention, the head of NHS Providers, Julian Hartley, has urged the next administration to relax Treasury rules that limit health service trusts in England from entering into such collaborations and insisted that the NHS has "nothing to fear" from them.

He said: "We need to think outside the box when it comes to solving this double whammy of under-strain public finances and an NHS estate in desperate need of renewal.

"Collaboration with public and private partners such as ethical pension funds, property developers, universities, private healthcare providers and local councils could unlock opportunities for NHS trusts keen to build new hospitals or redevelop existing sites which have been stymied by rigid Treasury rules."

However, Dr John Puntis, thecochair of Keep Our NHS Public, said most people would find his suggestion "appalling" and that it was "a shocking attack on the founding principles of the NHS".

As successful examples Hartley cited partnerships between NHS trusts in Birmingham and Surrey and private health providers to run new facilities that treat NHS and fee-paying patients.

"We can draw positive lessons that this is doable, that the NHS and the private sector can work together, and that it supports the interests of NHS services," he said.

"This doesn't have to be PFI Two. This is not about privatisation of the NHS; this is about strengthening and supporting the NHS through investment that creates better facilities for patient," Hartley added.

> ***'This is about strengthening and supporting the NHS through investment'***
>
> **Julian Hartley**
> *NHS Providers*

University Hospitals Birmingham (UHB) trust has been given 72 of the 122 beds in the Harborne private hospital on its site, which opened in January in a partnership with HCA, a large American healthcare firm that operates a network of private hospitals in the UK. UHB did not contribute towards the £100m cost of building the hospital, which provides cancer, cardiac and orthopaedic care, but has taken a lease on two of its five floors for its own patients.

The extra beds will let people in Birmingham and Solihull get quicker treatment "in world-class facilities, delivered by leading NHS specialists" by cutting its waiting list, it has said.

In a similar move, the Royal Surrey NHS trust and GenesisCare have made a deal to run a new dedicated cancer centre, which opened in Guildford in March. The £30m facility is providing oncology and radiotherapy to both NHS and private patients.

Hartley urged the next chancellor and health secretary to "have an open mind" on NHS tie-ups involving major injections of capital from drug companies, pension funds and universities. The new government should see the new wave of hospitals that would ensue as a boost to the economy and a way for the public sector to leverage private sources of funding as government spending is likely to remain tight, he said.

He wants the Treasury to review the Department of Health and Social Care's capital departmental expenditure limit, which restricts how much health trusts and the NHS overall can spend on capital projects, even if some of the money has come from external sources. The backlog of repairs needed across the NHS in England has ballooned in recent years to £11.6bn.

Keir Starmer and the shadow health secretary, Wes Streeting, have said that a Labour government would use the private sector as much as it could to cut an NHS backlog that has risen to 7.6m procedures. Acting on Hartley's idea would risk angering those anxious about NHS privatisation.

▲ *Jay Slater with Debbie Duncan, his mother. He vanished on 17 June*

Mother of Jay Slater tells of family's pain at disappearance

Mark Brown
North of England correspondent

The mother of a teenager who went missing during a holiday in Tenerife has said words cannot describe her family's "pain and agony".

Debbie Duncan described 19-year-old Jay Slater as a beautiful boy who had his whole life ahead of him.

"We just want to find him," she said in a statement, condemning as "vile" some of the online speculation.

Slater, an apprentice bricklayer from Oswaldtwistle, Lancashire, went missing on 17 June after attending a music festival with friends.

He was last heard from at about 8.15am when he told a friend, Lucy Law, that he planned to walk back to his holiday accommodation after missing a bus, a journey that would take him 10-11 hours.

Slater also said he was thirsty, had 1% charge left on his phone and did not know where he was.

For nearly two weeks, emergency services, mountain rescue teams, sniffer dogs, drones and helicopters have taken part in coordinated searches for Slater. On Sunday the Guardia Civil in Tenerife said the search had finished but that the case remained open.

In her statement, through the British overseas missing persons charity LBT Global, Duncan said: "We are a very close family and are absolutely devastated about his disappearance.

"Words cannot describe the pain and agony we are experiencing. He is our beautiful boy with his whole life ahead of him and we just want to find him."

The search has been accompanied by large media attention. Duncan said: "We really would like to maintain our privacy and crucially let the Spanish police get on with their investigations without hindrance from press."

The family and friends of the teenager say they have had to deal with lots of "online noise" around the case, including hurtful accusations, rumours and conspiracy theories.

"We are aware of the conspiracy theories and speculation on social media and some websites, and can only describe this as vile," Duncan said. "The negative comments are extremely distressing to our family.

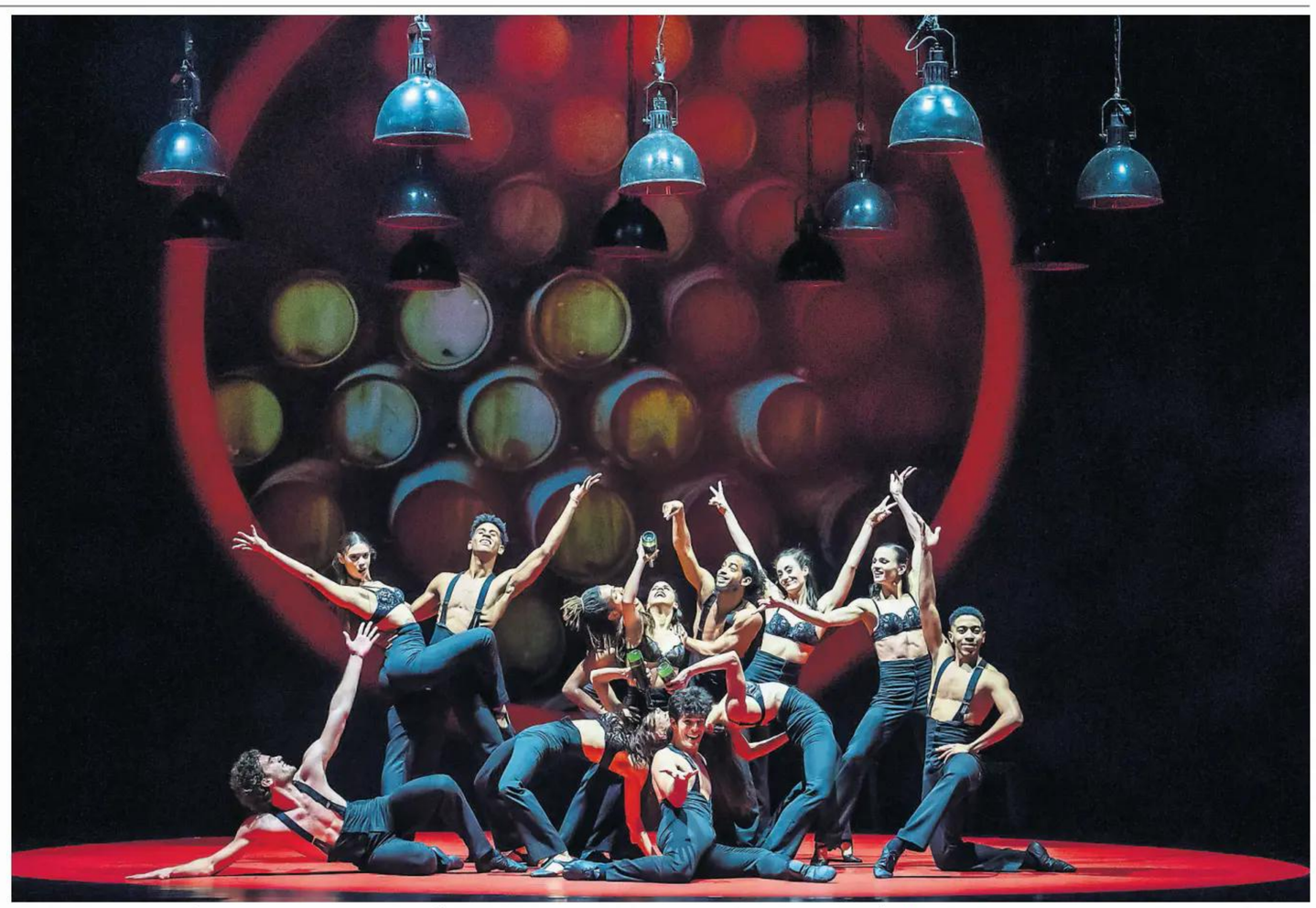
"We also embrace the love and support we have received from across the globe. It has not gone unnoticed."

Ballet review

An eclectic Cuban take on tragedy of Carmen

Carlos Acosta's Carmen
Sadler's Wells, London
★★★☆☆

Lyndsey Winship



▲ *The best scenes are those with the ensemble, Acosta Danza's dancers easily inhabiting the world on stage*
PHOTOGRAPH: TRISTRAM KENTON/THE GUARDIAN

The problem is, Don José, she's just not that into you. Sure, she loves it when you spin her in multiple pirouettes, or sweep her over your shoulder, but for this Carmen (Laura Rodríguez) it's never more than in-the-moment fun; she's all spirit and impulse and impressively carefree dancing. All it takes is the appearance of a hunky toreador and off she runs, towards tragedy.

It's a story that's been told countless times, many of them in dance, since the original Prosper Mérimée novella in 1845. This Carmen was created by the Cuban ballet star Carlos Acosta and it's an expansion of a one-act ballet he made for the Royal Ballet in 2015, set to Rodion Shchedrin's orchestration of Bizet's opera score. Now it's a full evening, danced by his Havana-based company Acosta Danza, with some added Cuban music, and its lively spirit is much better suited to the Cuban dancers who easily inhabit the world on stage.

The best scenes are with the ensemble, such as the tavern at the opening of act II, the dancers slapping a rhythm on the table with giddy whoops. It turns into a flamenco-Cuban-ballet-contemporary mashup, bursting with upfront energy, speed, cheekiness and an infectious sense of celebration.

Trying to bring something new to the story, Acosta is inventive in his eclectic smörgåsbord of steps, and has created a new character, the Bull (which he performs himself on opening night in a horned headdress). The Bull is an all-seeing figure, pulling the strings of the doomed protagonists.

Acosta stands ominously inside the centrepiece of Tim Hatley's stripped-back set, a giant glowing ring like a solar eclipse. Later he dances a scrappily gladiatorial pas de deux with Carmen, as if she is in a bullfight with fate.

Acosta Danza is a company of fantastic dancers (Denzel Francis is impressive as the guard Zuniga), although tonight's toreador isn't the most explosive. The emotional world of the show, however, doesn't cut deep enough. The various lovers' pas de deux are all momentum over meaningful moments, not much space to breathe, or feel. But then that's not our Carmen: she whirlwinds through life, to her death.

Until 6 July

Capt Tom's daughter disqualified from charity trustee roles

Haroon Siddique

▲ *Capt Tom Moore walked 100 laps of his daughter Hannah's garden for NHS charities in the pandemic*
PHOTOGRAPH: VICKIE FLORES/EPA-EFE

Captain Sir Tom Moore's daughter, Hannah Ingram-Moore, and her husband, Colin, have been disqualified from being charity trustees amid an investigation into the foundation set up in his name, the family has said.

The Captain Tom Moore Foundation was launched in May 2020 after the war veteran's fundraising efforts, which brought in £38.9m for NHS charities during the Covid pandemic. But the Charity Commission opened a case into the organisation shortly after his death in 2021 and launched an inquiry in June 2022 into concerns about its management and independence from his family.

In a statement yesterday, the Ingram-Moore family said the inquiry had not been concluded but that they had been served with an order of disqualification as trustees.

"We are increasingly concerned that the Charity Commission's process may have evolved into a relentless pursuit, and question whether it is a tactic by the commission to make our lives more difficult, by suspending us in constant fear and mental anguish," the statement said.

They said the orders did not state that they had misappropriated or received unauthorised payments from the charity's funds, including public donations, adding: "We have never accessed or made any payments from the charity's bank account." They said they would not appeal against the order because "the profound emotional upheaval and financial burden make such a course of action untenable".

Moore's fundraising, which involved him walking 100 laps of his garden before his 100th birthday in April 2020, offered a rare ray of light during the pandemic, and he was knighted that summer. He died in February 2021, but the feelgood story of his achievements turned sour amid the commission's investigation and criticism of his family.

There was controversy over the construction of an unauthorised spa pool block in the grounds of the family's Bedfordshire home where Moore had completed his laps. The Ingram-Moores were given planning permission for an L-shaped building, which they called the Captain Tom Foundation Building, in 2021 but built a larger £200,000 C-shaped structure containing a spa pool. It was demolished in February this year on the orders of an inspector. The house went on sale for £2.25m in April.

In an interview with Piers Morgan last year, Hannah Ingram-Moore said she had kept £800,000 from books Moore had written, saying he had wanted them to retain the profits.

She was appointed interim chief executive of the foundation from August 2021 until April 2022. Accounts published last year stated she received a gross salary of £63,750 and £7,602 in expense payments for travel and administration between June 2021 and November 2022.

Last year it was announced that the foundation would stop taking donations and be wound down.

The commission said the disqualification orders for Hannah Ingram-Moore and Colin Ingram-Moore were for 10 and eight years respectively.

London student dies in accident at Sussex beach

PA Media

The death of a 17-year-old student who got into difficulty in the sea during a college trip in West Sussex has been described as a "tragic accident".

Emergency services received a call of concern for the teenager's welfare at a beach in West Wittering, near Chichester, at about 1pm on Tuesday.

The boy was part of a group of pupils from Uxbridge college in west London, who were visiting the area to celebrate the end of term. He was airlifted to hospital where he was pronounced dead, Sussex police said.

The Uxbridge college principal, Dylan McTaggart, said: "This was a tragic accident that has had a huge impact on everyone here. Our priority now is to look after all those affected."

DI Darren Taylor said officers were investigating the incident, supported by the Health and Safety Executive.

"We are asking anyone who has any information that could help to contact us online or via 101, quoting Operation Redhill," he said.

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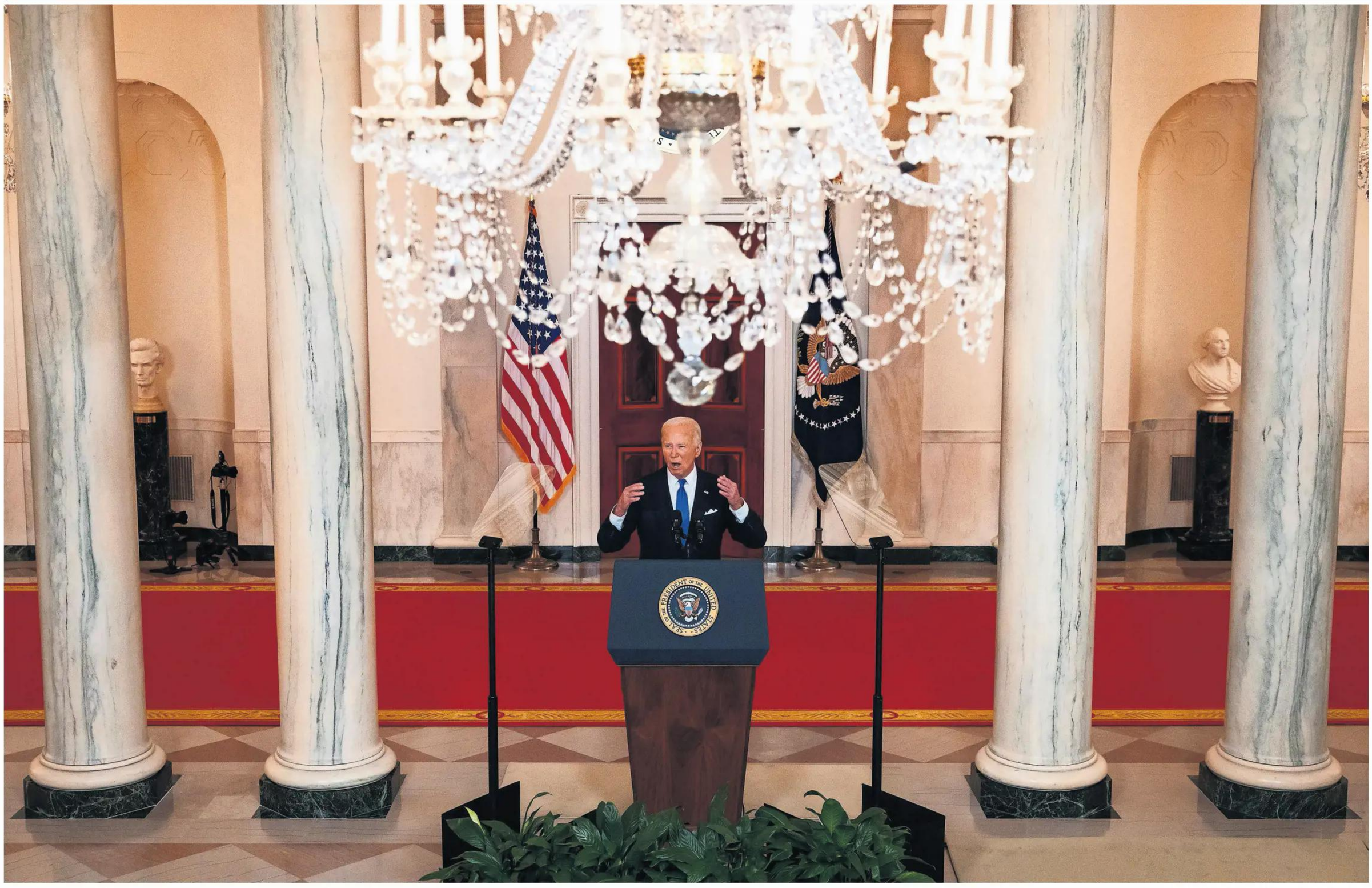
The Guardian

▼ Khan Younis, Gaza
Palestinians evacuate the southern city in advance of a further pre-announced Israeli bombardment

PHOTOGRAPH: ABED RAHIM HATIB/COVER IMAGES

World



Biden seeks to shore up support as top Democrats raise concerns

Continued *from page 1*

Earlier yesterday, an ally of Biden told the New York Times that the president remained fully committed to his re-election effort, but he knew his forthcoming public appearances would have to be successful for his candidacy to remain viable.

"He knows if he has two more events like that, we're in a different place," the source said, referring to Biden's disastrous debate against Donald Trump last week.

The White House immediately pushed back. The senior deputy press secretary and deputy assistant to the president Andrew Bates said: "That claim is absolutely false. If the New York Times had provided us with more than seven minutes to comment we would have told them so."

An interview is scheduled for tomorrow with George Stephanopoulos of ABC News, and the Biden campaign has scheduled stops in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Cracks in support among party leaders for Biden's campaign continued to widen before his meeting with Democratic governors yesterday.

The House Democrat Jim Clyburn, known as a kingmaker of sorts who was instrumental in Biden's 2020 win, told CNN the party should hold a "mini-primary" if Biden stepped aside, making him the first senior elected party member to talk publicly about how replacing him as a candidate would work.

Almost all elected national Democratic figure have continued to back Biden, but senior figures are reportedly scrambling to plot a way forward after Biden's weak debate performance, in which he mumbled, stared and occasionally lapsed into incoherency.

On Tuesday congressman Lloyd Doggett of Texas became the first House Democrat to publicly urge the president to step aside.

A second one joined yesterday afternoon when Raúl Grijalva of Arizona told the New York Times: "If he's the candidate, I'm going to support him but I think that this is an opportunity to look elsewhere ... What he really needs to do is shoulder the responsibility for keeping that seat – and part of that responsibility is to get out of this race."

At a Virginia campaign event on Tuesday evening, the US president blamed the debate debacle on his international trips leading up to the debate, saying: "I wasn't very smart. I decided to travel around the world a couple times, going through around 100 time zones ... Didn't listen to my staff and came back and nearly fell asleep on stage. That's no excuse but it is an explanation."

Barack Obama, who had Biden as his vice-president, told Democratic allies who sought his counsel that Biden was already on a tough road to re-election and that road was now rockier, the Washington Post reported on Tuesday.

> ***'It's a legitimate question to say: is this an episode or is this a condition?'***
>
> **Nancy Pelosi**
> *Former House speaker*

Obama talked to Biden by phone after the debate. The president's re-election campaign spoke of Obama's "unwavering support", while the former president's team declined to comment.

A post-debate survey commissioned by Puck news showed that 40% of voters who backed Biden in 2020 now believe he should withdraw. It also showed him now under threat from Trump in states previously considered safe by Democrats, including Virginia, New Mexico and New Hampshire.

The latest poll by New York Times/Siena College shows Trump has widened his lead on Biden since the TV debate, opening up a 6-point advantage, 49% to 43%, over Biden among likely voters. Only 49% of Democrats say Biden should remain nominee.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll released on Tuesday also found that one in three Democrats said Biden should end his re-election campaign.

As of Tuesday evening, there were 25 Democratic members of the House of Representatives preparing to call for Biden to step aside, according to an aide. Biden's campaign, however, has continued to downplay concerns, noting that the president had raised $38m (£30m) since last week.

'It's irrelevant'
Young Iranian voters dismayed by politics
Page 28

Prehistoric pig
Wild boar painting is 'world's oldest'
Page 30

◀ *Joe Biden has said he 'nearly fell asleep on stage' during a weak debate performance against Donald Trump because he had ignored his aides and 'decided to travel around the world a couple times' beforehand*

PHOTOGRAPH: SAMUEL CORUM/ SHUTTERSTOCK

Several prominent Democrats who previously served in the House or Senate have already spoken out, calling on Biden to step aside, and some key supporters including Clyburn and the former House speaker Nancy Pelosi have hinted at ambivalence.

"I think it's a legitimate question to say: is this an episode or is this a condition?" Pelosi told MSNBC, adding that she had heard "mixed" views on whether Biden was fit for the presidential campaign.

Harris, the vice-president, is the top alternative to replace Biden if he decides not to continue his re-election campaign, according to seven senior sources at the Biden campaign, the White House and the Democratic national committee with knowledge of current discussions on the topic, Reuters reported.

Democrats in private have been scathing both about the White House's lack of transparency about the president's apparent recent decline, and about his failure to rebound from the debate with interviews and news conferences that could have countered the concerns he is no longer fit to serve.

"He needs to start showing and stop telling. Otherwise, he will lose more House Dems. It's that acute," the Punchbowl website quoted one Democratic House member as saying.

Two other House Democrats, Jared Golden of Maine and Marie Gluesenkamp Perez of Washington, have predicted publicly since the debate that they believed Trump would win November's election.

Anger has also been voiced at the White House and campaign aides for shielding Biden from the public and covering up evidence of his supposedly fading powers amid reports that this has been visible for months.

Biden has given fewer press conferences than any president since Ronald Reagan, did not give a Super Bowl interview this year as is traditional, and has declined many in-depth interview opportunities with major US media platforms.

Some influential Democrats have floated alternatives to Biden besides Harris, including popular cabinet members and Democratic governors such as Gavin Newsom, from California, Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan and Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania. But trying to sidestep Harris is wishful thinking and would be nearly impossible, according to the sources.

If named as the party nominee, Harris, 59, would inherit Biden's campaign infrastructure, the sources said. She also has the highest name recognition among all the alternatives, and the strongest polling among Democrats who could seriously be considered a candidate.

▲ *Protesters in Atlanta. More than 700,000 voters have backed 'uncommitted' options* PHOTOGRAPH: OCTAVIO JONES/GETTY

Israel-Gaza Uncommitted voters urging US arms embargo gain influence

Rachel Leingang

After Joe Biden's poor debate performance and calls by some prominent Democrats to replace him, the hundreds of thousands of anti-war voters and the delegates who represent them have taken on new significance in the US presidential race.

More than 700,000 voters cast ballots in the Democratic primaries for "uncommitted" options after a movement started in Michigan to put pressure on Biden to call for a ceasefire in Gaza and stop US funding of and arms for the Israeli government.

These voters won 29 uncommitted delegates to the Democratic national convention (DNC), a small but vocal group that will use their position at the nominating convention to call for an end to the war.

The uncommitted vote consists of likely Democratic voters who have consistently said they are anti-Trump and who used the primary process to send a message to Biden.

Their message has not changed, though uncommitted delegates said they had been hearing from more people about the role they could play in the convention since last week's

▲ *Asma Mohammed is one of 29 'uncommitted' delegates to the DNC*

debate. Their sole platform remains a permanent ceasefire and an arms embargo, and their focus remains on Biden – who is still the president.

"People are like, you guys have 10 times the power you did before," said Asma Mohammed, an uncommitted delegate to the DNC from Minnesota. "Our story has consistently been powerful, and we have over 700,000 voters that we have been engaged with, who were previously just not going to show up or didn't know how to engage in this election."

The uncommitted movement spread quickly across some states, gaining steam from voters who wanted to make their disapproval of US involvement in the war known and who were otherwise not ready to commit to Biden, though they do not support Trump and do not want to see him win. After Michigan, it had strong showings in Minnesota, Hawaii and Washington.

Throughout the campaign, uncommitted's leaders have consistently said they would back Biden if he got on board with their anti-war demands – and they have reiterated this offer now, at a time when Biden needs all the support he can get.

"We're not hinging our advocacy on whether or not President Biden decides to remain the candidate," said Abbas Alawieh, a spokesperson for the Uncommitted National Movement and an uncommitted delegate to the DNC from Michigan. "Regardless of whether or not he decides to remain the candidate, he remains the president through January 2025, and we need him to stop supplying weapons long before that."

Since the movement began, Biden has called for a ceasefire in Gaza. But Alawieh said: "If the president is serious about delivering a ceasefire, he needs to stop supplying the weapons that are preventing a ceasefire."

The Uncommitted National Movement has said it is not aligning with any particular candidate, and any candidate seeking its support would need to agree with an arms embargo.

They have told Biden, via contacts on his campaign, at the DNC and at the White House, that they will mobilise voters for him if he delivers an arms embargo.

It would be "an opportunity for us to unite in both saving lives now and in preventing Donald Trump from getting into the White House again", Alawieh said.

Abortion Arizona on track to hold official ballot over rights

Carter Sherman

A citizen-led proposal to enshrine abortion rights into the state constitution of Arizona, a key battleground state in the upcoming US elections, has inched closer to becoming an official ballot measure.

Arizona for Abortion Access, the coalition behind the measure, said yesterday that the proposal had more than 800,000 signatures – more than double the needed to get the measure on the ballot in November.

"It represents one in five Arizona voters," said Chris Love, a spokesperson for the coalition. "It's an amazing feat for us. I think it's a demonstration of the strength of our campaign and the excitement of Arizona voters to really settle the issue of abortion rights on the ballot in November."

Arizona currently bans most abortions past 15 weeks of pregnancy, but the state came close to outlawing almost all abortions earlier this spring. In April, the Arizona supreme court ruled to uphold a law that paved the way for a 1864 near-total abortion ban – passed before Arizona even became a state – to take effect. That controversial decision prompted a battle in the Arizona state legislature, where Republicans hold a one-seat majority in both the state house and senate, as Democratic lawmakers tried to pass a repeal of the 1864 ban. They ultimately succeeded after a handful of Republican legislators broke ranks and voted for the repeal.

"Our message has always been the same: pregnant patients deserve the freedom to make their individual and personal health care decisions, and especially decisions about abortions, with their families and their health care providers," Love said. "The back and forth that just happened with respect to the 1864 ban is a clear demonstration of why we need politicians out of the calculus."

If voters pass the ballot measure, which is officially titled the Arizona Abortion Access Act, it would eliminate the state's 15-week ban and instead protect the right to an abortion until fetal viability, a benchmark that typically occurs at about 24 weeks of pregnancy. It would also allow abortions to take place after fetal viability if a health care professional believes the procedure is necessary to protect a pregnant person's life or physical or mental health.

About 12 states are expected to hold ballot measures over abortion rights in the November elections.

▼ *A polling station in Tehran. In the first round of voting on Friday turnout hit a record low of 39.9%*

PHOTOGRAPH: MAJID ASGARIPOUR/REUTERS

'It's irrelevant' Allowing a reformist to run fails to stop fall in turnout by Iran's voters

Patrick Wintour
Tehran

If Tehran is holding its breath, it is not because of political tensions but the smog that envelops the traffic-clogged capital in summertime.

Before tomorrow's presidential runoff between the hardliner Saeed Jalili and the reformist Masoud Pezeshkian – an election that has the potential to put Iran back on course to engage with the west – members of the young middle class sitting in Cafe Elie, Tehran, compete to express their disdain for the political process.

Two teenage girls, sipping drinks and not wearing hijabs, say they do not even know the candidates' names. Angel is a veteran of the Women, Life, Freedom protests, which erupted after the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, 22, who was detained for allegedly not wearing a headscarf properly.

"We feel so disappointed by what happened," Angel said. "There were so many promises [after the protests], but none were kept. Instead, they have come back to enforce the hijab and to take us back to the police station.

"In some ways it is worse and more humiliating because of what we have been through. Politics is an irrelevance."

Maryan, an analyst of women's rights, said: "After Mahsa Amini there is so much anger and resentment. I even know religious people that will not vote. It does not matter if it is Pezeshkian or Jalili, because the president is just a puppet."

A male oil engineer in a ponytail admitted he caught the end of Monday's two-hour TV debate between the candidates, adding he would probably vote to stop Jalili.

He said he knew others that thought if the hardliner was elected it would be the equivalent of the Taliban coming to power. "We cannot become a closed society like North Korea. The whole history and geopolitics of Iran is one of openness to Asia and to the west … We need gradual change in this country, and that is what Pezeshkian represents." But even he was not sure he would vote.

In Vali Asr square, there are two giant pictures of the candidates – the homespun 70-year-old heart surgeon Pezeshkian and the former diplomat Jalili, who opposed the nuclear deal with the west. In working-class districts, just a few posters are on display.

It is what Iranians describe as the coldest election ever. Yet the first round of voting, completed last Friday, at least shattered some established Iranian myths.

The first was that by allowing a reformist candidate to run, and ensuring a more competitive election, the regime could arrest a long-term decline in participation. Instead, turnout hit a record low of just 39.9% of the 61.45 million voters, including 1.2m spoiled papers. The supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, had urged every eligible Iranian to vote, and the disastrous turnout presents a crisis of legitimacy for him.

Second, it was expected that Pezeshkian could not take the lead in the first round unless turnout reached close to 60%. Instead, he topped the poll, scoring 10.4m votes, 1m more than Jalili.

Votes for the conservatives knocked out in the first round are likely to go to Jalili, so for Pezeshkian winning remains an uphill task. He must persuade those who abstained that they cannot afford to be indifferent tomorrow, and that a Jalili presidency will plunge Iran into the dark ages for the economy, individual freedoms and foreign policy.

He is making every effort, saying: "I know that women today don't want someone else to decide their marriage, education, career, clothing and lifestyle. They want to make their own choices and it is their natural right to make decisions about their lives. I respect their choices and will do my best to provide a platform for them to become the best version of themselves."

Pezeshkian has also been going all-out to show he understands those that have lost faith in the democratic process, and argued in Monday's TV debate that politicians in Iran were seen as a class apart. Above all, he argued that Jalili, by turning further away from the west, offered a recipe for yet more sanctions, a declining exchange rate and repression.

Pezeshkian, backed by the former foreign minister Javad Zarif, has also suggested some kind of reopening of talks with the US on the future of the nuclear deal, constantly challenging Jalili to set out his plan for the economy if sanctions are not lifted.

Peyman Jafari, an assistant professor at William & Mary university in the US, warned that Jalili knew his constituency and had "shifted his focus to the rural areas and urban poor by promising social support". He said it was for Pezeshkian to convince a jaded electorate of the reality of the Jalili threat. "He has a few days to do it, but it remains a daunting task."

Artificial lights like a 'midnight fridge' draw fish to their doom

Sophie Kevany

Artificial light shining from coastlines around the world is acting like "a midnight fridge" full of tasty snacks, threatening young fish who can be drawn to it and then eaten by predators also attracted by the brightness, according to a study.

The impact of light on marine ecosystems has rarely been taken into account, said Jules Schligler, the lead author of the study at the international coral ecosystem research centre in Mo'orea, French Polynesia.

Nearly a quarter of the world's coastline, excluding Antarctica, was artificially lit a decade ago, according to a satellite study, and it was probably more than this by now, Schligler said.

His study focused on yellowtail dascyllus and blue-green chromis and involved creating 12 coral test sites in the waters off Mo'orea and shining an underwater light on half of them. It found the artificially lit corals attracted fish larvae, and then predators that ate them.

"We found that the coral with the light attracted two to three times more fish compared to the naturally lit control site," Schligler said. "The coral with the [artificial] light is a bad environment for the larval fish because there are more predators, opportunistic fish passing by, that ate them."

The findings, he said, meant artificial light should be seen as "another threat to marine animal populations and coastal ecosystems".

▲ *Blue-green chromis, whose well lit larvae proved a treat for predators*

While artificial light might appear to benefit predator fish, Schligler said more research was needed. "It could be bad for their sleep, or they could eat too much, we don't yet know."

The study did not look at why the fish were drawn to the light. "The artificially lit coral could be like a midnight fridge full of tasty plankton that are drawn to the light too. Or it might be the light and the prospect of food that attract them. Either way it makes them all behave unnaturally."

The findings were presented at this week's Society for Experimental Biology conference in Prague.

Caribbean islanders describe havoc in wake of hurricane

▲ *Displaced people arrive in Kingstown, the capital of St Vincent and the Grenadines, after being evacuated from Union Island, below left, which is thought to be one of the areas that was most badly impacted by the hurricane, with 90% of houses damaged or destroyed.*

PHOTOGRAPH: LUCANUS OLLIVIERRE/AP; REUTERS

Natricia Duncan
Caribbean correspondent

This should have been a week of celebration in the Caribbean country of St Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG). The annual Vincy Mas carnival, which attracts thousands of tourists, had advertised a packed schedule of costume parades and soca competitions.

Instead, the Vincentian population is reeling from what the country's prime minister called "utter devastation", wrought by Hurricane Beryl, which ravaged the multi-island country and its eastern Caribbean neighbour Grenada.

Images and videos shared on social media showed apocalyptic scenes in SVG and Grenada: flattened houses; damaged police stations, schools and hospitals; streets strewn with the remnants of mangled and dismantled roofs, and towering swells rushing into roads and properties.

At least seven people have died during the hurricane, which is barrelling towards Jamaica.

Several posts were by those desperately searching for information about family members on the SVG island of Canouan which, along with Union Island and Mayreau, and the Grenadian islands of Carriacou and Petite Martinique are thought to be among the worst affected.

One distraught mother wrote: "My daughter [is] in a house in Canouan. Her roof is blowing off, and she is pregnant. Please send help, she is alone … please send help!"

Officials trying to reach the islands to assess damage, deliver aid and arrange evacuations have been hampered by dangerous conditions and a near-total communication blackout.

Last night, the US National Hurricane Center reported that the storm's eye wall was brushing Jamaica's southern coast, with winds of around 140mph (225km/h).

Jamaica's Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management warned of dangerous storm surges potentially raising water levels to as high as 2.75 metres (9ft). Officials encouraged vulnerable residents to go to shelters and warned those in flood-prone areas to prepare for evacuation.

"I am encouraging all Jamaicans to take the hurricane as a serious threat," the prime minister, Andrew Holness, said in a public address. At least three people have been reported dead amid floods in Venezuela, three in Grenada, and one in St Vincent and the Grenadines.

Late on Monday, Grenada's prime minister, Dickon Mitchell, told a press conference that the island of Carriacou had been flattened in half an hour. By Tuesday, he described "Armageddon-like" scenes of "almost total destruction", with approximately 98% of building structures damaged or destroyed and an almost complete wipeout of the electrical grid and communications systems.

"Having seen it myself, there is really nothing that could prepare you to see this level of destruction. It is almost Armageddon-like. Almost total damage or destruction of all buildings, whether they be public buildings, homes or private facilities. Complete devastation and destruction of agriculture, complete and total destruction of the natural environment. There is literally no vegetation left anywhere on the island of Carriacou," he said.

Union Island, part of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, suffered a similar fate, with 90% of houses severely damaged or destroyed.

In a video posted online, the Vincentian journalist Demion McTair, reporting from Union, described the "unthinkable" devastation, which he likened to the aftermath of a bombing. Walking through streets littered with debris and lined with gutted and roofless houses, he captured the anguish of residents who were being evacuated by ferry.

One woman, her voice trailing away as she choked back tears, said: "Just imagine stoves flying in the air, houses flying, lifting up, tearing apart and just going in the wind. Just like that … Just imagine."

A young man described sleeping on concrete as they waited for help. "About 25 of us slept on [roofing sheets] with sheets spread on it. We had cockroaches on our feet. It was cold and wet," he said.

The prime minister of SVG, Ralph Gonsalves, praised the resilience of the country's people, who are facing the "immense destruction" of Beryl while still recovering from the impact of a major volcanic eruption in 2021, which displaced more than 20,000 people and caused more than $200m (£160m) worth of damage.

"The faces of our men and women are strained and anxious," he said. "But tomorrow, we get up with the conviction to rebuild our individual lives and our family's lives. To rebuild our country, to recover."

Gonsalves expressed concerns about access to international finance to fund rebuilding and called on richer countries to honour their climate commitments.

"For the major emitters of greenhouse gases, those who contribute most to global warming, you are getting a lot of talking, but you are not seeing a lot of action – as in making money available to small-island developing states and other vulnerable countries," he said.

The Commonwealth secretary general, Patricia Scotland, joined the call for better climate finance support to small and vulnerable countries affected by hurricanes, which have been made increasingly frequent and dangerous by global heating.

Scotland had been on her way to the now-postponed 20-country Caribbean Communityleaders' summit in Grenada when a state of emergency was declared in the country.

Hurricane Beryl tracker

Source: NOAA. Note: times are UTC

India deadly crush blamed on huge overcrowding as death toll passes 120

Hannah Ellis-Petersen
Aakash Hassan *Delhi*

There were about 250,000 people at the Hindu religious gathering in northern India where 121 people died in a crowd crush, triple the capacity permitted by authorities, a police report has said.

The deadly crush took place on Tuesday at a religious function known as a *satsang* held in a village in Hathras, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, when hundreds of thousands of devotees assembled to see Bhole Baba, a self-styled guru.

According to authorities, the crowd who turned up to offer prayers to the baba, real name Narayan Sakar Vishwa Hari, was three times larger than the 80,000 for which permission had been granted. Witnesses said the crush was caused after large numbers surged forward in an effort to touch the feet of the guru and the ground he had driven away on, which is deemed holy, while organisers used force to prevent people moving off the roads to safety.

The event was held in a large tent erected in agricultural fields around the village. Those present said it had been raining heavily in the days leading up to the *satsang*, causing people to slip and fall in the muddy fields.

The death toll rose to 121 on Tuesday, with mostly women and children among the dead.

Rama Devi, 40, was among 80 people from the village of Baghauli who had travelled by bus to attend the *satsang*. She was accompanied by her sister-in-law, her 10-year-old nephew, Ayush, and five-year-old niece, Kavya. Both children were killed in the stampede.

250,000
Estimated crowd that turned up for the religious function, three times larger than the permission granted

"People started pushing after Baba left. I was holding my nephew, Ayush, firmly but then people started falling on me, and I lost his grip," she said.

Devi later learned that both her nephew and niece had died.

She was among those who accused police of failing to manage the event. "The police were just standing on the road and watching people die, they did not make any efforts to control the crowd."

India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, said that the victims would be "helped in every way". Vishwa Hari expressed his condolences and said the stampede was caused by "some antisocial elements".

France's republican front could stave off far-right majority as hundreds withdraw

Jon Henley
Paris

France's prime minister has said nationwide efforts to prevent Marine Le Pen's National Rally (RN) winning an outright majority in parliament could succeed, after more than 200 candidates pulled out of Sunday's legislative election runoff to avoid splitting the anti-far-right vote.

"We can avoid an absolute majority for the far right," Gabriel Attal said yesterday, adding that 90% of candidates from President Emmanuel Macron's centrist camp had quit three-way races if they were in third with an RN candidate ahead of them.

RN and its potential future prime minister, Jordan Bardella, finished a comfortable first in last Sunday's first-round election with 33% of the vote, followed by the New Popular Front (NFP) alliance on 28% and the president's Together alliance on 20%.

A historically high turnout dramatically boosted the number of second-round contests featuring three candidates to more than 300, increasing the anti-immigrant party's chances of securing the 289 seats it would need for an absolute majority.

Although accurate seat projections are difficult before the shape of each constituency contest is known, pollsters' initial estimates suggested RN could return as many as 300 deputies.

The high number of runoff withdrawals makes that less likely, and one poll released yesterday predicted the RN would fall short of a majority on Sunday, with between 190 and 220 seats. The Harris Interactive poll had the NPF in second place, with 159 to 183, and Macron's centrist camp in third with 110 to 135.

Attal said centrist candidates were right to stand down even in favour of a rival from the radical-left France Unbowed (LFI), part of the NFP leftwing alliance. "Neither LFI or NFP can win an absolute majority," he said. "RN can."

He added: "What's at stake is to do everything so that the extreme right does not have an absolute majority."

According to Le Monde, 221 candidates, including 132 from NFP and 83 from Macron's allies, had withdrawn from potential three-way runoffs by the Tuesday evening deadline, leaving 94 "triangular" contests.

The "republican front", aimed at shutting the far right out of power, has long been a feature of French politics but had shown signs of fraying as voters tired of having to vote against candidates they disliked rather than for those they backed.

While the parties have largely swung behind it, this time there is no guarantee centrist voters will be prepared to vote for candidates from the far-left LFI, or that leftwing voters angry with Macron will be happy to cast their ballots for candidates from his camp.

Asked about calls for the creation of a provisional cross-party government in the event of a hung parliament, Attal repeated his proposal for a range of mainstream parties to cooperate on individual pieces of legislation.

Le Pen said on Tuesday that she could try to form a rightwing coalition with MPs from other parties if RN fell short of an absolute majority. Bardella had previously said he would only form a government with a sufficiently strong mandate.

