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Thousands take to the streets to counter threat from far right

Police stage biggest mobilisation across country since 2011 riots

Emine Sinmaz
Vikram Dodd
Josh Halliday

Thousands of anti-racism protesters gathered across England and formed human shields to protect asylum centres last night after police had warned of unrest at more than 100 far right-led rallies.

Holding placards saying "Refugees welcome" and "Reject racism, try therapy", people took to the streets in towns and cities nine days after the country was shaken by repeated riots following the murders of three girls in Merseyside. But there was little sign of the unrest seen over the past week.

Police staged their biggest mobilisation to counter disorder since the 2011 riots and said there was a credible threat that many of the planned gatherings could turn violent.

Lawyers' offices shut down, high street shops were boarded up, GP practices closed early and MPs were told to consider working from home as 41 of the 43 local police force areas in England and Wales braced for potential disorder.

About 6,000 riot-trained officers were drafted in to tackle the expected rallies after immigration law firms and refugee

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▲ *Hundreds of anti-racism protesters gather in Walthamstow, east London, one of many mass demonstrations across England* PHOTOGRAPH: PA WIRE

Millions worldwide 'at risk of opioid addiction'

Anna Bawden

Millions of people are addicted to or are at risk of becoming dependent on prescription opioid painkillers, according to international research.

The study found that one in three people taking prescribed opioid analgesics, which include codeine, tramadol, oxycodone and morphine, showed symptoms of being dependent on them, while one in 10 become fully dependent on the drugs.

The research, led by academics from the University of Bristol and published in the journal Addiction, also showed that one in eight people were at risk of prescription opioid misuse. It examined data from 148 international studies involving more than 4.3 million patients aged 12 and over who had non-cancer pain for three months or longer and who were prescribed the medicines.

While they are useful for short-term acute pain and managing end of life care, "opioid painkillers are not effective in the management of long term pain", Kyla Thomas, professor of public health medicine and lead author of the study, told the Guardian. "They are associated with many harms. Our findings show opioid misuse is much more common among patients taking them for long-term pain that perhaps people imagine."

Chronic pain affects up to a quarter of adults globally. About a third are estimated to be prescribed opioid analgesics. In the US and England, more than 50 million and 15.5 million people respectively have chronic pain, meaning more than 20 million could be taking opioid painkillers.

An extrapolation of the findings suggests 1.7 million patients with chronic non-cancer pain in the US and half a million

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Taylor Swift Two held in Austria over terror plot to attack singer's concerts

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▼ *Zia Yusuf said he felt a 'betrayal' over Boris Johnson governing 'further to the left' than promised*
PHOTOGRAPH: HOLLIE ADAMS/REUTERS

Reform UK chair and donor was still member of Tories until last week

Eleni Courea
Political correspondent

The chair of Reform UK, Zia Yusuf, was a member of the Conservatives until last week, when party officials were approached by the Guardian.

Richard Fuller, the Conservative party chair, emailed Yusuf to tell him his membership had been revoked last Friday, after the Guardian asked the party whether it was still active.

That means Yusuf had remained a paid-up Tory member despite announcing that he had donated a six-figure sum to Nigel Farage's party in June, and then being unveiled as the chair of Reform UK in July.

The Conservative party did not cancel his membership even after Yusuf embarked on a series of broadcast interviews attacking Rishi Sunak and the then government, and urging voters to make Farage prime minister.

Yusuf told GB News in June that the Conservatives were "so divided that I simply don't see how they can govern effectively".

Addressing a Reform UK rally in Birmingham in June, Yusuf accused the Tories of having "lost control of our borders" and having "no coherent immigration policy". Within two weeks he had been made chair of Reform UK, replacing Richard Tice.

Had the Guardian not alerted the Conservatives, Yusuf might have been able to vote in the Tory leadership contest in November. It raises questions over whether other senior Reform UK figures are Conservative party members.

Yusuf told the Guardian last week that he had voted Conservative for most of his adult life. "They make it quite hard to cancel your membership," he said. "For all I know, I might still have a direct debit with them."

He said he had stopped supporting the Tories because of Boris Johnson, suggesting his government's policies were as leftwing as those of former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

"My enthusiasm for the Conservatives was really extinguished after we saw the aftermath of what Boris Johnson had done ... That sense of betrayal is something that I think a lot of people feel in this country about the Conservatives," Yusuf said.

"Boris came to power on the back of the promise that he would make the most of the opportunities that Brexit presented, and he really governed way further to the left than what he promised. If Jeremy Corbyn had come in and governed that way ... that wouldn't have been a betrayal."

Electoral Commission records show that Yusuf gave Reform UK £200,000 in June, one of the biggest donations by an individual in the election campaign.

Reform UK has been at the centre of a series of scandals. A Channel 4 investigation recorded activists making racist and homophobic comments while campaigning for Farage during the election, while several of the party's candidates were dropped over links to far-right groups or racist comments they had made in the past.

A fifth of Reform UK voters said they supported the anti-immigration riots that began after last week's mass stabbing in Southport, according to a YouGov poll this week. Opposition to the riots was near universal among supporters of every other party.

Reform UK says it now has more than 72,000 members, up from 28,000 before Farage announced he was standing for parliament.