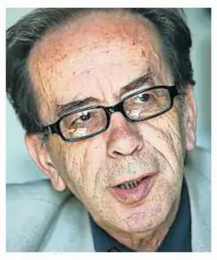
Analysts say the most likely outcome of the second-round vote is a hung parliament that could lead to months of political paralysis.

▲ *Attal said centrist candidates were right to pull out to stop the far right*

▼ *Soldiers guard the coffin of Ismail Kadare, the giant of Albanian literature, who died on Monday*

PHOTOGRAPH: FLORION GOGA/REUTERS

Albanian crowds pay homage before funeral of novelist Ismail Kadare



▲ *People applauded the coffin of Kadare, above, as it was carried in the Albanian capital, Tirana*

Philip Oltermann
Tirana

Thousands of Albanians gathered in the capital, Tirana, yesterday to pay tribute to their country's best-known novelist, Ismail Kadare, who died on Monday after a heart attack.

Flags flew at half-mast as the 88-year-old writer and poet's coffin lay in state in the entrance hall of the Opera and Ballet theatre in Tirana's central Skanderbeg Square, surrounded by national guard officers.

Some mourners read out Kadare's poems, while others applauded and threw flowers as the writer's coffin was carried to a hearse for a private funeral in the city. Albania's prime minister, Edi Rama, said in a speech that Kadare, who was nominated 15 times for the Nobel literature prize but never won it, had put his country's literature "into the pantheon of world letters".

Rama said the writer, whose best-known works include The General of the Dead Army and The Palace of Dreams, "came into this world, wrote and left". He added that it was right for Kadare to be given a private funeral, because "he was not a martyr and it was not in his desire to be a martyr".

In spite of missing out on the Nobel, Kadare received numerous awards in his lifetime, including the Booker international prize in 2005, the Prince of Asturias prize for the arts in 2009, and the America award in literature in 2023.

In France, where he had sought political asylum in the 1990s, President Emmanuel Macron last year awarded him the title of grand officer of the legion of honour.

Kadare "received all the possible praises and honours of the world", Rama said, "and all possible ... insults from the country that gave birth to him".

Under the Communist regime of Enver Hoxha, some of Kadare's poems and novels were banned for appearing to criticise the ruling party's authoritarian paranoia.

But the writer rejected being labelled as a dissident, saying open opposition to the dictatorial regime had been impossible.

Additional reporting **Reuters**

Cave art from 51,200 years ago is world's oldest picture story

Sharlotte Thou

The world's oldest known picture story is a cave painting almost 6,000 years older than the previous record holder, an international team of archaeologists has said.

The painting, believed to be at least 51,200 years old, was found at Leang Karampuang cave on the east Indonesian island of Sulawesi, about 10km from the previous record holder – a lifesize picture of a wild pig believed to be at least 45,500 years old – in a cave at Leang Tedongnge.

The painting is of three therianthropes – human-animal hybrids – and a wild pig.

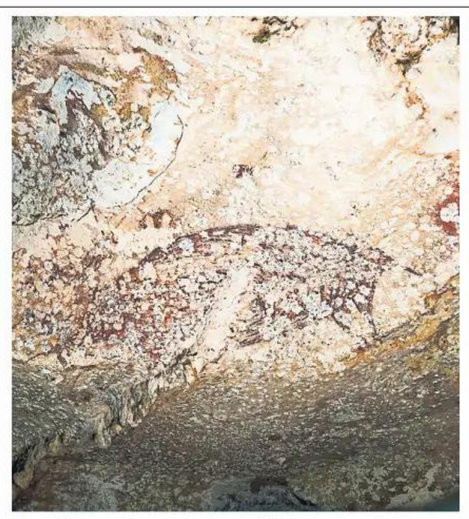
The finding contradicts the academic view that early figurative cave art consisted of single figure panels rather than scenes where figures interacted with each other. The researchers, from Griffith University, Southern Cross University and the Indonesian National Research and Innovation Agency, used uranium series dating to date the layers of calcium carbonate that had formed on top of the art.

Adam Brumm, a professor from Griffith University who jointly led the study, said that in the hundreds of excavations he had conducted in the region, there were frequent depictions of the warty pig.

"They were clearly economically important to these elite people," he said. "We can see they were also important to them symbolically and perhaps even spiritually". However, the researchers wrote in the journal Nature that the events taking place in the artwork were "difficult to interpret" and it was unclear what animals inspired the human-animal hybrids as they were drawn as "essentially stick figures".

"For whatever reason ... early humans ... [are] rarely depicted any form that could be reasonably interpreted as a human," Brumm said.

"Storytelling is a hugely important part of human evolution and possibly even helps to explain our success as a species, but finding evidence for it in art, especially in very early cave art, is exceptionally rare."



▲ *The painting was discovered on a cave wall on the island of Sulawesi*

FTSE 100	All share	Dow Indl	Nikkei 225	£/€	£/$
+49.92	+33.43	−33.73	+506.07	1.1811	1.2761
8171.12	4463.09	39298.12	40580.76	+0.0011	+0.0085

Business

Starmer must act immediately on workers' rights – union chief

Larry Elliott
Economics editor

Labour's post-election honeymoon will be short-lived unless it takes immediate action to deliver on workers' rights and brings a swift end to 14 years of public sector pay restraint, the president of the TUC has said.

Matt Wrack, also the general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), said Keir Starmer should convene a summit with unions within days to plan how Labour would deliver for workers if it wins today's election.

"Unions should be invited in quickly to set out their priorities," Wrack said as Starmer prepared for an expected landslide victory.

Wrack said issues that required urgent action included delivering on Labour's new deal for workers, resolving long-running public sector strikes and boosting wages.

While a Starmer-led government would probably insist that the state of the public finances means money is tight, Wrack said union members would not wait long. "We want a pay rise. There are ways of raising taxes on the richest that would help a Labour government deliver."

Wrack said Labour had to find a way of settling the junior doctors' pay dispute, and would then be faced with deciding what to do about the recommendations made by public sector pay review bodies. "If there is a honeymoon for Labour, it could be short-lived unless the government responds to the pent-up anger after 14 years of pay restraint."

Wrack said Starmer could lead the first government in decades to get rid of anti-union laws. While the measures would not be enough for the FBU, they would make life better for unions and would shift the balance of power in workplaces significantly.

The post-election summit should be the first of regular meetings between ministers and unions, he added. In its manifesto, Labour said

▲ *Matt Wrack said issues included resolving strikes and boosting pay*

the new deal for workers would be a priority, with legislation brought in within its first 100 days in power.

In addition to clamping down on zero-hours contracts and ending "fire and rehire" practices, Labour has promised a package of employment rights and said it wants to encourage collective bargaining by giving unions easier access to workplaces. It has said it would introduce a duty on employers to inform workers of their right to join a union.

Unions are concerned that the new deal for workers will be watered down as a result of lobbying from employers' groups such as the CBI. Business lobby groups have raised concerns that the plans will make the UK's labour market less flexible.

Wrack said unions had two concerns about Labour's proposals – that Starmer might give way to pressure from employers, and that the plans might be delayed.

Labour could buy itself some time on pay provided it moved quickly to deliver on workers' rights, Wrack said. "That would buy some goodwill. If they don't move quickly enough they won't buy as much goodwill."

A Starmer-led government would also need to take the risks of strikes seriously. "I don't want to rush into saying there will be a winter of discontent or anything like that but a Labour government will need to listen to the unions. People want some recompense for the losses they suffered during the pandemic and the cost of living crisis."

Action would also need to be taken "pretty quickly" to help workers struggling on low incomes.

"The 14 years of attacks on pay are unprecedented in the modern era and a Labour government is going to have to do something about it. I don't think the patience of union members will hold out for very long," said Wrack.

Landslide for Labour could restore UK as a 'safe haven', say City analysts

Richard Partington
Economics correspondent

A landslide victory for Keir Starmer in the general election today could hand Britain a stability premium in global markets, boosting the pound, shares and investment in the UK at a time of mounting political turmoil elsewhere, City investors have said.

In sharp contrast with the Conservative party's warnings of the dangers of a large Labour majority, analysts in the City of London said the prospect of a resounding mandate for Starmer's party could secure Britain's "safe haven" status among investors in an increasingly volatile world.

After failing to close the gap in opinion polls during the election campaign, Rishi Sunak warned that a Starmer "supermajority" would "bankrupt people in every generation". But City analysts said a Labour landslide could pave the way for global investment in Britain after the years of political and economic uncertainty under the Tories since the 2016 Brexit referendum.

Highlighting political instability on both sides of the Atlantic and the meltdown in financial markets triggered by Liz Truss's mini-budget – when investors spoke of a "moron premium" for the UK – City experts said a clear outcome today could return Britain to a steadier footing.

Nuwan Goonetilleke, the head of shareholder assets at Phoenix Group, said money was already pouring into London-listed assets in anticipation of a Labour victory. "The UK is really being seen not just as a safe haven, but the safest of havens – especially in Europe. With a Labour majority, it continues to really double down on that promise of economic stability, growth and wealth creation."

The pound has rallied against the euro on global currency markets since Emmanuel Macron called snap elections in France in early June, opening the door to a possible far-right victory or hung parliament in one of the EU's most powerful economies.

Joshua Mahony, the chief market analyst at Scope Markets, said: "Given the political shockwaves being felt around Europe, the prospect of a stable political environment could yet help place the UK economy as a haven for years to come."

While UK government bond yields have remained stable in recent weeks, French borrowing costs have risen sharply. Investors said uncertainty over the outcome of the US presidential election in November had also bolstered UK assets.

EU's plan for import duty on cheap goods may dent Shein and Temu

Sarah Butler
Lisa O'Carroll

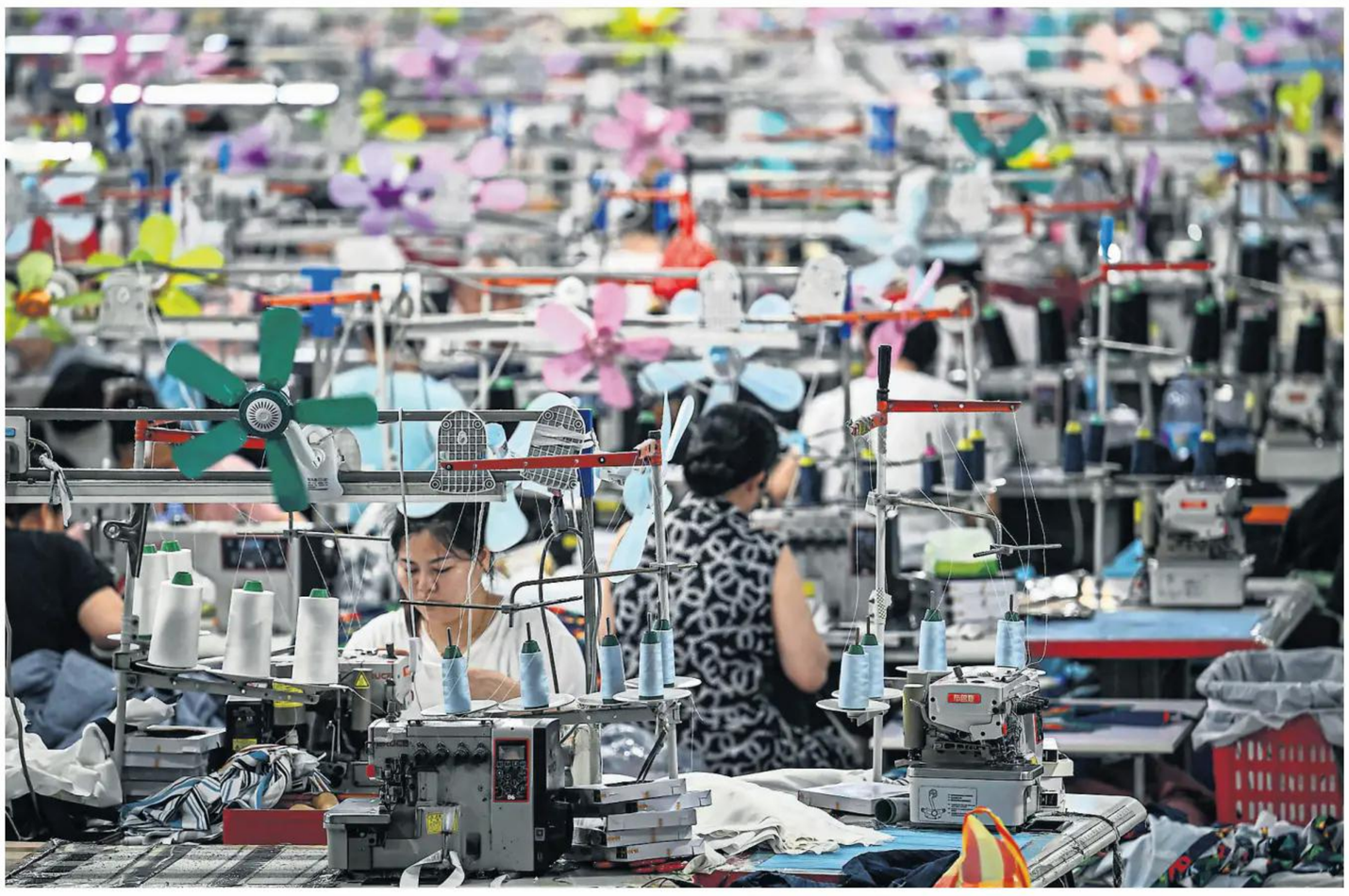
The EU is moving forward with plans to impose customs duty on cheap goods in a shift that could hit imports from online retailers and harm a hoped-for London listing by the fast-fashion seller Shein.

There has been growing disquiet among retailers based in mainland Europe, the UK and the US about rising competition from Chinese-linked marketplaces Shein and Temu, which exploit a loophole that excludes low-value items from import duty.

In the EU, the threshold for the levy is €150 (£127) and in the UK it is £135, enabling retailers such as Shein to ship products directly from overseas to shoppers in those markets without paying any import duty. In the UK, items valued at £39 or less also do not attract import VAT.

Subsidised postage costs in China make it more cost-effective for businesses based there to send cheap goods by air.

A European Commission spokesperson said: "In May last year we put on the table customs reforms for a simple, smarter and safer customs union. What we have proposed now is there is no exemption any more for packages valued at below €150."



▲ *Workers make clothes at a factory in Guangzhou, southern China, that supplies the online retailer Shein*
PHOTOGRAPH: JADE GAO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The e-commerce proposal must first be discussed and accepted by the European parliament, which sits again this month.

Last year, 2.3bn items below the duty-free €150 threshold were imported into the EU, according to a report in the Financial Times that highlighted the potential change.

Imports from online retailers have more than doubled year on year to more than 350,000 items in April – or almost two deliveries a household, commission data shows.

John Stevenson, an analyst at Peel Hunt, said the impact on Shein of a change in the rules "would be huge depending on the territory".

Some countries impose import duties of up to 30%, he said, and having to pay that would force Shein to either completely change its business model, put up prices or take a hit on profit. "The whole model is based on not paying duty," he said.

Stevenson said the issue would be high on investors' list of concerns alongside potential ethical issues in its supply chain if Shein went ahead with launching a London listing, as is expected as early as this autumn.

Shein said in a statement that it was "fully compliant with UK tax policies and pays applicable taxes including corporation tax, VAT and employment taxes".

Business view
Nils Pratley

EU action over cheap goods is just one reason to be sceptical about Shein's £50bn valuation

A stock market listing for Shein has been talked about for so long that the round number of £50bn has become attached to this Chinese-founded fast-fashion retailer as a plausible valuation. It's probably time to ask: are you sure about that number?

The figure isn't plucked out of thin air, it should be said. Shein raised money from private equity backers last year at a valuation of $66bn, which is roughly £50bn.

But, since the company also raised a few dollars at a $100bn valuation the previous year, it has merely demonstrated the standard truth that valuations set in thin private markets can be volatile and are not to be relied upon. Translating a sketchy private number into a hard valuation on a serious public market is a different game.

Then consider what has happened since those fundraisings. For starters, Shein has failed to get itself listed in the US, seemingly because of opposition from US lawmakers.

London is now the likely destination – initial papers have been filed with the Financial Conduct Authority – but the label of being a New York reject, you would think, would knock a few quid off the price.

Now comes something potentially far more serious. The European Union is drawing up plans to impose custom duties on cheap goods imported from China and seems to have Shein – plus the likes of fellow marketplaces Temu and AliExpress – in mind.

The current threshold for the levy in the EU is €150 (£127) and was probably set at that level because of the administrative hassle of chasing small sums. But, given the explosive growth in such sub-€150 parcels, there is a fair argument that the retail market is now being distorted and it has become worthwhile for the authorities to pursue duties on packets currently deemed "de minimis".

Why should Chinese-based retailers, dispatching orders in small packets to get under the duty threshold, while also enjoying subsidised postage costs in China, enjoy such an advantage?

The same argument is running in the UK, where the threshold is £135. Simon Roberts, the chief executive of Sainsbury's, this week called for loopholes to be closed for "some of the businesses that aren't paying tax in the right way, so it's a level playing field for everybody". Absolutely right: the rules need a fundamental rethink.

An open question is how far Shein's business model would be damaged if customs duties had to be paid on its products. Donald Tang, Shein's executive chairman, has argued in the past that the firm embraces reform in the name of "fair competition around the world" and has claimed tax breaks are "not foundational to our success".

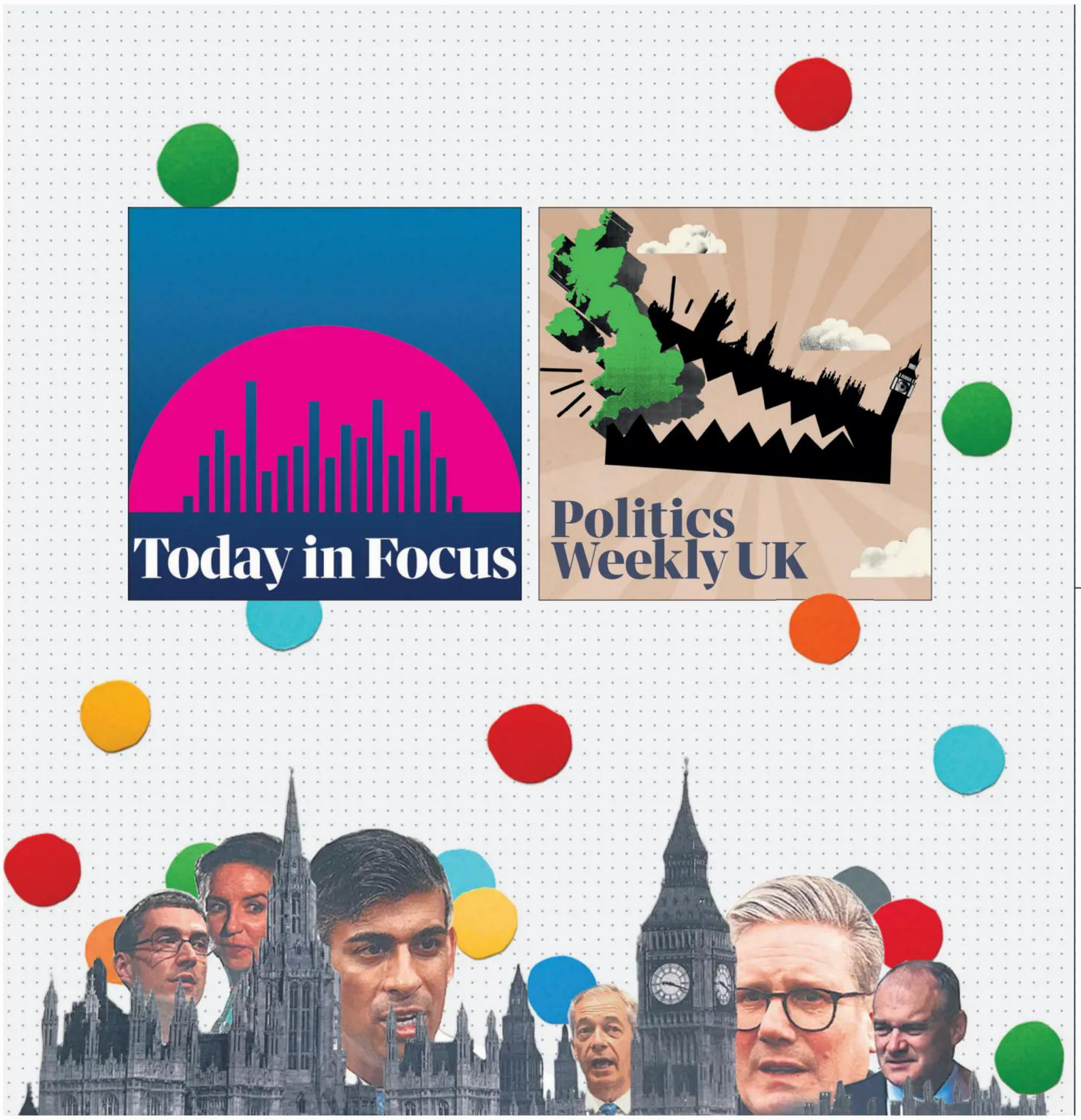
▲ *Shein failed to get itself a listing in the US and is now targeting London*

> *An open question is how far Shein's business model would be damaged if customs duties had to be paid on its products*

Outside investors, one suspects, would want to see detailed evidence to support the latter claim. The core pitch to consumers is that the clothes are dirt cheap; the customs duty advantage does not feel irrelevant.

In the meantime, the guessing-game on valuation must proceed on the basis of little detailed information. The Singapore-domiciled Shein drones on about how it uses AI to predict demand, how it ships to 150 countries and how it keeps waste to a minimum, but it is less forthcoming about financial performance.

The FT reported that it saw a financing document showing $2bn in profits for 2023 and roughly $45bn in gross merchandise value, but audited numbers are what count in a listing document and for valuation purposes. Even before one considers the controversy around alleged labour malpractices, some scepticism is required around the £50bn valuation. Shein is big, but it has barely started to explain its business meaningfully.



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AI's carbon cost

How tech's new toy puts climate in peril

Dan Milmo
Alex Hern
Jillian Ambrose

The artificial intelligence boom has driven big tech share prices to fresh highs, but at the cost of the sector's climate aspirations.

Google admitted this week that the technology is threatening its environmental targets after revealing that data centres had helped increase its greenhouse gas emissions by 48% since 2019. That follows Microsoft's admission that its 2030 net zero "moonshot" might not succeed owing to its AI strategy. So will tech be able to bring down AI's environmental cost?

Why does AI pose a threat to tech companies' green goals?

Data centres are a core component of training and operating AI models such as Google's Gemini or OpenAI's GPT-4. They contain the sophisticated computing equipment, or servers, that crunch through the vast reams of data underpinning AI systems. They require large amounts of electricity to run, which generates CO_2, as well as creating "embedded" CO_2 from the cost of manufacturing and transporting the equipment.

According to the International Energy Agency, total electricity consumption from data centres could double from 2022 levels to 1,000TWh (terawatt hours) in 2026, equivalent to the energy demand of Japan, while the research firm SemiAnalysis calculates that AI will result in data centres using 4.5% of global energy generation by 2030. Water usage is significant too, with one study estimating that AI could account for up to 6.6bn cubic meters of water use by 2027 - nearly two-thirds of England's annual consumption.

What do experts say about the environmental impact?

A recent UK government-backed report on AI safety pointed out that the carbon intensity of the energy source used by tech firms is "a key variable" in working out the environmental cost of the technology. It adds, however, that a "significant portion" of AI model training still relies on fossil fuel-powered energy.

Indeed, tech firms are hoovering up renewable energy contracts in an effort to meet their environmental goals. Amazon, for instance, is the world's largest corporate purchaser of renewable energy. Some experts argue that this pushes other energy users into fossil fuels because there is not enough clean energy meet demand.

Is there enough renewable energy to go round?

Global governments plan to triple the world's renewable energy resources by the end of the decade in order to cut consumption of fossil fuels in line with climate targets. But the ambitious pledge, agreed at last year's Cop28 climate talks, is already in doubt and experts fear that a sharp rise in demand from AI data centres will push it further out of reach.

The IEA, the world's energy watchdog, has warned that even though global renewable energy capacity grew at the fastest pace recorded in the past 20 years in 2023, the world may only double its renewable energy capacity by 2030 under current governments' plans.

How soon can we build new renewable energy projects?

Onshore renewable energy projects such as wind and solar farms are relatively fast to build - they can take less than six months to develop. However, sluggish planning rules in many developed countries together with a global logjam in connecting new projects to the power grid could add years to the process. Offshore windfarms and hydro power schemes face similar challenges, in addition to construction times of between two and five years.

Will AI's demand for electricity grow for ever?

Normal rules of supply and demand would suggest that, as AI uses more electricity, the cost of energy rises and the industry is forced to economise. But the unique nature of the industry means that the largest companies in the world may decide to plough through spikes in the cost of electricity, burning billions of dollars as a result.

The largest and most expensive data centres in the AI sector are those used to train so-called "frontier" AI, systems such as GPT-4o and Claude 3.5, which are more powerful and capable than any other. The leader in the field has changed over the years, but OpenAI is generally near the top, battling for position with Anthropic, the makers of Claude, and Google's Gemini.

Won't AI firms learn to use less electricity?

Every month, there are new breakthroughs in AI technology that let companies do more with less. In March 2022, for instance, a DeepMind project called Chinchilla showed researchers how to train frontier AI models using radically less computing power, by changing the ratio between the amount of training data and the size of the resulting model.

But that didn't result in the same AI systems using less electricity; instead, it resulted in the same amount of electricity being used to make even better AI systems. In economics, that phenomenon is known as the Jevons paradox, after the economist William Stanley Jevons, who noted that the improvement of the steam engine developed by James Watt, which allowed for much less coal to be used, instead led to a huge increase in the amount of the fossil fuel burned in England. As the price of steam power plummeted following Watt's design, new uses were discovered that would not have been worthwhile when power was more expensive.

Hawksmoor steakhouse chain looks for buyers to take majority stake

Jack Simpson

The high-end steakhouse chain Hawksmoor has been put up for sale in a deal that could value it at about £100m.

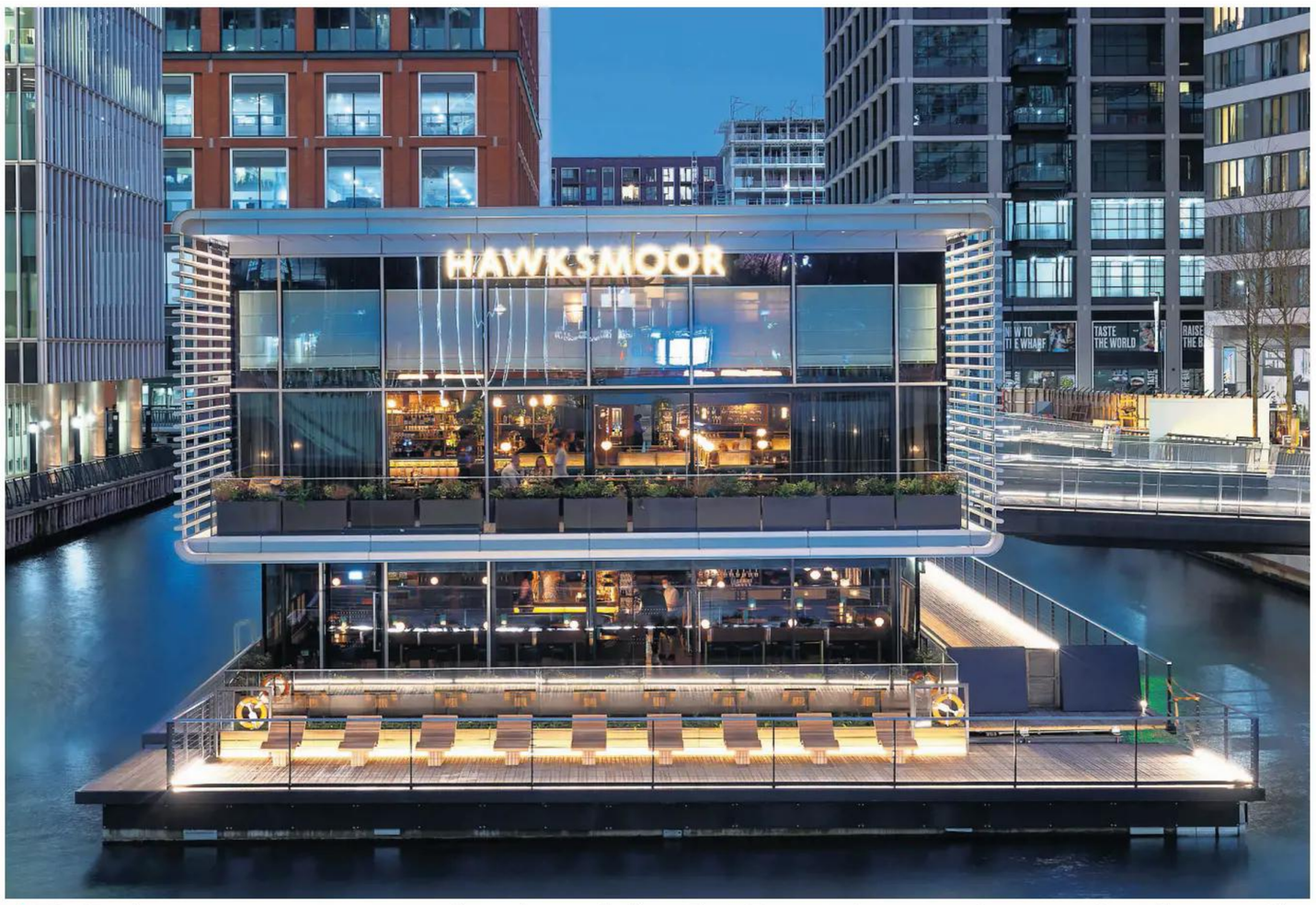
The restaurant chain has hired the investment bank Stephens to start looking for potential suitors for the business, which is hoping to expand its overseas operation.

Hawksmoor, which was founded in 2006 by Will Beckett and Huw Gott, has now opened in 13 locations, including three outside the UK. Last week, it launched its first restaurant in Chicago, while also running sites in Dublin and New York.

Graphite Capital has owned a 51% stake in the company since 2013 after it paid £35m to support a management buyout by both founders.

The investment process, which was first reported by the Financial Times, will result in Beckett, who is the current chief executive, and Gott, who owns a minority stake, retaining their stake after a deal is concluded.

Hawksmoor did not comment on the sale but Beckett said: "We've got a great relationship with Graphite, and together we are getting to know the US investment community in more depth. As that continues, an opportunity may emerge that we wish to explore together."



▲ *The Hawksmoor restaurant at Canary Wharf, London, is one of 13 that the company operates, including in New York and Dublin*

Beckett and Gott opened the first Hawksmoor restaurant in 2006 in Spitalfields, east London, before opening a second site in Covent Garden in 2010 and a third in the City of London in 2011.

Last week, Hawksmoor recorded turnover for the 12 months to April, with revenues hitting £90m, up 20% from the year before. The FT reported that a person close to the company had said its underlying profits were above £10m at the end of June.

The move comes three years after Hawksmoor shelved plans to float on the London Stock Exchange, citing broader uncertainty in the hospitality industry caused by supply chain disruption and labour shortages as pandemic lockdowns were lifted.

The potential deal follows several high-profile sales of restaurant chains in the past 12 months.

The Restaurant Group, which owns Frankie & Benny's and Wagamama, was taken private in October after accepting a £506m takeover offer from the US buyout group Apollo. In April last year, Fulham Shore, the owner of the Real Greek and Franca Manca, was bought by the Japanese restaurant operator Toridoll, in a deal worth £93m.

The news of a possible sale for Hawksmoor comes amid a difficult outlook for the wider restaurant and pub industry. Last month, figures from the trade body UKHospitality revealed that between 2021 and 2023, 22,859 businesses in the sector had closed, while only 11,734 had opened.

Graphite Capital said that it did not comment on market rumours.

Overseas cash transfers failing after collapse of Small World

Miles Brignall

Thousands of people in developing countries have been left waiting for vital payments that many rely on to live after the Small World money transfer service collapsed.

The company, which allowed users to send cash for pickup collection in more than 170 countries, ceased trading on 10 June.

Customers who paid money into the company's account expecting it to be sent on to friends and family, only for it to then fail to arrive, face an anxious wait to see how much of their payments will be returned.

"Small World UK and its associated group businesses have ceased receiving or processing new money transfer transactions through its agents, branches, websites and mobile applications," a statement on the company's website said.

While not a household name in the UK, Small World is understood to have been popular in west Africa and the Philippines.

On 18 June the Financial Conduct Authority, which regulated Small World's parent firm, LCC Trans-Sending, said the company had entered special administration. Accountants at the appointed administrators, Grant Thornton, are looking at the books to establish who is owed what.

A Question for the New Government:

energiraven.com

Where are Heat Networks on the Energy Agenda?

City-wide Heat, Street by Street

Heat Storage **Surplus Energy** **Renewable Energy** **Waste Heat**

Heat Storage
Cogeneration Energy
Waste-to-Energy
Industrial Surplus Energy
Solar
Geothermal
Wind
Data Centres

Eliminate Fuel Poverty. Create Green Jobs. Build Regional Wealth.

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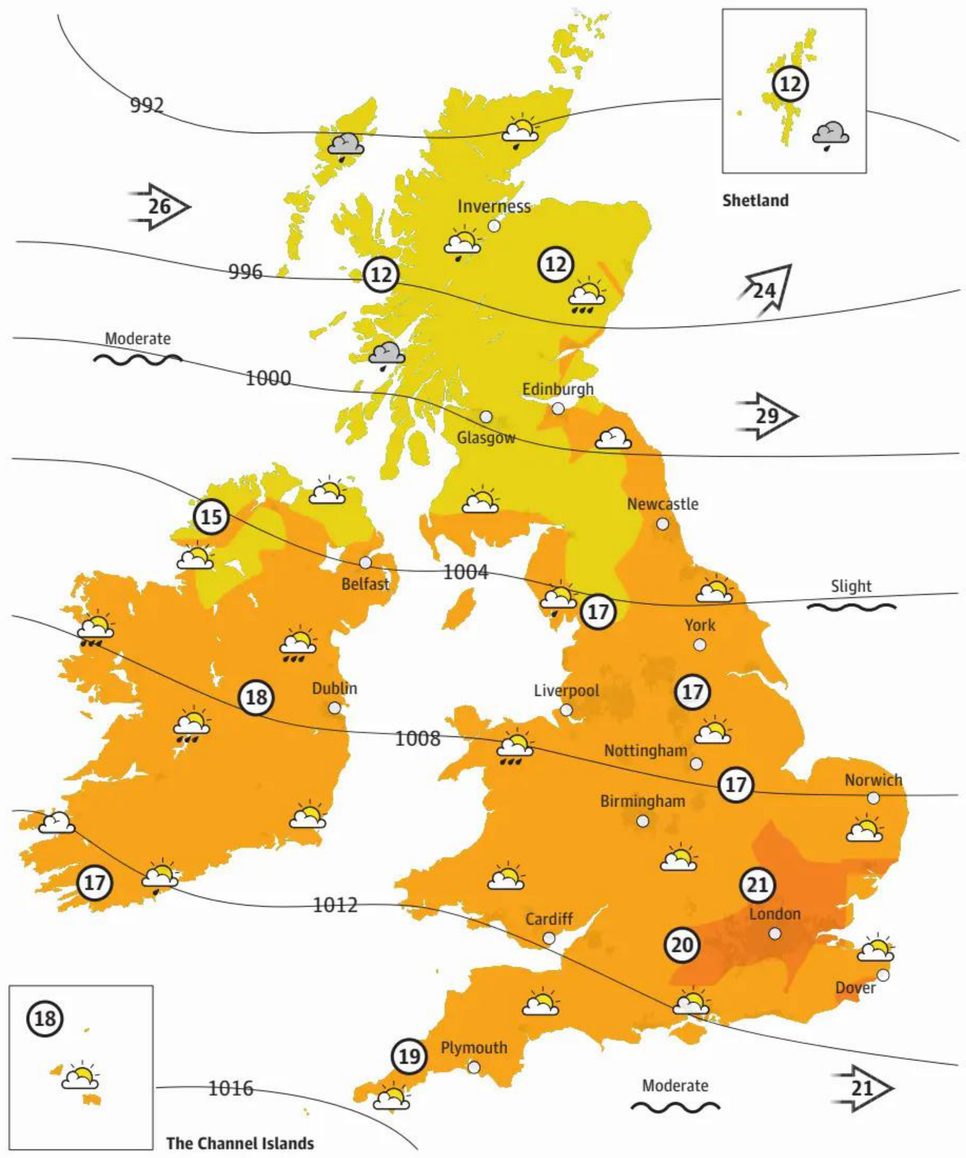
Find good company

Weather
Thursday 4 July 2024

UK and Ireland Noon today

Sunny · Mist · Fog · Sunny intervals · Hazy · Mostly cloudy · Overcast/dull · Sunny showers · Sunny and heavy showers · Light showers · Rain · Sleet · Light snow · Snow showers · Heavy snow · Ice · Thundery rain · Thundery showers · Temperature, °C · Wind speed, mph · Windy

35C 30 25 20 15 10 5 0 -5 -10 -15 -20



Forecast

Low 10 High 17
Tomorrow

Low 10 High 16
Saturday

Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

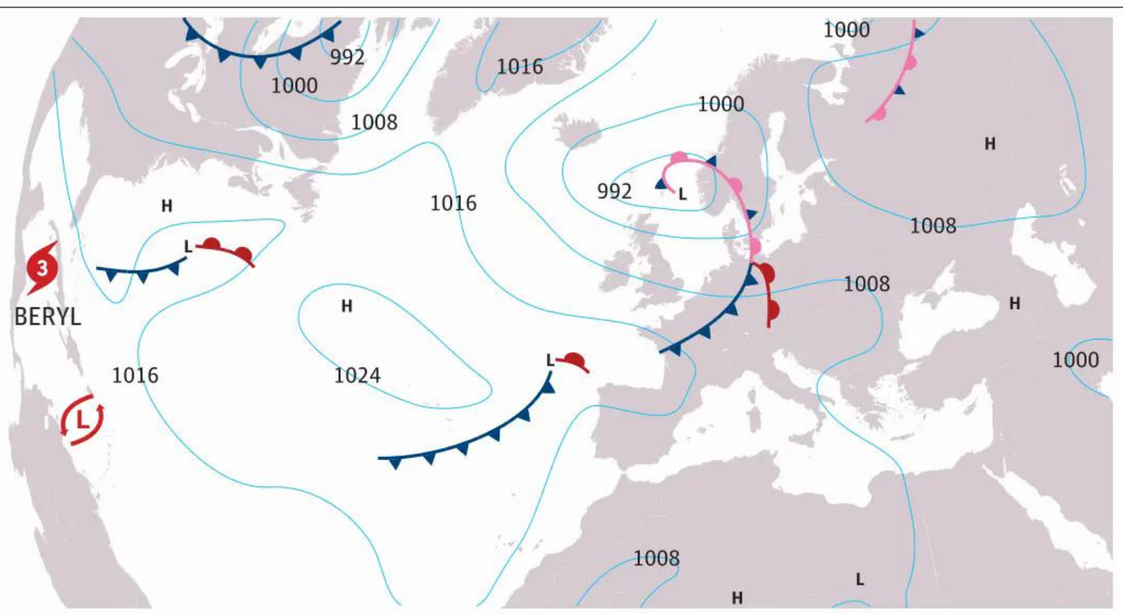
Latest	
02 Jul 2024	425.23
Weekly average	
23 Jun 2024	426.47
03 Jul 2023	422.33
03 Jul 2014	400.95
Pre-industrial base	*280*
Safe level	*350*

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

	Lows and highs	Precipitation	Air pollution
London	13 21	5%	Low
Manchester	10 17	75%	Low
Edinburgh	11 16	80%	Low
Belfast	9 16	60%	Low
Glasgow	11 14	80%	Low
Inverness	10 13	85%	Low
Leeds	11 17	0%	Low
Liverpool	11 19	55%	Low
Newcastle	9 16	25%	Low
Sheffield	10 17	0%	Low

Atlantic front



Cold front · Warm front · Occluded front · Trough

Weatherwatch

Cities slow the wind down. Skyscrapers, warehouses, suburbs and shopping centres all create obstacles to airflow and this increase in surface roughness slows the wind down. Across China the rapid growth of cities has resulted in average wind speed decreasing by 11% since the 1980s. But urbanisation also increases surface temperatures within cities, driving more mixing with the air above and potentially increasing wind speed.

Researchers from Nanjing University in China have simulated the impact of the buildings in one of China's megacities – Shanghai – to see how they change the wind. The research, which is published in the Journal of Advances in Modeling Earth Systems, shows that Shanghai's built landscape slows winds down by about 50%. However, during warm periods when the urban heat island effect is particularly strong, the slowing effect is outweighed by the energy added via turbulent mixing with the air above. This can result in average urban wind speeds increasing by as much as 30%.