A Conservative spokesperson said: "Zia Yusuf has had his party membership suspended. The party constitution does not permit you to be a member of the party while publicly supporting another party."

Taylor Swift cancels three shows in Vienna after attack threat

Guardian staff

The Vienna leg of Taylor Swift's blockbuster Eras tour has been cancelled after two people were arrested over an apparent plot to launch an attack on a public event in the Austrian capital.

The announcement was made by concert organisers Barracuda Music last night, after Austrian authorities said they had arrested a 19-year-old man for allegedly planning an Islamist attack in the Vienna region and suggested Swift's shows had been the "focus" of the plot.

The man, who had pledged his allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) group "in recent weeks", was detained in Lower Austria about an hour from the capital early yesterday, Austria's top security chief, Franz Ruf, told a press conference.

"We have established corresponding preparatory acts and also that there is a focus of the 19-year-old perpetrator on the Taylor Swift concerts in Vienna," he said.

The Austrian citizen is believed to have become radicalised on the internet. Ruf said chemical substances had been seized at the suspect's home and were being evaluated. A second person thought to have had contact with the suspect was arrested in Vienna.

Swift had been scheduled to play at the capital's Ernst Happel Stadium today, Friday and Saturday.

In an Instagram post, Barracuda Music said: "With confirmation from government officials of a planned terrorist attack at Ernst Happel Stadium, we have no choice but to cancel the three scheduled shows for everyone's safety."

▲ *Taylor Swift is performing three concerts in Vienna starting today*

The venue was reporterdly sold out for the planned concerts and an estimated 170,000 fans had been expected. The organisers said all tickets would be refunded.

Swift fans took to social media to express their devastation at missing out on one of the superstar's shows. Some lamented months of now wasted efforts to make friendship bracelets and find outfits for the performance.

In 2017, 22 people were killed when a suicide bomber targeted an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester. The bomber, Salman Abedi, detonated a knapsack bomb in Manchester Arena at the end of Grande's concert as thousands of young fans were leaving.

In November 2020, a convicted Islamic State group sympathiser went on a shooting rampage in central Vienna, killing four and wounding 23 others before police shot him dead. It was the country's first deadly jihadist attack.

Additional reporting **Associated Press** *and* **Agence France-Presse**

Millions of opioid users worldwide 'at risk of addiction'

Continued *from page 1*

in England could be dependent on the painkillers, while across the two countries about 7 million people could show signs of dependence and 3 million be at risk of misuse.

Thomas acknowledges the NHS cut opioid prescriptions by 450,000 between 2019 and 2023, but says more could be done. "Clinicians and policy-makers need a more accurate estimate of the prevalence of problematic opioid use in pain patients so that they can gauge the true extent of the problem, change prescribing guidance if necessary, and develop and implement effective interventions to manage the problem. Knowing the size of the problem is a necessary step to managing it."

Prof Kamila Hawthorne, chair of the Royal College of GPs, said: "Chronic pain can cause untold misery for patients and GPs want to help them manage this safely and effectively. Opioid painkillers can be an appropriate and effective intervention for some patients – particularly those suffering acute pain – but GPs will be acutely aware of how addictive they can be, and that they can cause other unpleasant side-effects.

"As such, if opioids are to be prescribed, GPs will always aim to prescribe the smallest possible dose for the shortest possible time, in line with clinical guidelines – and data from last year showed that prescriptions for opioids in primary care fell by 8% in less than three years."

While alternative treatment options are explored, "access to physical and psychological therapies that can help with pain, or specialist pain clinics, can be patchy across the country, and come with long waiting times for patients", she pointed out.

Robin Pollard, head of policy and influencing at the charity WithYou, said the figures were "incredibly concerning", adding: "We would like to see clearer national guidelines on the use of all prescription pain medication."

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said: "Clinicians should work with patients to decide on the best course of treatment, ensuring it is appropriate and that they take account of national guidance on the treatment's effectiveness.

"NHS England has an action plan to help local healthcare providers reduce inappropriate prescribing of high-strength painkillers and other addiction-causing medicines, while we are committed to ensuring people who misuse get support they need."

An NHS England spokesperson said: "When used appropriately, medicines can help deliver life-changing treatment. It is important to be alert to the potential risks of dependence and withdrawal from certain medicines, including opioids."

‘London zoo’ art keeps growing in monkey business from Banksy

Zainab Haji

Banksy has revealed his third animal-themed artwork in London since Monday, this time showing monkeys swinging across a railway bridge in east London.

On Tuesday the Bristol-based artist produced a mural of two elephant silhouettes on the side of a house in Edith Terrace in Chelsea. A day earlier, he had claimed credit for an artwork of a goat perched on top of a wall near Kew Bridge in Richmond.

The new collection’s latest instalment appeared in Brick Lane yesterday near Grimsby Street, not far from Shoreditch High Street.

Banksy confirmed that all three works were his through back-to-back Instagram posts. He did not caption any of the photos, fuelling online speculation about their meaning.

Some have already called the collection the “London zoo” series and begun crafting their own theories behind the works. One idea circulating among fans is that Banksy is comparing the recent far-right rioters to wild zoo animals.

Three monkeys have been associated with the Japanese proverb “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil”, though in Banksy’s work, the monkeys are not covering their eyes, ears or mouths.

Banksy frequently uses monkeys as motifs, using them to take the place of humans to convey social and political messages. For the late Queen’s golden jubilee, he depicted a chimp-faced monarch in black and the colours of the union flag.

When the anonymous artist has appeared in public, he has worn a monkey mask. He has also used the monkey mask to make a parody of the actor Demi Moore, who appeared naked and pregnant on a Vanity Fair magazine cover.

Though a number of identities have been associated with the artist, including that of a public schoolboy, Robin Gunningham, the street artist remains officially anonymous. He gained popularity in the early 1990s after spray-painting his now signature stencilled prints around Bristol. In the early 2000s, he moved to London, where his notoriety continued to rise.

The highest price ever paid for a Banksy was £18.5m for Love is in the Bin. The artwork, regarded as one of the biggest pranks in art history, comprises the remains of the live destruction of his piece Girl with Balloon, after a hidden shredder tore the painting moments when it had just been sold at Sotheby’s in 2018.

In June Banksy released a migrant boat installation at the Glastonbury festival that was crowd-surfed during performances by the Bristol band Idles and the rapper Little Simz.

In March, the artist created a mural in north London by spraying paint on a wall behind a cut-back tree, giving the impression of foliage. The paint was a similar shade of green to the colours used on Islington council’s street signs.

◀ *The new artwork, a trio of monkeys on a bridge in Brick Lane near Shoreditch High Street, has drawn an audience*
PHOTOGRAPH: LUCY NORTH/PA

▲ *Banksy often uses monkeys as motifs and speculation about the work’s meaning has grown after the artist confirmed it was his but did not write a caption*

▲ *Banksy has claimed credit for the goat near Kew Bridge in Richmond*

▶ *A mural of two elephant silhouettes on the side of a house in Edith Terrace in Chelsea, west London, which the anonymous artist produced on Tuesday*
PHOTOGRAPH: ANDY RAIN/EPA

Minnelli to tell life story because film depictions ‘didn’t get it right’

PA Media

Liza Minnelli is to release a memoir after she claimed that previous screen depictions of her life “didn’t get it right”.

The 78-year-old US actor and singer, the daughter of the actor Judy Garland and the director Vincente Minnelli, will release the book in spring 2026, and it promises to take readers through her career, struggles with substance abuse, and love life.

Minnelli is one of just 25 performers to have won an Egot (Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony). She is best known for her performances in 1972’s Cabaret, her TV concert film Liza With a Z, and Martin Scorsese’s 1977 musical-drama New York, New York.

Minnelli told People magazine: “Since I was old enough to put pencil to paper, people asked me to write books about my career, my life, my loves, my family. Absolutely not. Tell it when I’m gone was my philosophy. So, why did I change my mind?”

She said she felt documentaries about her career “didn’t get it right” and were made by people who, she said, “didn’t know my family and don’t really know me”.

Minnelli added: “Finally, I was mad as hell. Over dinner one night, I decided, it’s my own damn story, I’m going to share it with you because of all the love you’ve given me.”

The book, to be published by Grand Central Publishing, was written with the help of the Great American Songbook ambassador Michael Feinstein, who has been friends with Minnelli for 40 years.

Liza Minnelli said it was ‘my own damn story’

Referencing lyrics from the Cabaret song Maybe This Time, Minnelli said that “after incredible events and life-threatening battles ... I am truly Lady Peaceful, Lady Happy”.

“Thank you all for loving me so much ... being concerned about me,” she said. “I want you to know I’m still here, still kicking ass, still loving life and still creating. So, until this book arrives, know that I’m laughing, safe in every way, surrounded by loved ones and excited to see what’s right around the curve of life. Kids, wait till you hear this.”

Anti-racism protesters form human shields to protect asylum centres

Continued from page 1

centres were listed as potential targets in a far-right chat group on the encrypted messaging app Telegram.

But thousands of counter-protesters took to the streets of Liverpool, Birmingham, Bristol, Brighton and London to protect their communities from the rumoured gatherings.

At 7pm in Liverpool, hundreds of people formed a human shield outside a church that hosts an immigration advice centre, which had been mentioned in the Telgram chat, while women held banners saying: "Nans against Nazis."

Similar scenes were witnessed in Hackney and Walthamstow in east London, and Finchley in the north of the capital, as thousands of local people and anti-fascist activists came together and held placards saying "We are one human race" and "Unite against hate".

In Brighton, the handful of anti-immigration protesters who gathered outside a law office were surrounded by police for their own protection after they were outnumbered by about 500 counter-protesters who chanted: "Off our streets, Nazi scum." Later, the gathering took on a street carnival atmosphere with a samba band and loud singing.

But tensions flared in Aldershot in Hampshire after a group chanting "Stop the boats" clashed with protesters holding "Stand up to racism" placards who had been chanting, "Refugees are welcome here." Dozens of police officers rushed on to the road to keep the groups apart. There were also reported skirmishes in Blackpool.

Northamptonshire police said three people had been arrested for public order offences in Northampton, and that no members of the public or police had been injured.

The Metropolitan police said 10 people had been arrested in Croydon for assaulting emergency workers,

> *'We will not let the immigration asylum system be intimidated'*
>
> **Sir Mark Rowley**
> *Met police chief*

possession of offensive weapons and other offences after about 50 people gathered "to cause disruption and fuel disorder". "They've dragged and thrown objects down the road and thrown bottles at officers. This is not linked to protest, this appears to be pure antisocial behaviour," the force added on X.