The balance will vary from city to city, but it seems that most of the time buildings slow the wind down. However, cities can whip up quite a hoolie. **Kate Ravilious**

Around the world

Algiers	32	Lisbon	33
Ams'dam	17	Madrid	37
Athens	28	Malaga	31
Auckland	13	Melb'rne	12
B Aires	12	Mexico C	23
Bangkok	32	Miami	33
Barcelona	26	Milan	27
Basra	46	Mombasa	29
Beijing	30	Moscow	33
Berlin	19	Mumbai	31
Bermuda	26	N Orleans	33
Brussels	20	Nairobi	25
Budapest	26	New Delhi	32
C'hagen	18	New York	29
Cairo	38	Oslo	14
Cape Town	16	Paris	22
Chicago	29	Perth	18
Corfu	31	Prague	20
Dakar	30	Reykjavik	13
Dhaka	30	Rio de J	28
Dublin	17	Rome	27
Florence	30	Shanghai	38
Gibraltar	26	Singapore	30
H Kong	33	Stockh'm	17
Harare	25	Strasb'g	22
Helsinki	20	Sydney	17
Istanbul	28	Tel Aviv	33
Jo'burg	17	Tenerife	26
K Lumpur	31	Tokyo	33
K'mandu	27	Toronto	31
Kabul	36	Vancouv'r	22
Kingston	34	Vienna	24
Kolkata	31	Warsaw	23
L Angeles	31	Wash'ton	34
Lagos	27	Well'ton	10
Lima	19	Zurich	22

High tides

Source: © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Times are local UK times

Aberdeen	0040	3.8m	1305	3.9m	**London Bridge**	0048	6.6m	1328	6.4m
Avonmouth	0631	11.5m	1856	11.8m	**Lossiemouth**	1126	3.7m	2351	3.8m
Barrow	1058	8.4m	2323	8.4m	**Milford Haven**	0536	6.1m	1802	6.3m
Belfast	1044	3.3m	2303	3.4m	**Newquay**	0430	6.3m	1655	6.4m
Cobh	0442	3.6m	1711	3.7m	**North Shields**	0245	4.6m	1510	4.7m
Cromer	0602	4.5m	1824	4.6m	**Oban**	0533	3.4m	1739	3.5m
Dover	1046	6.0m	2311	6.1m	**Penzance**	0402	4.9m	1629	5.0m
Dublin	1117	3.8m	2340	3.8m	**Plymouth**	0505	4.8m	1729	5.0m
Galway	0438	4.6m	1658	4.8m	**Portsmouth**	1056	4.3m	2315	4.4m
Greenock	--	--	1204	3.1m	**Southport**	1005	8.2m	2239	8.3m
Harwich	1112	3.7m	2332	3.8m	**Stornoway**	0630	4.2m	1856	4.4m
Holyhead	0954	5.1m	2219	5.2m	**Weymouth**	0535	0.9m	1758	1.0m
Hull	0537	6.7m	1801	6.9m	**Whitby**	0319	5.0m	1544	5.1m
Leith	0149	5.0m	1415	5.1m	**Wick**	1057	3.1m	2320	3.2m
Liverpool	1037	8.5m	2304	8.6m	**Workington**	1102	7.5m	2326	7.6m

Sun & Moon

Sun rises	0450
Sun sets	2119
Moon rises	0237
Moon sets	2053
New Moon	5 July

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2024

Lighting up

Belfast	2203 to 0457
Birm'ham	2131 to 0452
Brighton	2116 to 0455
Bristol	2129 to 0502
Carlisle	2151 to 0441
Cork	2155 to 0523
Dublin	2155 to 0505
Glasgow	2204 to 0441
Harlech	2143 to 0500
Inverness	2215 to 0427
London	2119 to 0450
M'chester	2139 to 0449
Newcastle	2147 to 0436
Norwich	2120 to 0439
Penzance	2134 to 0520

Sport

Euro 2024

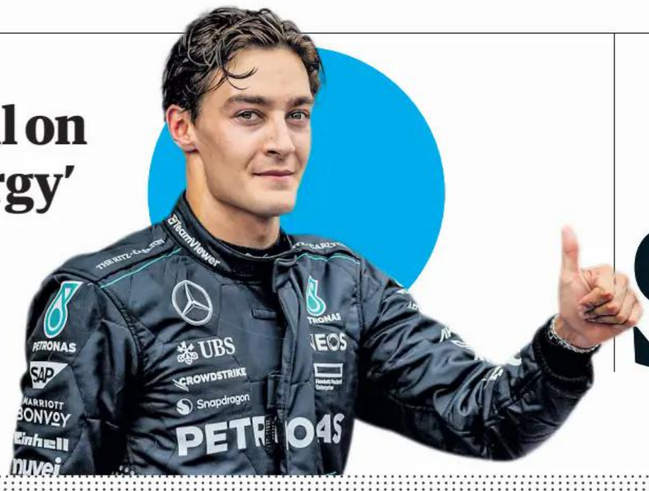
Turkey's Demiral faces ban threat over 'wolf' salute

Page 40 →

Formula One

George Russell on the 'extra energy' of Silverstone

Page 39 →



▲ *The online fury directed at Gareth Southgate during the victory over Slovakia was remarkable*
EDDIE KEOGH/THE FA/ GETTY IMAGES

Antisocial media

Throwaway hits of online hate are hard to avoid for today's young players

Jason Stockwood

Umberto Eco made a provocative statement about social media when receiving an honorary degree in Turin in 2015: it "gives legions of idiots the right to speak when they once only spoke at a bar after a glass of wine, without harming the community. Then they were quickly silenced, but now they have the same right to speak as a Nobel prize winner." While I do not entirely agree with this sentiment, there is some truth to it, particularly in the realm of football, where social media has significantly altered the share of voice between clubs and *some* fans.

I missed the Denmark v England game owing to a work commitment but ventured online to gauge reactions to England being top of their group in the Euros. The vitriol against Gareth Southgate after the draw was incredible. Our most successful national manager since 1966 was the target of memes about boredom, safety and mediocrity. The fury directed at Southgate during the win against Slovakia that took his team to a fourth consecutive major tournament quarter-final was remarkable.

Three years ago, at the beginning of my term as chair of Grimsby Town, we recognised the importance of being available online to try to foster a culture of trust and transparency. Over time, I dialled this back because it was hard to predict reactions. After a negative result, trying to highlight positives was like inviting 50 people to line up to punch you in the face. I learned to stay offline on Saturday nights, as immediate post-match emotions tend to skew responses. The anonymity and distance provided by social media amplifies this negativity, with some profiles pathologically unable to say anything productive. While social media has positive characteristics, negativity and nastiness seem to dominate this disembodied theatre of our lives. Several factors contribute to this; from an evolutionary point of view, we are wired to pay more attention to negative information because it could signal potential threats. Sharing these frustrations can bond communities of like-minded individuals, and negative comments elicit stronger reactions, causing algorithms to prioritise such content because it increases overall engagement.

Throwaway comments, temporary and context-specific, now become part of the permanent record. In our second year, we faced criticism about the perceived weakness of our January transfer window. After winning our first game of February 3-0 at Crewe, I tweeted something along the lines of: "Not a bad window after all." Screenshots were reposted a couple of weeks later after a bad game, with some fans being the arbiters of when we could be jokey or playful. In real life, a throwaway comment might be quickly forgotten, but online it's preserved and can be thrown back at you when things inevitably go awry.

This permanence is an issue when our biggest learning experiences come from our ability to try something, fail and, most importantly, move on quickly. I feel sorry for those born in the digital age who have to live with the knowledge that every embarrassing thing they do or mistake they make could be caught on camera or posted online.

I recently bumped into an old friend I knew when I was nine and hadn't seen for 40 years. We were in a dance group together as kids called Itchy Feet. For years I was thankful that this was in the pre-digital era and no photos existed of that period of my life. My friend had a grainy photo of me in homemade red and silver disco dungarees that she shared. I remember the photo being taken by a family friend in the park in Grimsby in 1979 and hadn't seen it since. It matters less now I am 53, but I wonder what people might have thought of me as I tried to build my career in tech if it was the first thing that appeared if someone happened to Google my name.

It's hard to overstate how bad online interaction can be for players, who are constantly under the spotlight. A generation of young players are advised to stay off social media, but positive reinforcement can be addictive when things are going well, while a poor performance can create a downward doom cycle. In the past, they only had to endure terrace shouts, which, though brutal, ended when they left the stadium. Now, they face a legion of critics online, with negative comments persisting long after the final whistle and into their weekends.

Past terrace shouts used to end when players departed the pitch – now negative comments persist long after the final whistle

Anonymity in my mind often renders these opinions irrelevant, as those without followers are usually bots or individuals without real courage. I tell my kids that most people are decent in real life, and those who aren't can generally be avoided. Online, however, some are emboldened to say what they would never dare in person and it's hard to imagine the lived experience of those who only find their courage alone in darkened rooms tapping out anger against the world. Last season, we reported an online troll to the police for making negative sexual comments about a female staff member, only to discover he was barely an adult, ashamed and contrite when confronted.

Ultimately, social media should be seen for what it is: a reaction to the headlines of life, often without bothering to read the full article. Sometimes, that's enough, but any real connection and understanding requires effort and empathy before we start to write.

Jason Stockwood is the vice-chair of Grimsby Town

◀ *Kavem Hodge guides a cut off the back foot against the Select XI*
KYLE ANDREWS/ALAMY LIVE NEWS

'It brings West Indians together': locals bring noise to Test warm-up

Fans in south-east London get a glimpse of players who may face England next week

Emma John
Beckenham County Cricket Ground

A cover drive from West Indies' Alick Athanaze pierces the gap between the boundary boards and a young boy fields the ball just behind them. He throws it back to the field, and his friends surround him with hugs and cheers as if he's just taken a match-winning catch. There may not have been a lot of sunshine here yesterday, but there was plenty of warmth.

West Indies' first and only warm-up match of their England tour attracted a delighted crowd, and their batters certainly seemed to enjoy the atmosphere, posting 339 against a First Class Counties Select XI, who reached the close 15 without loss in reply. In these days of strangulated scheduling, this three-day game represents vital batting practice for the tourists before the opening Test against England at Lord's next Wednesday.

While the captain, Kraigg Brathwaite, missed out - he lasted just eight balls before edging Josh Turner behind for four - there were runs for Athanaze, Kirk McKenzie, and a century for Kavem Hodge who scored 112 off 128 balls before top-edging a short ball.

Mikyle Louis, meanwhile, may well have played his way into the vacant opening spot opposite Brathwaite thanks to a half-century off 63 balls. It included 16 off one of Josh Hull's overs - a four and two sixes - and if Louis does make his debut at Lord's the 23-year-old will be the first Test player to come from St Kitts.

But there was more value in this game than the chance to adjust to English conditions. It was also a well-planned opportunity to re-engage traditionally cricket-loving Caribbean communities in south-east London. Asher Roberts came to his post as development officer at Kent after coaching Catford and Cyphers CC and has been planning this Rally Round the West Indies event for the past six months. "Everything right now shows that there is a demand for cricket in the south-east, and London itself," he says.

The view from the foldout chairs on the boundary suggested he was right. There were 800 tickets sold on the first day, and after some chilly winds and sporadic showers, the stands and coffee truck queues began to fill out in turn. The sound of a lone airhorn greeted an imperious pull from Athanaze as he brought up his 50 off 68 balls (he was eventually out for 74, top-edging a sweep). By the time Hodge danced down the pitch to hit the off-spinner Farhan Ahmed for six to bring up his century, the airhorn had been joined by whistles, cheers and a noisy bonhomie.

Near the pavilion Glenroy and Fitzroy genned up on the tourists for their cricket WhatsApp group. "We know the T20 players but not many of these ones," said Glenroy. "Conditions are going to be against them in England. But then, they went against them in Australia and they still came away with a draw ..."

Fitzroy was impressed by McKenzie, who has only played three Tests as West Indies' No 3. Dropped at short leg on 62, he responded by swinging a six to the sightscreen and cover driving the next delivery.

In the stands, Mercia Campbell watched with her grownup children as Athanaze and Hodge put on a partnership of 138 for the fifth wicket. Ignoring cricket was never a choice in their south London home - the fanatical Mercia has flown over from Ireland especially for this game - and her daughter Caitlin still believes it holds a special place among the Caribbean diaspora.

"It brings West Indians together outside of the homeland," said Caitlin. "There's such a community and passion for it, everyone talks to each other." While her brother Joseph frets about the death of Test cricket, Caitlin thinks the franchise atmosphere can help reconnect the game with Caribbean roots. "I've been to a couple of games and it's just insane, it's like the most amazing party ever. Someone like Chris Gayle is such a huge star, just not outside of cricket. We need that here. Make cricket sexy again!"

The former Jamaica player Simon Jackson, who has been coaching in this part of England for the past eight years, said he sees a positive shift in engagement with the game. "There's a bit of a buzz now around cricket and getting it back into the community, with initiatives like the ACE programme charity and the stuff that Asher and others are doing. And having a strong West Indies team over here won't hurt that - if it continues to be a good summer, I think it can grow bigger and stronger."

The Beckenham ground, which missed out on the chance to be a Tier One venue in the women's game, remains a place of great possibility - a place that could emerge as a vital hub for cricket in a high-density catchment area Kent is keen to realise.

Today, 600 primary schoolchildren will be in the crowd and more than a thousand tickets have already been sold for the final day of the match, when the entertainment will include steel bands and a dance group.

Joseph Campbell, meanwhile, is just pleased to be watching his team in his home town. "I still can't quite believe that West Indies are playing in Beckenham," he says. "I suppose if I can't go to West Indies, West Indies will come to me."

County Championship

History eludes McIlroy after thrilling chase

Tanya Aldred
Southport

Three thrilling matches went to the wire to draw the latch on this high-summer championship window. **Glamorgan** tied with **Gloucestershire** in an astonishing match at Cheltenham, Glamorgan falling just short of what would have been a world-record run chase of 593. No 11 Jamie McIlroy needed one from the final ball, but instead edged Ajeet Singh Dale to James Bracey who took a flying catch in an ungloved hand. Sam Northeast, the captain, top-scored with a brilliant 187, Marnus Labuschagne made 119, and there was an unbeaten 43 from Mason Crane at the death - but it wasn't enough.

Tom Abell polished off a golden chase of 410 with four successive boundaries as he guided **Somerset** to a five-wicket win over **Warwickshire** with 152. He was aided by Tom Banton (81), James Rew (57) and Tom Kohler-Cadmore (49). There were 4.2 overs to spare.

Liam Dawson's cameo 56, off 28 balls, turned **Hampshire**'s tricky chase of 179 in 31 overs on its head at Southampton. Ben Compton and Harry Finch had earlier made life tricky for the home side, but **Kent** go into the break without a Championship win since 3 May.

After the fireworks of Tuesday at Southport, Jimmy Anderson's (possible) final day in his faded red rose cap was a quieter affair. With on-off weather, he took one more wicket as an excellent Joe Clarke century for **Nottinghamshire** blunted a tired **Lancashire** attack.

Tom Lawes grabbed four wickets to help **Surrey** to a 145-run win over an **Essex** side hampered by the loss of Jordan Cox on day one. Some 13,706 came through the turnstiles, a record for a Championship match at the Oval in the 21st century. Surrey have a 23-point lead over second placed Somerset and there they will stay until the conkers are almost ready to fall - the next round starts on 22 August.

Third Metro Bank ODI

Bell tolls for New Zealand to complete whitewash

New Zealand	211-8
England	212-5

England beat New Zealand by five wickets

Raf Nicholson
Bristol

Lauren Bell took her first five-wicket haul in any form of senior cricket as England wrapped up a narrow one-day international whitewash against New Zealand at Bristol.

The match was reduced to 42 overs a side due to a 95-minute rain delay but New Zealand had nevertheless posted their highest total of the series - 211 for eight. But Bell's interventions cut off promising innings from the captain, Sophie Devine, half-centurion Amelia Kerr and left-hander Brooke Halliday.

England then overhauled the total with five wickets to spare in spite of an early wobble, thanks to half-centuries from Amy Jones and Nat Sciver-Brunt - the latter unbeaten on 76.

The 23-year-old seamer Bell broke the rollicking 68-run partnership between Devine and Kerr by angling one in to Devine, who foolishly tried to cut and edged on to her own stumps.

Then, reintroduced with five overs remaining, Bell wiped out Kerr and Halliday in the same over - Kerr trapped lbw missing a slog sweep, and Halliday swishing down the leg side into the gloves of a diving Jones. Slower balls to Izzy Gaze and Lauren Down - who both skied catches to mid-off - completed the set.

"It [the change] has been a little bit challenging but moving forward in my career it will be one of the best things I've done," Bell said.

With Sophie Ecclestone rested, this was an interesting test for England, and while their fielding was as sharp as ever - Jones pouching two brilliant diving catches and Charlie Dean running out Georgia Plimmer with a direct hit from backward point - their batting was dozy at times. Tammy Beaumont did not even attempt to bring DRS to bear on her lbw decision, seemingly happy to walk off for a duck as England sunk to 33 for three - Maia Bouchier bounced out by Molly Penfold, and Heather Knight sending up a limp leading edge to bowler Hannah Rowe after struggling to 9 from 21 balls.

▲ *Lauren Bell leads England off after her maiden five-wicket haul*

A 90-run partnership between Sciver-Brunt and Jones, though, steadied the ship. And while Jones feather-edged behind with 50 runs still needed, Alice Capsey was able to face down her own recent demons and remain with Sciver-Brunt to finish the job.

Rugby union

'Razor' Robertson is All Blacks' surf dude ready to sink England

New Zealand coach's club credentials suggest Steve Borthwick's side might hit stormy waters in first Test

Robert Kitson
Dunedin

Scott "Razor" Robertson could hardly be further removed from the traditional image of an All Blacks head coach. You never heard about Graham Henry checking the latest surf conditions or Steve Hansen indulging in post-game breakdancing. Or Ian Foster, the previous incumbent, opening up about having dyslexia and describing a close shave with a massive tiger shark.

Which, from the perspective of the Kiwi rugby public, is slightly unsettling. The sport needs characters and colour and Robertson has been delivering in both respects before his team even take the field, with a documentary on his rise from surf dude to New Zealand's ultimate oval office already released on YouTube. On the other hand, no amount of breakdancing skill will help if the national team suddenly lose their obsessive winning edge.

If England contrive to gatecrash Razor's welcome party in Saturday's first Test in Dunedin, the new coach's honeymoon period will be the briefest on record.

To suggest he is unprepared, though, is inaccurate. Having played for the All Blacks himself – he won 23 caps between 1998 and 2002 – and coached the Crusaders to seven successive Super Rugby titles, he knows the ingredients of a winning rugby team. In his eyes it primarily boils down to caring for players and building connections. "My job is to connect them and make them believe. What does it look like? How does it feel? How are people going to own it?"

Scott Robertson says he feels ready for the challenge of Test rugby

He has been less publicly forthcoming about precisely how his New Zealand will play, while his dyslexia means he communicates with his players in a more visual way. "What is the mindset overall? Who is going where? Bringing it alive is the key," he says. "That's what I like the guys to have in their minds. I am not great at admin. I just talk to pictures."

The talkative 49-year-old has certainly come a long way from his childhood in Mount Maunganui, where his life revolved around the beach, the surf life-saving club and fishing. The son of a fireman, he has never been a collar-and-tie man and still cites a spell playing club rugby in Newtownards just east of Belfast as a formative time. "It helped me mature massively. I was a bit sheltered and limited in my thoughts. The number one thing I learned was that I had to get an education," he says.

"A lot of the guys there went to Queen's University. I would sit in the back of the lecture theatre and listen. They were going off to Amsterdam or London to work in finance and the markets. Education gave them those opportunities and I hadn't had that. I wasn't going to be a brickie or a labourer."

So he enrolled as an adult and his life changed. "I sat in front of the best-looking girl in class and married her seven years later," he says. "Jane got a double degree – she got hers and mine. I learned about myself at uni. 'How do I work? Who do I need around me? What are my blind spots? What am I missing?'" It led to him signing a groundbreaking contract with the Crusaders, who paid for him to do a degree at the University of Lincoln. "I was a bit of a pioneer in that regard."

It remains the case, even so, that Test rugby is a different beast to Super Rugby. Robertson has coached New Zealand Under-20s but has never had to cope with the full weight of national scrutiny. His assistant coach, Leon MacDonald, however, reckons his old teammate has served a sufficiently long apprenticeship. "You've got to be really, really ready to be coach of the All Blacks," MacDonald says. "Razor's done his time. He's ready."

When you ask MacDonald to describe Robertson, the word "energy" is front and centre. "He's always trying to think of ways to keep pushing the team forward," he says. "He's got a very wide understanding of the game in all departments. There are not many head coaches who are as deep into the game as he is."

There are equally few head coaches who can describe how it feels to encounter a tiger shark while surfing off the coast of South Africa. "It was massive. I looked around and no one else was there so I just went straight up on my board and straight in with my feet up. It was close enough. That was my little moment."

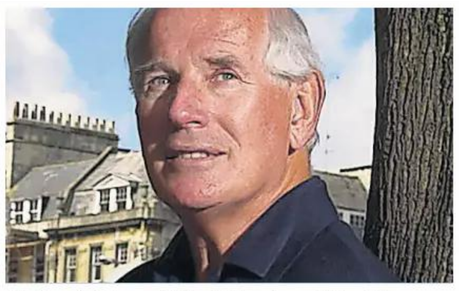
Undeterred, he still studies the daily surf reports – "I'm a water man" – but sinking England is his priority. Before Steve Borthwick's appointment there was a moment when Robertson was linked with the England role – "Me and the missus were talking about living in a castle at one stage!" – but he looks very happy to be back in black.

"I didn't really want to go back into club rugby … it was time to test myself at Test level," he says. "I did have other opportunities, but my first choice was where I am now." While he says there will be no more breakdancing until the 2027 World Cup has been won, the All Blacks' new mix master is in the house.

Borthwick leads tributes to 'incredible' former England coach Rowell

Steve Borthwick has led tributes to the former England and Bath head coach Jack Rowell after his death at the age of 87. Rowell coached England from 1994 to 1997, overseeing 21 victories in 29 Tests and reaching the 1995 World Cup semi-finals.

Players such as Will Carling, Jeremy Guscott and Rob Andrew all flourished under Rowell's leadership, with England winning Five Nations grand slams in 1995 and 1996. Rowell was appointed by the Rugby Football Union after an outstanding 16-year coaching career with Bath. He transformed the West Country club, winning five league titles and the knockout cup eight times under his direction.



▲ *Jack Rowell led England to Five Nations glory in 1995 and 1996*

In a statement, Bath said: "Jack Rowell, all 6ft 7in of him, was a towering figure in the history of Bath and English rugby."

Rowell returned to the club as director of rugby in 2002 and worked with Borthwick, the current England head coach. "We are saddened to hear of the passing of Jack Rowell and extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and friends," Borthwick told englandrugby.com. "As a player at Bath, I had the privilege of working with him when he was director of rugby. He left a huge impression on me, not only as someone with incredible rugby knowledge, but also a fantastic man." PA Media

Formula One

The 'goatee' Russell can ride Silverstone wave

British driver believes he has proved he is 'as good as anyone' as he goes into his home grand prix on a high

Giles Richards

George Russell is understandably in buoyant mood heading into his home race at the British Grand Prix. The 26-year-old rolls into Silverstone this weekend on the back of a win and with no shortage of confidence.

When asked to appraise his standing among Formula One's top drivers he is unhesitant. "I believe I'm as good as anyone," he says. "I think I've proven that."

He has had to do so against the toughest of measures in the form of his Mercedes teammate, Lewis Hamilton, which raises the question: if Hamilton is the GOAT, where is Russell?

Having been relentlessly questioned about his relationship with the seven-times world champion since the driver from King's Lynn joined Mercedes in 2022, he replies simply with a broad grin. "That's the big question, isn't it? The goatee?" Russell's victory at the last round in Austria, only the second of his career and Mercedes' first since he took the flag at Brazil in 2022, was as welcome as it was unexpected. The series of upgrades since Monaco in May have put his car in position to challenge McLaren and Ferrari, for podium places behind Red Bull and potentially more.

After Austria the team principal, Toto Wolff, said he felt Mercedes were on track, noting they had "big momentum now in the team to go to a point where we are able, on real performance, to fight for the win".

At the Red Bull Ring, however, pace was not decisive. Russell was in third behind Red Bull's Max Verstappen and McLaren's Lando Norris when the pair collided, allowing Russell in to win. It was a reminder of sticking to the task, a lesson not lost on him.

"My time will come," he says. "I've got a good 17 to 20 years left in me. This is Max's time. Max's era. There's no guarantee that he's going to be fighting every single year in the future. When Sebastian [Vettel] was winning, nobody would have predicted that. When Lewis was winning, nobody would have predicted that. Who knows what's going to come next? I've just got to make sure I'm ready."

Russell began his F1 career at Williams in 2019, impressing over three seasons at the struggling team until he joined Mercedes. Optimism then that he would be immediately battling for wins with the team which had won eight consecutive constructors' championships fell away as their interpretation of the new regulations proved off the mark.

They have been playing catchup until these most recent races. For Russell this was a tougher task than he surely had anticipated as he looks towards Mercedes coming good again and is set to become their senior driver when Hamilton joins Ferrari at the end of the season.

"I definitely take confidence in my performances and the results I've managed to achieve in these three years," he says. "I knew it was always going to be a hard task going against Lewis but I always believed in myself. I know I've got it in me, that when the car's there, I'll be able to deliver those performances."

He is, he admits, still learning, still improving and explains he was only 11 when he believed he could make it as a driver but several years later experience and reality made themselves felt.

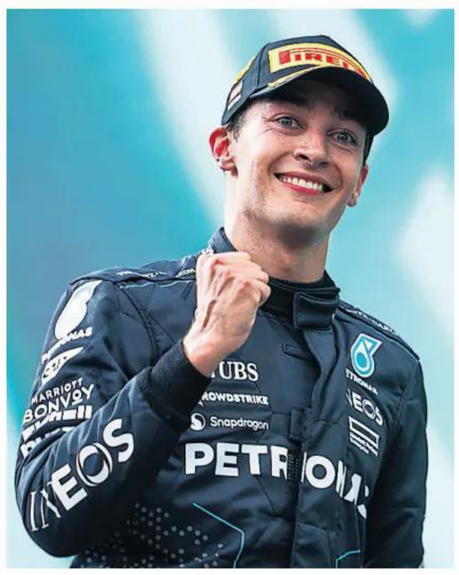
"I was just so naive to the world and confident and maybe arrogant, you can argue," he says. "I was winning everything that I was racing in at the time. So I thought: 'I'm just gonna win and be an F1 driver one day.' I just thought it was as simple as that.

"It was only when I was 16 I recognised life's not quite as simple as it was as a kid, or what you believed as a kid, and you couldn't just rely on your speed and talent, you had to go above and beyond."

As someone who first came to Silverstone as a child, this race means an awful lot to Russell. He made his single-seater debut there and took his first win and first F1 test at the old airfield.

His ambitions remain grand – he wants more victories and to fight for the title – but for now, if fate smiles on him again this weekend, it would mean more than anything.

"If I had the choice, Silverstone would always be No 1 of a race win, of course," he says. "When you go to your home race you feel this extra energy from the crowd, you're just sort of riding this wave."



▲ *George Russell's win in Austria was the second of his F1 career*

▲ *Merih Demiral could face a ban or a fine for the controversial gesture*

Demiral at risk of ban from quarter-final for 'wolf' salute

Nick Ames
Herzogenaurach

Merih Demiral, Turkey's goalscorer from their last-16 win over Austria, could face a ban from their quarter-final against the Netherlands on Saturday after Uefa opened an investigation into a gesture with apparent far-right connotations.

Demiral, a centre-back, was the unlikely match winner for Turkey in Leipzig but may be in line for disciplinary action after celebrating his second goal with a "wolf" salute. It is associated with the right-wing extremist nationalist group Grey Wolves and is banned in Austria, where it is punishable by fines of up to €4,000 (£3,400), since 2019.

A Uefa statement read: "An investigation has been opened in accordance with Article 31(4) of the Uefa Disciplinary Regulations in relation to the alleged inappropriate behaviour of the Turkish Football Federation player, Merih Demiral. Further information regarding this matter will be made available in due course."

Speaking after the game, Demiral defended using the gesture, in which both hands are made to resemble wolves with pointed noses and ears. "I had a specific celebration in mind, something connected to my Turkish identity," he said. "I am incredibly proud to be Turkish, and I felt that pride deeply after scoring. I wanted to express that, and I'm very happy I did." Demiral went on to explain that he saw supporters making the gesture in the stands and wanted to join them. If that is borne out, Uefa may also launch a probe into the fans' conduct.

The sign is not banned in Germany, although there has been a long-running discussion among politicians from both left and right-learning parties around making it illegal. The country's interior minister, Nancy Faeser, condemned Demiral's actions in a post on X.

"The symbols of Turkish right-wing extremists have no place in our stadiums," she wrote. "Using the European football championship as a platform for racism is completely unacceptable. We expect Uefa to investigate the case and consider sanctions." Faeser added that the Grey Wolves group is under surveillance by Germany's domestic intelligence service.

Uefa's options include a ban and or a fine.

Toney desperate to play bigger part after cameo

Striker came off the bench to good effect against Slovakia and is hungry for another slice of action in quarter-final

Jacob Steinberg
Blankenhain

Few top sides play with two up front these days. Some prefer to use a false 9. At Euro 2024, there have been suggestions that no task in football is more thankless than having to be Harry Kane's back-up. England's captain always starts.

Gareth Southgate has not drawn on the memory of Alan Shearer and Teddy Sheringham's partnership at Euro 96. His preference is to have Kane leading the line on his own, with Phil Foden, Jude Bellingham and Bukayo Saka supporting him from attacking midfield.

Ivan Toney and Ollie Watkins, England's reserve forwards, have had to spend a lot of time imagining what it would be like to play alongside Kane, feed off his through balls and rough defenders up the old-fashioned way.

But last Sunday, with England seconds away from going out to Slovakia in the last 16, Southgate decided to try something different. There were 94 minutes on the clock when Toney came on; the Brentford striker, was by his manager's admission, not particularly impressed to be introduced at that stage. He was desperate for more time to save England.

But when Kyle Walker chucked in a long throw and Marc Guéhi headed it on, Toney was there to make his presence felt by occupying Slovakia's defenders. Pinned back, they could not stop Bellingham from doing something that Toney succinctly describes as "Jude doing Jude things".

The attention, naturally, was on the overhead kick. But there was another element to England's comeback. Toney threw Slovakia off course. His physicality ruffled them. He held the ball up, brought teammates into play and created Kane's winner in extra time.

It is a shame to hear that England have not trained much with a front two. Their attack has spluttered. There is an argument that pairing Kane with Toney or Watkins could give them a fresher feel in their quarter-final against Switzerland on Saturday.

"I feel like you just put yourself about when there's two up front," Toney said. "It gives the opposition more to think about. I'd knock it back to H and he could just pick up seconds."

Toney is big on positive thinking. "There's a guy called Michael Caulfield at Brentford who is always talking about controlling your emotions," he said. Toney admits that he was annoyed with Southgate. "In that moment it was time to control your emotions," he said. "I was annoyed but there was still 30 minutes to play. You've got to focus."

The 28-year-old was full of good humour yesterday. "I think my face said it all," Toney said, smiling as he explained how Southgate could tell that he was in a bad mood. "Everything is sorted now. We're friends!"

Toney is desperate to leave his mark on the Euros. "You're excited to come out to a tournament," he said. "Everybody wants to play, not just myself. In the dying moments, it's like: 'When am I going to come on?' You're looking at the clock thinking: 'Now, now.' The time

Road to Berlin The last eight

Spain v Germany
Tomorrow
5pm, ITV1
Stuttgart

Portugal v France
Tomorrow
8pm, BBC One
Hamburg

Semi-final
Tue 9 July
8pm, Munich

Semi-final
Wed 10 July
8pm, Dortmund

Final
Sun 14 July
8pm
Berlin

Netherlands v Turkey
Saturday
8pm, ITV1
Berlin

England v Switzerland
Saturday
5pm, BBC One
Düsseldorf

wasn't coming and then it came in the dying moments.

"I have seen it plenty of times when you're on the touchline ready to come on and the ball doesn't go out and the final whistle goes. But if I wasn't annoyed sitting on the bench, then I see it as you wouldn't have the right attitude and don't really want to play football. When I came on to the pitch you have to stay focused and change your mindset.

"It was eye-opening that you could be going home any minute. The relief after in the dressing room was: 'Right, boys, it's time to kick on.' I think we've got the character and the quality of players to do so."

Toney insisted that he always believed that England would score. "There'll always be one big chance," he said. "You saw it in the Turkey game, one of the Austria players had a header in the dying moments and the keeper pulled off a magnificent save. It's having that belief. If you have that going into the final moments a chance will fall to someone. Then it's up to you to take it."

Toney will back himself if the ball falls his way. He is not afraid to take a penalty if England go to a shootout. The question, though, is how much Southgate is prepared to use him. England could catch Switzerland out by drawing on tactics that were supposed to have been consigned to the past.

Living in the shadow of Kane

Ivan Toney has been firmly below the England captain in the pecking order for strikers in Germany

RICHARD PELHAM/ GETTY IMAGES

▼ *'I have been a little bit frustrated, I'm not going to lie,' Phil Foden said*

EDDIE KEOGH/THE FA/GETTY IMAGES

Foden urges teammates to step up and be leaders

Continued *from back page*

There has to be some leaders to get together. There is only so much the manager can do. He sets you up in a system and tells you how to press. You never decide when a person is going to drop deep as well. The players have to adapt to what the other team is doing to be better. Hopefully you will see a different side to us pressing wise."

Foden, who flew home to attend the birth of his third child last week, talked about England "accepting" that Denmark were pressurising them in their 1-1 draw in Frankfurt. Southgate has repeatedly fretted about his team's physical condition. John Stones wore strapping on his right knee yesterday. But Foden is confident that there will be a more cohesive plan against Switzerland. "You can prepare for a game but you can't prepare for players moving out of position and making it awkward for you," he said. "Hopefully going into this game we can get it right."

The 24-year-old has been starting on the left. England have lacked balance and are hopeful that Luke Shaw, the squad's only left-back, will play some part against Switzerland. The Manchester United player, who has been out with a hamstring injury since February, trained yesterday.

The right-footed Kieran Trippier has deputised for Shaw, which has made England lopsided. Foden's natural instinct is to drift inside and he has been trying to make things happen. He hit a post against Denmark and had a goal disallowed against Slovakia. Southgate has options in reserve, but he has kept faith with an attack that has Foden, Jude Bellingham and Bukayo Saka operating behind Harry Kane.

It is yet to click, even though Foden was crucial to Manchester City winning the Premier League last season, Bellingham was the best player in La Liga and Kane scored 44 goals in his debut campaign for Bayern Munich. "I have been a little frustrated," Foden said. "I am not going to lie. I want to try and score, do better things for England. It has not worked out but it is about keeping a good mentality. I have not been the best player in the Premier League to come here and not show it."

What of the idea that Foden and Bellingham are crowding each other out? "I don't agree with that," Foden said. "We do work together. In the last game we did build on it really well in terms of keeping the ball a lot more."

Foden was substituted moments before Bellingham equalised with an overhead kick against Slovakia in the 95th minute. "I thought: 'I'm 30 seconds away from doing baby feeds at home,'" he said. "So thanks to Jude for that ... saved me there. It's unbelievable – it just sums Jude up."

There is no doubt about Foden's desire; he tops the squad's running stats and has been praised for his unselfishness. He explained that he knew that working hard without the ball was the only way he would convince Pep Guardiola to pick him for City when he was younger.

Yet Foden would love to take centre stage. He largely played as a No 10 for City last season, scoring 27 times in all competitions. "I have been honest about my position and I have always seen myself as playing midfield," Foden said. "Even though I have started on the left, I have drifted into those positions.

"It's more how we've been on the ball and not been able to find me because of the way the games have been. We have not had many attacks, we have had to dig deep and I am hoping that against Switzerland, we see more of the ball and that our pressing is good. I am looking forward to it."

English officials take charge of first two quarter-finals

Refereeing teams from England will oversee both of tomorrow's Euro 2024 quarter-finals. Anthony Taylor has been selected to referee Spain's match against the hosts Germany, alongside his on-field assistants Gary Beswick and Adam Nunn and VAR Stuart Attwell. Michael Oliver will take charge of the later game between France and Portugal, assisted by Stuart Burt and Dan Cook, with David Coote named the assistant VAR for the match. Oliver took charge of Germany's last-16 match against Denmark, where he had to temporarily stop proceedings due to an electrical storm in Dortmund. Further tournament appointments for the Premier League officials will hinge on whether or not England defeat Switzerland. **PA Media**

Swiss surprise Duah eyes historic last-four spot

London-born forward has already made his mark, now he wants to help his country to a first major semi-final

Ben Fisher
Stuttgart

He was the first player born in England to score at the European Championship this summer and on Saturday, for a place in the semi-finals, Kwadwo Duah will play ... England.

The 27-year-old, who was born in London but moved from Islington to Switzerland with his parents aged two, is a Chelsea supporter and among those perplexed at Cole Palmer's lack of minutes in Germany. "He had a very, very good season last year," says Duah. "I'm also thinking: 'Why is he not playing?' Because his stats were perfect. Let's see if he starts at the weekend. I'm a big Chelsea fan, my idol is Didier Drogba. I follow the Premier League."

Switzerland have never made it as far as a tournament semi-finals but impressed against the hosts, Germany, in the group stage, knocked out the holders, Italy, in the last 16 and are unbeaten in eight matches, so Duah does not expect Gareth Southgate's side to underestimate them in Düsseldorf. "I don't think so because I think they will have watched the game against Italy and we were pretty good," he says, smiling. "So I don't think they will do that. We want to show what we can and we want to play our game. We will see [what happens]."

For Duah, whose parents grew up in Ghana, it has been an incredible journey to this point. The forward, who joined the Bulgarian champions, Ludogorets, from Nürnberg last year, was something of a bolter, a surprise inclusion in Murat Yakin's provisional Swiss squad in May. Duah represented Switzerland at under-18, under-19 and under-20 level, the latter eight years ago, and a senior call-up came as a shock, despite his impressive scoring record in recent years. Yakin's assistant, Giorgio Contini, a former striker, pushed Duah's case for inclusion after the forward scored 13 goals in 24 top-flight appearances last season.

Duah struck 12 minutes into Switzerland's 3-1 victory over Hungary and has featured in three of their four matches. Duah may be on the bench against England, with Breel Embolo, whom he played against as a youngster in Switzerland, likely to retain his place. Regardless, that goal against Hungary will stay with him. "It was a big moment for my family and me," he says. "To score the first goal for Switzerland in a European Championship, I don't think everyone does that, and we were all very happy. It was a big moment for me."

Switzerland hope there is another seminal moment in the works. Granit Xhaka, their captain, is poised to start despite training alone for the last two days as he fights a thigh problem. Xhaka headed into the Italy game with a similar niggle but those inside the camp insist there is no way he would miss a date with England. "What I can say about him is that he's very positive," Duah says. "He always wants to win, even in training. He's really good at what he does. What I can learn from him is his winning mentality. He pushes the people around him. He controls everything."

Duah is a confident talker, comfortable conversing in English, French, German and Italian, and an interesting character. He is a fan of comic books and sometimes reads them on the team bus en route to matches to help him relax. "Right now, I don't read them, but yes I'm a very big fan, Donald Duck and stuff," he says. There is a line there somewhere about Mickey Mouse defending.

As Switzerland prepare to tame Jude Bellingham, the big question is whether his overhead kick against Slovakia, that averted an embarrassing last-16 exit for England, eclipsed Xherdan Shaqiri's ripped left-foot, first-time effort from outside the box against Scotland earlier in the tournament?

"I would say that Shaq's goal was the best," says Duah. "I think it was more difficult, but it was probably more beautiful. It did something for us [to equalise]. Shaq has already scored many goals like that. I would say that his goal was a bit better."

◀ *Kwadwo Duah scored his first goal for Switzerland in their opener against Hungary*

‘I don’t expect this will be my last match’

A former Real Madrid teammate hopes Spain can ‘retire’ Toni Kroos but Germany’s midfield linchpin is calling the shots to the end

Nick Ames
Herzogenaurach

Toni Kroos sat down, smiled and made no apologies for arriving empty-handed. Should he not have brought farewell cakes with him? The curtain could fall any day now, after all. It was not hard to envisage that these, just two days out from Germany’s quarter-final tie against an exceptional Spain, could be his final public pronouncements as a professional footballer. “I’m not feeling nostalgic in the least,” Kroos deadpanned. “I don’t expect this will be my final match and I assume we’ll all be seeing each other again.”

The *kuchen* will have to wait and so, the host nation hopes, will the goodbyes. It was a shock when Kroos announced in May that, at 34 and seemingly with a few more years in the tank, he would retire this summer. He wanted to depart on a high and it gave his decision to have one last shot at international football, made three months previously, a fresh dimension. A European Championship medal has eluded him but there is a growing belief Kroos could ride into the sunset wearing one.

That journey will be made at some point in the next week and a half, however the rest of this tournament unfolds. “I’m fully aware of the fact that football will no longer play a key role in my life,” he said. “But I’m not afraid. I was the one who took the decision. Nobody had told me, even in veiled terms, that it was time to say goodbye. I will miss it because I still love the game, and I doubt I’ll find anything I can do as well as football. I’d rather pick the date myself, and not have it picked for me by other people.”

The precise moment will still, to a large extent, lie in the laps of

Toni Kroos believes Germany have already silenced the doubters

teammates, opponents, officials and perhaps *force majeure*. But while Kroos refuses to treat every game as if it is his last, his performances have pulsated with a desire to control the narrative. His display in the destruction of Scotland will be difficult to top all summer; he has hardly stopped pulling the strings since, although Denmark had some joy in limiting his influence on Saturday. Kroos has generally called the shots and set the tempo, leaving some of his career’s most eye-catching work until last.

Perhaps tomorrow Spain will look to stop him at source, too. “It wouldn’t be new to me,” he said, while expecting their main objective would be to dominate. A midfield battle for the ages could transpire if he and Rodri are both in fine nick. “It’s been my opinion for a long time that games like these are decided in the middle,” he said. “Whoever can control the game there will have a much better chance of winning. Both teams love possession, love having the ball.”

The Spain forward Joselu said he hopes to “retire” Kroos, who was a colleague in Real Madrid’s Champions League-winning team last season. The pair are friends, but there is only one way to prevent further chirping. “Win: that’s a very short answer,” Kroos said. “I’ll do everything I can to prevent his wish from coming true.”

Whether or not Spain retire Kroos, one certainty is that Kroos will retire to Spain. He expects to run an academy in Madrid while enjoying family life with his wife and three children. In response to one question about his post-career plans, he jokingly issued the correction: “I have never worked!” Spanish journalists were given fluent answers in their mother tongue during his half-hour appearance; his decade at Real has been sensational and he was asked whether, in his opinion, he was better appreciated by the public there. The response was diplomatic: he feels understood everywhere, he said, however long it has taken.