By 9pm, few far-right activists were seen at the alleged targeted sites, although counter-protesters remained on the streets.

A police source with knowledge of the national picture said there were believed to have been small, far right-led gatherings in Durham, Blackpool, Norwich, Northampton, Sheffield and Brighton.

One reason for the apparent far-right no-show, the source said, was the deterrent effect of the wave of swift arrests and court appearances that gathered pace after the violence at the weekend, which caused widespread shock. Police expect the next couple of days to be relatively quiet, but more so-called protests are expected this weekend.

Earlier, Sir Mark Rowley, the head of the Metropolitan police, said threats against immigration lawyers were "at the centre of our planning tonight", and added: "We will not let the immigration asylum system be intimidated."

▼ *Counter-protesters in Bristol, one of many cities across England where the far-right were outnumbered*
PHOTOGRAPH: RICK FINDLER/SPA

The director of public prosecutions, Stephen Parkinson, said that the publication of targets could be considered a terrorism offence as he revealed that one case of alleged terrorism was "actively under consideration" following the unrest over the last week.

Britain's head of counter-terrorism, assistant commissioner Matt Jukes, also confirmed for the first time that counter-terrorism detectives were investigating some of the violence that erupted after the killing of three young girls at a Taylor Swift-themed dance class in Southport last Monday.

The Guardian understands that counter-terrorism police are interested in an apparent attempt to set fire to a mosque near the scene of the atrocity, barely 36 hours after Bebe King, six, Elsie Dot Stancombe, seven, and Alice Dasilva Aguiar, nine, were killed. They are also looking into the attempt to set fire to a Rotherham hotel housing more than 200 asylum seekers on Sunday.

Parts of England went into effective shutdown yesterday as shops were boarded up in the centre of Manchester, the Jewellery Quarter of Birmingham, Aldershot town centre and Westcliff-on-Sea in Essex.

Cases being heard at an immigration tribunal were also abandoned following concerns that far-right agitators could target the building. Staff, lawyers and claimants at Hatton Cross tribunal hearing centre, near Heathrow airport, were ordered to leave at around lunchtime.

Those inside the court building were told that there was far-right activity in the area. A Whitehall source said the decision to abandon the court was precautionary. It is understood that other immigration tribunals were also closed early because of fears of violence.

It came as Lindsay Hoyle, the Commons speaker, wrote to MPs suggesting they review their security in the wake of the threat of further riots and suggested some might want to consider working from home.

So far, 428 arrests have been made across 26 forces and more than 140 people have been charged since the riots erupted last Tuesday, but that number is expected to increase, police said.

Disorder-related sentencing hearings are scheduled for 26 people over the next two days, the Ministry of Justice added yesterday evening. Offences covered by the hearings will include violent disorder, publishing written material to stir up racial hatred, and racially aggravated threatening behaviour.

Extra reporting by Rajeev Syal, Rowena Mason and Bibi van der Zee

United against hate

Counter-protesters left with nothing to counter

It was the day that England held its breath. Across the country, and over the Irish Sea in Belfast, police forces were braced for the most widespread night of violence in more than a decade.

Shops were boarded up, theatre performances cancelled and hotels and immigration advice centres closed over fears they were in the crosshairs of the far-right disorder that has laid siege to dozens of towns and cities over the past week.

But it was anti-racism demonstrators who thronged on the streets of England, from Newcastle down to London and across to Bristol. Counter-protesters arrived first and their numbers just grew and grew, from dozens to hundreds and then thousands.

By mid-evening, they were mostly counter-protesters with nothing to counter. There was sometimes an almost carnival-like atmosphere – singing, dancing and in one case a samba band – with little sign of the far right.

The scale of the anti-racism protests was surely sending a message: a bid to change the narrative after a week dominated by rampant far-right, anti-immigrant violence.

In Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter, outside a migrant centre, they chanted, "Fascist scum. out of Brum."

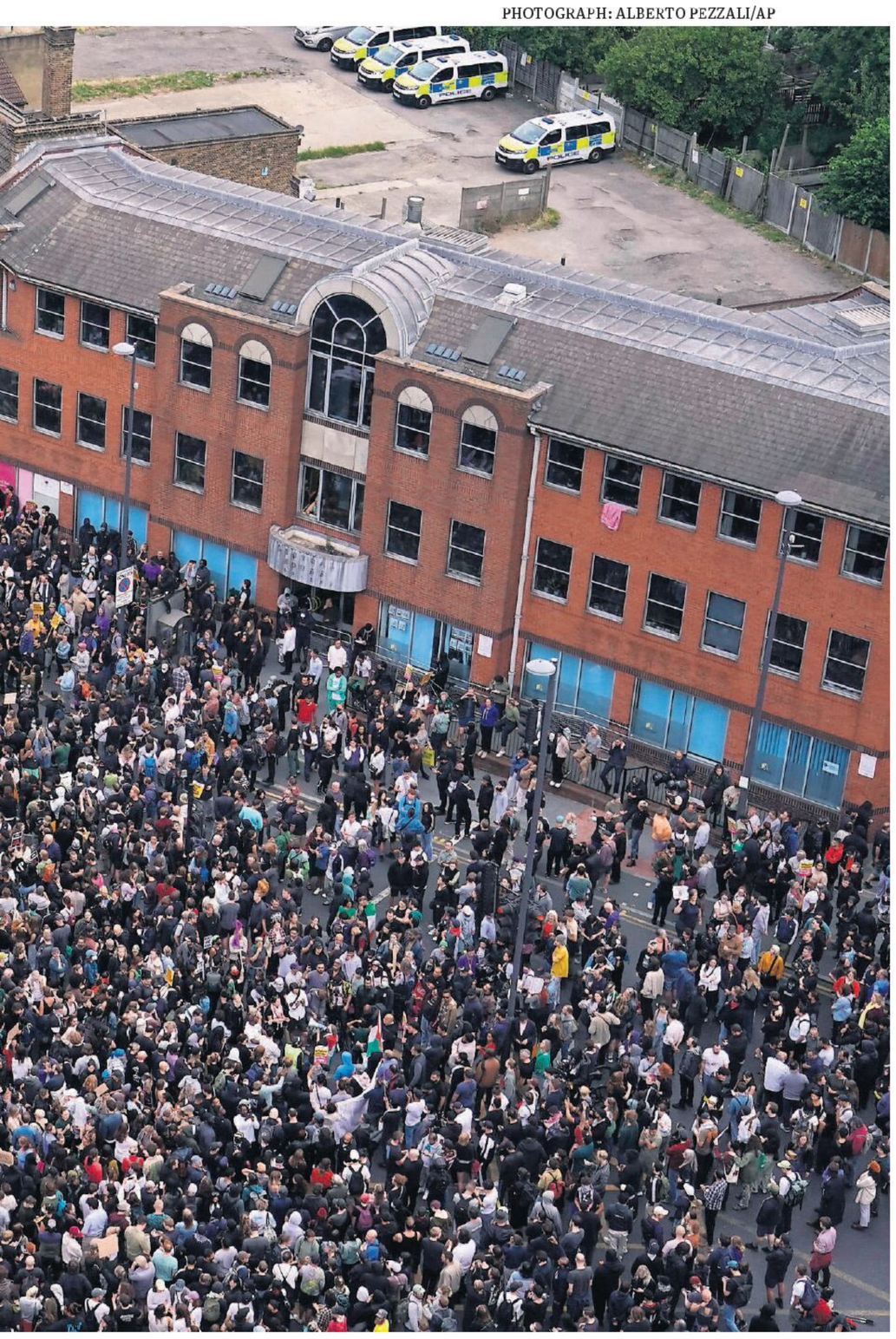
In Liverpool, they held banners such as "Nans against Nazis", "Immigrants welcome. Racists not" and "When the poor blame the poor, only the rich win". An elderly man with a portable speaker resting on his walking frame played John Lennon's Give Peace a Chance on repeat.

In Brighton, the anti-racism demonstrators so outnumbered

Reporting team

Mark Brown, Josh Halliday, Jessica Murray, Bibi van der Zee, Ben Quinn, Robyn Vinter, Tom Wall

▼ An anti-racist protest gathers in Walthamstow, north-east London, in anticipation of far-right violence
PHOTOGRAPH: ALBERTO PEZZALI/AP



▼ An immigration solicitors' office in Westcliff, Essex. The far right had circulated a 'hit list' of targets
PHOTOGRAPH: RYAN JENKINSON/GETTY

▶ In Brighton, counter-protesters so outnumbered the far right that the police surrounded the latter for their own protection

▲ In Birmingham, outside a migrant centre, anti-racism protesters chanted: 'Fascist scum out of Brum'
PHOTOGRAPH: PA

the far right that the police surrounded the latter for their own protection. By 9pm a hardcore of three rightwing activists remained, so sound systems were set up. It became a party. "This could on for hours," said one observer.

Fr Peter Morgan, the priest of St Mary's church in Liverpool, which hosts an immigration centre that featured on a far-right "hit list" circulated this week, said asylum seekers had been "terrified, absolutely terrified".

His church had to be boarded up. Police on horseback roamed the nearby streets. Morgan described as "nonsense" calls for the country to "defend" its Christian values.

"It's actually crazy what they're saying, and here we are, having to defend our Christian church. It just doesn't make sense. All we're doing is actually helping to feed the hungry," he said.

The huge anti-racism, pro-immigration gatherings were repeated everywhere. Nearly a thousand people gathered in the west end of Newcastle.

By 9pm, as darkness fell, speeches had finished and many anti-racism protesters decided to drift home.

After what appeared to be a standoff, police moved into the crowd in Brighton to allow the glum-faced anti-immigration people to leave. The process took 30 minutes, during which time a good number of insults and jeers were hurled.

In Northampton, police posted on social media to politely ask anti-racist protesters to go home for the night. Elsewhere, some people expressed mock annoyance. "We made a sign for nothing!" said one Sheffield protester, Claire, holding a pink glittery placard emblazoned with the words "Hate never wins". Her friend added: "They didn't bother coming. Very disappointing."

There were some skirmishes, but they were few and far between. In Aldershot, Hampshire, tempers flared and police intervened to keep one group who were chanting "Refugees are welcome here" away from another shouting "Stop the boats".