Kroos and the rest of Germany’s old guard carry some burden from past failures, but he believes they have already proved a point. “We’ve reached a minimum objective and, no matter how we play against Spain, people won’t talk of a catastrophe any more. But I wouldn’t say it is a bonus. We’ve reached a stage that leaves us kind of satisfied, but there’s a huge drive to go further. We’re convinced we can do it.”

If Germany succeed on 14 July, perhaps Kroos will finally receive the acclaim his body of work unquestionably deserves. The comfort, on hearing him, was that he will be at peace either way. “You can’t plan for a title,” he said. “It worked out well with Real Madrid and I’ll try it here too, without being devastated if it doesn’t work out. The goal when I returned was to become European champion.”

There has to be a chance Spain will prevent that. “It goes through your head, but it doesn’t bother me,” said Kroos. “It’s a motivation to think that it’s not the last game. I’ll be happy without football but I hope I can hold out a little longer.” Bavaria’s finest bakers can stand down for now.

Results and cricket scoreboard

Football

COPA AMÉRICA
Group D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Colombia **Q**	3	2	1	0	6	2	+4	7
Brazil **Q**	3	1	2	0	5	2	+3	5
Costa Rica	3	1	1	1	2	4	-2	4
Paraguay	3	0	0	3	3	8	-5	0

Brazil (1) **1** — Raphinha 12
Colombia (1) **1** — Muñoz 45+2

Costa Rica (2) **2** — Calvo 3, Alcócer 7
Paraguay (0) **1** — Sosa 55

Tennis

WIMBLEDON (London)

Men: Singles: First round: E Ruusuvuori (Fin) bt M McDonald (US) 7-6 (6) 4-6 5-7 7-6 (6) 6-3; **A Rinderknech** (Fr) bt K Nishikori (Jpn) 5-7 6-4 6-7 (2) 6-3 6-2; **A TABILO** (Chl, 24) bt D Evans (GB) 6-2 7-5 6-3; **T Machac** (Cz) bt D Goffin (Bel) 3-6 3-6 6-4 6-1 7-6 (5); **R Safiullin** (Rus) bt F CERUNDOLO (Arg, 26) 6-7 (5) 3-6 7-5 6-3 6-4; **L Pouille** (Fr) bt L Djere (Ser) 3-6 7-6 (4) 3-6 6-3 6-1; **Q Halys** (Fr) bt C Eubanks (US) 6-4 6-4 6-2; **K KHACHANOV** (Rus, 21) bt A Karatsev (Rus) 6-3 6-7 (4) 7-6 (11) 2-0 ret

Second round: D MEDVEDEV (Rus, 5) bt A Muller (Fr) 6-7 (3) 7-6 (4) 6-4 7-5; **C ALCARAZ** (Sp, 3) bt A Vukic (Aus) 7-6 (5) 6-2 6-2; **F TIAFOE** (US, 29) bt B Coric (Cro) 7-6 (5) 6-1 6-3; **B Nakashima** (US) bt J Thompson (Aus) 6-3 6-2 6-2; **U HUMBERT** (Fr, 16) bt B Van de Zandschulp (Neth) 7-6 (9) 6-1 6-3; **F Fognini** (It) bt C RUUD (Nor, 8) 6-4 7-5 6-7 (1) 6-3; **R Bautista Agut** (Spa) bt L Sonego (It) 6-3 3-6 6-3 6-4; **JL Struff** (Ger) bt ZHANG Z (Chn, 32) 5-7 6-3 7-6 (1) 7-6 (8); **J SINNER** (It, 1) bt M Berrettini (It) 7-6 (3) 7-6 (4) 2-6 7-6 (4); **M Kecmanovic** (Ser) bt T GRIEKSPOOR (Neth, 27) 4-6 7-6 (7) 1-6 6-2 6-3; **T PAUL** (US, 12) bt O Virtanen (Fin) 4-6 6-3 5-7 7-5 6-4; **A BUBLIK** (Kaz, 23) bt A Cazaux (Fr) 6-4 7-6 (1) 6-4

Women: Singles: First round: J Niemeier (Ger) bt V Golubic (Swi) 6-2 6-1; **E SVITOLINA** (Ukr, 21) bt M Linette (Pol) 7-5 6-7 (9) 6-3; **B KREJCIKOVA** (Cz, 31) bt V Kudermetova (Rus) 7-6 (4) 6-7 (1) 7-5; **K Volynets** (US) bt M Lourdes Carle (Arg) 6-2 7-5; **C Osorio** (Col) bt L Davis (US) 6-3 6-1; **D COLLINS** (US, 11) bt C Tauson (Den) 6-3 7-6 (4); **B HADDAD MAIA** (Bra, 20) bt M Frech (Pol) 7-5 6-3

Second round: D YASTREMSKA (Ukr, 28) bt V Gracheva (Fr) 3-6 6-4 7-6 (5); **J PAOLINI** (It, 7) bt G Minnen (Bel) 7-6 (5) 6-2; **D Shnaider** (Rus) bt S Stephens (US) 6-1 6-1; **S Kartal** (GB) bt C Burel (Fr) 6-3 5-7 6-3; **B Andreescu** (Can) bt L NOSKOVA (Cz, 26) 6-3 7-6 (5); **Zhu L** (Chn) bt A PAVLYUCHENKOVA (Rus, 25) 6-4 6-3; **L Sun** (NZ) bt Y Starodubtseva (Ukr) 4-6 6-3 6-2; **C GAUFF** (US, 2) bt A Todoni (Rom) 6-2 6-1; **D Vekic** (Cro) bt E ANDREEVA (Rus, 3) 6-2 6-3; **M SAKKARI** (Gre, 9) bt Arantxa Rus (Ned) 7-5 6-3; **E NAVARRO** (US, 19) bt N Osaka (Jpn) 6-4 6-1; **E Raducanu** (GB) bt E Mertens (Bel) 6-1 6-2

Men: Doubles: First round: K KRAWIETZ & T PÜTZ (Ger, 8) bt L Darderi & F Romboli (It/Bra) 6-4 6-2; **H Heliovaara & H Patten** (Fin/GB) bt S BOLELLI & A VAVASSORI (It, 5) 6-3 6-4; **P Martínez & J Munar** (Sp) bt D Lajovic & S Nagal (Ser/Ind) 6-2 6-2; **C Frantzen & H Jebens** (Ger) bt P Kotov & C Rodriguez (Rus/Col) 7-6 (3) 7-6 (3); **R Matos & M Melo** (Bra) bt J Fearnley & J Pinnington Jones (GB) 6-4 7-6 (5); **N LAMMONS & J WITHROW** (US, 12) bt M Giron & A Michelsen (US) 6-3 6-2; **N Barrientos & F Cabral** (Col/Por) bt I DODIG & A KRAJICEK (Cro/US, 10) 7-6 (4) 7-6 (6); **R BOPANNA & M EBDEN** (Ind/Aus, 2) bt S Arends & R Haase (Neth) 7-5 6-4

Women: Doubles: First round: M Kato & Zhang S (Jpn/Chn) bt A Moratelli & N Podoroska (It/Arg) 6-2 7-6 (2); **G DABROWSKI & E ROUTLIFFE** (Can/NZ, 2) bt M Andreeva & A Potapova (Rus) 6-2 7-5; **M BOUZKOVA & S SORRIBES TORMO** (Cz/Sp, 10) bt E Avanesyan & O Kalashnikova (Rus/Geo) 6-3 6-7 (1) 6-2; **L Fernandez & E Shibahara** (Can/Jpn) bt Guo H & Jiang X (Chn) 2-6 7-6 (4) 6-3; **C Garcia & K Mladenovic** (Fr) bt Wang X-y & Zheng S (Chn) 6-2 6-4; **U EIKERI & I NEEL** (Nor/Est, 16) bt C Rosatello & L Samsonova (It/Cz) 6-3 6-7 (2) 6-3

Cricket

THIRD WOMEN’S ONE-DAY INTERNATIONAL

England v New Zealand

Bristol England beat New Zealand by five wickets.

New Zealand
SW Bates c Jones b Cross 24
GE Plimmer run out (Dean) 7
AC Kerr lbw b Bell 57
***SFM Devine** b Bell 43
ML Green lbw b Cross 5
BM Halliday c Jones b Bell 31
†IC Gaze c Sciver-Brunt b Bell 4
LR Down c Sciver-Brunt b Bell 14
HM Rowe not out 9
MM Penfold not out 1
Extras (lb5, w7, nb4) 16
Total (for 8, 42 overs) 211

Fall 21, 41, 109, 116, 181, 182, 194, 208. **Did not bat** EJ Carson. **Bowling** Cross 9-0-46-2; Bell 9-0-37-5; Dean 8-0-39-0; Sciver-Brunt 8-0-31-0; Glenn 5-0-40-0; Capsey 3-0-13-0.

England
TT Beaumont lbw b Rowe 0
ME Bouchier c Gaze b Penfold 19
***HC Knight** c & b Rowe 9
NR Sciver-Brunt not out 76
SIR Dunkley c Gaze b Kerr 15
†AE Jones c Gaze b Halliday 50
A Capsey not out 35
Extras (lb1, w5, nb2) 8
Total (for 5, 38.4 overs) 212

Fall 0, 29, 33, 72, 162.
Did not bat CE Dean, S Glenn, KL Cross, LK Bell.
Bowling Rowe 9-0-38-2; Penfold 8-1-45-1; Devine 6.4-0-29-0; Kerr 7-0-44-1; Carson 4-0-26-0; Halliday 4-0-29-1.
Toss England elected to field.
Umpires AY Harris and RA White.

VITALITY COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIP
Division One (final day of four)

	P	W	L	D	Bat	Bowl	Pts
Surrey	9	6	1	2	20	25	157
Somerset	9	3	1	5	21	25	134
Essex	9	4	2	3	17	23	128
Hampshire*	9	3	1	5	15	19	120
Durham**	9	2	2	5	14	17	102
Nottinghamshire†	9	1	2	6	14	25	102
Lancashire	9	2	3	4	15	22	101
Warwickshire	9	0	3	6	24	24	96
Worcestershire	9	1	3	5	13	22	91
Kent	9	1	5	3	9	17	66

** Hampshire deducted 2 points; ** Durham deducted 1 point; † Nottinghamshire deducted 1 point*

Surrey v Essex

The Kia Oval Surrey (20pts) beat Essex (3) by 145 runs.
Surrey First innings 262 (JL Smith 100).
Essex First innings 180 (PI Walter 64).
Surrey Second innings 278 (RS Patel 107, JL Smith 70).
Essex Second innings (overnight 21-2)
D Elgar c Sudharsan b Worrall 60
***T Westley** c Foakes b Lawes 28
MJJ Critchley c Foakes b Lawes 0
PI Walter b Lawes 56
†MKS Pepper c Sibley b Lawes 26
SR Harmer c Foakes b Worrall 7
S Snater lbw b Clark 7
JA Porter not out 0
JM Cox absent 0
Extras (b13, lb4, nb4) 21
Total (61.1 overs) 215

Fall cont 86, 86, 117, 181, 194, 215, 215.
Bowling Worrall 18-3-71-2; Clark 22.1-3-56-3; Taylor 6-0-41-0; Lawes 13-4-26-4; Lawrence 2-0-4-0.
Toss Essex elected to field. **Umpires** PJ Hartley and GD Lloyd.

Somerset v Warwickshire

Taunton Somerset (20pts) beat Warwickshire (7) by five wickets.
Warwickshire First innings 412 (MGK Burgess 147, E Barnard 92, WMH Rhodes 63; M Pretorius 5-104).
Somerset First innings 284 (T Banton 78, TB Abell 61; OJ Hannon-Dalby 6-56).
Warwickshire Second innings (overnight 281-8)
MGK Burgess not out 17
Extras (b4, lb1, nb4) 9
Total (for 8 dec, 83.2 overs) 281
Did not bat M Booth, OJ Hannon-Dalby.
Bowling Davey 12-2-36-0; Overton 19-4-57-4; Leach 32.2-8-97-3; Pretorius 11-0-44-0; Aldridge 9-1-42-0.
Somerset Second innings
T Kohler-Cadmore c Barnard b Hannon-Dalby 49
ARI Umeed c Burgess b Hannon-Dalby 30
TA Lammonby c Barnard b Booth 26
TB Abell not out 152
T Banton c Yates b Barnard 81
M Pretorius c Barnard b Rhodes 14
†JEK Rew not out 57
Extras (b2, lb1, w1) 4
Total (for 5, 91.4 overs) 413

Fall 44, 77, 144, 282, 299.
Did not bat KL Aldridge, *C Overton, MJ Leach, JH Davey.
Bowling Woakes 19-4-82-0; Hannon-Dalby 15-0-73-2; Booth 9.4-0-69-1; Barnard 18-1-56-1; Bethell 18-2-73-0; Yates 5-0-18-0; Rhodes 5-0-27-1; Mousley 2-0-12-0.
Toss Somerset elected to field. **Umpires** RJ Bailey and M Newell.

Lancashire v Nottinghamshire

Southport Lancashire (14pts) drew with Nottinghamshire (11).
Lancashire First innings 353-9 dec (KK Jennings 187 no; LW James 4-61).
Nottinghamshire First innings 126 (BT Slater 64 no; JM Anderson 7-35).
Nottinghamshire Second innings (overnight 84-2)
WA Young c Hurst b Anderson 17
†JM Clarke not out 115
JA Haynes c Hurst b Green 21
LW James not out 47
Extras (b2, nb10) 12
Total (for 4 dec, 102 overs) 270

Fall cont 91, 134. **Did not bat** LA Patterson-White, CG Harrison, OP Stone, D Pennington, D Paterson.
Bowling Anderson 15-4-29-1; Bailey 17-3-51-0; Williams 11-2-33-0; Balderson 9-1-45-0; Lyon 27-3-65-2; Green 15-5-20-1; Wells 8-1-25-0.
Toss Nottinghamshire elected to field.
Umpires MJ Saggers and T Lungley.

Hampshire v Kent

Rose Bowl Hampshire (23pts) beat Kent (4) by six wickets.
Hampshire First innings 505-8 dec (JM Vince 211, BC Brown 110; JDM Evison 4-83).
Kent First innings 343 (JA Leaning 118, FIN Khushi 53; KHD Barker 4-85).
Kent Second innings (overnight 132-2)
BG Compton c Middleton b Dawson 92
JA Leaning c BC Brown b Abbott 43
JDM Evison lbw b Fuller 13
T Muyeye b Abbott 39
†HZ Finch c Vince b Abbott 84
CH Stobo b Abbott 4
G Stewart lbw b Abbott 4
MW Parkinson c BC Brown b Mohammad Abbas 15
NN Gilchrist not out 4
Extras (b8, lb5, nb6) 19
Total (118.2 overs) 340

Fall cont 154, 171, 185, 257, 267, 273, 317.
Bowling Barker 6.1-1-12-1; Mohammad Abbas 24-6-55-1; Organ 20-5-34-0; Abbott 25.2-5-89-5; Dawson 24.5-5-69-2; Fuller 18-1-68-1.
Hampshire Second innings
TE Albert c Finch b Stobo 18
FS Middleton b Parkinson 39
***JM Vince** b Gilchrist 32
NRT Gubbins c Khushi b Parkinson 25
LA Dawson not out 56
JK Fuller not out 5
Extras (b1, lb4) 5
Total (for 4, 22.1 overs) 180

Fall 41, 92, 92, 175.
Did not bat †BC Brown, FS Organ, KHD Barker, KJ Abbott, Mohammad Abbas.
Bowling Stewart 6.1-0-39-0; Stobo 5-0-36-1; Gilchrist 5-0 -52-1; Parkinson 6-0-48-2.
Toss Kent elected to field.
Umpires PR Pollard and BJ Debenham.

Division Two (final day of four)

	P	W	L	D	Bat	Bowl	Pts
Sussex*	9	5	1	3	24	25	150
Middlesex	9	3	1	5	18	21	127
Yorkshire	9	2	2	5	24	27	123
Leicestershire	9	1	1	7	22	21	115
Glamorgan	9	1	1	6	16	20	108
Gloucestershire	9	1	2	5	20	19	103
Northants	9	0	2	7	19	22	97
Derbyshire†	9	0	3	6	14	17	78

** Sussex deducted 3 points; †Derbyshire deducted 1 point*

Gloucestershire v Glamorgan

Cheltenham Gloucestershire (11pts) tied with Glamorgan (11).
Gloucestershire First innings 179 (T van der Gugten 5-59).
Glamorgan First innings 197 (BJ Webster 5-17).
Gloucestershire Second innings 610-5 dec (JR Bracey 204 no, CT Bancroft 184, MAH Hammond 121, BJ Webster 65 no).
Glamorgan Second innings (overnight 222-3)
M Labuschagne c Bancroft b Webster 119
***SA Northeast** c Bracey b Taylor 187
†CB Cooke c Bracey b Taylor 14
DA Douthwaite c Van Buuren b Price 39
T van der Gugten c Bracey b Dale 31
MS Crane not out 43
A W Gorvin b De Lange 7
JP McIlroy c Bracey b Dale 5
Extras (b24, lb6, w1, nb20) 51
Total (152 overs) 592

Fall cont 309, 348, 453, 509, 544, 561.
Bowling Taylor 31-3-120-3; Dale 29-4-124-3; De Lange 29-6-110-2; Akhter 20-1-75-0; Webster 27-6-77-1; Price 14-1-48-1; Van Buuren 2-0-8-0.
Toss Glamorgan elected to field.
Umpires N Ashraf and PK Baldwin.

Cycling

TOUR DE FRANCE

Stage 5 (Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne - Saint-Vulba, 177km): **1** M Cavendish (GB) Astana Qazaqstan Team 4hr 08min 46sec; **2** J Philipsen (Bel) Alpecin-Deceuninck; **3** A Kristoff (Nor) Uno-X Mobility; **4** A De Lie (Bel) Lotto Dstny; **5** F Jakobsen (Neth) Team dsm-firmenich PostNL; **6** P Ackermann (Ger) Israel-Premier Tech; **7** A Demare (Fr) ARKEA-B&B HOTELS; **8** G Thijssen (Bel) Intermarche-Wanty; **9** B Girmay (Eri) Intermarche-Wanty; **10** M van den Berg (Neth) EF Education-EasyPost all at the same time. **Selected others: 15** S Bennett (Ire) Decathlon AG2R La Mondial; **25** D McLay (GB) ARKEA-B&B HOTELS; **35** J Stewart (GB) Israel-Premier Tech; **37** B Healy (Ire) EF Education-EasyPost; **66** G Thomas (GB) Ineos Grenadiers; **71** A Yates (GB) UAE Team Emirates; **74** S Yates (GB) Team Jayco-AlUla.

Overall standings: 1 T Pogacar (Svn) UAE Team Emirates 23hr 15min 24sec; **2** R Evenepoel (Bel) Soudal Quick-Step at 45s; **3** J Vingegaard (Den) Team Visma | Lease a Bike at 50; **4** J Ayuso (Sp) UAE Team Emirates at 1m 10s; **5** P Roglic (Svn) Red Bull-BORA-hansgrohe at 1:14; **6** C Rodríguez (Sp) Ineos Grenadiers at 1:16; **7** M Landa (Sp) Soudal Quick-Step at 1:32; **8** J Almeida (Por) UAE Team Emirates at same time; **9** G Ciccone (It) Lidl-Trek at 3:20; **10** E Bernal (Col) Ineos Grenadiers at 3:21. **Selected others: 13** A Yates (GB) UAE Team Emirates 3m 21s; **19** S Yates (GB) Team Jayco-AlUla at 4:40; **29** G Thomas (GB) Ineos Grenadiers at 7:24; **30** B Healy (Ire) EF Education-EasyPost at 8:12; **34** T Pidcock (GB) Ineos Grenadiers at 13:12; **36** O Onley (GB) Team dsm-firmenich PostNL at 13:51; **78** S Williams (GB) Israel-Premier Tech at 48:59.

Golf

LET ARAMCO TEAM SERIES (St Albans)

Leading first-round scores (GB & Ire unless stated, Par 73): **66** L Maguire. **67** S Schober (Aut). **69** M Dennis; N Iturrioz (Sp); C Williams. **70** G Hall; L Fünfstück (Ger); H Screen. **71** S Kyriacou (Aus); M Folke (Swe); A Mora (Fr)

Greg Wood’s racing tips

Haydock **2.10** Quietness **2.40** Fahrenheit Seven **3.10** Miss Hathaway **3.40** Tiriac **4.10** Sir Paul Ramsey **4.45** Kode Secret; Perth **2.18** Bishop Hill **2.48** Max Of Stars **3.18** Sword Of Fate **3.48** Marty McFly **4.18** Up For Appeal **4.50** Diamond State **5.20** Somebody’s Fortune; Yarmouth **2.30** Charlie’s Choice **3.00** Haazeez **3.30** Eighth Avenue **4.00** Queen’s Company **4.30** Salamanca City **5.00** Zaman Daar; Kempton **5.15** Jakarta **5.50** Place Of Safety **6.25** Top Spin Lob **7.00** Cabinet Of Clowns (nb) **7.35** Simply Sondheim **8.10** Heathcliff **8.45** Glamorous Express; Newbury **6.10** Split The Profit **6.45** Shostakova **7.20** Chelsea Embankment **7.55** Red Maids **8.25** Ravenswell **9.00** New Kings Road (nap)

Sinner flawless in trio of tie-breaks to beat battling Berrettini

Tumaini Carayol
Simon Cambers
Wimbledon

Matteo Berrettini's run through the Wimbledon draw to his maiden grand slam final in 2021 felt like a significant moment. Even though he lost to Novak Djokovic, Berrettini had already established himself as one Italy's finest tennis players.

Three years later, Berrettini's success is a distant memory, a consequence of injuries, miserable luck and the flourishing greatness of his brilliant opponent on Centre Court. Jannik Sinner, who became the first ever Italian ATP No 1 last month, reinforced the new status quo in a tense, high-quality tussle by producing three flawless tie-breaks under pressure to defeat Berrettini 7-6 (3), 7-6 (4), 2-6, 7-6 (4) and reach the third round.

"We are very good friends, sometimes we practise together," Sinner said. "It's obviously very, very tough that we had to play each other in such an important tournament."

Unseeded and vulnerable, Berrettini's brutal draw was also an extremely difficult challenge for Sinner. With his massive serve and forehand complemented by his wicked backhand slice and the unusual feel around the court, Berrettini has become one of the best grass-court players over the past few years.

Both players entered Centre Court serving extremely well and frantically looking to take the first strike with their forehands. The first set tie-break, however, underlined the many more options that Sinner has in his game. His far greater defence, return of serve and backhand marked the difference as he continuously drew out unforced errors from Berrettini to take a comfortable tie-break.

But after such a high-quality set, Berrettini's confidence grew. He continued to eviscerate forehands and he frustrated Sinner with his backhand slice, which skidded low on the grass. It was Berrettini who took the first break of the match, establishing a 4-2 second-set lead.

▲ *Jannik Sinner saved his best play for the most decisive moments*

But in the decisive moments, Sinner again just had more margin and possibilities in his game. After retrieving the break, he opened the tie-break with a devastating backhand down-the-line winner and it set the tone as he dominated from inside the baseline, suffocating Berrettini's backhand and taking a two-set lead.

Sinner's level finally dropped at the beginning of the third set and the No 1 completely lost timing in his forehand. Berrettini continued to serve incredibly well, shutting Sinner out of his service games and drawing errors with his slice. The 28-year-old rolled through the third set and broke for a 2-1 lead in the fourth set.

Still, Sinner did not panic. He returned brilliantly to immediately retrieve the break and as he rolled through his own service games, the pressure on Berrettini's shoulders grew. Down match point at 5-6, 40-advantage though, Berrettini responded by spectacularly recovering to hold serve with an unreturned serve, an ace and a forehand winner in quick succession. Once again, Sinner saved his best tennis for the most decisive moments, his brilliant return of serve the difference between them as he closed out an excellent battle.

"I knew that I had to raise my level today if I wanted to play against him," he said. "He played final here, he is a grass-court specialist. I was looking forward to it. For me, it was a challenge for me to come on the court. I was very happy with how I handled the situation."

After the defending champion Carlos Alcaraz had booked his place in the third round, he was told that his next opponent, Frances Tiafoe, said he's "coming after you".

Alcaraz just smiled. "I'm going for him," he said. The Alcaraz smile has become almost as famous as his forehand, a feature of his exhilarating run to the title here last year. Yesterday, the Spaniard improved as the match went on to see off Aleksandar Vukic 7-6 (5), 6-2, 6-2.

Ranked 69, the Australian made life uncomfortable for Alcaraz and served for the first set but could not close it out. That was his last chance as the French Open champion won the tie-break, before pulling away.

The fifth seed, Daniil Medvedev, was being pushed so hard by the Frenchman Alexandre Müller in their second-round match that he completely lost track of the score.

After losing a point to trail 6-3 in a tie-break, the Russian sat down on his chair thinking he had already lost the opening set to his 102nd-ranked opponent. He was then informed by the umpire that he was actually still alive in the first set and he returned to the baseline, only to lose the next point anyway and fall behind.

Despite losing that tie-break it all turned out OK for Medvedev as he hit back by winning the next three sets.

Casper Ruud, seeded eight, was beaten in four sets by Fabio Fognini.

◀ *Naomi Osaka is heading for North America's hard courts – she has won the US Open twice*
HENRY NICHOLLS/AFP/GETTY

Osaka looks to New York after grass stint ends early

Osaka disappointed by 6-4, 6-1 Navarro loss but is eager to start the hard-court season

Simon Cambers
Wimbledon

When Naomi Osaka returned to the Tour in January, six months after giving birth to her daughter, she said she did not expect to hit top form until later this summer, on the hard courts. Yesterday, after impressing in her first-round win at Wimbledon, she was undone, beaten 6-4, 6-1 by the American No 19 seed, Emma Navarro. For Osaka, the US hard courts probably cannot come soon enough.

"I'm excited to go back on hard courts but I'm a bit disappointed because I wanted to do really well and I put a lot of time into it," the former world No 1 said. "But there's always next year."

Grass has always been a troublesome surface for Osaka, who reached the third round on her first two visits in 2017 and 2018 but who lost in round one in 2019 and had not played here since. Against Navarro, who has enjoyed a breakthrough season, she began well but faded as the American roared through to the third round.

All four of Osaka's grand slam triumphs have come on hard courts – two at the US Open and two at the Australian Open – and the 26-year-old has shown enough to suggest that she will be a threat in New York. She had match point against Iga Swiatek at the French Open, the only player who came close to threatening the eventual champion, and her on-court body language has been much more positive than in recent years, during which she has been open about mental-health problems.

> ***'I have a lot of confidence in my return game that makes the serving a lot easier'***
> **Coco Gauff**
> *US Open champion*

Coco Gauff will play Sonay Kartal of Britain tomorrow afternoon

Navarro always looked likely to be a tough opponent. A leading junior, she chose to go to college in the US, now a well-versed route to the professional circuit, and emerged physically and mentally better-equipped to handle the rigours of the Tour. She won her first title in Hobart in January, made the fourth round at the French Open and though this is only her second Wimbledon, the 23-year-old was good value for her win.

"Naomi's obviously a great player, it's great to have her back on tour and she's been playing some great tennis on tour," Navarro said. "But I wanted to get to the win today, I played some good tennis at times. It was my first time on Centre Court at Wimbledon, it doesn't really feel real. I've been having a lot of fun on grass, it's been the theme of my time on tour, just trying to enjoy myself."

Coco Gauff was enjoying herself enough during her 6-2, 6-1 win over the Romanian qualifier Anca Todoni that she snuck more than a few looks at the serve clock. The Gauff serve has been problematic at times – before the French Open she was hitting several double faults per match – but she has been working hard to iron out the kinks and has also adopted a new attitude.

"I think I'm just going for it more and accepting the misses," said the 20-year-old, who sent one down at 124mph. "I think today I had a really low first-serve percentage in the first set and maybe in the second it got higher. When I go for it overall it's more winning for me on my serve. I just have a lot of confidence in my return game that makes the serving a lot easier. I know I can get the power when I need to. I'm just trying to focus on continuing that and not losing confidence in it."

The Ukrainian Elina Svitolina, who reached the semi-finals last year, came through a tough match with Magda Linette of Poland 7-5, 6-7 (9), 6-3 while Danielle Collins, the American No 11 seed, beat Clara Tauson of Denmark 6-3, 7-6 (4).

Today's order of play

Yesterday's results on facing page

Centre Court (1.30pm)
J Fearnley (GB) v N DJOKOVIC (Ser, 2); I SWIATEK (Pol, 1) v P Martic (Cro); R Hijikata v J Peers (Aus/Aus) v A Murray & J Murray (GB/GB)

No 1 Court (1pm)
K BOULTER (GB, 32) v H Dart (GB); J DRAPER (GB, 28) v C Norrie (GB); M Giron (US) v A ZVEREV (Ger, 4)

No 2 Court (11am)
H HURKACZ (Pol, 7) v A Fils (Fr); O JABEUR (Tun, 10) v R Montgomery (US); E RYBAKINA (Kaz, 4) v L Siegemund (Ger)

No 3 Court (11am)
J Munar (Sp) v A DE MINAUR (Aus, 9); Wang X (Chn) v J PEGULA (US, 5); D COLLINS (US, 11) v D Galfi (Hun); E Ruusuvuori (Fin) v S TSITSIPAS (Gre, 11)

Court 12 (11am)
Wang Y (Chn) v M KEYS (US, 12); G DIMITROV (Bul, 10) v Shang J (Chn); T FRITZ (US, 13) v A Rinderknech (Fr); C Wozniacki (Den) v L FERNANDEZ (Can, 30)

Court 18 (11am)
D KASATKINA (Rus, 14) v Y Miyazaki (GB); L Harris (SA) v B SHELTON (US, 14); H RUNE (Den, 15) v T Seyboth Wild (Bra); E Avanesyan v L SAMSONOVA (Rus, 15)

Court Four (11am)
C Bucsa (Sp) v J Bouzas Maneiro (Sp); L Darderi (It) v L MUSETTI (It, 25); D Shnaider & E Vesnina (Rus/Rus) v Y Putintseva & C Tauson (Kaz/Den); H Dart & M Lumsden (GB/GB) v S ERRANI & J PAOLINI (It/It, 5)

Court Five (11am)
M Frech & K Kawa (Pol/Pol) v A Danilina & Xu Y (Kaz/Chn); M Demoliner & D Medvedev (Bra/Rus) v G Escobar & A Nedovyesov (Ecu/Kaz); E Navarro & D Parry (US/Fr) v L Bronzetti & V Gracheva (It/Fr); A Erler & L Miedler (Aut/Aut) v N SKUPSKI & M VENUS (GB/NZ, 9); A Blinkova & M Sherif (Rus/Egy) v E Hozumi & M Uchijima (Jpn/Jpn)

Court Six (11am)
V Cornea & F Marozsan (Rom/Hun) v A Mies & J Smith (Ger/Aus); N Balaji & L Johnson (Ind/GB) v M AREVALO & M PAVIC (Sp/Cro, 4); G OLMOS & A PANOVA (Mex/Rus, 13) v M Kostyuk & E Ruse (Ukr/Rom); I Gamarra Martins & B Haddad Maia (Bra/Bra) v I Khromacheva & K Rakhimova (Rus/Rus); S GONZÁLEZ & E ROGER-VASSELIN (Mex/Fr, 6) v D Evans & H Searle (GB/GB)

Court Seven (11am)
T Mihalikova & O Nicholls (Svk/GB) v D SCHUURS & L STEFANI (Neth/Bra, 6); C DOLEHIDE & D KRAWCZYK (US/US, 7) v S Aoyama & A Krunic (Jpn/Ser); Wang X & Zhu L (Chn/Chn) v E Appleton & Y Miyazaki (GB/GB); C Bucsa & N Hibino (Sp/Jpn) v T Maria & A Rus (Ger/Neth); H Baptiste & A Parks (US/US) v M Ninomiya & Wu F (Jpn/Tpe)

Court Eight (11am)
B KREJCIKOVA (Cz, 31) v K Volynets (US); T Machac (Cz) v R Safiullin; T Kokkinakis (Aus) v L Pouille (Fr); G Minnen & H Watson (Bel/GB) v S KENIN & B MATTEK-SANDS (US/US, 14)

Court Nine (11am)
S Grey & T Moore (GB/GB) v N MELICHAR-MARTINEZ & E PEREZ (US/AUS, 3); A Bublik & A Shevchenko (Kaz/Kaz) v Y Bhambri & A Olivetti (Ind/Fr); F Martin & M Middelkoop (Fr/Neth) v T Griekspoor & B Stevens (Neth/Neth); M GRANOLLERS & H ZEBALLOS (Sp/Arg, 1) v A Fils & U Humbert (Fr/Fr); M Linette & P Stearns (Pol/US) v A Bogdan & J Cristian (Rom/Rom)

Court 10 (11am)
A MUHAMMAD & A SUTJIADI (US/Ina, 15) v I Begu & M Trevisan (Rom/It); J Clarke & M Willis (GB/GB) v M PURCELL & J THOMPSON (Aus/Aus, 15); K SINIAKOVA & T TOWNSEND (Cz/US, 4) v R Masarova & L Noskova (Sp/Cz); N Bains & A Rajecki (GB/GB) v T Babos & N Kichenok (Hun/Ukr); M Kolodziejova & A Siskova (Cz/Cz) v L Davis & K Zimmermann (US/Bel)

Court 11 (11am)
R RAM & J SALISBURY (US/GB, 3) v W Blumberg & C Ruud (US/Nor); T ETCHEVERRY (Arg, 30) v A Popyrin (Aus); S DOUMBIA & F REBOUL (Fr/Fr, 16) v O Crawford & K Edmund (GB/GB); K Piter & V Tomova (Pol/Bul) v C Burel & C Osorio (Fr/Col); C Eubanks & E King (US/US) v L Broady & B Harris (GB/GB)

Court 14 (11am)
M KOSTYUK (Ukr, 18) v D Saville (Aus); F Cobolli (It) v A TABILO (Chl, 24); G Mpetshi Perricard (Fr) v Y Nishioka (Jpn); HSIEH S & E MERTENS (Tpe/Bel, 1) v A Barnett & F Christie (GB/GB)

Court 15 (11am)
Y Putintseva (Kaz) v K SINIAKOVA (Cz, 27); C Osorio (COL) v B HADDAD MAIA (Bra, 20); A KALINSKAYA (Rus, 17) v M Bouzkova (Cz); Q Halys (Fr) v K KHACHANOV (Rus, 21); T Machac & Zhang Z (Cz/Chn) v A Behar & A Pavlasek (Uru/Cz)

Court 16 (11am)
D Snigur (Ukr) v J OSTAPENKO (Lat, 13); C GARCIA (Fr, 23) v B Pera (US); L KICHENOK & J OSTAPENKO (Ukr/Lat, 9) v D Saville & Yuan (Aus/Chn); F Coria & M Navone (Arg/Arg) v W KOOLHOF & N MEKTIC (Neth/Cro, 7)

Court 17 (11am)
P Badosa (Sp) v B Fruhvirtova (Cz); D Shapovalov (Can) v D Altmaier (Ger); J Niemeier (Ger) v E SVITOLINA (Ukr, 21); C GAUFF & J PEGULA (US/US, 11) v A Kalinina & D Yastremska (Ukr)

Murray's mixed feelings as focus turns to doubles

Former champion will bid farewell to SW19 in tandem with brother and Raducanu

Tumaini Carayol
Wimbledon

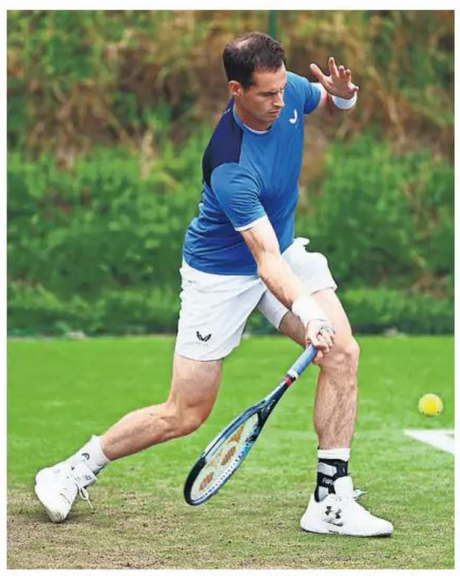
As Andy Murray closes the door on a career that has brought him so much joy and fulfilment for such a long time, the past few weeks have looked far from enjoyable. He has suffered multiple significant injuries, undergone surgery and been engaged in a race against time to be ready to compete in the Wimbledon singles draw, a race that ultimately proved futile.

Over the past few days, Murray has had to come to terms with the reality that he will not get another opportunity to compete as a singles player and to shift his focus to the doubles court. But solely playing doubles comes with one benefit: enjoyment.

In addition to his preparations for his men's doubles first-round match with his brother, Jamie, today, Murray will join forces with Emma Raducanu in the mixed doubles draw after the pair received a wildcard.

The pairing, a meeting of Great Britain's two active singles grand slam champions, was a long time coming. According to Murray, they had spoken about playing mixed doubles together as long ago as 2020 when they played against each other in mixed doubles during the Battle of the Brits event. Murray has played mixed doubles before, most notably he teamed up with Serena Williams in 2019.

"We'd spoken about it a few years ago during the Covid year, but both of us ended up doing quite well in singles so it didn't happen," Murray said. "And then yesterday I was chatting to my team, they were discussing mixed and then last night I messaged her coach and just said: 'Look, do you think this is something that maybe she'd be up for doing?' He said it was worth asking. I asked her and she said yeah she'd be up for it. It should be fun. I really enjoyed it, it's something we rarely get to do."



▲ *Andy Murray last played mixed doubles with Serena Williams*

Despite receiving Murray's text the night before her second-round singles match against Elise Mertens, Raducanu responded quickly: "It was quite late yesterday evening when I sent the message, it would have been after nine, so I was a bit worried she might be in bed, but I got a quick reply. She said: 'Yeah, let's do it.'"

Beyond the symbolism of their pairing, Murray's decision to choose Raducanu as his final mixed doubles partner is an unconventional one. Raducanu is as inexperienced as players come in doubles, having only played the format once on the WTA tour in her career so far. Murray, though, is insistent that singles skills translate well to doubles.

"She's a brilliant returner and great ball striker so I'd imagine she'll deal with returning guys' serves well," he said. "And, when she's getting into exchanges at the back of the court, she'll be really good."

For the time being, Murray's focus will be on men's doubles as the brothers will share the court again after spending so many of their early years playing together. Andy Murray is, of course, a singles player in his soul, an individual who loves nothing more than being forced to fight and figure things out by himself. But it remains fitting that Murray's final Wimbledon will be played alongside his older brother, who has been with him every step of the way.

Although they grew up playing together, as juniors the Murray brothers rarely played on the same side of the net because of their 15-month age gap and the relatively strict age groupings in junior tennis. As professionals, though, they have played together many times, winning ATP titles together and, most notably, winning all three pivotal doubles matches together as Great Britain won the Davis Cup in 2015.

While the Murray brothers face a tough encounter against the Australians Rinky Hijikata and John Peers, scheduled as the third match on Centre Court, Murray will not step on the court simply to say goodbye: "It's not like we're going to roll over and lose," he said. "We've got a good chance."

Even though he will still be just 12 days out of surgery, the work that Murray has put into preparing it has been impressive. Just a few hours after his singles withdrawal, Murray emerged at Aorangi Park to train alongside his brother and, instead of playing a singles set as in previous days, they instantly switched to doubles drills. Yesterday, they trained with Joe Salisbury and Rajeev Ram. They will step out on to Centre Court not for a sentimental farewell, but rather attempting to stay in SW19 for as long as they can.

Raducanu hits top form on Court One

The 2021 US Open champion reminds the SW19 crowd and Elise Mertens of how good she can be, with a 6-1, 6-2 win
JOHN WALTON/PA

'Super pleased' Raducanu looks set for long fortnight

E Raducanu Great Britain	6 6
E Mertens Belgium	1 2

Sean Ingle
Wimbledon

Emma Raducanu has not looked this unfettered and carefree at a grand slam since she won the US Open. And as winners spun and sped off her racket, and the women's draw opened up further after her 6-1, 6-2 slam dunk of Elise Mertens, a question began to form. Just how far into this fortnight might she go?

The 21-year-old is ranked only 135 in the world after the surgery to her wrists and an ankle, but the bookies are already taking cover. In fact they make her a favourite to make the semi-finals. Fanciful? Not after this.

Mertens is no mug. She has been ranked as high as 12 in the world and was expected to give a stern test of the Briton's credentials. Yet long before the end the Belgian was staring wistfully at her box, seeking solutions that never came.

The last time Raducanu played on Court One, as an 18-year-old in her first grand slam in 2021, she suffered nerves and a shortness of breath, which forced her to retire in her fourth-round match against Ajla Tomljanovic. This time it was only the crowd that was left breathless.

"I'm super-pleased with that performance," Raducanu said. "I just had so much fun on the court. I felt the atmosphere was amazing with the crowd – I really fed off of it and played some really good stuff."

Her only false notes came at the start, as first she sent a forehand long and then double-faulted in the opening two points of the match. But after rattling off the next four points to hold serve she then got motoring.

Within 21 minutes, Mertens was 4-0 down and watching as Raducanu jumped into forehands and sprayed winners from all over the court. While the 28-year-old finally got on the scoreboard, the first set was quickly gone – and soon afterwards the match.

When Raducanu was asked whether this was the best tennis she had played for years, the crowd answered for her with loud shouts of "yes". It was hard to argue.

"I knew all the hard yards would lead to something and I am just happy

'I just had so much fun on the court. The atmosphere was amazing'
Emma Raducanu

I can reap some of the rewards here in Wimbledon," she said.

Those rewards could also come in the mixed doubles, where she will form an exciting partnership with Andy Murray. "I got asked, and in literally 10 seconds I was like: 'Yeah.'