The atmosphere in places like Preston and Blackpool was said to be tense.

Nine days on from the murder of three young girls at a Taylor Swift-themed holiday club in Southport, Merseyside, police chiefs were preparing for what they thought could be more than 100 extreme rightwing gatherings across England.

Every force in the country was on high alert by midday, with police intelligence suggesting that the north-west and north-east of England would see the worst of the trouble.

Riot squads of more than 4,000 officers fanned out around the country, shielding a "hit list" of 39 locations – including immigration law firms and asylum seeker accommodation – that had been circulating on far-right Telegram channels and beyond for days.

The message, believed to have originated in Liverpool, told followers: "THEY WON'T STOP COMING UNTIL YOU TELL THEM ... NO MORE IMMIGRATION. MASK UP. SPREAD THIS AS FAR AND WIDE AS YOU CAN," along with a dozen fire emojis.

While specialist investigators sought to trace the provenance of the post, the threat was taken very seriously. Keir Starmer called two emergency Cobra meetings in 48 hours and mobilised the biggest deployment of riot officers across Britain since the 2011 riots.

The violent unrest began in Southport, barely 36 hours after the fatal stabbings, when rioters attacked a mosque and set a police van on fire after the suspect was mistakenly identified online as a Muslim man of Arabic heritage. The posts were viewed tens of millions of times and amplified by popular rightwing figures such as Andrew Tate and Tommy Robinson.

Other towns and cities followed. In Rotherham and Tamworth, groups set fire to two hotels housing asylum seekers, while a community library was set ablaze in Walton, Liverpool. Shops have been looted, homes and cars attacked, and journalists targeted.

In Merseyside, the chief constable, Serena Kennedy, told a court yesterday that more than 90 of her officers had been injured in the "unprecedented" riots. Some were having sleepless nights and panic attacks.

By yesterday afternoon, there were signs of communities preparing for the worst, with GPs and nurseries were closing their doors by lunchtime. A hospital in central London told staff they could go home early. Businesses near the site of the planned disorder boarded up their windows.

Newcastle Theatre Royal cancelled last night's performance of the musical Come From Away, while the Sunderland Empire did the same for The Wizard of Oz.

Ofcom 8,000 complaints over Cooper interview

Jim Waterson

The media regulator Ofcom has received more than 8,000 complaints after an episode of Good Morning Britain in which the home secretary, Yvette Cooper, was interviewed by her husband, Ed Balls.

Balls, a former Labour cabinet minister and a regular presenter on the ITV breakfast programme, questioned his wife's response to far-right riots during Monday's programme.

Ofcom said it received 8,201 complaints relating to the programme. Some of them related to the husband-and-wife interview, while others related to an earlier interview with the leftwing Labour MP Zarah Sultana, in which Balls defended Cooper and the government.

A spokesperson for the media regulator said: "We are assessing the complaints against our broadcasting rules but are yet to decide whether or not to investigate."

The issue of politicians hosting current affairs programmes has been highlighted in recent years, after the decision by GB News and the now defunct TalkTV to pay a number of serving Conservative politicians to host shows. Yet Ofcom had declined to ban politicians from hosting current affairs programmes – and ITV argued that Balls has not been an active politician since losing his seat in the 2015 general election.

At first Cooper was questioned by co-host Kate Garraway before Balls stepped in to ask about the role of social media, saying: "We've talked about this a few times in the last few days." Cooper responded: "Well you're right, Ed. We have seen things appearing online that are clearly criminal. Social media has put rocket boosters under far-right extremist organisations and also some of the violence we have seen. Things that are criminal offline are also criminal online."

In her interview, Sultana had demanded that the government brand the riots Islamophobic, in a testy back-and-forth with Balls. She said after the broadcast: "The sneering contempt of 'journalists' will never stop me from calling out racism and Islamophobic hate."

A spokesperson for Good Morning Britain said: "We are satisfied that these interviews were balanced, fair and duly impartial."

▲ Yvette Cooper was interviewed on ITV by Kate Garraway and then by her husband, Ed Balls

PHOTOGRAPH: CPS/PA

In the dock

Top row: Aaron Johnson, of North Reddish, guilty of distributing images intended to stir up racial hatred in Stockport; Matthew Wilson, of Rossendale, Lancashire, and Alex Fraser of Manchester, charged with racially aggravated assaults in Manchester; Leanne Hodgson and Andrew Smith, guilty of violent disorder in Sunderland.

Second row: Josh Kellett and Bradley Makin, guilty of violent disorder in Sunderland; James Nelson, guilty of causing criminal damage in Bolton; Liam Powell, guilty of participation in disorder in Bolton; Declan Geiran, jailed for 30 months for violent disorder in Liverpool.

Third row: Lucas Ormond Skeaping, of Tavistock, Daniel McGuire, of Plymouth, and Michael Williams of Sparkwell, all guilty of violent disorder in Plymouth; Liam Riley, of Liverpool, jailed for 20 months for violent disorder in Liverpool; Derek Drummond, of Southport, jailed for three years for violent disorder and assaulting an emergency worker in Southport.

Fourth row: Liam Ryan, of Bradford, guilty of violent disorder in Manchester; Andrew Philips, of Stretford, Shaun Holt, of Stockport, and David Green, of Stalybridge, were each charged with violent disorder in Manchester; Joshua Simpson, convicted of assaulting a police officer outside the Holiday Inn in Rotherham.

Man who punched officer in the face during Southport riot jailed for three years

Josh Halliday
North of England editor

A rioter who punched a police officer in the face during violent unrest in Southport has been jailed for three years, in the longest prison sentence so far over the far-right disorder in England and Northern Ireland.

Derek Drummond, 58, pleaded guilty to violent disorder and assaulting an emergency worker during a riot in the Merseyside town on the day after the killing of three young girls.

The judge, Andrew Menary KC, said Drummond was part of a "large and unlawful mob" who had "effectively hijacked" Southport's grief as part of the disorder, which left a mosque under siege and more than 50 officers injured.

He said: "Every decent member of the community affected by these events will have been appalled, horrified and deeply disturbed by what has taken place in their neighbourhoods."

The hearing at Liverpool crown court was told that an "unprecedented" 93 Merseyside police officers had been injured over the past eight days, with more injuries being assessed daily.

In a statement read to the court, the Merseyside police chief constable, Serena Kennedy, said officers had sustained a range of physical injuries including a broken jaw and lost teeth, while some had been waking in the night with panic attacks.

Police had expressed "disbelief" that no officer had been killed in the unrest, Kennedy said, with many left fearing whether they would "return home safely to their families".

Drummond shouted "shithouses" before punching the Merseyside police officer Thomas Ball during the riot outside Southport mosque. He was also seen throwing bricks at police as part of the disorder, in which a riot van was set alight, the court heard.

Christopher Taylor, prosecuting, said police estimated that about 1,000 people were involved in the unrest in Southport, where missiles including bricks, tins of paint and wheelie bins "rained down" on officers as shouts of "Allah, Allah, who the fuck is Allah" were heard.

After handing himself in to police four days later, Drummond told officers he had been "a fool" and was "holding his hands up to his offending".

Drummond, who has 14 previous convictions including several for violence, had been to a vigil for the three victims of the Southport attack, Bebe King, six, Elsie Dot Stancombe, seven, and Alice Dasilva Aguiar, nine, before attending the planned far-right demonstration two hours later.

During his police interview, Drummond said "tensions were very high" at the protest and accepted his behaviour was "appalling".

"He said he was deeply sorry to the people he has let down," Taylor told the court.

Lionel Greig, defending Drummond, said his client had lost his job as a result of his arrest and had told police officers: "I'm absolutely ashamed by the way I've acted. I've let Southport down, I've let the kids down, I've let myself down. I'm not here to deny anything."

Another man, Declan Geiran, 29, was jailed for 30 months after admitting trying to set fire to a police van during a far-right rally in Liverpool city centre on Saturday. Taylor said Geiran could be seen in a TikTok video setting fire to the seatbelt of a police van.

The vehicle had to be written off at a cost to the taxpayer of more than £32,000, the court was told

Geiran told police he had gone to the planned far-right rally because he "wanted to show his support for the bereaved families", the court was told, and he denied any "negative thoughts about immigration".

Brendan Carville, defending Geiran, said his client had told him he "doesn't know what far right and far left means - he simply went along".

> *'Let today's result serve as a warning to all those who carry out criminality'*
>
> **Jonathan Egan**
> *Crown prosecutor*

A third man, Liam James Riley, 41, was jailed for 20 months after admitting violent disorder in Liverpool city centre.

A "very drunk" Riley was part of a crowd of 100 people, some of whom were throwing bricks towards police officers, the court was told. He said he had gone to the demonstration to show "solidarity and support" to the Southport victims' families.

On arrest he "made a number of negative remarks about immigrants and Muslims" and expressed the view that "both were to blame for the murders in Southport", Taylor said.

Carville described Riley as a "loner" and a "very foolish man" for getting caught up in the disorder and "stupidly" staying at the demonstration when he had been told to leave.

Speaking outside court, the senior district crown prosecutor, Jonathan Egan, said the three jailed rioters were "the tip of the iceberg" and "just the start of what will be a very painful process for many who foolishly chose to involve themselves in violent unrest".

He added: "Many of those involved will be sent to prison for a long time ... Let today's result serve as a warning to all those who carry out criminality on our streets: you will always suffer the consequences."

More than 400 people have been arrested in connection with the riots and disorder around the country since the Southport stabbings on 29 July, with the number expected to rise in the coming days.

UK extremists The actors, activists and conspiracists of the far right

Ben Quinn

Britain's splintered far right has been trying to mount a resurgence by exploiting shock and anger over the killing of three young girls in Southport. Groups, individuals and influencers have been pumping out misinformation over social media.

Here is a brief guide to today's far-right landscape in Britain - which has become what some commentators call "post-organisational", with a myriad of individuals playing varying roles.

Tommy Robinson and allies

Britain's most high-profile far-right activist is among those being looked at by police for allegedly disseminating disinformation.

Robinson, whose real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, first gained prominence in 2009 as the leader of the now defunct English Defence League (EDL). But while it splintered into groups such as the Yorkshire Patriots, the ties formed during that time continue to provide foot soldiers.