"For me, it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It's been a dream of mine since I was a young girl watching the Olympics.

"At the end of my life, I know I'm going to have that memory of playing Wimbledon with Andy Murray on a home slam. It was an honour to be asked. Hopefully I can learn a thing or two about coming to the net."

She is also determined that their makeshift pairing won't be there to make up the numbers. "I really don't want to let him down," she said. "I'm going to be on my best form, trying hard. And I'll probably be more nervous for that than the singles."

But for the next few days Raducanu's focus will be on the singles' draw. In the third round she will play the ninth seed, Greece's Maria Sakkari, whom she beat in straight sets in their US Open semi-final in 2021 on the way to winning the first and so far only title of her career.

That is not the only echo of three years ago, either. Back then she benefited from a draw that opened up when a number of seeds crashed out early. And the signs are that is happening again.

The pre-tournament favourite, Aryna Sabalenka, who was in her quarter, pulled out with injury. As did the 22nd seed, Ekaterina Alexandrova, who Raducanu should have played in the first round.

With other seeds in her quarter, including Zheng Qinwen and Mirra Andreeva, beaten, Raducanu knows she has an opportunity - even though she expects Sakkari to be a step up again. "I'm expecting a really tough match," she said. "She's top 10 in the world, so it's going to be a really difficult one."

When asked about whether there could be parallels between Wimbledon 2024 and New York in 2021, she was just as cautious. "It's very easy to get caught up in parallels, and things that have happened in the past," she said. "But no situation is the same. Dynamics are always changing."

In fact Raducanu insisted that she is so focused that she didn't even know that the general election is today. "I think I'll have a lie-in, then I'll come to practice. I didn't even know it was tomorrow, to be honest."

However the verdict of No 1 Court is already in as Raducanu left the court to a standing ovation. She will hope it proves infectious.

Rare Battles of Britain leave bragging rights up for grabs

Top-ranked British players in men's and women's game will both face off today

Simon Cambers
Wimbledon

Considering there were 18 home players in the main draws this year, that there should be a couple of all-British clashes at Wimbledon is no statistical surprise. But there is no doubt that today will be a special day as the top-ranked British players meet one another in round two of the men's and women's singles. Jack Draper, the new No 1 British man, will take on the No 2, Cameron Norrie, while the women's No 1, Katie Boulter, meets the No 2, Harriet Dart. Just call it the Battles of Britain.

In the Open era, which began in 1968, there have been 19 all-British clashes in the men's singles and 38 in the women's event. The most recent all-British meeting in the women's singles, though, was in 2011, when Anne Keothavong beat Naomi Broady, while Murray's win over Ryan Peniston last year was the most recent home clash in the men's event.

The last time the top two British men met in a grand slam was in 2002 at the Australian Open, when Tim Henman beat Greg Rusedski. It's happened in the women's game just once this century, at the US Open in 2020 when Johanna Konta beat Heather Watson.

British players relish the support they receive at Wimbledon, for obvious reasons. But playing a fellow Brit adds a little extra spice, even if they are friends off the court. For Draper, seeded at a grand slam for the first time, it is also the first time he has gone into a slam as the British No 1, a title he intends to hold on to.

"Obviously he won't like the fact that I'm British No 1 now," said Draper, 22, who praises 28-year-old Norrie for helping him settle on Tour. "I'm a lot younger. [Britain has] Dan [Evans] and Cam, Andy might be stopping soon. Dan and Cam definitely probably won't like seeing me being British No 1. I think that creates a really healthy rivalry and environment.

"I think we have huge respect for each other, for one. We've practised together so many times, been a part of the Davis Cup together. I wouldn't say we're extremely close, but we definitely support each other. We definitely have a great relationship."

Norrie is as unassuming a character off the court as he is feisty on it, but he insists he is only concerned with trying to win the match for himself, rather than to make a point. Doing it won't be easy, though, with his own form patchy while Draper won his first title in Stuttgart and then beat Carlos Alcaraz at Queen's. The younger player will be the favourite.

"I actually can't wait for the match," Norrie said. "It's been a while since I played another Brit. He's at the top of his game, playing with so much confidence, moving so well, serving rockets. I'm looking forward to it."

Boulter and Dart have played each other seven times, with Boulter winning six of them. The pair have been embroiled in a couple of tense battles on grass and, in Nottingham last summer, had an altercation after the match when Dart accused Boulter of being "unprofessional" for pointing to her temple after clinching match point. Boulter responded by saying: "I do it every match."

"We're teammates, we played big tournaments, we've grown up together, we've been close," Dart said. "It's always going to be tricky, especially when you play a fellow Brit. But it's great to see that all of us are doing well and putting ourselves in positions where we do get to play each other, hopefully more so in the latter rounds. She's been having an amazing year. She's been playing great. I expect a very tough match."

Boulter said there will be no secrets. "We both know each other's games inside-out, back-to-front at this point," she said. "We've played so many matches. But I do have to draw on the last things that I have played with her and use that to my advantage. I think it's going to be extremely tough. I have a lot of respect for her on this surface. It's one of her favourite ones."

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Kartal enjoys career-best win to set up Gauff clash

Greg Wood
Wimbledon

One career-best performance followed another for Sonay Kartal here as the 22-year-old became the first British qualifier to reach the third round of the women's singles since Karen Cross in 1997, defeating Clara Burel, the 29th seed, in three sets, 6-3, 7-5, 6-3.

Kartal will now face Coco Gauff in the next round tomorrow, and while the No 2 seed is unlikely to be as generous on serve as Burel, the British No 9 will be encouraged by her recovery from a distinct wobble in the middle of the second set that allowed her opponent to level the match.

Kartal did not produce a single ace in any of her 15 service games, but her overall first-serve percentage of 64% reached 76% in a deciding set in which she made just two unforced errors. The ability to raise her game when she needed it most proved decisive as Burel slid to defeat with 18 unforced errors in the third set, and no fewer than 61 overall, including eight double faults to just one from Kartal.

While the bare numbers were impressive, Kartal will take greater inspiration from her response to losing the second set. She appeared to be coasting to victory as she served at 3-0 with two breaks, but her French opponent clawed her way back to 4-4 and, while Kartal saved two set points in a brave hold at 4-5, a third break for Burel at 5-6 ensured that the match would go to a decider.

▲ *Sonay Kartal will face Coco Gauff, the US Open champion, tomorrow*

"I'm super-proud of today's performance, I managed to keep a level head throughout the match," Kartal said. "The fact of the year I've had [which forced her to go through qualifying after suffering from undisclosed health problems], there's so much effort and time gone into that."

Kartal's first visit to one of Wimbledon's show courts was with her parents as a child, while the next will be for her match against the reigning US Open champion.

"We were on Centre Court, we got lucky with really good tickets," she said. "To walk on to one of those courts will be a dream come true."

Kartal was the only British player to win on day three after Dan Evans failed to turn around his match with Alejandro Tabilo, which had been suspended on Tuesday evening with the No 24 seed already a set to the good.

Evans staged a stirring fightback from 0-40 in the eighth game of the second set but surrendered with two double faults from deuce at 5-6 and never threatened to stage a revival as the third set slipped away 6-3.

Brave, brilliant Cavendish is cycling's miracle man

The Manx Missile has seen sprint rivals come and go in a career that can now achieve further records of longevity

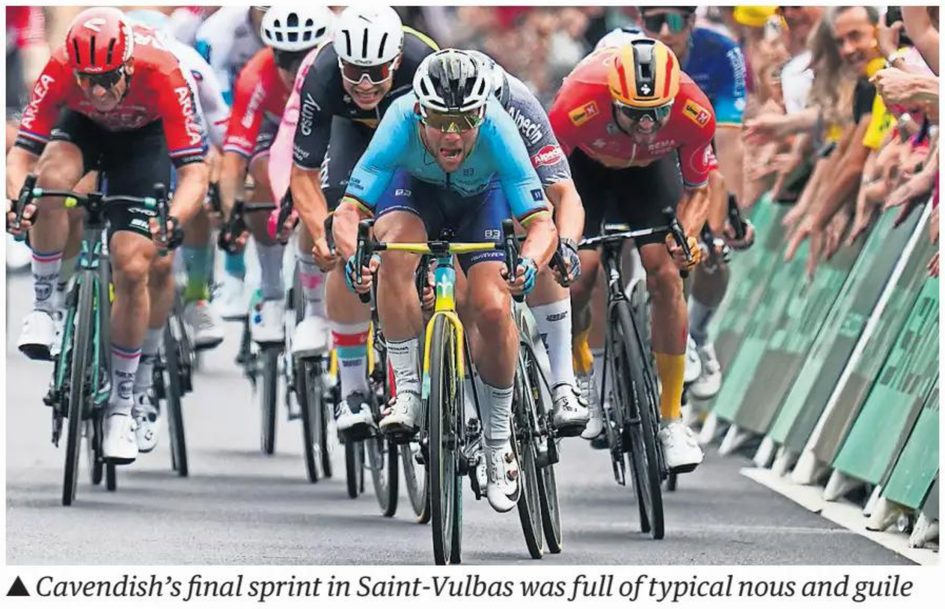
William Fotheringham

In 2007, when Mark Cavendish made his Tour de France debut, there was plenty of expectation that the youth from the Isle of Man would produce special things on his bike, but longevity was never mentioned. Professional cycling is a world where the average career is said to last two and half years, where most professionals don't get past their initial two-year contract, and merely to win one race is an achievement. To win a Tour stage is still viewed as the crowning glory for most, and to keep racing into the early 30s is a big ask. So where, then, do you rank winning 35 Tour de France stages, over a span of 17 seasons, and to be still winning at 39, let alone breaking the Tour stage-winning record held by Eddy Merckx?

The answer is, you don't. You think back to where you were 17 years ago - when Tony Blair was a very recent memory, Sven-Göran Eriksson and Lance Armstrong slightly less recent, and Boris Johnson had only been sacked from a couple of prominent roles - and you think forward to where you are today, you compare the two, and you wonder. Which of us can maintain the drive to excel at anything for that long? And then you reflect on what it must take to persist so stubbornly at something as frankly insane as sprinting from a bunch in the Tour de France, something where the risks are blindingly obvious - just ask Fabio Jakobsen to name one - and the rewards magnificent but so often elusive.

It's still as obvious when Cavendish is on song as in the early years. You watch the diminutive figure in the helicopter shots - he's always seemed smaller than the others - and he has the cycling equivalent of an extra smidgin of spin, that apparent extra moment on the ball that is the hallmark of the greats. So it was for No 1 at Châteauroux, so it was for No 35 at Saint-Vulbas: a roundabout with 2.7km left, where he sailed through in the first 10, where on a bad day he'd have been shoved back among the flotsam, and then the little jostles and shimmies in the final 500m, now nudging Phil Bauhaus off the wheel he wants to own, now leaning on a Movistar ride, next keeping Jasper Philipsen out of the gap he needs. The instinct that leads him to Pascal Ackermann's wheel, and the final drive up the left.

There is little point in stating again that Cavendish is the greatest sprinter of all time. I've already written that he is "more prolific than most and more consistent than all the rest", but that was back in 2011, by which time he had already clocked up 20 stage wins in four Tours. Had he continued on his prolific trajectory, he would have passed Merckx's 35 by 2014, but from 2013 onwards, sprinting wasn't quite so simple for Cavendish. Faster, younger men such as Marcel Kittel came and went. There were injuries, ill health and the inevitable lack of belief from a world where a cyclist is only as good as his last few races.



▲ *Cavendish's final sprint in Saint-Vulbas was full of typical nous and guile*
DANIEL COLE/AP

▲ *Mark Cavendish celebrates with his family after his 35th stage win*
SHUTTERSTOCK

As remarkable as Cavendish's sprint ability – the blistering speed, the split second reflexes, the brain bending courage – is the staying power he has displayed in the last few years, the sheer bloody-mindedness that has kept him going when the gaps wouldn't open and the legs wouldn't answer his mind, when others would have reflected that what was already on the shelf was sufficient. At 32, Bernard Hinault was pulling on carpet slippers; Merckx quit at the same age, a washed-out shadow of his great self. For longevity in cycling, you look to others: Gino Bartali, a Tour winner at 24 and 34; Lucien van Impe, climbing like an angel from 1971 to 1983. Some might argue that the 35 wins makes Cavendish greater than Merckx; better to view him as completely unique in his sport.

Students of stattery will enjoy the fact that other records are within Cavendish's reach: he's still two behind Mario Cipollini's tally of 57 career stage wins across the three Grand Tours, but with five more sprint stages to come in this Tour, you never know. With Cavendish, the unexpected has become routine.

For now, it's enough to watch the replay as we could have watched any replay of the other 34 stage wins going back to 2008, and let our collective jaws drop as Cav does what he does best. We ask it of all the Tour sprinters, but we've been asking ourselves since 2007 how on earth the Manx Missile does what he does, and if we are still asking that question 17 years on, that is the measure of a truly remarkable athlete achieving feats that are the stuff of dreams.

Most Tour stage wins

		Span of wins
35	**Mark Cavendish** (GB)	2008-24
34	**Eddy Merckx** (Bel)	1969-75
28	**Bernard Hinault** (Fr)	1978-86
25	**André Leducq** (Fr)	1927-38
22	**André Darrigade** (Fr)	1953-64
20	**Nicolas Frantz** (Lux)	1924-29

Rewind to: first win in 2008

'I've always wanted this – I grew up watching the Tour'

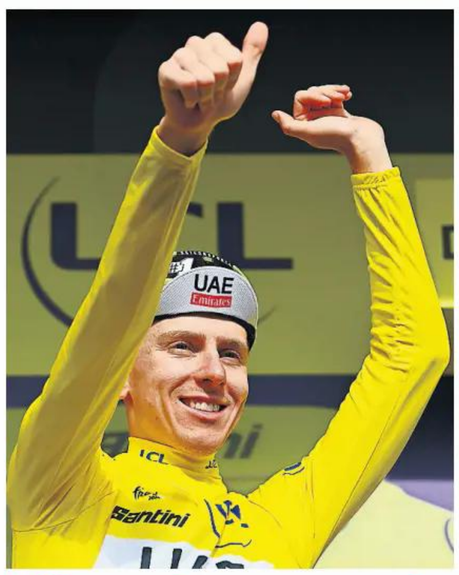
Extract from a Guardian column by Cavendish, then 23, on his first stage win in Châteauroux in 2008:

This was my 18th victory since I turned professional last year, and it's the one that means the most. I could feel it was coming. When I woke up yesterday morning I said: "Lads, I've got to win today." Winning this stage is an incredible feeling. It's something I've always wanted to do, because I grew up with the Tour de France as a kid.

The Tour was the only cycle racing I could watch on television, so I saw Chris Boardman in the yellow jersey in 1994, and David Millar winning his stage five years ago. I needed the victory to get my place in the history books. At the moment, when things work out, I'm the fastest sprinter in the world. My teammates worked selflessly, making the pace as we tried to chase down the leaders. With them behind me, I'll give it 100% to win another stage now.

The Olympics are big but in cycling, the Tour is the greatest thing you can get.

▲ *Mark Cavendish's first Tour stage win was 16 years ago in Châteauroux*



◀ *Race leader Tadej Pogacar hailed Cavendish's 'historical moment'*

'Hero to many'

Pogacar leads tributes to a childhood idol

Jeremy Whittle
Saint-Vulbas

Mark Cavendish's record-breaking 35th stage win in the Tour de France was hailed by cycling's great and good, especially as it came only days after he had almost been forced to quit this year's race due to heatstroke.

In eclipsing the five-time Tour winner Eddy Merckx's record of 34 stage wins, at 39, Cavendish, riding for the Astana Qazaqstan team, has confirmed his status as the greatest sprinter in the history of cycling.

With his first stage success coming in 2008, Cavendish's 35 wins have now spanned almost two decades. The race leader, Tadej Pogacar, born in 1998, was only nine when the sprint prodigy from the Isle of Man took his first victory in the Tour.

"When I was a kid, I watched Mark with my friends and with my brother," said the Slovenian, who was one of the first to hug Cavendish in the finish line area. "He was just a hero to so many of us. Over the six years I have been racing against him, we have become quite good friends, so it's a historical moment."

As a sprinter, Cavendish has never been short on self-belief and Sir Dave Brailsford, a pivotal figure in his early career, recalled their first meeting. "He walked into my office and declared that he was going to be the best sprinter in the world. I was a bit taken aback but I shouldn't have been, because here he is, the best sprinter of all time."

"I cannot admire him more though," Brailsford added. "Not for how he burst on the scene as a youngster but for his mentality and grit to keep going and winning through the adversities he's had. That's what sets him apart and makes him a true champion."

The 2018 Tour de France winner, Geraint Thomas, described Cavendish's longevity as a sprinter as "unbelievable". "I thought he could do it," the Ineos Grenadiers rider said. "He always suffers, he always has a bad day in the mountains. He can get through it with a good team around him."

> ***'He always suffers. He just has to be there and see the finish line'***
>
> **Geraint Thomas**
> *2018 Tour de France winner*

Thomas added: "He just has to be there and see the finish line. It's great that he's now officially got that record alone. I wouldn't put it past him to win another one."

Cavendish's training partner and long-term friend Alex Dowsett, a former British national champion said: "I'm utterly delighted for him. I've been asked a lot if he was going to do it. The answer was always the same."

Dowsett continued: "You never bet against Mark Cavendish and he proved that today. He looked so relaxed coming into that final, with his body language in the bunch. He looked like he had it all under control. He made all the right decisions, and he was in his absolute element."

Brian Cookson, a former long-term president of British Cycling, described Cavendish's record-breaking win as "an amazing achievement". "Today was classic Cav, the skill, the nous to find his way through a hectic finale, the determination and the sheer bloody-mindedness that has driven him. We have witnessed so many special moments from Cav, and this was perhaps the finest."

'I stay calm, trust in my boys and know I'm in with the best shot'

Continued *from back page*

France. You're never going to feel fresh in this bike race. I think that's the same for anyone."

Even on the first sprint stage, into Turin on Monday, he was stymied by a crash in the last three kilometres. This time, however, the stars aligned once more for Cavendish, with both the peloton and the weather in south-eastern France playing ball.

He is one of the most hardened professionals in World Tour cycling, but he is also one of the most sentimental: a fearless sprinter who places huge value on loyalty, team spirit and togetherness. Cavendish has often insisted that he has not been obsessive about breaking Merckx's record, but the joy evident on his face, and those of his colleagues in the peloton, revealed the truth.

"I just want to be with everyone," he said after his win, referring to the many teammates, friends and helpers who have supported him through his 15 Tour appearances.

For win 35, he and his Astana Qazaqstan team were in the zone for much of the final 40km, shepherding him expertly into the closing moments. With 24km to go and the surfaces drying out after an earlier downpour, he and his teammates stubbornly hugged the right-hand side of the road and maintained the steady pace that had characterised much of an uneventful stage.

◀ *An emotional Mark Cavendish heaped praise on his team after he eclipsed Eddy Merckx's record*

But with 5km to go, things got messy as the Lotto Dstny team took over the pace making. Suddenly, Cavendish faced a fight to regain a good position. Despite the expectations and the pressure building, he kept his cool and navigated his way to the front, before unleashing his sprint with perfect timing.

As he has shown in the past, he sprints as successfully using guile, nous and experience, as he does relying on his team. Fittingly, for his record-breaking win, this was a classic example of those instincts.

In the end it looked almost easy. The rival who frustrated him last year in Bordeaux, Jasper Philipsen of Alpecin-Deceuninck, experienced what so many others before him had in the Tour, as the Manx Missile, head down, crouched over his handlebars and left him behind.

"You know what you have to do," Cavendish said. "I know the final, I go through it in my head. I stay calm, I trust in my boys and I know I'm in with the best shot."

From a tearful teenager making his world championships debut in 2005 and winning a gold medal, to a similarly tearful father of five, Cavendish has always worn his heart on his sleeve. Most in the race convoy are familiar with his many moods, whether it's been happy Cav, sentimental Cav, tetchy Cav or fired-up Cav. For his sprint rivals, calm Cav may be the most daunting of all.

As he celebrated his 35th Tour success in 16 seasons and repaid the faith shown in him by the team manager, Alexandre Vinokourov, the prospect of yet more wins came into view. Dijon's Cours General de Gaulle, scene of the finish of today's flat sixth stage, awaits.

On the march

Raducanu storms through – and signs up for Murray's mixed doubles swan song

Wimbledon *Pages 43-45 →*

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Sport

Mark Cavendish shows his elation after eclipsing Eddie Merckx's longstanding record with victory in Saint-Vulbas
STÉPHANE MAHÉ/REUTERS

Tour de force
Cavendish rides into history with record 35th stage win

Jeremy Whittle
Saint-Vulbas

Mark Cavendish broke new ground in the Tour de France, becoming the most prolific stage winner in the history of the French race, as he took a record-breaking 35th victory with a typically instinctive sprint finish in Saint-Vulbas.

It may not have been as grand as the Champs Élysées, but when the moment came on the Avenue des Bergeries, in a suburban town better known for its boulodromes than for its sprint spectacles, the 39-year-old from the Isle of Man kept his date with destiny. "You have to go all in," he said, "and we've done it. We worked out exactly what we wanted to do, how we built the team, the equipment. Every detail has gone specifically into today."

The Cavendish who threaded his way expertly through a chaotic melee to eclipse Eddy Merckx's longstanding record of 34 stage wins was a million miles from the rider who had sweated and vomited his way through the Tour's first stage, five days earlier.

"You know when things are going right, you know when the team's dialled in," he said. "It's more to do with the belief and confidence you have and I think you saw in the final half of the stage today, my boys were committed."

Cavendish comebacks have become legendary but this was perhaps the greatest triumph over adversity of all, given how hard he had to battle to get through Saturday's stage from Florence to Rimini. "It normally takes me days to get into it," Cavendish said. "I've done 15 Tours now. I don't like having bad days, I don't like to suffer, but I know it's just in the head and if you get through it, you can have an opportunity.

"Things have to go your way. It's the Tour de

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Analysis
A triumph of blistering speed, split-second reflexes and brain-bending courage
William Fotheringham
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Players must share blame for performances, Foden admits

Jacob Steinberg
Blankenhain

Phil Foden has defended Gareth Southgate's tactics and insisted England's players should shoulder more of the blame for the team's underwhelming performances at Euro 2024.

Now the euphoria of beating Slovakia in dramatic circumstances on Sunday has faded, England's focus is on making sure there is a drastic improvement in their quarter-final against Switzerland on Saturday. Southgate has been ramping up his preparations and it remains to be seen if he will adjust his tactics against Murat Yakin's dangerous side.

England have trialled a back three in training this week and are considering moving away from their 4-2-3-1 formation. Southgate's team ended their win over Slovakia with Bukayo Saka and Ezri Konsa playing as wing-backs, and they could alter their defence in response to Marc Guéhi's suspension. Konsa, the versatile Aston Villa defender, is likely to replace Guéhi in central defence.

England have disappointed in their opening four games in Germany, particularly with their output in the final third, and there is pressure on Southgate to change his front four. Equally there is an acceptance within the dressing room that the focus cannot be only on the manager. There was an honesty to Foden admitting the forwards need to seize the initiative if England's pressing game malfunctions again.

"I feel sorry for Gareth," Foden said. "In training he has been telling us to press and be high up on the pitch. Sometimes it has to come from the players. We have to be leaders and I feel like in games we could have got together more and worked out a solution. We have spoken about it more and if it happens again we can find a solution and adapt our press.

"The players have to take some of the blame.

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▲ *Phil Foden says Gareth Southgate has been telling his team to press high*

The new era's first challenge: bringing back trust in politics *Martin Kettle, page 3*

Vote for change – a final appeal to readers of the Guardian *Angela Rayner, page 4*

The history of laughing gas, and how it changed the world *The long read, page 5*

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Journal

Opinion and ideas

This isn't just luck – Starmer has earned his victory

Rafael Behr

Time has dragged in the final stages of the election campaign. It feels like the end of a long-haul flight – the plane has already landed and restless passengers fidget in their seats, waiting for the signal to disembark. The itinerary was fixed long ago. Mild turbulence has not affected the polling trajectory. Unless every standard instrument for reading the national mood has malfunctioned, voters will soon emerge into a Britain governed by the Labour party – a place it hasn't been for 14 years.

There is still scope for uncertainty. Forecasts of a Conservative rout could have unpredictable feedback effects. Differential turnout may mess with the models that show Keir Starmer romping to victory with record-breaking majorities. Expectations have been inflated so far that an 80-seat margin, matching the result that kept Boris Johnson in power in 2019, would be reported as an underwhelming performance by Labour.

In reality, it would be a phenomenal accomplishment. A majority of one looked like a distant fantasy from the bottom of the electoral crater where Labour lay divided and demoralised four years ago. To make the party electorally viable again has not been simple, but there was a plan – understand what voters had rejected; fix it; look ready to govern. It has worked.

It is an unprecedented turnaround, and yet Starmer is routinely cast as a passenger on the journey, not the driver. Despite all the evidence that he was winning, he has never enjoyed the aura of a natural winner.

People at different ends of the political spectrum have had incentives to deny that Labour's recovery is real; or, if it is, that the opposition leader deserves the credit.

The left faction that had to be marginalised in pursuit of electability will not admit that its prospectus was toxic. It attributes Labour's advantages to unprovoked Tory implosion, and laments Starmer's squandering of a commanding lead on a cautious manifesto for incremental change.

Many Tories agree that Starmer has been given an easy ride. They share also the left's habit of feeding electoral rejection into the conviction that what British voters have really been craving all along is more, not less, radical ideology. After years of ratcheting their leaders ever further to the right, hardline Conservatives attribute impending defeat to insufficient rightward thrust.

Sunak has made himself an easy receptacle for blame by running an inept

ILLUSTRATION: GUARDIAN DESIGN/AP

✻ **Guardian Newsroom election results special** *Join our columnists online at 7.30pm on Friday 5 July. Tickets are available on the Live Events webpage*

This isn't just luck – Starmer has earned his victory

Rafael Behr

← *Continued from front*

campaign – demanding reinstatement in the public's affections like a jilted lover shouting random pleas and threats through the letterbox of a slammed door.

A dysfunctional government defending a terrible record at the end of a long incumbency is eminently beatable. But beating it still requires discipline and strategic acumen. For Starmer, that has meant neutralising all the reasons voters might have to be wary of putting Labour in charge.

The effectiveness of the method will show up not only in Labour gains but in seats that swing from Conservatives to Liberal Democrats. Voters who make that choice know they are helping install Starmer as prime minister and are relaxed about it. When those same voters thought a ballot cast for the Lib Dems might put Ed Miliband or Jeremy Corbyn in Downing Street, they didn't risk it. That dynamic could give Labour a big majority on a relatively small percentage share of the vote. The result will express a stronger desire to get the Tories out than appetite to get Labour in. Everyone who belittled Starmer's achievement in getting his party to the verge of victory will then deny him ownership of the win. The mandate is thin, given on loan without enthusiasm, they will say.

Starmer's personal poll ratings are poor in comparison with most election-winning leaders, but they are no worse than Johnson's were in 2019. Yet to this day many Tories nurture the myth of "Boris" as beloved national mascot and oracle of popular will. They struggle to get their heads around the idea of Britain as a country that is happy to be governed by someone such as Starmer, with the charismatic range of a stern but fair geography teacher. His name was not chanted at Glastonbury last weekend, but cultish devotion is not a measure of likely effectiveness in government.

The Labour leader's understated style courts underestimation. There is a pattern of slow-burning appreciation that I have heard described by various people who have dealt with Starmer throughout his career – whether in parliament or going back to the years he spent as a barrister.

The first impression is underwhelming. There is a suspicion of mediocrity, soon dispelled. It turns to admiration for the man's fierce determination and strategic focus, his methodical calibration of principle and pragmatism in pursuit of justice. Another recurrent observation made of Starmer by those who know him is that he always does what he says he will do; it never pays to bet that he won't.

He ran for the leadership of his party in order to become prime minister. It didn't sound plausible. Most opposition leaders fail. None has ever flipped a landslide defeat into a majority within a single term. Now Starmer is at the threshold of No 10 and his detractors, left and right, imagine he has stumbled there as much by accident as design.

Nothing was inevitable. To make a Labour government *seem* inevitable, to make so many people comfortable with the journey to Starmer's Britain, to make it the obvious, natural destination at the end of the long-haul campaign is an achievement of rare political craft, not luck. Even the Sun newspaper has tucked itself into Starmer's slipstream with an eve-of-polling endorsement, not through any sincere approval of his manifesto but because its proprietor hates flying against a prevailing cultural wind.

It is easy to come up with scenarios in which disembarking passengers are soon dissatisfied. A daunting list of intractable challenges faces the next government. But it is equally hard to imagine a great pining for a return to Tory Britain any time soon.

There are also many hypothetical ways that a prime minister can fail, and many incentives for predicting disappointment as insurance against the charge of naive optimism. But that tendency must be balanced against a rational appraisal of Starmer's record as a man who gets things done. He intends to be a transformative Labour prime minister. The available evidence makes it worth believing he might just do it.

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'Comment is free... but facts are sacred' CP Scott

Polling day

Be glad that elections still make a difference in an era of imperilled democracy

The youngest eligible voters in today's general election were four years old when David Cameron became prime minister. They have known only Conservative prime ministers since then. This electoral cohort has also grown up in the long shadow of the global financial crisis that struck before they started school. Much of the political turbulence that has tracked their lives so far can be seen as ripples emanating from that economic cataclysm.

The surge in public borrowing and deficit spending required to stabilise the financial system became the pretext for budget austerity under Mr Cameron's coalition government. The consequent corrosion of public services and withdrawal of economic safety nets fed disillusionment and cultivated resentments that would help tip the scales in favour of Brexit in 2016. The young person who votes for the first time today, and whose future opportunities were curtailed by that referendum, was only 10 when it was held.

The subsequent struggle to define what Brexit should mean in practice shook Britain's democracy to its constitutional foundations. It took a supreme court ruling in 2019 to reverse Boris Johnson's tyrannical caprice in suspending parliament when it wouldn't yield to his will. His party interpreted its subsequent election victory as vindication of a reckless style of government. Mr Johnson issued himself a licence to act with impunity and, although he was defenestrated after three years, the ethos of unaccountability was passed on, together with a tenuous mandate, to Liz Truss and then Rishi Sunak.

Until the votes are counted there is no way to know for sure whether that era has come to an end. The uncertainty is itself something worth celebrating. Britain has been subjected to plenty of bad administration under the Conservatives, with outbreaks of contempt for democratic protocol and the rule of law against a backdrop of casual venality. But the possibility of achieving regime change at the ballot box has never seriously been in doubt. This should not be a remarkable observation and yet, in an age of global volatility and insurgent nationalism, the resilience of even well-established democracies cannot be taken for granted.

The Tories have tinkered with election law, setting perverse requirements for photo ID in ways that look like partisan voter suppression. Rules governing donations and online advertising are woefully out of date. Still, by international standards it is safe to describe the conduct of a British ballot as free. If it transpires that enough people want rid of the present government, that is what will happen.

Uncorrupt elections are a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for a healthy democracy. The ballot is a moment of engagement, a contract where the public hires its leaders. The right also to fire them is crucial, but stability in the intervening years requires patience on the part of the electorate, which in turn depends on trust in the decision-makers. It is that mechanism – belief in the effectiveness of politics – that is most urgently in need of repair.

The next government will face diverse challenges, but tackling them all in a manner that raises the reputation of democracy itself is an overarching duty. Whatever the result, polling day marks a potential new start. It is an opportunity to begin the task of restoring depleted confidence in the political process, and perhaps to embed that faith in a new generation.

US supreme court

A sweeping majority ruling on immunity is good news for Trump and tyranny

The supreme court's ruling on presidential immunity combines a tectonic constitutional shift and immediate political repercussions to devastating effect. It allows one man to stand above the law. It slows and appears to gut the 2020 election-subversion case against Donald Trump, though it does not necessarily end it. No one believes a trial can be held before November's election, although court hearings could still offer a detailed airing of the evidence this autumn.

There could hardly have been a better week for Mr Trump, who saw his rival stumble so badly in last Thursday's debate that Joe Biden faces growing calls to quit four months from election day. Anyone who doubts how consequential a second Trump administration term would be for the United States and the world need only look to the supreme court, now ruled by a conservative supermajority thanks to three Trump-appointed justices.

Monday's majority ruling, penned by Chief Justice John Roberts, is a disingenuous, bloodless discussion which pompously warns that "we cannot afford to fixate exclusively, or even primarily, on present exigencies". The minority opinion, written by Justice Sonia Sotomayor, is screaming to the people to wake up: the city on a hill is on fire. A twice-impeached convicted felon who attempted to overturn the people's verdict, reveres authoritarians and pledges to be a dictator (only "on day one") could soon be re-elected. This is not about exigencies; this is an emergency.

Justice Sotomayor outlined the new limits for a president: "Orders the Navy's Seal Team 6 to assassinate a political rival? Immune. Organises a military coup to hold on to power? Immune. Takes a bribe in exchange for a pardon? Immune. Immune, immune, immune ... In every use of official power, the president is now a king above the law."

The court's ruling grants complete immunity from criminal prosecution to core presidential powers. But it also grants presumptive immunity to other "official acts" – and these are extraordinarily widely drawn. Pressuring Mike Pence not to certify the 2020 election results would probably enjoy immunity, Chief Justice Roberts writes, because if the president and vice-president are discussing official duties, this is official conduct; and presiding over the results is a constitutional responsibility of the vice-president.

The bar for overturning presumption looks sky-high, as Justice Sotomayor notes – doing so must pose no danger of intrusion whatsoever on presidential authority. The president's motives cannot be examined. Nor can official acts be used in criminal cases relating to unofficial acts. The resulting scope is so great that any politician or official would surely balk at granting it to the other side – unless they were certain they could hold on to power indefinitely.

This ruling will almost certainly, as it should, further lower declining support for a court now mired in scandal, thanks to the Republican-appointed Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito. Other majority rulings in recent days have delivered a major blow to the regulatory powers of federal agencies and, extraordinarily, said that officials can accept cash or gifts from people they have assisted: they only count as bribes if given before the favour. This is a court for the rich and powerful, and it is making them more so. The founders intended the supreme court to be part of the solution to the tyranny of European kings. Mr Trump, and the court's conservative justices, have made it part of the problem.

Rishi Sunak and Boris Johnson at a brewery in London in October 2021

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW PARSONS/ NO 10 DOWNING STREET

The new era's first challenge: bringing back trust in politics

Martin Kettle

On the other side of the Atlantic, in an act of shocking irresponsibility, the US supreme court has ruled that the president is above the law. On this side of the ocean, however, something diametrically opposite lies in store for Britain. The US is a republic that has, in effect, just given itself an elected monarch who will be free to act as he or she pleases. The UK, by contrast, is a monarchy that is about to declare itself the closest thing to a republic of virtue since Cromwellian times.

Yes, we will still have a king, who happens to himself be largely above the law. But, if the Labour manifesto is to be believed, many other parts of British government are about to see the self-interested Cavalier culture of recent years swept aside by the more puritanical ways of the Roundheads.

Is this important? You bet it is. There are many reasons why the Conservatives may be ejected from power. But corruption and cronyism in office have been extremely close to the heart of it. Boris Johnson never recovered from the revelation that he had been partying while the country was obeying Covid rules, and from trying to let off a Tory MP who had broken lobbying rules. That was the tipping point. The Tories' polling went south and has never returned.

The decline in standards in politics has redefined the modern public's view of it for the far worse. The British Social Attitudes survey reported last month that public faith in MPs, politics and government had hit historic lows. According to Ipsos, just 9% of voters trust politicians to tell the truth. And only 14% of the public think MPs are in politics to help others, while 69% think they are in it for themselves, according to YouGov.

Labour's manifesto could hardly be clearer about why this matters and what is at stake. Try this: "There is now a crisis of confidence in our political system's ability to deliver *any* [Labour's own italics] change." Or this: "Just as corrosive has been the inability of politicians to keep promises." Or these: "This will require a reset in our public life," and: "Labour will restore confidence in government."

Not "will aim to". Will. Quite a claim. By contrast, the Conservative manifesto contains not one word about any of this. The Tories are in denial about the crisis in politics and government. Labour seems to get it.

Whether you approve of Keir Starmer's election strategy or not, it is a matter of observable fact that he has centred it upon the regaining of trust. Starmer regards trust as the precondition for everything difficult that his government will have to do. It is, you could say, Starmer's secret sixth mission in government.

This is why we now stand on the threshold of the most restrictive and significant attempt to tighten standards in politics and public life in a generation. Rhetorically, Labour's language sets the bar of ambition high. Sleaze, scandal, false promises, gimmicks, divisive language, consultancies, the revolving door between government and business – all must go. And it is for government to make the first move.

Will all this actually happen? That is the key question. We may find part of the answer very soon indeed. If Starmer becomes prime minister this week, one of his first tasks will be to issue his own edition of the ministerial code. This document provides ministers with their ethical map and compass. It lays down the rules and the sanctions for breaking them. Every new prime minister issues such a document. Starmer's may come within days.

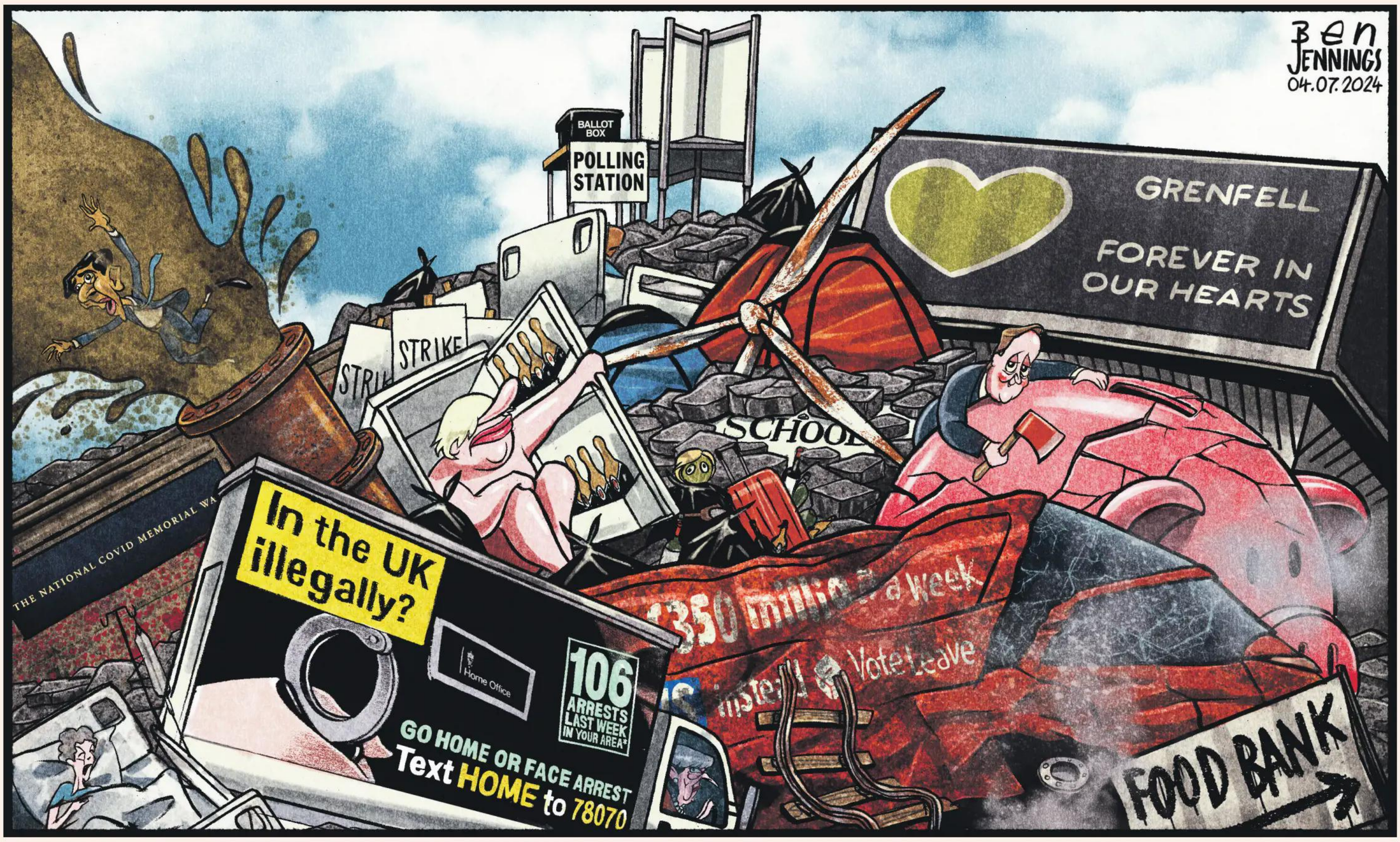
"Performative stuff matters. So no more freebies, no quango jobs, no knighthoods for the likes of Beckham, no peerages for donors

Starmer's code will be a big opportunity to start the reset. It should be hard-hitting. It could, for example, explicitly uphold the rule of law, including international law (Sunak's code, written in 2022, does neither). It could forbid public appointments for partisan reasons (in contrast to the shameless behaviour of successive Tory governments). It could empower the independent enforcement of the code, rather than keep the process in the hands of the prime minister (as Johnson notoriously did in the Priti Patel case).

The code will set the tone. But it is only the start. Labour's manifesto is more vague and less impressive about what comes next. It promises an independent ethics and integrity commission, but it is not clear whether this would replace all the existing standards regulators in government, parliament and public appointments, or act, as it ought to, as an umbrella body. Either way, it should be strongly independent and accountable to parliament.

The real challenge, though, is for ministers and MPs to take the issue of standards utterly seriously, to absorb the Nolan principles into their bloodstream, and to understand the penalty that they and the entire government will pay if anyone among their number does anything to encourage the media and the public to believe that "Ah, yes, they're all the same, after all." Anyone who knows British politics will know how difficult this will be.

But the performative stuff matters. So, Sir Keir, no more freebies to Taylor Swift concerts, no quango jobs for the Labour boys and girls, no knighthoods for David Beckham, and no peerages for donors, cronies and time-servers. If Starmer is about to rebuild a social democratic Britain, then that extraordinary achievement should be based on demonstrable modesty and frugality at the centre – not on Johnsonian entitlement or extravagance. Political trust, like economic growth, has to be earned. If it is true that support for Labour is very wide but also very shallow, then even now it will not take much to drain the pool.



Vote for change

A final appeal to readers of the Guardian

Angela Rayner

Travelling the length and breadth of Britain these past few weeks, I've seen potential in every conversation with voters. There is no doubt it's a tall order to reverse Tory decline and restore optimism. But if you vote Labour today, change will begin immediately. We'll start work on day one to enact our first steps – down payments, if you like – for a better, brighter future. These will be fully funded and fully costed, as you would expect, to deliver the groundwork of a mission-driven Labour government.

I know first-hand the transformative difference Labour in power can make. It was a secure home, decent work and a strong community under the last Labour government that changed my life when I was a young mum struggling to make ends meet.

For too many people in Britain, those foundations of a good life feel as if they're crumbling today. A generation looks to the future with worry rather than with hope. The dream of a safe, secure and affordable home is further out of reach. More people find themselves in insecure work and dragged into a race to the bottom. Families in every corner of the country are feeling worse off and forgotten.

Labour understands the importance of having a secure home, decent work and putting power in people's hands. With Keir Starmer at the helm, we're ready to meet this moment. Our plan for secure homes will end the housing emergency created by the Tories, getting Britain building, with 1.5m homes over five years, and delivering the biggest boost to affordable, social and council housing in decades.

We will back first-time buyers, giving them "first dibs" on new developments, and a comprehensive mortgage guarantee scheme for those without access to the bank of mum and dad. And we will take action to protect renters, with an immediate ban on no-fault evictions, an end to rental bidding wars, and extended protections against damp, mould and cold. A Labour government will get back on track towards ending homelessness, by addressing its root causes.

We will put power in homeowners' hands, bringing down mortgage payments, and giving leaseholders the right to manage services and a route to buy out freeholds, while speeding up work to fix and future-proof unsafe homes.

But the changes we propose aren't just about the roof over your head. Labour's plan to make work pay will also ensure every worker has access to a secure job and respect at work. Our new deal for working people will be the biggest upgrade to rights at work in a generation, boosting wages, ending insecure work and ensuring good employers can't be undercut.

We will do this by delivering a genuine living wage for 2 million of the UK's lowest-paid workers, banning exploitative zero-hours contracts, and ending fire and rehire. And, of course, our agenda for change will empower communities. Labour's plan to power up Britain will turn the page on the Tories' levelling up scam.

In place of gimmicks, Labour will do the hard yards to get our economy growing for everyone everywhere, releasing Britain's untapped strengths and powering up our towns and cities. I want to see new powers handed to local leaders, so they have the tools they need to boost economic growth where you live, from housing and planning to transport and skills.

It's a plan that will be supported by a modern industrial strategy and a green prosperity plan for 650,000 new skilled jobs of the future in every region and nation. This is what Britain's future could be. But we will need a clear mandate for change – don't doubt that.

To those who say "they're all the same" or that voting doesn't change anything, I ask you to reconsider. Change won't happen unless you vote for it.

Imagine, if you dare, waking up on Friday and the Tories are back in. How will you feel, to see them back in power, and not just back but more entitled and emboldened than ever? If they win another five years, the worst is yet to come.

You don't have to risk that fate. The power is in your hands. We can heal the wounds, put politics back in the service of the people and start to rebuild Britain. Our best days lie ahead of us. Let's turn the page and start a new chapter together.

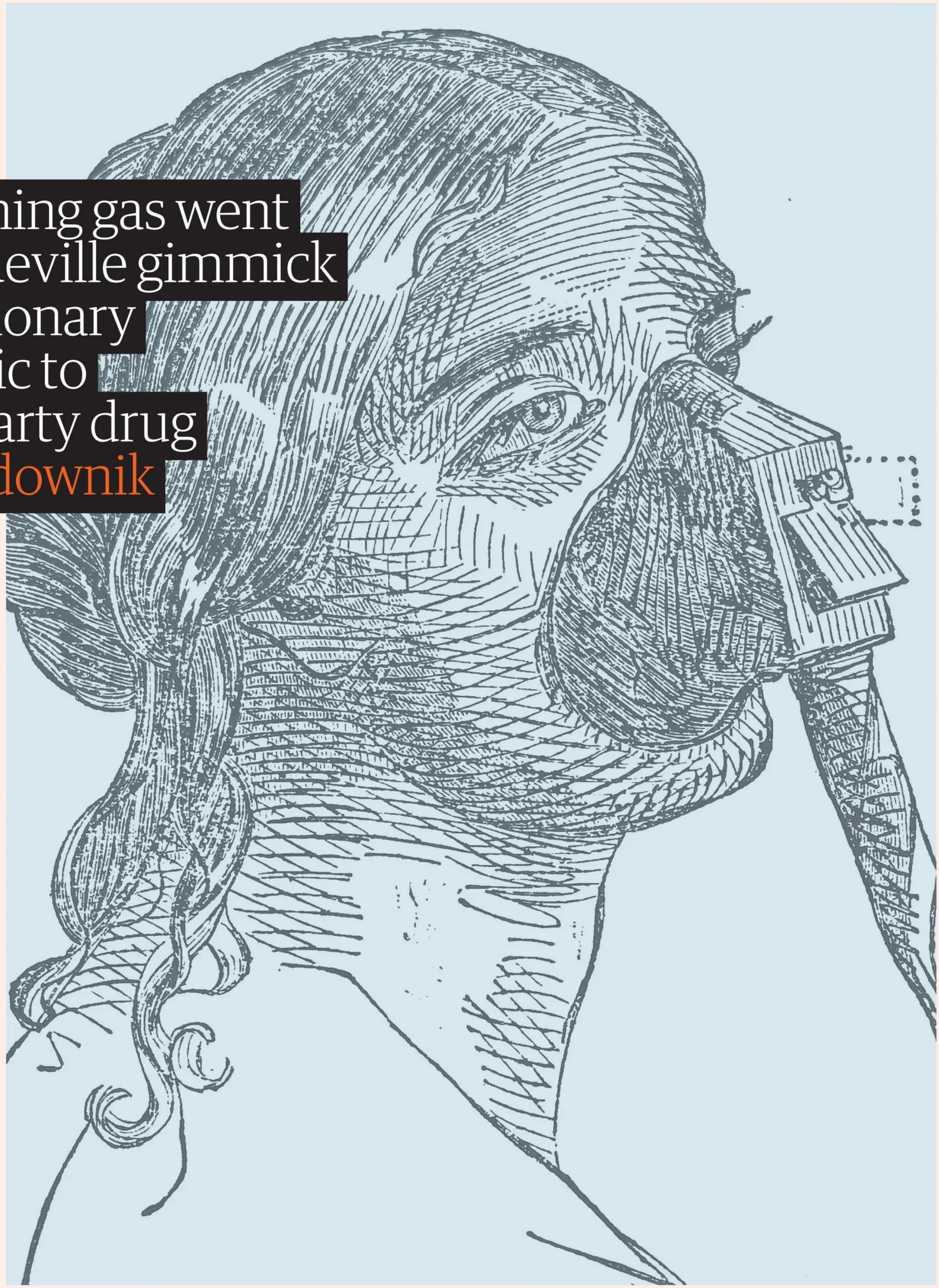
* **Angela Rayner** *is the deputy leader of the Labour party*

The long read

Deep breaths

How laughing gas went from vaudeville gimmick to revolutionary anaesthetic to modern party drug

Mark Miodownik



WORLD HISTORY ARCHIVE/ALAMY

1 Dancing around the pneumatic institute

Playing rugby one day, I mistimed a tackle and dislocated one of my fingers. I felt a stab of pain and sat in the mud staring in disbelief at my hand. One of my fingers was now bent at an unnatural angle. My teammates gathered round, grinning. They made it clear that they expected me to snap my finger back into place. Several of them mimed the action and excitedly made the cracking sound they wanted to hear. This was a test of my toughness, one of many that I have failed in my life.

Instead, I took myself to hospital and sat for hours in a blaze of fluorescent lights in the A&E department, feeling self-conscious with my shorts, muddy legs and odd-looking finger. Later that evening, I was shown into a booth and blue paper curtains were drawn around me for privacy. A young male doctor came in. He seemed distracted, but asked a few questions while consulting a clipboard containing my patient info. "Dislocated finger?" he said. I nodded. He put the clipboard down, took the dislocated finger in his hand and then, with no warning, he yanked it violently. There is an absurd moment from this scene that is freeze-framed in my memory. I am screaming in pain and his face is very close to mine. He is red from the effort of trying to pull my finger back into its socket, but he has failed, and instead has managed to pull me out of my seat and right up close to him. We both fall back towards the wall, like two drunks fighting.

Afterwards, calming me down with a cup of tea, he explained that he was sorry, and that he had been trying to catch me off guard in order to snap the finger back into place – a manoeuvre that had always worked in the past, he said. He then fetched a canister of laughing gas, attached to which were a tube and a mask. He fitted the mask over my nose and mouth, and began fiddling with the valves on the canister. He then asked me to take a deep breath. I did so and felt nothing. The doctor fiddled with the valves some more and asked me to have another go. It felt good, very good. I took another deep breath and soon found myself out of my mind and on a golf course, unable to find my ball.

The story of how a gas that creates delusions became a method of standard pain relief begins in industrial Britain. The air in cities and towns was full of coal smoke and the foul smell of human and animal waste. It was widely believed that bad air could cause disease. This was the miasma theory. It seemed like common sense, because where bad smells were most concentrated, there was the most disease. Outbreaks of cholera, Black Death and other contagious diseases were thought to be caused by clouds of miasma carried in the stench. People died in their millions of respiratory diseases such as consumption (tuberculosis). For thousands of years, it affected rich and poor alike, although because it was an airborne infection, the poor – who lived in crowded conditions – contracted it more often.

If air could carry disease, then perhaps gas could cure them, too. So went the reasoning of Thomas Beddoes, who set up the Pneumatic Institution in 1799 in the city of Bristol. The idea was to find specific gases that could cure specific diseases. Beddoes hired a young chemist called Humphry Davy to carry out the research in gas therapy. Davy tried many gases, none of which seemed to be much help – in fact, quite the opposite: when he tried a new gas called carbon monoxide on himself, he almost died.

Undeterred in his zeal to make great discoveries and help humankind, Davy then inhaled another newly discovered gas, nitrous oxide. The gas tasted slightly sweet and had a very strange effect on him. He started dancing round his laboratory "like a madman", as he noted later. He laughed. He giggled. It was highly inappropriate, given that he was working in a medical institute, but he couldn't stop.

The effects did wear off after an hour. But how miraculous, how strange, he reflected. He tried it again, sometimes with the same ludicrous effects, and sometimes he was taken out of his mind in a more transcendental way. After one session, he wrote "nothing exists but thoughts". Davy described breathing nitrous oxide as a sublime experience, an experience that was beyond language, although he did try to capture the feeling in his poetry, describing his limbs as "clad with new-born mightiness".

Davy thought he would try the gas out on the institute's patients to assess if it had any therapeutic value for curing diseases such as consumption. It didn't. But it did make them laugh. He himself found it so delightful that he could not resist carrying on experimenting with nitrous oxide at night. Davy found that breathing the gas heightened his senses – he felt he could see and hear more vividly. He invited friends, writers and poets, such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, to his laboratory to inhale the gas. They breathed it in and fell into fits of laughter, too, singing and dancing. The poet Robert Southey grandly declared that Davy had invented a new type of pleasure, which gave "delightful sensation in every limb – in every part of the body – to the very teeth". More and more people came to try this remarkable laughing gas, including the radical poet Anna Barbauld. These laughing gas gatherings gave the Pneumatic Institution a revolutionary air.

During all the partying and dancing, Humphry Davy still had the acumen to deduce something scientifically important about laughing gas: it was not just funny and distracting – it could eliminate pain.

2 Hysteria on demand

Up until this point, surgery and dentistry had been largely carried out without anaesthetic. For most people, this meant living with the agony of toothache until they could stand the pain no more. They would then reluctantly go to a dentist or doctor, who would remove the tooth by kneeling on their chest and tugging it out with a pair of pliers. Similarly, those with the excruciating pain of gallstones often preferred to live with the pain rather than go for surgery to remove them. Alcohol and herbal concoctions containing opium and henbane (psychoactive substances derived from plants) were offered as sedatives, but patients still felt excruciating pain and writhed in agony because these substances didn't effectively block pain receptors. To carry out surgery or amputations, the patients were tied down, with a piece of wood or leather in their mouth to stop them screaming.

There was also a belief among western surgeons that pain might be important to the success of the surgery. They thought it might be required for nature's healing powers to be triggered. Thus there was no obvious demand from medical doctors for the development of anaesthetics. So although Davy discovered nitrous oxide to be a fast-acting anaesthetic, the medical profession wasn't interested.

A self-taught engineer, Samuel Colt, spotted the potential of Davy's laughing gas. He had an idea for a new type of gun, but needed money to develop it. In 1832, he decided to tour the US performing laughing gas demonstrations on stage. It wasn't hard for Colt to learn how to make laughing gas. The formula is N_2O, which means it is made of two nitrogen atoms and one oxygen atom. Since the air we breathe is mostly made up of nitrogen (78%) and oxygen (21%) you might expect that laughing gas would occur naturally. But although the oxygen in the air is very reactive, the nitrogen is not. It occurs as a molecule, N2, which is to say two nitrogen atoms chemically bound together into a single molecule. This molecule is very stable and reacts with very few things – not even the oxygen in air.

The method Colt used to produce nitrous oxide was to heat up ammonium nitrate, which decomposes to produce N_2O gas. But he needed to be careful. Heating it too fast causes a different reaction, creating enormous amounts of nitrogen and nitrogen dioxide gas very quickly. When large amounts of gas are produced, it has to go somewhere, and so it expands outwards. This creates a pressure wave, destroying objects in its path and carrying the smashed pieces along with it. In other words, an explosion.

To avoid blowing himself up, Colt carefully heated ammonium nitrate, keeping the temperature below 300C, and collected the gas that was created in a fine silk bag, which gradually expanded into a balloon. In his stage shows, he would invite volunteers on to the stage to inhale the gas, whereupon they would fall into hysterics, sing and dance. The spectacle of a prim middle-aged nurse suddenly bursting into song, or a shy gentleman transforming into a comedian, provided entertainment to the paying audience.

Keeping the spectacle in the realms of good family entertainment was a priority given the dubious reputation of laughing gas, and so Colt pretended to be a doctor. He stopped doing the shows once he had raised enough cash for his real passion, the development of a hand held pistol with a rotating cylinder: the Colt revolver.

Davy thought he would try the gas out on his patients to see if it could cure diseases. It didn't. But it did make them laugh

A woman in labour taking gas and air to relieve pain

JONATHAN LITTLEJOHN/ALAMY

3 The birth of anaesthesia

In 1844, a dentist called Horace Wells attended a laughing gas show and wondered whether it might work as pain relief during teeth extraction. He tried it on himself while having a wisdom tooth extracted. He giggled while spitting blood, and realised laughing gas really did block pain.

After trying it on more than 10 other patients, he decided to go public, and performed a tooth extraction in Massachusetts general hospital, before a small audience. Unfortunately for Wells, the patient let out a small cry during the procedure, and although afterwards he said he felt very little pain, the conservative medical establishment who had been in attendance pounced on this as proof of frivolous fairground trickery. They dismissed nitrous oxide and ridiculed Wells. He would later fall into addiction, and killed himself in 1848, but he had ignited an interest in anaesthesia.

Two years after his demonstration, another dentist, William Morton, used a different substance to anaesthetise a patient in the same hospital. The gas was a vapour of a mysterious liquid called ether.

Ether is a clear but very powerful liquid. If you sniff a bottle of ether you will immediately feel woozy. Like ethanol, the alcohol in beer and wine, it is made

of two carbon atoms, six hydrogen atoms and one oxygen. But the two molecules differ in the way the atoms are bonded together, which has a big impact on their properties. For instance, their boiling points, the temperatures at which they change from liquid into a gas, are very different. The boiling point of ether is 35C, while the boiling point of ethanol is 78C.

Now, 35C is not a high temperature: a glass of ether will boil in front of you on a very hot summer's day. Although a bottle of pure alcohol will not boil on that same summer's day, you will be able to smell it, and that means it is still releasing some of its molecules into the air. In fact, as with all liquids, molecules jump into the air and become a gas even before they reach the boiling point: this is called the vapour of a liquid, and is why you can smell liquids – it is the bouquet of wine, the warming aroma from a bowl of soup, a waft of perfume. The lower the boiling point compared with room temperature, the more vapour you get from it, and generally the smellier it is. Ether is very smelly, and no one would describe it as having a pleasant bouquet. It is not dissimilar to the smell of diesel and petrol – to which it is chemically related – and it will knock you out.

If you breathe ether vapour, it goes straight to your lungs, where it infiltrates the bloodstream and causes rapid intoxication in a matter of minutes. As with alcohol, the effect can be pleasant, but there are differences that make the gas useful for anaesthesia. When surgeons gave alcohol to patients being cut open, patients still felt pain, often babbling incoherently and striking out, arms flailing around. Ether's molecular structure means it affects different pathways in the brain, causing a patient to lose consciousness rapidly and become insensitive to the pain of being cut open. Crucially, they lie still.

Because the boiling point of ether is so low, it can be easily delivered by getting a patient to breathe in the vapour using a vial of the warmed liquid. The trick, of course, is to get the dose of vapour inhalation right. Too much and the patient is poisoned, causing severe side-effects such as breathing difficulties and heart rate abnormalities. Too little and the patient will wake up while being cut open.

On trying chloroform, Simpson and colleagues found it pleasant at first, and were put 'into a good humour'. Then they all collapsed

A 19th-century painting symbolising the effects of chloroform on the human body

WELLCOME LIBRARY/ R COOPER

Beyond this, the use of ether as an anaesthetic was effective, but not ideal. For a start, like alcohol, it is addictive. So once there was general acceptance of the idea that the benefits of anaesthetics might outweigh the risks, scientists started to explore the vapours of other substances.

4 A royal knockout

One of these experimenters was John Simpson, a Scottish obstetrician living in Edinburgh. Every evening, he and two assistants would gather in his sitting room and sniff chemicals to assess their anaesthetic effect. This was a risky thing to do, because the toxicity of these chemicals was completely unknown. On a dark November evening in 1847, they gathered to inhale a sweet-smelling, volatile liquid called chloroform. At first they found it pleasant and were put "into a good humour", but then they all collapsed.

When they regained consciousness the next morning, Simpson was elated: had he found a new anaesthetic? Not realising he could have killed himself, he next tried it on his niece, who said she felt happy, began singing "I am an angel" and then dropped to the floor unconscious. She survived, and, deeming it safe, Simpson went on to use chloroform in his medical practice, successfully administering it to mothers in labour to ease their pain. It was a miracle he didn't kill some of them, as getting the dose wrong, as with ether, can be lethal.

Other doctors were outraged, but not about the safety issues. The mostly male medical establishment argued that alleviating the pain of childbirth was morally wrong, and that God had ordained that women should suffer while giving birth. The moral issues around pain relief became a hot public debate until Queen Victoria in 1853 was administered chloroform while giving birth to Prince Leopold, after which it received the royal stamp of approval. The queen later wrote to a friend who had also inhaled chloroform for pain relief: "Very glad to hear Minnie is going on so well & had the inestimable blessing of chloroform w. no one can ever be sufficiently grateful for."

5 Laughing gas goes legit

By the turn of the 20th century, chloroform's use as a medical anaesthetic was being phased out. It was too toxic, damaging to the liver and kidneys in high doses, but also caused unexpected deaths in surgery by interfering with the rhythm of the heart – the so-called "sudden sniffing death" – which is a dangerous side-effect associated with inhaling many solvents.

This balance between effective pain relief and the risk of side-effects brought laughing gas back into the picture. No, it didn't knock you out, but yes, it did allow you to experience less pain with fewer side-effects. However, it

was unregulated, and the form of administration – a silk or rubber balloon – was not ideal for dentists or medics because balloons are bulky and leak gas over time into the room where they are stored, which, in the case of nitrous oxide, makes everyone giddy. One person who took up the challenge to solve this engineering problem was George Poe, a cousin of the poet and master of the macabre Edgar Allan Poe. He created a factory in New Jersey for the mass manufacturing of nitrous oxide in a liquid form, which he then sold in canisters.

This was a clever choice. Liquids are denser than gases, and so a lot of nitrous oxide could be crammed into a small cylinder. The boiling point of nitrous oxide is -88C, which means that liquid nitrous oxide immediately boils at room temperature. However, pressurising a gas increases its boiling point, allowing it to be kept as a liquid in a pressurised container (such as gas bottles used to store butane for camping). Opening the valve of the canister released the pressure, instantly transforming the liquid into vapour for use in dentists' practices and hospitals. By 1883, George Poe was supplying 5,000 dentists with medical-grade anaesthetic nitrous oxide in canisters.

Poe was passionate about the power of gases to help people in pain. He patented a respirator as a safe and systematic way of administering gas to a patient. A canister fed gas into brass cylinders and then into a face mask placed over the patient's nose and mouth. Using this procedure, he claimed it was possible, using pure oxygen, to bring people back from the dead.

Once gases could be compressed cheaply and put in convenient cylinders, they were put to all sorts of unexpected uses throughout the 20th century. For instance, if you add cream to a nitrous oxide gas cylinder, some of the compressed gas dissolves in the fat. If you then open the cylinder, the gas pressure squirts the cream out of the dispenser. As it does this, the gas inside the fat expands rapidly and blows trillions of little bubbles – this instantly whips the cream into a fluffy foam. This delicious messy process was discovered accidentally in the

Young people, in their endless quest for new ways to inhabit their own minds, have rediscovered laughing gas

1930s by a chemistry student who was studying the preservation of dairy cream using compressed gas. He tried other gases too, but nitrous oxide works best for cream because it doesn't affect the taste. It is also easy and safe to compress into a convenient form called a nitrous oxide whippet, used in commercial kitchens. These look like little bullets that you might load a revolver with, but instead they are designed to fit into a whipped cream gun. Press the trigger and out comes instant and perfect whipped cream: it's delightful, it's delicious, it's a kind of magic.

The nitrous oxide used in modern hospitals is stored in cylindrical steel bottles. It was one of those that was used by my doctor on the day I dislocated my finger. I breathed in the gas using a respirator mask, like those pioneered by George Poe. These days it is delivered as a mixture of oxygen and nitrous oxide called "gas and air". If you give birth in hospital, you are very likely to be offered this mixture to relieve the pain. It is a simple and easy to use system, and a much milder painkiller than the epidurals that are the alternative when someone in labour is in extreme agony. This gas really is part of the life support system of modern hospitals.

Young people, in their endless quest for different ways to inhabit their own minds, have rediscovered laughing gas. They buy boxes of whippets online and use them to blow up balloons of nitrous oxide. They then inhale the gas through the necks of the balloons as a recreational drug. I sometimes find tangible evidence of their hilarious, mad, dangerous (illegal in the UK) and life-changing trips. These are clusters of bright silver whippets that shine in the green grass of our local park.

Discarded laughing gas canisters and balloons

GETTY/ISTOCKPHOTO

My own nitrous oxide trip occurred that day in hospital during my dislocated-finger episode. I floated completely out of my mind. Hearing a "clack" sound, I mistook it for the sound of a ball being hit, and became puzzled as to why someone was playing golf in the hospital. Returning to consciousness a few seconds (or minutes?) later, I saw the doctor standing in front of me, but there was no sign of his golf clubs. Instead, my finger was back where it should be. I had felt no pain this time. The doctor looked pleased.

On the way home from hospital, and despite my injury, I felt elated. I was sitting on the top deck of a bus. It was a dark night and London's grimy streets raced by in the orange glow of the sodium street lamps. Every now and again the bus passed a room on the upper floor of a house in which the occupant had not closed their curtains. I saw snapshots of people in their rooms, some sitting in bed reading a book or working on a computer. Then I saw a woman staring out of her window and we locked stares for an instant. I felt as if I was inside her head, momentarily transported into her consciousness, looking out of her window and seeing a young man on the top deck of a doubledecker bus staring at me.

Later I rationally attributed this out-of-body experience to the residual effects of laughing gas inhalation. My subconscious mind hangs on to this memory, returning to it frequently, feeling its strangeness like a tongue exploring the hole left after dental extraction. Once you have experienced moments like this, and had the idea that you have accessed a different realm of consciousness, it is impossible to let go of them. ●

✻ **Mark Miodownik** *is a materials scientist and engineer, and the director of UCL Institute of Making*

This is an edited extract from It's a Gas: The Magnificent and Elusive Elements That Expand Our World by Mark Miodownik, published by Viking and available at guardianbookshop.com

Letters

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Established 1906

Country diary

Carn Euny, Cornwall

Away from the dazzling sea, inland West Penwith is a landscape of rocks, wind and flowers. In high summer, sheep's-bit sizzles an intense, electric blue alongside tall bolts of foxglove.

In the ruins of the iron age village of Carn Euny, the ground seethes with granite boulders. Some are built into hut walls; others erupt through the soil, part of a continual, slow movement. Every generation of farmers had to clear their fields of risen stone, occasionally digging out pieces the size of coffins.

The largest single rock here is a trapezoid hunk, almost as big as a first world war tank, that squats over a shallow well. In place of a gun turret, a hawthorn tree grows from the apex, lashed in place by long roots covered in pennywort, a succulent with round, fleshy, slightly frilled leaves, dimpled in the centre like belly buttons.

Carn Euny has a fogou – a mysterious underground passage of a type found only in the far west of Cornwall. Nearly 2 metres high and 20 metres long, it snakes into the earth. Today, it's open at both ends and you can stroll in, but originally it was only accessible by crawling.

The fogou culminates in a round, corbelled chamber, dimly lit by a small opening in the turf above. The sides are slightly damp and covered with peculiar moss. Seen from certain angles, it shines a luminous lime, running like phosphorescent fire along the crevices between the stones. Gaze for a while and the wall seems to dissolve into a pit of green lava.

This is goblin's gold (*Schistostega pennata*). Its fronds have refractive, lens-like cells that scavenge for light, focusing it on the chloroplasts deep within and bouncing green rays back, rather like cats' eyes. Found in crumbling soil, typically the entrances to rabbit burrows and badger dens, it survives in stygian conditions too dark for other plants.

If taken outside in the sunlight, the moss dies, its brilliance extinguished. Its ungraspable allure inspired a genre of folktales about fools stealing fairy gold from beneath the ground and waking up the next morning to find that their treasure was nothing more than a handful of dirt.

Sara Hudston

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Hope has the smiles returning to our faces

Re Zadie Smith's article (Here comes the sun, 3 July), I'm hoping against hope (we've been here before) that on Friday, the miasma of greed, self-centredness and downright stupidity will have evaporated and we will have a government whose fundamental purpose is to support, serve and improve the whole of the UK and not just to rip the lead off the roof and steal the last lightbulbs. A government that genuinely means to roll up its sleeves and sort out the mess.

I'm from the generation of free orange juice and cod-liver oil, smaller-scale secondary schools that weren't businesses but educational establishments, and hospitals where you saw physiotherapists as soon as – and for as long as – you needed, where patients lay in wards, not corridors.

Watching Rishi Sunak talking about his lack of Sky TV finally made clear to me what Marie Antoinette meant about eating cake. Well, it's definitely time for change – this country deserves some hope.

Barbara Kay
Wallasey, Merseyside

● Zadie Smith's superb, angry and telling article speaks of the £570bn locked up in offshore accounts by British residents. Rishi Sunak bleats about the Ukraine war as a drain on our economy, but in 1946, after the second world war, the Labour government brought into being the welfare state (what quaint, longed-for words they sound now). Smith's vivid evocation of its destruction by self-serving Toryism hints at the huge amounts that Labour will have to find to put these great losses right, from what sounds like an empty purse – except it isn't empty.

The billions that should fund the welfare state have been creamed off by privatisation and tax giveaways to a voraciously rich yet minuscule proportion of our people. Keir Starmer, you need to open and release this treasure chest – it could achieve miracles.

Bee Hepworth
Leigh-on-Sea, Essex

● Zadie Smith almost brought tears to my eyes and gagged my throat. I was a postwar working-class baby who had a free university education in the 60s. Everything I valued seems to have been attacked in these last years, and my urban environment has become shabby and depressing. Thank you so much for an article which set me off with a feeling of joy, and said that I don't have to wait till Friday morning. I've waited too long already.

Carole Cregan
Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire

● Zadie Smith's wonderful, accurate, sobering but ultimately inspiring article has made me hopeful, and hopefully had the same effect on many more people. We cannot succumb to nihilism. We owe the next generation a fight against inequality and the restoration of a more moral and empathetic society.

Rhiannon England
London

Labour will need to be more radical in office

Much of the electorate will concur with your editorial and look for a reason to hope that better times lie ahead (The Tories must lose. Only Labour can shape a future we want to see, 29 June). Like many other voters, I have temporarily put aside yearnings for radical change and a redistribution of wealth, and will settle for a government that offers a basic level of competence and decency. I will bemoan Labour's lack of ambition and the absence of fundamental reform, but hope that, once in government, it will reveal a programme of action that better reflects its roots and values. In the meantime, I will be relieved to see an enthusiastic, united government beginning to clear up the mess left by 14 years of Conservative misrule.

Peter Riddle
Wirksworth, Derbyshire

● "The Tories must lose," says your editorial headline. I couldn't agree more. The last 14 years have been a nightmare of corruption and self-delusion. "Only Labour can shape a future we want to see," it adds. This is wishful thinking. Public services have been degraded to the point where only radical change will save them. Labour's extreme fiscal caution simply won't do the job. This is why it is vital that voters in a constituency where a party to the left of Labour (Lib Dem, Green, SNP or Plaid Cymru) has a good chance should vote for it. The ideal result would be Labour as the largest party, but dependent on support from those to its left. Then, we might even get electoral reform that would end the need for tactical voting.

Rodney Smith
Glasgow

● I will hold my nose and vote Labour this time, as I did in 1997. I think that Starmerism is the only realistic bulwark we have against an insurgent far right. Contrary to the normal view, it is Keir Starmer himself who offers me this hope. His early work as a defendant on death penalty cases, and pro bono work on the McLibel case, speaks of a man of moral substance with the competence to get results, however uninspiring his rhetoric.

But I do hope that when he eventually puts down the Ming vase, he addresses our broken relationship with Europe and finally starts to speak about education, which has been ominously absent from this campaign. If he needs to raise taxes to fix the damage done by the Tories and, to be fair, the pandemic, I'm in favour. Tax is not a malediction, it is a measure of the values we hold.

Matthew Pritchard
Ware, Hertfordshire

Hold your nose and vote tactically today

I had a letter in the Guardian the day before polling day in 1997. In it, I reminded readers that Michael Portillo might be vulnerable to tactical voting for Labour, and so could John Gummer in Suffolk Coastal. Only one of these came to pass, but it was one of the defining moments of election night.

This time, in Suffolk Coastal, Thérèse Coffey, former environment secretary during much of the raw sewage saga, and deputy prime minister under the disastrous Liz Truss, could also be vulnerable if voters back the Labour candidate.

I'm not a natural Labour supporter, but I agree with Polly Toynbee that we need to use the unpleasant necessity of tactical voting to flush out this awful government (Journal, 2 July). Hold our noses, use the plunger of this undemocratic tool to unclog the pipes of power, then campaign for a more representative system where we can back whoever represents our true interests. I hope this is the last time I have to vote tactically to get rid of bad governance.

Joe Cassels
Saxmundham, Suffolk

● You may be tempted not to vote tactically because Labour is forecast to win a "supermajority". This would be a huge mistake. In 1992, I lived in Bolton North East, the Tory/Labour marginal that was always won by the party that won the election. Labour was forecast to win the seat, so I was one of the 4,971 that voted Lib Dem. The Tories won by 185 votes, and John Major won the election. Where I live now, in the Harrogate and Knaresborough constituency, Labour and Green voters should vote tactically for the Lib Dems if they don't want the Tory to win. You have been warned.

Michael Goodliffe
Harrogate, North Yorkshire

Corrections and clarifications

● The name of the K-pop band Seventeen refers not to the "number of members", which is 13; it comes from combining this figure with the number of subgroups in the band (hip-hop, vocals and performance) and adding one for the band as a whole (Manifesting and more is more, 1 July, G2, p4).

● A counsellor with Relate who was mentioned in an article ('It's a complete secret', 2 July, G2, p4) is Peter Saddington, not Waddington.

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Can things only get better for England?

The last time England won a major football tournament was shortly after Labour had been elected with a landslide. Just a thought (History lesson: We know we can get better, says Southgate, 2 July).

Maurice Bates
Scarborough, North Yorkshire

● If you really want to "deliver a bloody nose to the Tories" (Letters, 3 July), you may just have to hold your own nose – as political groups are doing en masse in France to stop the National Rally winning.

Janet Fraser
Twickenham, London

● Warwick Hillman (Letters, 3 July) should not dismiss his local Labour candidate for calling Liz Truss "wreckless". Surely dyslexic people can work as MPs, or in their offices?

Margaret Squires
St Andrews, Fife

● Sorry, Ian Cassidy (Letters, 3 July), but Gordon Brown seems to have stolen a march on Polly Toynbee with his "Let's get our country back" piece (Journal, 3 July). Let's hope it's not a jinx.

Barbara Brewis
Burnopfield, County Durham

● On Tuesday Boris Johnson said Labour will be "the most leftwing government since the war". Until then I had been undecided, but now I'll definitely vote Labour.

Brian Woolland
Salisbury

● The song for Thursday (Letters, 3 July)? Kick Out the Tories by the Newtown Neurotics.

Mark Schulz
Uckfield, East Sussex

● Jeremy Hunt should do the decent thing and leave a note saying "Even less than no money left".

Alan Pearson
Durham

Joss Naylor

Towering figure in the world of fell-running admired for his tenacity and rugged charisma

Joss Naylor was a colossus in the world of fell-running who in the final third of the 20th century not only dominated his sport but, through sheer charisma, put it on the map. His greatest feats of endurance, in the 1970s and 80s, were accomplished far from the public gaze in the clouded hills of Cumbria.

However, the unprecedented extremity of his achievements, and the hardiness that made them possible, captured the imagination of mountain lovers everywhere.

A Lakeland sheep-farmer who lived for most of his life in the hamlet of Wasdale Head, Naylor, who has died aged 88, ran his first fell event in September 1960, in the Lake District Mountain Trial – despite medical advice to avoid strenuous activity following injury in his teens. Over the next few years, he began to race regularly. He was not the fastest, and, after taking over the tenancy of his father's farm in 1962, he had little time for systematic training. But he felt comfortable moving at speed over even the roughest terrain – he said that his experience with dry-stone walls helped him "read" the rocks – and his resilience seemed superhuman.

By the late 60s, he had begun a purple patch that would last almost 20 years: he won the Mountain Trial 10 times and the Ennerdale Horseshoe nine times in a row (1968-76), along with repeated victories in such gruelling events as the Wasdale, the Duddon Valley, the Welsh 1,000m Peaks, the Manx Mountain Marathon and the Karrimor Mountain Marathon (now the Original Mountain Marathon).

What he really excelled at, however, were individual ultra-distance challenges. In 1971, he became only the sixth person to complete the Bob Graham Round, a notorious 66-mile circuit of 42 Lake District peaks, to be completed in 24 hours, which had once been considered as unattainable as the four-minute mile. Then he set out to extend that circuit.

In 1972 he completed 63 peaks within the 24-hour time limit, in the midst of an atrocious storm. Chris Brasher, who paced him for part of the route, described this as "a memory equal to any of the greatest Olympic races that I have ever seen". Three years later, Naylor upped his total to 72 peaks: the equivalent of going up and down Everest, Ben Nevis, Snowdon and Kinder Scout in a single day, all in a blistering heatwave.

Naylor running in Wasdale, Cumbria, 2004. He was born in the hamlet of Wasdale Head, where he lived for most of his life
JOHN ANGERSON/ ALAMY

No challenge was too extreme. He ran the 268-mile Pennine Way in just over three days (1974), the 190 miles of the Coast-to-Coast path from St Bees to Robin Hood's Bay in 41 hours (1976), Hadrian's Wall in just under 11 hours (1980), and a route linking all 26 of the Lake District's "lakes, meres and waters" in 19 hours 15 minutes (1983). When he took off his shoes at the end of the Coast-to-Coast, the skin from the bottom of his feet came off.

Naylor was born in Wasdale Head, the youngest child of Joe, a shepherd who had moved there in 1927, and his wife, Ella (nee Wilson). It was not a comfortable upbringing: the valley did not even have electricity until 1977. But Joss grew used to long days and developed a tolerance for physical discomfort which – combined with his love of nature – would fuel his subsequent achievements.

At 15, he left school (in nearby Gosforth) to work on the farm full time. But his teens were marred by the after-effects of two seemingly minor accidents that left him with chronic back pain. By his early 20s, the medical profession had all but given up on him. His right knee had lost all its cartilage; two discs had been taken from his spine; he wore a special corset to prevent further damage. He was pronounced unfit for national service and urged to avoid strenuous activity.

He listened, but not for long. Other young men his age were getting involved in long-distance fell-running, and Naylor, whose home was overlooked by Scafell Pike, Yewbarrow and Great Gable, had a ringside seat. When the Mountain Trial event started in Wasdale in 1960 Naylor could not resist. He threw away his corset, cut off his work trousers at the knee, and ran in his heavy work boots. He seized up with cramp near the end, but did well enough to know that he had found his calling.

> **Naylor's favoured fuels were rock cakes and apple pie, washed down with Guinness**

In 1977, after many years of running and record-setting, he was warned that if he did not stop farm-work he risked having to use a wheelchair for the rest of his life. So he took an indoor job, mentoring apprentices, at the nearby Windscale (now Sellafield) nuclear plant. Yet he hung on to his 1,000-strong flock of Herdwick sheep, which thereafter he tended "as a hobby". And his fell-running became, if anything, more extreme.

In June 1986, aged 50, he attempted a continuous traverse of all 214 peaks in Alfred Wainwright's seven-volume Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells, in the midst of another heatwave. It took him seven days, one hour and 25 minutes – a record that stood until 2014 – and required him to "dig deeper within … than I have ever had to reach". By the end, the flesh on both ankles was rubbed through to the nerve, and his throat and tongue were so swollen that he could barely speak.

To admirers, such ugly details capture the essence of "Iron Joss". Naylor's achievements owed less to genetic good fortune than to his indomitable spirit. His greatness came from his refusal to surrender.

In an age when elite sport is often seen as a science or a business, he ran with his heart, not his head. His favoured fuels were rock cakes and apple pie, washed down with Guinness or salted blackcurrant juice or, occasionally, cod liver oil (swigged from the bottle).

He was appointed MBE in 1976, yet remained startlingly modest about his achievements. Lesser fell-runners were inspired by the interest he took in their endeavours, and he would offer advice to anyone who shared his love of the fells. The Joss Naylor Lakeland Challenge – a 48-mile route for runners over 50 that he set up in 1990 – reflects this generous outlook.

He also used his fame to raise money for charity, which he did enthusiastically for many years – not least by scaling 60 peaks at the age of 60 (in 36 hours) and 70 rather smaller peaks at 70 (in 21 hours).

Naylor was still active on the fells in his 80s, until a stroke in 2021 set off his final decline.

He is survived by his wife, Mary (nee Downie), whom he married in 1963, and three children, Paul, Susan and Gillian.

Richard Askwith

Joss (Joseph) Naylor, fell runner and farmer, born 10 February 1936; died 28 June 2024

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Other lives

Anna Allott

Lecturer in Burmese at Soas, language teacher to UK diplomats and former secretary of the British-Burma society

My friend and former teacher Anna Allott, who has died aged 93, was a lecturer in Burmese at Soas University of London from the early 1950s until her retirement in the 90s.

Aside from her academic work she was a great promoter of friendship between the UK and Myanmar (Burma), and did much to try to raise awareness in Britain of the country's literature. Appointed OBE in 1998, she was secretary of the Britain-Burma Society from 1980 to 1997, and from 2002 to 2016 was a trustee of Prospect Burma, a charity set up with funds from her friend Aung San Suu Kyi's Nobel peace prize to provide scholarships.

Born in London to Marie Hloušková, a Czech-born French teacher, and Thomas Sargant, who later co-founded the human rights organisation Justice, Anna attended South Hampstead high school before gaining a degree in French and Russian at the London School of Slavonic Studies.

Moving to Soas as a postgraduate student in the phonetics and linguistics department, she initially studied Chinese before switching in 1952 to learn Burmese. It was at Soas that she met Antony Allott, an academic expert in African law. They married in 1952, shortly before she headed alone to Rangoon (Yangon) and the city of Mandalay to study Burmese for nine months.

Returning to Soas and married life, Anna was appointed an assistant lecturer in 1953, later moving up to lecturer. As part of her Soas work she was also required, on behalf of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to provide tuition in Burmese to a succession of British diplomats – me among them.

The two of us later collaborated with Ma Thida Sanchaung on a book, Inked Over, Ripped Out (1993), which collected together censored short stories. At heart a lexicographer, she also ensured that her colleague Eugenie Henderson's dictionary of Bwe Karen, an ethnic minority language of Myanmar, saw the light of day after Henderson's death in 1997. In 2009 her own Burmese Dictionary of Grammatical Forms, compiled with John Okell, was published.

After she stood down as a full-time lecturer Anna continued to teach at Soas on a part-time basis for a number of years. Following her initial visit to Myanmar in the early 50s she did not return there until 1976, partly because of the demands of work and family but also due to Myanmar's isolation after a 1962 coup. Blacklisted by the military regime in 2005, she made her final visit to the country in 2014, when a civilian government emerged.

Over the years Anna welcomed many Burmese visitors to her house in Bodicote, Oxfordshire, where she also held open days of her lovely garden in aid of local charities. Antony died of Parkinson's disease in 2002; she was chair of Banbury Parkinson's UK for 16 years, before and after his death. Later she moved to Wedmore in Somerset, where she spent her final 12 years.

She is survived by her three children, Nicholas, Stephen and Lucy, 12 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

Vicky Bowman

Aidan Rose

Academic and expert in public services management determined to use his knowledge to help Ukraine

My husband, Aidan Rose, who has died aged 65, was a leading academic in the field of public administration.

In 1994 Aidan took a key role in London Metropolitan University's Institutional Strengthening Project in Ukraine, a critical venture during the tumultuous period following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The governments of the UK, through its Know How Fund, and Canada were investing in the development of new courses for aspiring civil servants and seeking to build a strong foundation for public administration in Ukraine.

Working with colleagues in the country and those from Canada, Aidan was central to its success. At the newly established Ukrainian Institute of Public Administration in

Kyiv, he helped to develop a master's in public administration and to provide internship programmes in Britain for its students. Over a 10-year period he made 36 visits to Ukraine, travelling to Kyiv and beyond, to Lviv, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv and Odesa. Aidan was deeply affected by the recent challenges faced by his Ukrainian colleagues. He hoped fervently for the eventual rebuilding of their communities.

Born in Edinburgh, Aidan was the eldest of three children of Jane (nee Orr), and Anthony Rose, who were both microbiologists. He was proud of his Scottish heritage, and though Aidan's formative years were spent in Newcastle and Bath, where his parents moved to for their work, his love for Scotland never waned. This was evident in his fervent support for the Scotland football team.

After leaving City of Bath boys' school (now Beechen Cliff), he earned a degree in public and social policy from Bradford University in 1981. In 1991 he was awarded a doctorate in philosophy from Teesside Polytechnic (now Teesside University) with a dissertation on "The ethical accountability of the elected member in local government in England and Wales".

Aidan's career began as a lecturer in public administration at Teesside. He moved to Newcastle Polytechnic (Northumbria University Newcastle) in 1987 and in 1994 joined the University of North London (now London Metropolitan University), where he became associate head of the school of law, governance and international relations.

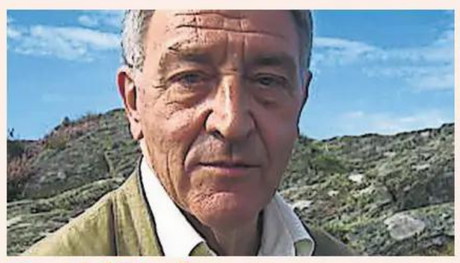
After leaving London Metropolitan in 2009, Aidan ventured into consultancy, advising the mayor of Elbasan, Albania, on a strategic plan for the city, and the European Commission on results-based budgeting. He juggled this with an external examiner role for public administration courses.

Aidan was also committed to his local community in Haringey, north London, and served as chair of governors of Campsbourne primary school from 2007 to 2010.

He was a devoted supporter of West Bromwich Albion FC, and a member of the editorial team of the London supporters' magazine, Baggie Shorts. WBA brought him immense joy and friendship, even in his final days, when he was suffering from several chronic health conditions. In all his endeavours, Aidan's intellect, wit and humour always shone out.

Aidan and I met in 1986 and married two years later. I survive him, along with his mother and his sister, Sarah, and brother, Simon.

Gillian Rose Fawcett



David Naden

Award-winning film editor on TV series and documentaries whose credo was: 'Always be true to the rushes'

My friend David Naden, who has died aged 91, was a Bafta award-winning film editor. He made his breakthrough while working on John Irvin's 1963 documentary about the Durham Miners' Gala day.

It was made with a £750 grant from the British Film Institute, and David cut it with the help of fellow graduates from the London School of Film Technique (LSFT), Jane Wood and Dai Vaughan. After Gala Day was transmitted by the BBC in 1964, the trio of editors established David Naden Associates, and the DNA collective became the base for some of the best British documentaries.

Born in Chapel-en-le-Frith, Derbyshire, David was the only child of Mabel (nee West), who became a village postmistress after separating from his father, Gerald Naden, a factory worker.

David boarded at the King's school, Chester. On leaving he did his national service in the signal corps, then won a place to study metallurgy at Sheffield University. He left after two years, in 1956, to study then lecture at the LSFT in Brixton, south London.

In 1960, he married Jennifer Smith, a children's TV presenter. They had three children, Jon, Mo and Jess, and lived in Crystal Palace. Between 1965 and 1981, David cut a wide range of films, including an episode of Michael Darlow's TV series Cities at War, The Hero City: Leningrad (1968); four dramas for the director Michael Apted, including the 1972 TV play Another Sunday and Sweet FA; and the feature film The Shadow Line (1976) by the director Andrzej Wajda.

In 1978, David won a Bafta for his editing of Bamber Gascoigne's Granada documentary series The Christians. David also edited three of Michael Grigsby's extraordinary documentaries commissioned by Granada: Deep South (1968), about the impact of the US's new civil rights laws, If the Village Dies (1969), commissioned to coincide with the 100th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth, and I Was a Soldier (1970), a portrait of three young Vietnam veterans.

David also worked on Labour party political broadcasts until the mid-1970s. He did this through DNA, where I got my break into film production and directing.

His marriage to Jennifer ended in divorce, and in the early 80s David moved to the Midlands to work as a producer on England Their England, a series of half-hour documentaries about the Midlands produced by ATV and Central TV. In 1986 he helped set up the film company Waterside Productions, where he continued to help film-makers hone their craft. His credo was: "Always be true to the rushes."

In 1983 he married Dzidka Wiorkowska, a film editor, and they had a son, Tomek. Dzidka died of cancer in 1995, and David focused on raising Tomek while continuing to work as a producer and director in Birmingham.

Returning to London in 2010, David kept active by going regularly to the cinema, visiting the Frontline club and following Crystal Palace.

He is survived by his children and by seven grandchildren.

Martin Smith

Birthdays

John Alexander, tennis player and politician, 73; **Ronni Ancona**, comedian and actor, 56; **René Arnoux**, racing driver, 76; **Lady (Janet) Cohen of Pimlico**, banker, broadcaster and writer, 84; **Sir Philip Craven**, former president, International Paralympic Committee, 74; **John Frawley**, tennis player, 59; **Richard Garriott**, video game designer and entrepreneur, 63; **Lord (Alastair) Goodlad**, former British high commissioner to Australia and former Conservative MP, 81; **Adam Hart-Davis**, photographer, writer and broadcaster, 81; **Francesca Hayward**, principal dancer, Royal Ballet, 32; **David Jensen**, DJ and broadcaster, 74; **Henri Leconte**, tennis player, 61; **Ute Lemper**, singer and actor, 61; **Mark Lloyd**, former chief executive, Local Government Association, 57; **Lord (Francis) Maude of Horsham**, former Conservative MP and cabinet minister, 71; **Neil Morrissey**, actor and broadcaster, 62; **David Potter**, founder and former chair, Psion, 81; **Prof Steven Rose**, biologist and broadcaster, 86; **Eva Marie Saint**, actor, 100; **Jenny Seagrove**, actor and animal rights activist, 67; **Pam Shriver**, tennis player and commentator, 62; **Mark Steel**, comedian and writer, 64; **John Stevenson**, Conservative politician, 61; **Jo Whiley**, broadcaster and DJ, 59.

Eva Marie Saint, the actor, is 100 today. One of her most celebrated roles was in the 1959 film North By Northwest, directed by Alfred Hitchock

Announcements

Deaths

BROATCH, Catherine Margaret (Cathy), of Ashtead Surrey, formerly of Waterloo, wife of Donald and mother of Neil and Ian, died at Epsom Hospital on 19 June. Funeral 24 July at Leatherhead Crematorium. Details from Alan Greenwood Funerals 01372 277444.

For Announcements, Acknowledgments, Adoptions, Anniversaries, Birthdays, Births, Deaths, Engagements, Memorial Services and In Memoriam, email us at announcements@theguardian.com including your name, address and telephone number or phone 0203 353 2114.

Reread our obituaries of the footballer Kevin Campbell, the singer and songwriter Françoise Hardy, the photographer Bob Gibbons and the poet John Burnside **theguardian.com/obituaries**

Yesterday's solutions

Killer sudoku
Easy

1	9	4	8	3	2	7	5	6
5	8	2	6	7	9	3	4	1
6	7	3	1	5	4	9	8	2
3	1	6	5	2	8	4	7	9
8	2	9	4	1	7	5	6	3
7	4	5	3	9	6	2	1	8
4	3	8	9	6	5	1	2	7
2	6	1	7	4	3	8	9	5
9	5	7	2	8	1	6	3	4

Medium

8	9	4	1	6	2	7	5	3
2	5	7	9	4	3	8	1	6
3	6	1	7	8	5	9	2	4
5	4	8	6	3	1	2	7	9
9	2	6	5	7	4	1	3	8
1	7	3	2	9	8	6	4	5
4	1	2	8	5	6	3	9	7
6	3	9	4	2	7	5	8	1
7	8	5	3	1	9	4	6	2

Codeword

	P		S		J		C	L	O	U	D	Y		
V	I	R	T	U	O	S	O		P		O			
	Q		E		T		L		T	O	W	N		
	U	P	R	A	T	E	D		I		N			
	E		N		E		N	I	C	E	T	Y		
A	T	O	N	E	D		E				U			
			E				S		A	U	R	A		
	B		S	C	H	I	S	M	S		N			
K	E	Y	S		E				T					
	R				A		S	T	R	I	C	T		
W	I	Z	A	R	D		A		O		R			
	B		C		A	L	F	A	L	F	A			
T	E	X	T		C		E		O		V			
	R		E		H	O	L	O	G	R	A	M		
B	I	R	D	I	E		Y		Y		T			

Cryptic crossword
Solution No. 29,425

M	U	L	T	I	P	L	I	C	A	T	I	O	N	
A		O		S		A		H		E		B		
S	E	T	T	O		C	R	E	V	A	S	S	E	
T		U		M		O		L		R		T		L
E	A	S	T	E	R	N		S	A	S	H	I	M	I
R				T		I		E				N		E
S	U	P	E	R		C	L	A	P	B	O	A	R	D
W		R		I						A		T		E
I	R	O	N	C	R	O	S	S		T	R	E	A	T
T		K				V		A		H				E
C	H	O	R	A	L	E		P	O	S	T	D	O	C
H		F		P		R		P		H		R		T
	H	I	E	R	A	R	C	H		E	R	A	T	O
		E		O		U		I		B		W		R
	E	V	E	N	I	N	G	C	L	A	S	S	E	S

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Call **0330 333 6946** for customer service (charged at standard rate).
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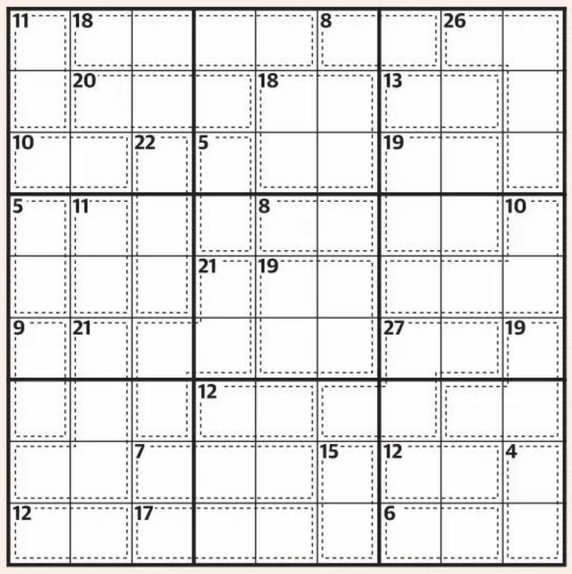
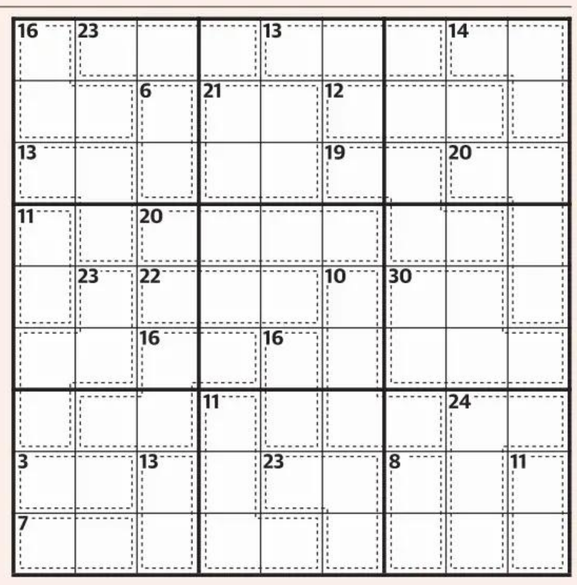
Killer sudoku

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

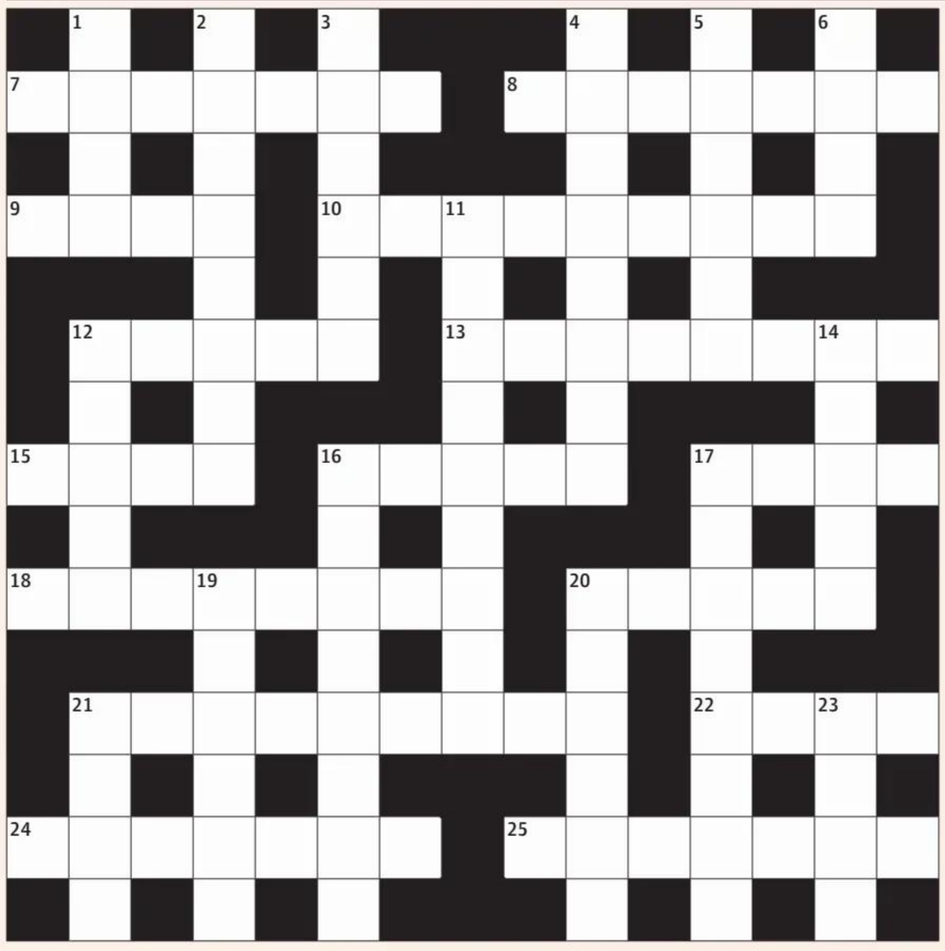
Each letter of the alphabet makes at least one appearance in the grid, and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. The letters decoded should help you to identify other letters and words in the grid.

5	2	6	12	2	■	5	17	8 U	6	19	1	■
26	■	8	■	12	■	17	■	25	■	26	■	3
2	10	14	8	26	26	1	■	17	4	18	5	11
25	■	14	■	2	■	26	■	18	■	25	■	17
9	13	20	23	23	26	11	5	■	18	15	13	2
■	■	25	■	11	■	■	4	■	7	■	■	20
3	18	5	11	■	3	18	18	13	12	11	26	26
2	■	■	17	■	13	■	25	■	18	■	■	11
20	25	22	4	18	2	17	11	■	10	18	18	3
16	■	■	18	■	10	■	■	12	■	24	■	■
8	13	25	5	■	26	20	9	2	6	11	25 N	17
20	■	8	■	22	■	25	■	25	■	13	■	18
13	8	3	3	1	■	2	3	21	18	8	13	25
20	■	9	■	5	■	19	■	18	■	5	■	11
■	5	11	7	17	11	17	■	5	17	11	2	3

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 U	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25 N	26

Guardian cryptic crossword No 29,426 set by Paul



Across

7 Something toxic with Plaid Cymru, and Liz Trussed? (7)
8 Country dispensing with old Conservative PM? (7)
9 Fossil fuel, Rishi's confessed addiction (4)
10 Looking to the left, further thought surely vital (9)
12 Mean Conservative, shabby, premier to go? (5)
13 Needing regeneration, Reeves leading the way - it's most brutal (8)
15 Party seeking Independence Day to wrap up a kind of election (4)
16 Horrifying thing not having capital for nurse (5)
17 Foot in door with pained expression, might one be slated? (4)
18 Politician snarky in speech? (8)
20 Shower elected, given keys to number ten (5)
21 On two wings, Tories and DUP labouring (9)
22 Trench dug, yah boo sucks! (2-2)
24 Leader befitting in marked man? (7)
25 Count endless data on card after opening of ballot (7)

Down

1 Currency in Europe's obsolete (4)
2 Party held in check, closer? (5,3)
3 Very exciting tomorrow, something Rishi deprived of? (6)
4 Tomorrow's headache, Matt? Member gone and Michael too - Labour's back! (8)
5 What things can only get for Rishi's campaign official? (6)
6 Rishi, say, tax-cutting leader of Opposition? (4)
11 Reform tries to react, sending those coming in away - certainly not my cup of tea! (9)
12 6 party, flat (5)
14 Knack lost by leader on the hustings - tribal language? (5)
16 Offensive plugging wind - what's the alternative? (5,3)
17 Astronomical effect in swing towards Labour? (3,5)
19 Rayner's moral responsibility with record investment? (6)
20 Brainwash, throwing up a little corporal: it's Nigel! (6)
21 When party leader took eve off? (1-3)
23 Debt: remove lid from jar (4)

The Guardian

G2

Thursday 04/07/24

Life & Arts

Flop gear
Sirin Kale's six-month hell to get a driving test
page 4

My Best Shot
The Stone Roses at Spike Island: 'The band were buzzing!'
page 9

Dive deeper into the biggest election year in history

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Adrian Chiles

My superpower? Turning a nice day out into an orgy of panic

I left a bag with everything in it on platform three at York station. Imagine my disappointment. I was on a direct train to London, finishing the puzzle I'd been doing on my phone as I'd boarded the train, so absorbed that I'd left half my luggage – the important half – behind. My Sunday was in tatters.

I'd had such a nice day planned – a nice lunchtime train journey, after a nice morning with family and friends in York, leaving plenty of time to get home to watch the England match. But it wasn't to be. It rarely is. For this is my special power – common to many people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder – forever finding ways of turning leisure time, in this case a relaxing afternoon, into a nerve-shredding orgy of panic.

I did a lot of things all at once. I slapped myself around the head several times quite hard, uttering the foulest language as I did so. I found an 0800 number for York station, which wasn't for York station but for Northern Rail, and there were no humans on the end of it, only unhelpful options. And then the signal went anyway. I called my brother-in-law, who dropped everything and went racing to the station. I found the train manager, who had a secret number for the station, and eventually got hold of someone to seek my bag. With heart rate soaring, blood pressure doubtless dangerously high and a vein pulsing on my temple, I awaited news.

The prodigal bag

The train manager reappeared. The bag had been located. I resisted the temptation to kiss him on the lips. With my brother-in-law closing in on the station, I started formulating a plan. As one of Britain's leading idiots, who has done this kind of thing a million times, I'm very good at quickly reformulating carefully laid plans. I've had to be.

I checked train times back north from King's Cross, wondering if I could persuade my brother-in-law to meet me halfway – Peterborough? Newark? – hand over the prodigal bag, find a pub, and watch the football there.

At which point, from deep in the recesses of my addled mind, came a lightbulb moment. That morning I'd met a friend whose son had mentioned he was getting the train after mine to London, which was leaving in five minutes' time. I begged him to find my brother-in-law, who had by now retrieved the bag from the information desk and could give it to him to convey to me at King's Cross on the very next train. It worked. The bag was on its way, only half an hour behind me. Truly, you are better off being lucky than clever.

It was a beautiful thing. What a story. What a narrative arc. I could almost see the credits rolling, cast in order of appearance, with thanks to, etc, etc. I should make a short film. Take it to Cannes. Win an award. *Un Film d'un Idiot*.

Seriously, I sometimes pity competent people. They miss out on these thrills and spills. The horror, the terror that the error cannot be resolved, the frantic rearguard action, the joy of resolution. Redemption. Euphoria. I felt nothing less than euphoria. To my lasting shame, with barely a thought for all the people I'd put out, I spent the remainder of that journey luxuriating in my triumph. How energised I now felt. So much happier than if I'd not been stupid enough to leave my bag with everything in it on platform three at York station.

As Tennyson – a man who knew a self-inflicted disaster when he saw one – might have put it, 'tis better to have lost a bag and found it again than never to have lost the bloody thing in the first place.

When will my dog learn that the broom is not his enemy?

My dog disappoints me. I don't feel good about this. I am disappointed in myself for being disappointed in him. But I can't help feeling that he should have wised up a bit by now. He is nearly four, after all, which in human years puts him in his mid-20s. I expect more from him.

An example: he growls at brooms. He has been growling at brooms ever since he was a puppy. It was sweet then; how I laughed. Well, I am not laughing now. Because, having seen the broom in action most days of his life, he ought to have cottoned on to the fact that brooms are fine. As are, among other things, vacuum cleaners, wheelbarrows and blokes wearing turbans – growls towards those in the third category being particularly embarrassing.

I am a reasonable man, so I can forgive the frantic chasing in vain of cats and the odd growl-off with other dogs. He needs to get his kicks somewhere and I am all for a bit of feeble-minded fun. But the other stuff I am just not having.

He has a thing about parents carrying small children. I once figured this is because what he sees is a two-headed human. Again, all very sweet when he was a puppy. But I assumed that, by now, it would have dawned on him that it is just a tall person holding a small person. Maybe he needs glasses.

I put my unreasonable expectations down to my inexperience as a dog owner. My only history of raising animals was with human children, who are different. As a toddler, my daughter announced that, when she grew up, she wanted to be a butterfly, which was sweet and funny. If she was still saying that she wanted to be a butterfly in her mid-20s, it would be a problem. She has learned, you see, thanks in no small part to my good parenting, that she will not and cannot ever be a butterfly. Clearly, I am better at raising children than dogs.

One man and his (naughty) dog

COVER: DAVID LEVENE/THE GUARDIAN. THIS PAGE: GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO; COURTESY OF ADRIAN CHILES

Pass notes

№ 4,717

XL gullies

Age: First identified in March.
Appearance: Winged and dangerous.
Not more irresponsible dog breeding … wait, did you say "winged"? That's right. XL gullies are "Britain's HARDEST seagulls".
"Britain's hardest seagulls" should be a Ross Kemp show. Indeed; there is genuine drama to this story. A new breed of seagull is terrorising the country.
There's no such thing as a seagull. OK, smartypants. We're mainly talking about herring gulls. Britons believe they are getting bolder, fiercer and more successful at stealing our snacks. See, for instance, reports of a "jacked-up gargantuan", "top-level boss" gull operating out of Liverpool city centre.
Yikes. How exactly is it operating? Carrying out smash-and-grab attacks on people's snacks (Greggs is reportedly its favourite).
Give me more incidents of gull crime. The Daily Mail sent journalists to Margate in Kent and St Ives in Cornwall to walk around with chips and see what happened.
And what happened? Gulls ate their chips.
Astonishing. Are those towns chip-theft hotspots? No, XL gullies are everywhere. Reddit users have been comparing notes on no-go zones. Aberdeen gulls are "psychotic" and "absolutely ruthless"; mid-Wales ones are "pure evil"; Tenby gulls are "as big as turkeys"; Rhyl gulls "need Asbos"; and Cornish gulls are "pterodactyls".
This is like a sinister avian version of the Beach Boys' California Girls. Especially the "They knock me out when I'm down there" bit.
Are gulls actually violent? Not unless they're defending their chicks. There are reports of minor injuries when they swoop to steal food – but it's chips they want, not blood.
It may not be a balanced diet, but isn't this expected gull behaviour? Absolutely – and it's our own fault. Gulls are "very intelligent … opportunistic and extremely adaptable", according to the naturalist Dominic Couzens. Since people discard so much food, the gulls have altered their foraging strategies.
Can anything be done? You can report interactions to researchers via Glasgow and Plymouth's Gull's Eye app. Liverpool has deployed a Harris hawk to try to deter the top-level boss and his capos. But like all wild birds, herring gulls are protected (numbers are declining), so any retaliation against them is illegal. The best thing to do is stay out of their way (especially when eating chips).
Do say: "Increasing overlap between anthropogenic landscapes and wildlife habitats has given rise to more human-wildlife conflicts."
Don't say: "I wish they all could be California gulls."

Tested to their limits

The black market in driving tests is booming, with even some instructors taking part in the scams. **Sirin Kale** meets the people who are putting their foot down

I have much good fortune in my life, but in one respect I am unlucky: I live in the part of the country with the longest waiting times for driving tests, and I have been learning to drive.

I began learning in 2022. In June 2023, I was test-ready. But when I tried to book my test, there were none available until mid-November, meaning I had to pay for six extra months of lessons so I wouldn't forget what I had learned.

I failed that test - a stupid, nervous mistake. After time off to lick my wounds, I rebooked my test in January. The earliest test I could get? In late June 2024.

The result of all this was that by the time I went for my second test last month, I had spent at least £1,000 on a year of unnecessary lessons. And I had the pressure of knowing that if I failed, I'd have to wait another six months, and pay out yet again.

I am not alone. In 2019, the average waiting time for a driving test at my local London test centre was 2.8 weeks. As of 4 March 2024, it was 24 weeks. Four years on from the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, which caused driving tests to be suspended, the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA), which carries out the tests in Great Britain (Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the Driver and Vehicle Agency), has not recovered.

While waiting times are coming down in Wales and Scotland, in England the situation is getting worse. In March 2022, the average waiting time for a practical driving test in England was 14.5 weeks. In March 2023, it was 15.8 weeks. As of March 2024, it was 17.8 weeks, more than double the seven-week target set out in the DVSA's annual report.

But according to the DVSA, I am the problem. Me and all the other learner drivers for booking driving tests before they're ready. As a result, says the DVSA chief executive, Loveday Ryder, in a chiding blog post, "those who need to drive for their job, such as nurses and carers" aren't able to access tests. If only we'd stop being so irresponsible, NHS nurses and carers could go to work.

There is a straightforward way to determine whether this is true. If learner drivers booking tests when they aren't ready is causing the backlog, the pass rate would be down post-Covid.

But Guardian analysis of DVSA data reveals that the pass rate for learner drivers has actually gone up post-pandemic. In the five years from April 2014 to March 2019, the average pass rate in England was 47.8%, whereas post-Covid, from April 2021 to December 2023, it averaged 48.2%. England is no outlier: throughout Great Britain the pass rate post-Covid is higher: 46.6% from April 2014 to March 2019, versus 48.9% in April 2021 to December 2023.

So if learner drivers aren't the problem, what's really going on at the DVSA?

"It's like waiting for festival tickets," says Calu Malta, 27, who works for a nonprofit organisation. In March, she woke at 6am on a Monday morning, when the DVSA releases new tests, to book a driving test near her home in north London. Malta will have to wait six months for her test, in August.

When a test becomes available, says Sue Smith, 62, a Newbury driving instructor who searches for her students, "it's like having heart palpitations. You have to have the fastest fingers in the west." As a result, some learners are seeing their theory tests, which are only valid for two years, expire before they can pass.

There is a way to get a test faster - on the black market. Dozens of businesses offer fast-track tests, advertised by WhatsApp groups, websites and driving schools. The array of dates on offer is staggering. Fees range from £120 to £350 for tests that should cost £62.

When faced with an impossible dilemma - spend hundreds on extra lessons, or pay touts - many decide that the second option is cheaper. "It's unfair," says Dan Cloake, a 35-year-old lighting technician from east London. In April, he paid £170 for a fast-track driving test through a WhatsApp group promising "early driving bookings". "This is a public service and we are having to pay this private tax."

To book his test, Cloake sent the touts a photo of his provisional driving licence. "It had my home address, my date of birth, quite a lot

Campaigning for change ... driving instructor Rachel Newland

of personal information on it," he says. Is he worried about what the touts have done with his data, I ask.

"Yeah," says Cloake slowly. "A little. Now I am thinking about it."

"It is a constant battle to keep on top of these bot things," said Ryder when giving evidence to the transport committee last July. Touts use automated software, known as bots, to reload the DVSA website until a test becomes available, then grab it.

"It's all above board," insists a Bradford-based driving instructor as he offers me a fast-track driving test slot for £200. "Nothing illegal." I've called asking for his assistance in booking a test in Thornbury, where waiting times last year averaged 24 weeks. "You tell me when you need it," he says genially.

He's right. It's not illegal to sell a driving test for profit, although it is a violation of the DVSA's terms of use. But when you examine how the touts operate, evidence of illegality emerges.

There are two main ways to book a driving test: the public access system, open to the general public, and the business system, accessible to driving instructors and driving schools. On the latter, instructors and schools can book multiple tests, and, crucially, they can swap tests between different learners.

But in order to book a test, everyone, including instructors, needs a provisional driving licence, registered to someone who has passed their theory test. So how do the test companies do it?

"On our system," boasts the director of one firm that offers fast-track test slots for £190 to £250, "we have loads and loads of other licences, all looking for test dates. So what we're able to do, using their licence, is hold and reserve test dates, basically swap people in."

This is how some touts operate: by reserving tests using people's driving licences without their consent, in a probable violation of data protection laws, then switching in the details of whoever buys the test. A Time Out writer wrote about having her licence used to book 53 tests without her knowledge. She'd previously given her details to touts.

Fraudsters have even sent out phishing emails, purporting to be from the DVSA, asking instructors to share learners' licences. "The police don't have the resources to take proper action against fraud," says Dr Ben Collier, online crime expert at the University of Edinburgh. "Frauds like this are almost seen as not illegal."

In the driving instructor community, it's common knowledge that some instructors participate in these scams, to the frustration of their peers. "Instructors are buying tests," says Simon Brady, 59, an instructor from Bradford. "They do it without their pupil's knowledge. They get their driving licence details and sell it to someone else."

'You're over a barrel with it' ... learner driver Max Sobol

When Max Sobol, a 39-year-old film director from east London, paid £132 for a fast-track driving test in April 2022, he sent a photo of his driving licence over WhatsApp to the touts. Sobol failed his test in May and struggled to book another. Not wanting to pay for another black market test, Sobol's partner contacted the DVSA in July 2022 - only for the DVSA to tell her that Sobol actually had a test booked for that October.

"I suppose it's silly to be giving these companies your driving licence details," Sobol says. "But it's the only way you can get a test."

Like an arsonist who burns down your house, then sells you a tent, the touts offer a solution to a problem they created. But Ryder doesn't see the black market touts as fuelling the crisis, only as a symptom of it. "This problem," she told the committee, "will go away when the wait times come down."

As well as blaming long waiting times on the public, for booking tests before they are ready, the DVSA has pointed the finger at the people who carry them out. Driving examiners went on strike in December 2022 and January 2023. "We were seeing a steady improvement ... until the industrial action part started," Ryder told the select committee.

The DVSA does not appear to have undertaken much soul-searching about whether it might have done anything differently. After scores of driving instructors left angry comments under a post about waiting times, the DVSA turned off comments on a subsequent post. "This is not about censoring your views," it said.

Yet the cause of the waiting times crisis is simple. There aren't enough tests to clear the backlog, and many of those that are available are being sold on the black market.

According to Guardian analysis of DVSA data, as of 2024, the total Covid backlog for Great Britain is 1.1m tests. Since pandemic restrictions ended in 2021, the agency has made available an extra 212,000 tests, meaning, at the current rate, it will not clear the Covid backlog until 2026.

"The core of this problem is that there are not enough practical tests for everyone," says Rachel Newland, 46, a driving instructor from Reading. "And the reason for that is that there is an examiner-retention crisis. Until the DVSA acknowledges that, nothing will be fixed." Newland campaigns for the DVSA to increase examiner pay: a petition she set up currently has 1,883 signatures.

As of July 2023, the DVSA had recruited 474 new driving examiners since March 2021. But about 15 examiners quit each month.

It's not hard to see why. Examiners test seven students a day, work weekends for no extra pay and are often abused by members of the public. For all this, they are paid about £27,000 a year.

Because the government determines civil service pay, the DVSA cannot put up salaries. But it could ask the government to make reselling tests illegal.

"Stop the ability to swap tests," says Brady. "Then the whole scam will fall to pieces. It's the only solution. But the DVSA won't do it."

The DVSA is resistant to this change because most driving instructors use the test-swapping service responsibly, to trade candidates who aren't ready for their tests with candidates who are. Yet those benefits are marginal, given the way the system facilitates an exploitative black market. We cannot swap GP appointments, or primary school places, or NHS operations. Why must we be able to switch driving tests?

In the absence of the one change that would work, the DVSA has reduced the amount of times driving tests can be changed from 10 to six, and implemented more anti-bot protections incorporating AI technology. It says it has created nearly 150,000 new tests and redeployed managers to help clear the backlog. It has a counter-fraud team that reports to social media networks if necessary. To date it has issued 231 warnings, suspended 687 accounts, and closed 570 accounts for misuse of the booking system, and removed 4,700 accounts that were not linked to approved driving instructors. It urges the public to book their driving tests themselves, or through their instructor, to prevent their information being misused.

In January 2023 it made it a violation of its terms of service to sell driving tests for profit, or use driving licences without consent.

"It didn't feel right that I have to pay the black market for a public service

But dozens of touts continue to flout these rules. And so English learners must choose between waiting six months for a test, or paying the touts and risk having their data misused. But there is a third way.

"It didn't feel right that I should have to pay the black market for something that's a public service," says Paul Weinberger. In July 2022, Weinberger, who is 31 and lives in south London, needed a driving test, but his test centre had an 18.5-week wait.

It took Weinberger, who is a software developer, one evening to build a bot to search the DVSA website, and it took that bot two days to find him a test. "It was quite simple," he says. After he'd passed his test, Weinberger uploaded details of the bot to Reddit. "Please be kind," he wrote, "and do try to not make a business out of this."

Since Weinberger built his bot, the DVSA has introduced stricter anti-bot protections. I meet Weinberger in a cafe to see if his bot still works. He installs it on my laptop and smiles as it begins reloading the DVSA page, looking for slots. "It still works," he says.

Ryder has said the DVSA plans to rebuild its booking system. If that removes the ability to switch tests, an exploitative industry will slam to an emergency stop. But the conditions that allowed it to start up will remain.

"It feels like a lot of public services are broken," says Cloake. "This is just another example." Fourteen years since austerity began, we are used to non-functioning public infrastructure. We pay a tax to access basic services, such as booking driving tests, because we have no expectation of things getting better.

"I'm originally from Brazil," says Malta. "In Brazil, you have to pay to make things accessible. It's scary to see that happening here."

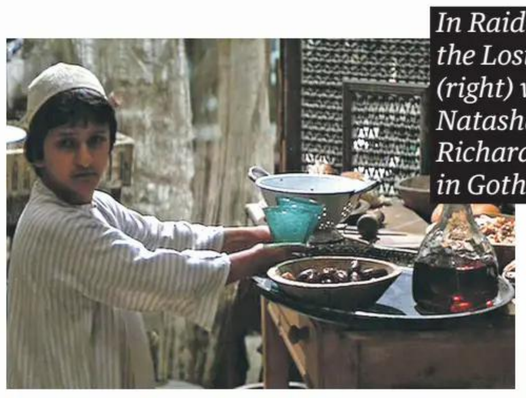
As for me, I passed my test. If I'd failed, I wouldn't have waited another six months for a test. I'd have fired up Weinberger's bot instead: my indefatigable friend, a middleman who's not trying to make money from my misfortune.

With data by Tural Ahmedzade

Paul Weinberger, who built a bot to find a driving test

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALICIA CANTER, ANTONIO OLMOS AND JILL MEAD/THE GUARDIAN

How Kiran Shah conquered Hollywood



In Raiders of the Lost Ark; (right) with Natasha Richardson in Gothic

He's played Superman, Frodo and countless roles in Star Wars. The great stuntman tells **Steve Rose** about starring with Christopher Reeve and partying with Freddie Mercury

As an Ewok for Return of the Jedi; (left) Shah (top) with Daisy Ridley in The Force Awakens

'It was brilliant'... Shah as Christopher Reeve's stunt double for Superman

It was 1976 when Kiran Shah saw the advert that would change his life. "It was a sci-fi film looking for a little guy," he says. Shah turned up at Elstree Studios in Hertfordshire and was introduced to a nervous young man named George Lucas. "He said: 'Can you get in that dustbin thing?' I was a bit too tall for it but I got in, they put the lid on, and he said: 'Can you look left, look right?'" Shah didn't realise he was auditioning for the role of R2-D2 in Star Wars. He didn't get the job - it went to Kenny Baker - but Lucas's casting director liked Shah, and got him an agent, which set him on the path of an almost 50-year career as "the world's shortest stuntman".

There are very few blockbusters Shah has not been in. You might not recognise him - he is often doubling for another character or he's disguised under prosthetics as a mythical creature. But he has played more Star Wars characters than he can count, doubled for every hobbit in The Lord of the Rings movies, did Christopher Reeve's stunts in the Superman movies and played every single child in Titanic (which is even more impressive given that he can't swim).

He has also worked with just about every blockbuster director out there: Lucas, James Cameron, Steven Spielberg, Peter Jackson, Ridley Scott, Terry Gilliam, JJ Abrams. Shah's stature (he is just under 4ft 2in, or 126cm, according to Guinness World Records), combined with his fearlessness, have helped him find a niche in cinema that has led to an absurdly storied career, not to mention an MBE last month for his services to the film industry.

His favourite experience was working on Superman in 1977. He and his friend Milton Reid (a former wrestler) decided to visit Pinewood Studios one day, looking for work. The director, Richard Donner, showed them on to the Superman set and introduced them to Marlon Brando. "Marlon immediately picked me up and started dancing," says Shah. "I don't know why he did that. And I'm going: 'Marlon, please put me down, I don't like being picked up.' He finally put me down and then in walked Reeve, and Donner went: 'Christopher, I've found a stunt double for you!' and pointed at me. The entire crew were bursting with laughter."

Donner wasn't joking, though. For the movie's flying scenes, the effects team used an array of stunt doubles of different sizes, down to Shah, so they could realistically portray Superman flying through the back-projected cityscape at all distances. Thus, Shah found himself in the iconic Superman costume (and a Christopher Reeve mask), winched up high in the air on wires and swung around for several days with his fist extended in front of him. "It was really brilliant," says Shah, smiling. "I felt like: 'I am Superman now!'" He and Reeve got along well, he says. "I used to smoke cigarettes back then, and Christopher was not allowed to smoke. He would come to me and go," he lowers his voice, "'Kiran, have you got a cigarette? Let's go and find a corner.'" It must have been quite a sight: 6ft 4in Reeve and Shah, both in their Superman costumes, sneaking a smoke like naughty schoolboys. "The tall one and the small one! Nobody took a photograph, luckily."

Looking back on his career, Shah, 67, says modestly: "I've been very lucky." We meet at the Guardian offices in London; he is here with his nephew Kit, who is also his assistant. Shah never wanted to do anything apart from acting, he says. "When I was about six or seven, I used to take the mickey out of my uncle. I'd replicate his movements and mannerisms but make it bigger and funnier, and people would laugh. I thought: 'Yeah, I want to go into the movies.'"

At this stage, much of Shah's Indian-diaspora family was living in Nairobi, Kenya, where he was born. They were not wealthy, but they were happy, he says: his father ran a textile shop and his mother made saris. But in 1965, when Shah was 10, his father had a stroke. Two years later, the family relocated to Mumbai, India, for his father's health.

By this time, Shah had almost stopped growing due to a hormone deficiency. He credits his parents for helping him come to terms with his condition. "They never, ever pointed out 'you're different' or anything. They said: 'You are like any other kid, you can do whatever you want to do, play with other kids, be like other kids.' So I didn't even think about it. That was a good thing, not having a chip on your shoulder." He played football and cricket, and devoured films, mostly westerns and Bollywood, whenever he could.

Shah's height became more of an issue when the family moved to the UK in 1973 and he started school in Feltham, west London. "The kids who were white, brown and black were all picking on me ... like picking me up and throwing me to each other and all that stuff." An unlikely protector came in the form of a young skinhead kid, who saw he was being bullied and persuaded the local skinheads to protect him. "Maybe they felt sorry for the little brown kid," he says. "They protected me for a few weeks, then the head of the skinheads turned to my classmates and said: 'You guys look after him now, and if there's any problem, we'll sort it out.'"

Shah's acting aspirations began to bear fruit when he auditioned for the Red Buddha Theatre company, founded by Japanese musician Stomu Yamash'ta, which was bringing his multimedia show The Man from the East - a fusion of prog rock and Japanese folk - to London. Yamash'ta taught him a lot, says Shah, who never studied drama. He was to wear a mask in the show, but couldn't put it on until he had studied it, understood his character, and learned mime, juggling and other skills. The training has served him well ever since, he says.

Shah toured Italy with the Red Buddha troupe, but after that

PHOTOGRAPHS: DAVID LEVENE/THE GUARDIAN; AJ PICS/ALAMY; EVERETT COLLECTION INC/ALAMY; CINEMATIC/ALAMY; COURTESY OF KIRAN SHAH

Shah in There's Something in the Barn; (below) with Tilda Swinton in The Chronicles of Narnia

'The best job I ever did' ... on set with Elijah Wood

work was thin on the ground for a few years until he went to that fated Star Wars audition. A couple of weeks later, he was doubling for a child actor in a movie called Candleshoe, starring Jodie Foster and David Niven. Now over 18, he could do what child actors couldn't: work longer hours, unaccompanied by an adult. One day Niven took him to one side. "He said to me: 'You've got a twinkle in your eye, young man. I can see you are really hungry. Don't be like me or the other actors who go and have a nap in their trailer between setups; keep looking and talking to people. You need to be learning what's happening on the set - what everybody is doing and why." Shah became friends with the stunt coordinator, Bob Anderson, who took him under his wing.

David Niven told me: 'You've got a twinkle in your eye, young man'

Shah says he was fortunate to come into the industry just as two things were happening. The first was that attitudes were changing. "From the beginning of the movies, little people were treated like freaks," he says. "That happened in the 20s, the 30s, all the way to the 60s. We wouldn't get that much work, and if we did, often it would be a freakish character. Then Terry Gilliam changed the whole perspective with Time Bandits." Shah was cast in the 1981 adventure film but his scenes were cut (Gilliam later cast him in The Adventures of Baron Munchausen). But for the first time, Time Bandits gave prominent dramatic roles to actors with dwarfism, such as Kenny Baker and Malcolm Dixon. Now there are lots of them, says Shah: Warwick Davis, Peter Dinklage, Deep Roy.

The second development was the explosion of fantasy and sci-fi films, often Hollywood-backed, being made in Britain in the 1970s and 80s. Not only was there the Star Wars franchise (Shah continued working in them right up to 2022 spin-off series Andor), but The Dark Crystal, Legend, Krull, Raiders of the Lost Ark - Shah had multiple roles in all of these (he's the boy who brings Indiana Jones the poisoned dates in Raiders of the Lost Ark).

Some jobs were more challenging than others. On Titanic, Shah stunt-doubled for all the children, which meant continuously falling and sliding off decks, being deluged by tons of water in the corridors and basically drowning in myriad ways, all while not being able to swim. Shah had worked with the director James Cameron before, on Aliens (he doubled for Newt, the little girl), and had managed to stay on the right side of the notoriously volatile director. On Titanic, he was not so lucky. "I got a few bollockings from him," he says, as a result of mistakes on set. One time, Shah was required to jump from the top deck of the ship but was wearing a safety strap that was too short. Cameron yelled: "'Motherfucker! Why did you have to do that, you fucking idiot!' I let it go."

A few days later he was playing the little girl that Billy Zane carries on to the lifeboat in order to save himself. The boat was supposed to tip over and pitch the passengers into the water, but Shah didn't want to be trapped under it, so he jumped off early. "I got another bollocking for that," he says. They tried the shot again and again. By the fifth time, Cameron was losing his patience - and so was Shah. "I started arguing back. I said: 'Don't call me motherfucker, I'm not the motherfucker, motherfucker!' Simon Crane [the stunt coordinator] came in and said: 'What happened?' And I said: 'The motherfucker's shouting at us.'" It was almost a mutiny, but the next day, miraculously, Cameron apologised to the stunt crew. "We tried again and got the shot in three takes," he says.

A few years later, Shah got what he describes as "the best job I ever did in my life": Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings movies, in which he doubled for Elijah Wood's Frodo (again, disguised in a Frodo mask), and all the other hobbits at various stages. It was more than just being a body double, he says. He had to study Wood's movements and mannerisms, to match up their characters. "You need to replicate everything, understand what the character is going through," Shah says.

He had a whale of a time in New Zealand, marching through the landscape in his hairy hobbit feet, doing horseback stunts, sword fighting and boating down rivers with Viggo Mortensen (who found it hilarious that Shah couldn't swim). He returned for Jackson's Hobbit trilogy, too, doubling for Ian Holm. One time on set, he ran into Cameron, who was visiting. "He said to me: 'Motherfucker Kiran! How are you?' I go: 'Motherfucker, I'm great!' And he points to Peter and says: 'Is this motherfucker looking after you?'"

Shah has so many of these anecdotes that there's a strong urge to go through his CV film by film: playing an Ewok in Return of the Jedi, "The costume was really hot; when you put the head on everything misted up"; getting hung by the neck in Braveheart; being Tilda Swinton's goblin assistant in The Chronicles of Narnia: the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. He's done plenty outside cinema, too: television comedy, music videos, working in nightclubs where he met a lot of rock stars: "Lennon, Paul McCartney, Eric Clapton, George Harrison, Pink Floyd ..."

Did he do his share of rock'n'roll partying? "Yeah," he says hesitantly. He looks to his nephew Kit and asks: "Can we talk about the other one?"

What other one?

"The biggest rock'n'roll party ever," he says. This was one of Freddie Mercury's legendary bashes, at Kensington's Roof Gardens, some time in the mid-80s. "Freddie asked me: 'Would you come and join my party? I'll pay you.'" Shah had no idea what he meant. "He said: 'I want you to meet and greet people.' So I went, and I had to go into makeup first, and there were lots of people who were nude, being painted into rocks and trees and whatever. I said: 'I'm not going to take my clothes off.'" In fact he was painted orange and dressed like a sultan, "in a suit and a turban with a hole in the top. I had no idea why the hole was there." Just before the party started, a huge bowl of cocaine was placed in it. Needless to say, he was very popular with the guests. He won't say who was there, though, or what went on. And no, he didn't dip into his own supply, he insists. Because that's not his thing, or because he was working? He smiles bashfully. "Something in between," he says.

Shah still lives in Hounslow with his mother, his brother and sister-in-law - surrounded by memorabilia from his various adventures. He also writes poetry in his spare time. He's slowed down a bit, and doesn't do the more dangerous stunts, but "I'm still busy, still working," he says, with the satisfaction of someone who has leveraged what could have been a disadvantage into a charmed life. "Things happened to me that shouldn't have really happened, but they did," he says. "And it's been fun."

Virginia Woolf, 25 Orlandos and me

Paul B Preciado's debut film uses the radical novel to explore the trans experience. 'I'm a pathological optimist', the philosopher tells **Claire Armistead**

In the opening seconds of Orlando: My Political Biography, a shadowy figure in a quiet city street says: "Someone once asked me, 'Why don't you write your autobiography?' And I replied, 'Because Virginia Woolf fucking wrote it for me in 1928.'" The scene takes place in the dead of night, with the silence broken only by the swish of a brush as this speaker pastes up a large gold poster. "Orlando," it reads, "où es tu?"

Moments later, this fly-poster apologises to Woolf for his profanity: "I say it with tenderness and admiration, because your writing seems impossible to surpass. But I also say it with rage, because you represented us - trans people - as aristocrats in colonial England who one day wake up in a woman's body."

There is nothing accidental about the slide from plural to singular in that last sentence, which is spoken - like most of the film - in French. The fly-poster with neatly cropped hair is its 53-year-old screenwriter and director Paul B Preciado, a writer, curator and activist who was mentored in philosophy by Jacques Derrida, and is only now making his first venture into film. In Orlando: My Political Biography, Preciado spends 90 minutes retelling Woolf's centuries-spanning story of gender transformation through 25 different Orlandos. They are white, brown and black; male, female and non-binary; and they range in age from eight to over 70. Shot on a shoestring budget, the film is an improbable undertaking, one that could easily have been pretentiously academic, but it turns out to be funny and captivatingly humane.

It has taken several months to pin Preciado down for an interview, with several cancellations. When we finally settle for a video call, I am expecting him to be uncooperative, but I'm wrong. He answers every question candidly and at essay length, starting with his childhood in the "strongly Catholic, militaristic" city of Burgos in northern Spain.

From the age of four, he says, everyone knew he was different. "Even the teachers would refer to boys, girls - and you. But at that time - especially being from Spain at the end of Francoism and the beginning of democracy - it was very difficult to find words to name my condition, besides being just moody." Preciado found his way to the US via a Fulbright scholarship for an MA in philosophy, returning later for a PhD at Princeton, where he wrote a dissertation, Pornotopía: Architecture and Sexuality in Playboy During the Cold War, in 2010. It later became an award-winning book in France.

In early adulthood, he says, he embraced the gay and lesbian community, publishing his early work under his birth name of Beatriz Preciado. "But I always thought my way of seeing gender was different to most of the people in that community. So when I was 35, because I was surrounded by other people using hormones, I thought, 'OK, I'm going to try and see what is happening.' And then, little by little, my body changed until I found myself with a passport that didn't relate at all to it. Then I went into basically changing my legal identity in Spain, within a binary regime that doesn't allow for anything else." Only last year was Spanish law changed to allow people over 16 to change their gender.

In the book Testo Junkie, published originally in Spanish in 2008, Preciado recounted this experience, as part of a history of reproductive technologies that traced a "pharmacopornographic" line from the pill to Viagra and gender-change hormones. Did I know, he asks, "that the pill was invented at the beginning as a technique for regulating the

"The body is not an anatomical object. It is a historical archive

'My teachers would refer to girls, boys - and you': Paul B Preciado

Ruff cut … Orlando performers, below and left

expansion of what, at that time, were called black races in the US? Then women, through the feminist emancipation, started to use the pill differently. Well, it's similar for trans and non-binary people, who reallocate technologies – such as operations and hormones, which were invented to normalise the bodies of intersex babies at birth – to emancipate themselves and construct all their genders. The body is not an anatomical object. It is a historical archive."

In the film, Preciado translates the abstract language of cultural theory into a sequence of witty scenes that grant access to all areas – on stage and behind it – allowing the biographical musings of his Orlandos to merge with Woolf's own words. They romp through woods in Elizabethan ruffs and modern leisure-wear. One marches into a weapon shop in half a suit of badly knitted chain mail asking for something that will make them a man, turning down a sword in favour of a large gun. Another recounts an encounter with a sexist sea captain on Orlando's voyage home from Constantinople, while an assistant pins a model sailing ship to the top of their oceanic wig.

Preciado's critique of the medicalisation of trans identity extends to psychiatry via a grimly amusing episode in which a waiting room full of Orlandos exchange black-market hormones while waiting to be called in for pointless consultations with a box-ticking psychiatrist who has no understanding that all they really need is to be recognised as having a legitimate case for changing gender.

In 2019, Preciado had his own bruising encounter with the psychiatric establishment in France, where he is now based, when he was invited to explain his thinking on gender to the École de la Cause Freudienne (School of the Freudian Cause), only to be heckled by 3,500 Lacanian psychoanalysts and hustled off the stage. Eighteen months later, he published the text of his lecture as a book, Can the Monster Speak?

The most potentially combustive aspect of the film is its fleeting inclusion of a trio of sweet pre-pubescent Orlandos. But so far there has been no pushback in either the US or Europe – much to his surprise, "given the way the extreme right and the conservative religious groups are using the notion of our childhood to basically implement right-wing policies".

Away from the limelight and the academy, Preciado does a lot of work with the families of trans children, some of whom have been "extremely harassed by the media, or their school, or other institutions. So for me, the film was valuable not only to the kids but to the people around them."

One encounter that didn't make it to the screen – "because it was emotional and the children are fragile" – was between the film's oldest Orlando, Jenny Bel'Air, who is a well-known trans actor in France now in her 70s, and her younger selves. "Jenny was telling her story, so the children were learning in the moment about a time that was quite different to their own, and it was so funny, because she was explaining to them, 'You know, I'm just an Orlando like you.'"

Far from being too radical, Preciado says: "I'm always thinking I'm not radical enough. Because, if I think about the future and what is needed for there to even be one, I think we need to go farther: we need to stop this madness of destruction of the planet; we need to stop gender violence; we need to stop considering the nuclear family as the only system of possible reproduction of life; we need to stop considering the male European body as the only sovereign body that has to embody power. All these are basically models that we have inherited from patriarchal colonial history. And it has to stop."

But he's not going to let it depress him. "I'm basically a pathological optimist. Maybe that's my only pathology – if I have to accept one," he jokes, then turns serious, pointing out that it's not that he wakes up every morning feeling optimistic. It's a political decision.

"My optimism comes from this feeling of need for the renewal of a collective system of thought. I don't have the luxury of doing anything else because, as long as I am living on this planet, I feel responsible for it and the people living with me."

The reception of his film, provocative and essayish as it is, is one serious reason to be cheerful. "In France," he says, "there are people against transitioning, against everything I work for. But some of these people came to see the film. At the end, they said, 'I still hate your work, but the film is OK.'"

Orlando, My Political Biography is released in UK cinemas tomorrow

PHOTOGRAPHS: PICTUREHOUSE ENTERTAINMENT

Andy Phillips

'The Stone Roses had just come off stage at Spike Island and were buzzing. I blocked their path, they stopped in their tracks and started dancing on the spot'

Caught off guard … the Stone Roses after their Widnes gig

I was working as a freelance rock photographer. The Stone Roses' PR, the late Philip Hall, had given me their album and singles, which I loved. I'd not been able to go to the band's earlier gigs in Blackpool and Alexandra Palace in London as I had been working in America with Tom Petty and Billy Idol, so when it came to their huge outdoor gig at Spike Island in Widnes in 1990, I thought: "I'm not missing this."

I set off for Manchester on the Friday to cover the press conference at the Piccadilly Hotel that evening, followed by a night's clubbing at the Haçienda. The press conference was a disaster. The band ambled on stage and just sat looking bored, pulling faces behind their microphones because nobody asked any questions. Eventually another photographer, who was a bit feisty, stormed down the front, turned to the crowd and said: "You fucking idiots. What's the matter with you?" Eventually someone asked: "Have you heard of the Charlatans?" who had just released their first single.

A coach was laid on for the media to the Spike Island site the following afternoon. It was late May and a boiling hot day, and we all piled into the backstage bar area, but by the time it got to my turn, they announced that they'd run out of everything, and this was at 3pm.

We were finally shown where we were shooting from – the pit below the stage, but the stage was 20 foot high and the area directly below was full of security, so it was impossible to use. The photographers said: "We can't see anything," so the stage crew rustled up some scaffolding.

We were allowed to shoot the whole show, which would never happen these days as the norm is first three songs only. By 1990, most of the national newspapers and music press had switched to full colour, so the emphasis was to shoot that way, but there was so much red stage lighting that it affects the colour film and makes it look even redder. Photographers call it "the red nightmare". Towards the end of the show I switched to black and white.

As I Am the Resurrection reached its finale, I still felt I hadn't got anything that really caught the essence of the event. I could see that the band would have to walk along this huge empty space between the rear of the stage and the cordoned-off VIP area to get back to their dressing room, so I climbed down and quietly left the other photographers who were packing their stuff away, and made my way over there.

The band had just come off stage and were buzzing. There was no security and they headed straight towards me. I blocked their path and they just stopped in their tracks and started dancing on the spot. I shot away until John [Squire] lunged towards me, and I knew that I had the shot I wanted. I quickly thanked them and said they'd better move on as I'd noticed a couple of other photographers heading our way.

Some of the black and white pictures of the show and some of the portraits I took at the press conference were syndicated globally, but this shot wasn't used at the time. It wasn't until the band announced their comeback in 2011 that NME started to use the image in their online news stories. Then just about every other media outlet started using it too and it has become one of my most published images. It featured in Shane Meadows' documentary Made of Stone, and has become one of the landmark images from the whole of the Spike Island gig.

Looking back, I'm just happy I had my eyes open and my wits about me to get myself into the perfect position, which is why I'm the one who walked away with such an iconic shot while many of the other photographers didn't have anything to compete with – he said, not so modestly.

Interview by Rich Pelley

The CV

Born *Greenwich, 1957.*
Trained *Self-taught.*
Influences *Buñuel, Miró, Frank Zappa.*
High points *'Travelling the world and the lesson learned.'*
Low points *'Family and friends lost to cancer.'*
Top tip *'Politeness and good manners count, but do not suffer fools gladly.'*

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDY PHILLIPS

Jonathan Meijer with one of the many children he has fathered

Review The Man With 1000 Kids, Netflix

More proof that human civilisation should be razed to the ground

★★★★☆

Lucy Mangan

Another week, another entrant in Netflix's unofficially but accurately titled (by me) category of shows: "Why Don't We Just Raze Human Civilisation to the Ground and Start Again, or Hand It Over to the Monkeys and See If They Can Manage Any Better?"

It is more commonly known as the true-crime genre, but sometimes that doesn't capture the headshaking despair as a new and hitherto unsuspected seam of depravity, psychosis or malevolence is mined and the results laid before us. Abducted in Plain Sight, say – the story of a paedophile who befriended a married couple for years and effectively kidnapped their daughter twice with all but their blessing. Or Girl in the Picture, whose twists and turns into utterly unbelievable yet all-too-real territory had you contemplating spending the rest of your life as a hermit or vigilante. Or any of the Jeffrey Epstein stuff. Or – well, you get the gist.

Now we have another: The Man With 1000 Kids. Think of it as a companion piece to the streamer's Our Father documentary, about a fertility doctor who spent 30 years secretly impregnating patients with his sperm rather than the donor or spousal sample agreed. This time we follow the story of frequent ejaculator Jonathan Meijer, a Dutch man who appears to have travelled all over the world donating his sperm to as many clinics in as many countries as he could. Not to mention also finding time to make uncountable donations to women who preferred to source their sperm privately and avoid sperm banks' rules about donor anonymity and veto the gamete provider's contact with any offspring until the child is 16 or 18, depending on national regulations.

It is clear from the lack of any way of enforcing the already weak rules barring donors from providing too much material that men, should they choose to, can exploit this non-system almost endlessly.

We meet just a handful of the women he impregnated (occasionally through "natural donation" – sex – if the woman was single, though getting his end away does not seem to have been Meijer's main motivation). Gay couple Suzanne and Natalie met him as a private donor, were impressed with his good looks, health and intelligence – especially after their weird encounter with the first donor they met, an unsettling man who seemed nothing like the "sympathetic, kind" profile he put up on the website they used. Meijer told them he was planning to donate to up to five families and was happy for them to be one. Suzanne and Natalie now have two children by him.

He used the five-families-only line a lot. When suspicions were finally roused, recipients started to unite on a Facebook group. They mapped his travels via his YouTube videos and matched them with donor lists on nearby sperm banks. It gradually became clear that this was not the altruistic hippyish young man they had met but someone fixated on fathering as many children as he could, regardless of the risks of consanguinity and potential unwitting incest it holds. From what they could glean, he could easily have produced 3,000 children so far. From the personal experience of Nicolette, who within her own circle of friends and friends of friends realised that six had used Meijer's sperm to have their children, the potential scale and risks of his operations were horrendous. He refused their entreaties to stop jeopardising their/his children's futures, so they turned to the law.

The documentary tracks the women's stories from the initial joy of the pregnancies to the unravelling of the horror, the rallying of victims and the eventual court case they bring that rules against Meijer making any more donations, on pain of a €100,000 fine for each one. This is supposedly the first case that has ever curbed male bodily autonomy in this, or possibly any, way.

There are no solid conclusions about his motivations. One woman suggests attention-seeking after being a child overlooked in a large family, which you feel is very generous of her. Some of the women suggest addiction to the power and a growing God complex; others proffer simple narcissism and male entitlement writ large as the main drivers. Certainly his vicious response when they try to get answers from him suggests that these swam not far below the charming surface. There is no hope that Netflix or any other streamer will ever run out of content.

Election 2024
9.55pm, BBC One

Is time up for Rishi Sunak and his Tory government? After what has felt like the least inspiring election campaign in UK history, it's time to find out. All major channels will cover the event into the early hours, including Laura Kuenssberg and Clive Myrie for the BBC. They will be helped by political editor Chris Mason and correspondents Jeremy Vine – with his famous swingometer – Kirsty Wark, Fiona Bruce, Victoria Derbyshire and Naga Munchetty. One good bit of news: no more nauseating TV debates.
Hollie Richardson

Tom Kerridge Cooks Britain
8.30pm, ITV1
Beetroot is always divisive, but if anyone can make the controversial vegetable acceptable, it is Tom Kerridge. In this new series, he is off to the Cambridgeshire Fens in his 1950s food truck to pick his beet, before apple-picking in Kent. A cracking crumble is guaranteed, whatever the weather. **Hannah Verdier**

Douglas Is Cancelled
9pm, ITV1
What is the best way to deal with a media scandal? An interview with a Newsnight journalist, of course! Douglas (Hugh Bonneville) is told it is the only way to save his career in the second episode of Steven Moffat's fun cancel culture drama. But why is his co-host Madeleine (Karen Gillan) so eager to do the practice interview with him? **HR**

Election Night Live
9pm, Sky News
If the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg/Clive Myrie double act doesn't float your boat, you could do worse than spend election night with Sky. Its coverage will be anchored by Kay Burley, while Labour's Andy Burnham and Conservative Ruth Davidson will offer analysis, and Sophy Ridge will pick up the pieces the following day. **Phil Harrison**

Britain Decides With The Rest Is Politics and Gogglebox
9.45pm, Channel 4
Emily Maitlis co-hosts with Krishnan Guru-Murthy, alongside Alastair Campbell and Rory Stewart – who will doubtless revive the cosmetic disagreements featured on their podcast. If all that gets too wonkish, the cast of Gogglebox are on hand to critique the main parties' campaigns. **Jack Seale**

Paul Whitehouse's Sketch Show Years
10pm, Gold
We could all use a good laugh tonight, so here's the second part of Paul Whitehouse's sketch appreciation series. He goes back to the 80s and pays homage to beloved sketch shows such as The Two Ronnies and Not The Nine O'Clock News. **Kayleigh Dray**

What's On
Scan the QR code below to sign up for the What's On newsletter, our free TV email with the best reviews, news and exclusive writing direct to your inbox every Monday

BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **9.30** Morning Live (T) **10.45** Scam Interceptors (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) **1.0** News (T) **1.25** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.35** News (T) **1.45** Wimbledon 2024 (T) Coverage of second-round matches. **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **7.0** Wimbledon 2024 (T) Further coverage of day four.

9.25 **Not Going Out** (T) (R) Frank announces his engagement, but Lee cannot believe it.
9.55 **Election 2024** (T) Live coverage of the results, with Laura Kuenssberg and Clive Myrie. Political editor Chris Mason leads the correspondents reporting from each corner of the United Kingdom.

2.0 **Election 2024** (T) Live coverage of the results, with Laura Kuenssberg and Clive Myrie.

BBC Two

6.45 **Beechgrove Garden** (T) (R) **7.15** Garden Rescue: Top of the Plots (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Gardeners' World (T) (R) **9.0** News (T) **11.0** Wimbledon 2024 (T) Coverage of day four. **3.0** Wimbledon 2024 (T) The men's and ladies' singles. **7.0** EastEnders (T)

8.0 **Gardeners' World** (T) The team reports from the RHS Hampton Court Palace garden festival.
9.0 **Saving Lives at Sea** (T) In Trearddur Bay, the RNLI crew battle through a force 10 gale.
9.25 **Live at the Apollo** (T) (R) With Ed Gamble, Tom Davis and Judi Love.

9.55 **Gimme Gimme Gimme** (T)
10.25 FILM **Moulin Rouge!** (Baz Luhrmann, 2001) (T) Romantic musical, starring Ewan McGregor, Nicole Kidman and Jim Broadbent.
12.25 **Today at Wimbledon** (T) **1.25** Sign Zone: Springwatch (T) (R) **2.25** Andy Murray: Will to Win (T) (R) **3.25** 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) **1.30** News (T) **1.55** Local News (T) **2.0** Cooking With the Stars (T) (R) **3.0** Lingo (T) (R) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) (R) **5.0** The Chase (T) (R) **6.0** Local News (T) **6.30** News (T) **7.30** Emmerdale (T)

8.30 **Tom Kerridge Cooks Britain** (T) New series. The chef hits the road in his 1950s food truck to discover what it takes to produce the food on our plate.
9.0 **Douglas Is Cancelled** (T) The furore around the joke continues to mount even though no one knows what caused it.

9.50 **Election 2024 Live: The Results** (T) Tom Bradby leads ITV's coverage as viewers see the results announced and the emerging political shape of the new parliament.

Channel 4

6.15 **Cheers** (T) (R) **7.05** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **9.05** Frasier (T) (R) **11.05** Help! We Bought a Village (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) **4.0** Renovation Nation (T) **5.0** A New Life in the Sun: Where Are They Now? (T) (R) **6.0** Four in a Bed (T) (R) **6.30** The Simpsons (T) (R) **7.0** News (T)

8.0 **The Supervet: Noel Fitzpatrick** (T) A Marbella-based French bulldog is flown in for treatment on a broken elbow.
9.0 **24 Hours in Police Custody** (T) (R) Detectives investigate when a 76-year-old man is arrested following allegations of historical child sex abuse from the 1970s.

9.45 **Britain Decides With the Rest Is Politics and Gogglebox** (T) Krishnan Guru-Murthy and Emily Maitlis present news and analysis, while Alastair Campbell and Rory Stewart offer opinion of the outcome of the general election.
12.0 **Britain Decides With the Rest Is Politics and Gogglebox** (T)

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 A Deadly Mother (Jeff Hare, 2020) (T) (R) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) (R) **5.0** News (T) **6.05** Police Interceptors (T) (R) **7.0** Happy Campers: The Caravan Park (T)

8.0 **Supermarket Own-Brands: The Big Taste Test** (T) Examining the difference between leading brands and supermarkets' own versions.
9.0 **Susan Calman's Grand Day Out** (T) Susan sets out to discover the Channel Islands, meets a sixth-generation Jersey farmer, and learns about potato harvesting.

10.0 **Only Fools and Horses: Secrets & Scandals** (T) (R)
11.0 FILM **Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw** (2019) (T) Action adventure.
1.35 **Live Casino Show** (T) **3.35** Yorkshire Tea Vs PG Tips (T) (R) **4.20** Inside the Balmoral Hotel (T) (R) **5.10** House Doctor (T) (R) **5.40** Milkshake!

BBC Four

7.0 **Canal Boat Diaries** (T) (R) Robbie Cumming continues across the Pennines from Marple to Huddersfield.

7.30 FILM **North By Northwest** (Alfred Hitchcock, 1959) (T) (R) An innocent man mistaken for a spy by a foreign agent is drawn into a world of espionage and adventure. Hitchcock thriller, starring Cary Grant, James Mason and Eva Marie Saint.

9.40 FILM **On the Waterfront** (Elia Kazan, 1954) (T) (R) Drama, starring Marlon Brando, Lee J Cobb and Eva Marie Saint.
11.25 **Imagine: Listen to Me Marlon** (T) (R) Documentary.
1.05 **Canal Boat Diaries** (T) (R) **1.35** Full Circle With Michael Palin (T) (R) **2.25** Treasures of the Indus (T) (R)

Other channels

BBC Three

7.0pm Top Gear **7.55** The Catch Up **8.0** FILM The Maze Runner (2014) **9.45** Glastonbury **10.45** Glastonbury **11.45** Dreaming Whilst Black **12.15** Dreaming Whilst Black **12.35** Paddy & Molly: Show No Mersey **1.05** Paddy & Molly: Show No Mersey **1.35** Top Gear **2.35** My Mate's a Bad Date **2.55** Birdsong **3.10** Dreaming Whilst Black **3.35** Dreaming Whilst Black

Dave

6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **7.35** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **8.0** Special Ops: Crime Squad UK **9.0** Top Gear **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: At the Ends of the Earth **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Top Gear **5.0** The Hairy Bikers' Northern Exposure **6.0** Rick Stein's Long Weekends **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** QI XL **11.0** Taskmaster **12.0** Would I Lie to You? **12.40** Alan Davies: As Yet Untitled **1.40** Dave Gorman: Modern Life Is Goodish **2.45** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **3.10** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **3.35** Travel Man: 48 Hours in Amsterdam **4.0** Teleshopping

E4

6.0am Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **8.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **9.0** The Goldbergs **9.30** The Goldbergs **10.0** Young Sheldon **10.30** Young Sheldon **11.0** Modern Family **11.30** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory **2.0** The Goldbergs **2.30** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Young Sheldon **4.30** Young Sheldon **5.0** The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Come Dine With Me **8.0** Dance Moms **9.0** Gogglebox **10.0** Naked Attraction **11.05** First Dates **12.05** The Big Bang Theory **12.35** The Big Bang Theory **1.05** Rick and Morty **1.35** Smiling Friends **1.55** Smiling Friends **2.10** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **2.35** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **3.0** Dance Moms **3.50** Modern Family **4.15** Modern Family **4.40** The Neighborhood **5.05** The Neighborhood **5.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine

Film4

11.0am FILM Nothing But the Best (1964) **1.05** FILM Time Lock (1957) **2.35** FILM Comanche Station (1960) **4.10** FILM Hell Is a City (1960) **6.05** FILM Clear and Present Danger (1994) **9.0** FILM Inglourious Basterds (2009) **12.10** FILM Zola (2021) **1.55** FILM Heatwave (2022)

ITV2

6.0am CITV **9.0** World's Funniest Videos **9.30** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **10.0** Love Bites **11.0** Love Bites **12.0** Dress to Impress **1.0** Deal Or No Deal **2.0** Supermarket Sweep **3.0** Charmed **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Dress to Impress **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Deal Or No Deal **8.0** The Masked Singer US **9.0** Love Island **10.05** Tell Me Everything **11.05** Family Guy **11.35** Family Guy **12.05** American Dad! **1.05** Karaoke Club: Drag Edition **2.10** Don't Hate the Playaz **2.50** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping

Sky Max

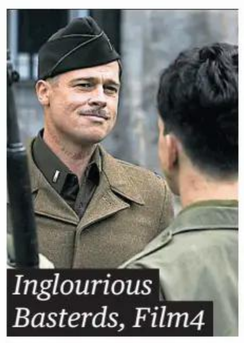
6.0am NCIS: Los Angeles **7.0** SEAL Team **8.0** The Flash **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** NCIS: Los Angeles **12.0** The Flash **1.0** MacGyver **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** SEAL Team **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** Rob & Romesh Vs F1 **9.0** The Walking Dead: The Ones Who Live **10.0** A Discovery of Witches **11.0** The Walking Dead **12.0** Last King of the Cross **1.0** Entourage **1.30** Entourage **2.0** Road Wars **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** Highway Patrol

Sky Arts

6.0am Cameron Mackintosh: The First 50 Years **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: John Malkovich **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** The South Bank Show Originals **2.30** The South Bank Show Originals **3.0** Dickens: Phantoms and Fictions **4.0** Discovering: Samuel L Jackson **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** Battle of the Bagpipes **8.0** The Directors **9.0** Discovering: John Hurt **10.0** The Ghost of Richard Harris **12.20** Comedy Legends **1.20** I Am Richard Pryor **3.15** Tales of the Unexpected **3.45** National Trust: National Treasures **5.0** The Art of Architecture

Sky Atlantic

6.0am The Guest Wing **7.55** Six Feet Under **10.05** Gomorrah **12.15** Game of Thrones **1.20** The Sopranos **3.30** Six Feet Under **5.45** Gomorrah **7.55** Game of Thrones **9.0** House of the Dragon **10.20** Band of Brothers **11.30** Succession **12.40** Watchmen **1.45** The Deuce **2.55** Game of Thrones **4.05** The Guest Wing **5.0** The Guest Wing


Inglourious Basterds, Film4

Radio

Radio 3

6.30am Breakfast **9.30** Essential Classics **1.0** Classical Live. Elizabeth Alker with music from BBC music groups and the European Broadcasting Union, including the BBC Philharmonic with Bruckner's Symphony No. 6. **4.0** Composer of the Week: Richard Strauss (4/5) **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** Radio 3 in Concert. Soprano Anna Prohaska joins the choruses and Philharmonic Orchestra of Radio France in the premiere of Rufus Wainwright's Dream Requiem from Paris, with Meryl Streep as narrator. **9.45** The Essay: Forever Songs. Musician Karine Polwart recalls an unexpected musical collaboration. (4/5) **10.0** Night Tracks **11.30** 'Round Midnight. Soweto Kinch presents the best in jazz. **12.30** Through the Night: RIAS Chamber Choir

Radio 4

6.0am Today **9.0** In Our Time (14/14) **9.45** NatureBang: Zebra Finches and Learning a Language (R) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** This Cultural Life. Last in the series. (14/14) **11.45** Obsessed With the Quest: Bicycling with Butterflies (R) **12.0** News **12.04** The Bottom Line. Business issues that matter. (5/8) **12.32** Sliced Bread. The scientific evidence behind a product's bold claims. (9/10) **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One. **1.45** Buried: The Last Witness. A friend casts doubt on Douglas's honesty. Could he have lied? Investigative journalists Dan Ashby and Lucy Taylor uncover unsettling truths and begin to question what's real. And Michael Sheen gives his verdict. (9/10) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** Assisted. By Greg Wilkinson. A man monitors his girlfriend's every move with the help of his AI household voice assistant. Drama, starring Tamsin Greig and Jude Owusu. **3.0** Ramblings. Clare Balding explores Moyle Hill in Co Donegal with motivational speaker Nikki Bradley. (3/7) **3.27** Radio 4 Appeal: Just Like Us (R) **3.30** Feedback. Listeners' views, with Andrea Catherwood. (3/9) **4.0** The Briefing Room. David Aaronovitch discusses a story in the news. Last in the series. (14/14) **4.30** BBC Inside Science **5.0** PM **5.57** Weather **6.0** Six O'Clock News **6.30** Rhysearch: Can You Be Proud of Your Country? Rhys James considers cross-national pride. (3/5) **7.0** The Archers: **7.15** Front Row. Arts programme. **8.0** The Media Show (R) **9.0** Loose Ends. With David Baddiel, Richard Thompson, Nooruddean Choudry and Amy Gledhill. **9.45** Election 2024. Rachel Burden and Nick Robinson host live election night coverage. **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** Election 2024. Rachel Burden and Nick Robinson host continued coverage of the election results. **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** Election 2024. The results continue through to the Today programme.

Radio 4 Extra

6.0am Monk's Hood (4/5) **6.30** Bolt (4/5) **7.0** Patterson (6/8) **7.30** Dad's Army (17/20) **8.0** For the Love of Leo (3/4) **8.30** The Confession (9/10) **8.45** Valley of the Dolls (4/15) **9.0** Rhysearch (2/5) **9.30** Parkmasters **9.45** Daily Service **10.0** Great Lives (4/9) **10.30** Sexton's Tales (2/7) **11.0** Monk's Hood (4/5) **11.30** Bolt (4/5) **12.0** Patterson (6/8) **12.30** Dad's Army (17/20) **1.0** For the Love of Leo (3/4) **1.30** The Confession (9/10) **1.45** Valley of the Dolls (4/15) **2.0** Genius (2/6) **2.30** Gilbert Without Sullivan (2/5) **3.0** Dick George: Private Investigator (3/3) **4.0** Great Lives (4/9) **4.30** Sexton's Tales (2/7) **5.0** Monk's Hood (4/5) **5.30** Bolt (4/5) **6.0** Patterson (6/8) **6.30** Dad's Army (17/20) **7.0** For the Love of Leo (3/4) **7.30** The Confession (9/10) **7.45** Valley of the Dolls (4/15) **8.0** Genius (2/6) **8.30** Gilbert Without Sullivan (2/5) **9.0** Dick George: Private Investigator (3/3) **10.0** Rhysearch (2/5) **10.30** The Guns of Adam Riches (4/4) **10.55** The Comedy Club Interview **11.0** Detective Sergeant Nick Mohammed (2/4) **11.30** I've Never Seen Star Wars (1/6) **12.0** Great Lives (4/9) **12.30** Sexton's Tales (2/7) **1.0** Monk's Hood (4/5) **1.30** Bolt (4/5) **2.0** Patterson (6/8) **2.30** Dad's Army (17/20) **3.0** For the Love of Leo (3/4) **3.30** The Confession (9/10) **3.45** Valley of the Dolls (4/15) **4.0** Genius (2/6) **4.30** Gilbert Without Sullivan (2/5) **5.0** Dick George: Private Investigator (3/3)

Yesterday's solutions

Wordsearch

Solution no 16,898

Sudoku no 6,536

7	5	1	6	2	8	9	4	3
9	2	4	7	3	1	6	8	5
8	3	6	9	4	5	7	1	2
2	7	3	8	1	4	5	9	6
4	9	8	5	6	3	1	2	7
6	1	5	2	9	7	8	3	4
1	6	9	3	7	2	4	5	8
5	4	2	1	8	6	3	7	9
3	8	7	4	5	9	2	6	1

Word wheel

IMPLEMENT

Suguru

2	3	2	1	2	4
4	1	5	3	5	1
3	2	4	1	4	2
4	1	3	2	3	1
3	5	4	1	4	5
1	2	3	2	3	1

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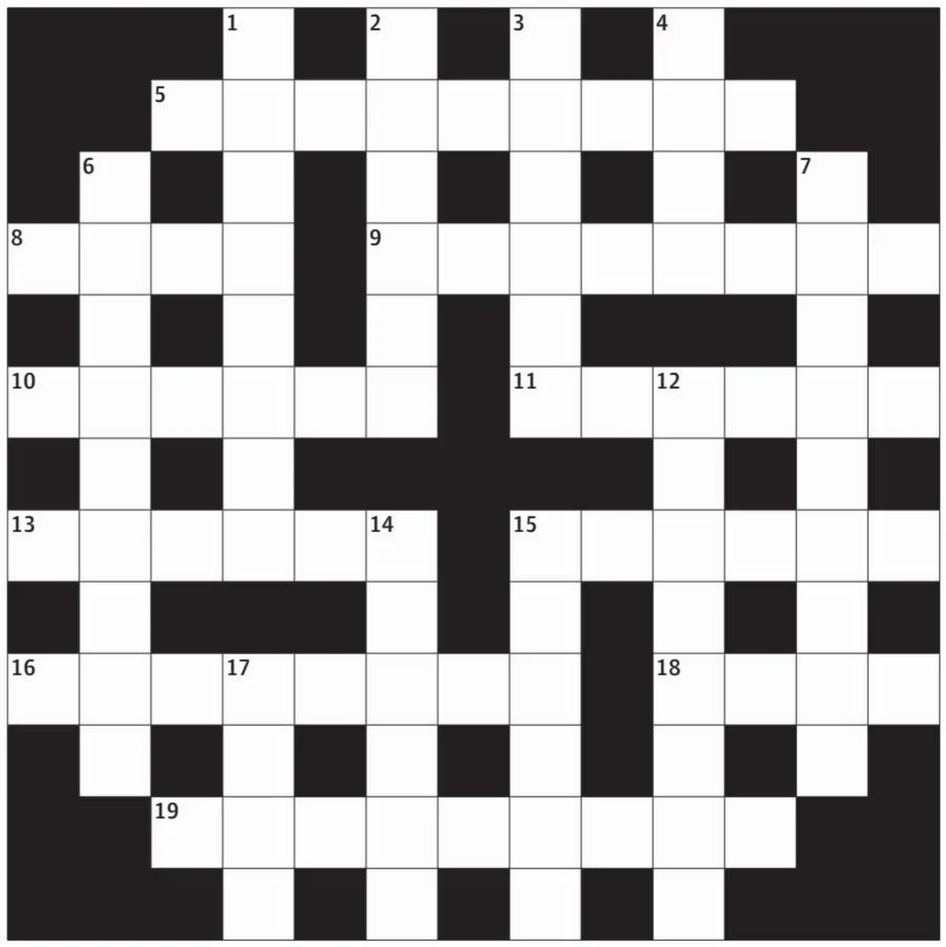
Quick crossword no 16,899

Across

5 Clumsy (9)
8 Cover up (4)
9 Prosit! (4-4)
10 Rialto (anag.) (6)
11 Rap (3-3)
13 Easy chance to score - artist's model (6)
15 Tree-dweller - oik - £500 (6)
16 WI lecher (anag) - short poem about a famous person (8)
18 Green shot (4)
19 Tendon behind knee (9)

Down

1 Booklet (8)
2 Cup supporter (6)
3 Ghost - raw hit (anag) (6)
4 Bluish-white metal (4)
6 Armoured burrower (9)
7 Twirl on tiptoe (9)
12 Table sport (4-4)
14 Use old material (6)
15 Well I'm blowed! (2,4)
17 Existing (4)



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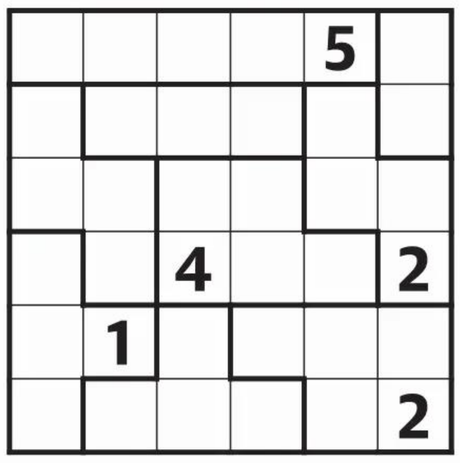
Sudoku no 6,537

Hard. Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9. Printable version at theguardian.com/sudoku

				5				
			6		9	7		
			1	8			2	
	8	2						9
5		1		2		6		
	9					1	7	
	2			1	4			
		4			8			5
			7				4	8

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 flowers in the grid? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight, unbroken line.

R	D	F	K	Y	S	N	A	P
E	N	O	M	E	N	A	A	A
F	V	I	O	L	A	Y	C	I
P	U	V	X	R	D	N	O	N
H	A	C	P	A	T	O	N	O
L	R	I	H	I	E	E	I	G
O	M	L	L	S	N	P	T	E
X	I	U	O	E	I	K	E	B
A	S	R	E	L	B	A	S	T
C	D	R	U	G	S	O	T	H
P	E	T	U	N	I	A	L	R

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-44. Good-37. Average-27.

Trivia corner

For which film did Steven Spielberg win his most recent Oscar (for best director)?
a. Saving Private Ryan
b. Munich
c. Lincoln
d. West Side Story
Answer top right