"Lieutenants" include Daniel Thomas, who was jailed for an attempted armed kidnapping and tweeted an early video urging followers to "get prepared". Others include Rikki Doolan, a Christian evangelist who says Robinson is not to blame for the riots.

Laurence Fox

The scion of an acting dynasty who has embraced a new identity as a political activist, Fox said he was "totally radicalised" by YouTube to crusade against "woke culture".

In 2021 Fox's Reclaim party received almost as much money in donations as the Liberal Democrats in the first quarter of 2021, all of it coming from the Brexit-supporting investment manager and Tory donor Jeremy Hosking.

Sacked last year from GB News, Fox has increasingly moved to the right, appearing on platforms with Robinson, whom he describes as a friend. He has told his 535,000 followers on X: "We need to permanently remove Islam from Great Britain."

▲ *Laurence Fox at a Turning Point UK protest last year. The actor says he crusades against 'woke culture'*
PHOTOGRAPH: JORDAN PETTITT/PA

Patriotic Alternative

Formed in 2019 by the former British National party (BNP) activist Mark Collett, it enjoyed early success in unifying the fractured far-right scene, as digitally savvy younger members presented themselves as a "white pride" organisation blending concern for the environment with anti-migrant campaigns.

However, a split last year has left the organisation reeling, while a leader, Sam Melia, was jailed in March after being found guilty of inciting racial hatred. The group has kept a relatively low profile in the context of the riots.

Britain First

Now largely in the shadow of Patriotic Alternative, Britain First had sought to emerge as a successor to the BNP by blending traditional far-right street protests with stunts such as mosque "invasions".

Attempts by the party's leader, Paul Golding, a former BNP activist and figure of ridicule even among others on the far right, to exploit tensions after Southport have been confined to the internet.

Turning Point UK

Launched in 2019 as a spin-off from a pro-Trump US youth campaign that advocates free markets and small government, TPUK pivoted towards "culture war" issues.

More recently, however, the group has had a crossover with Ukip, whose interim leader, Nick Tenconi, is also TPUK's head of operations. Tenconi was outside Downing Street during a protest on 1 August that turned violent.

Conspiracy theorist websites

Resistance GB is a self-styled journalism platform which has disseminated conspiracy theories. It was set up by a former London Tory councillor, William Coleshill. Coleshill has sought to ride on the coat-tails of rallies for both Robinson and Farage.

In a similar category is the Unity News Network (UNN), a website run by a former Tory and Labour councillor, David Clews.

'History repeating' Anti-racist veterans on how to fight back

Neha Gohil
Community affairs correspondent

When Balwinder Singh Rana, along with about 50 members of the Indian Youth Federation, entered a pub in Gravesend in 1969 after their inaugural meeting, it was their first moment of local activism.

"There was this pub not far from the meeting hall, which did not serve our people," Rana said. "If people went in there, they would just ignore and say: 'Get out, you black bastard.'"

He defiantly demanded 50 pints of lager from staff, who quickly obliged. "My friends, the 50 of them, were all smiling, laughing and joking. The first time they have ever seen their power," he said.

Rana arrived in the UK in 1963, aged 16, from Punjab, India, during a decade that witnessed the birth of the National Front and a spate of racist attacks across the UK. In 1968, Enoch Powell delivered his infamous "rivers of blood" speech.

Those events spurred Rana on to form the Indian Youth Federation, thought to be the country's first Asian youth movement.

Their action in the Gravesend pub was just one of several incidents of defiance that form part of Rana's struggle against racism and the far right, with the activist travelling across the country with the Anti-Nazi League in the late 1970s. "Before I came here, I had no idea that people were having to face racism," he said. "After just two weeks I saw it for myself."

Rana said the current violence, during which riots have spread across parts of the country after the Southport stabbings last week, was "totally unprecedented".

"I've never ever seen this situation before. I've been fighting against racism, fascism; it's never happened at this scale," Rana said. "The level of violence, they're doing this day after day."

Mukhtar Dar, 62, is another prominent member of youth movements that confronted the far right in the second half of the 20th century. He is one of the founding members of the Sheffield Asian Youth Movement (SAYM), and described the recent far-right riots as "very concerning" but disagreed they were unprecedented.

"It echoes some of the things that we went through, but there are major differences between what happened then and what is taking place now," he said.

Dar, now the artistic director of the Birmingham arts foundation Kalaboration, co-founded the SAYM in response to an attack on a local restaurant. "That attack was not unique to Sheffield; the attacks were happening up and down the country," he said.

"We learned that you have to stop the fascists from marching. You can't march away from them because they believe that whoever controls the streets can control the state."

Matloub Husayn Ali Khan, 66, another co-founder of the SAYM, recalled threats being made to local mosques during the 70s. "We were always afraid of the National Front attacking the mosques," he said. "My mum and dad used to say: 'Stay away from the NF.'

"That fear was there at that time. But now it's the same, history repeating itself, but it's a different lot. People organise a lot better and that's the same with the far right. They are organising misinformation ... That is the problem with social media."

Dar added: "People that are disillusioned, that don't see their voices being heard, that are buying into the far-right narrative - we really need to be able to counteract those arguments.

"We know we won [against] the fascists before. They offer no hope; they offer no solution; they offer destruction and divisions."

Both Dar and Rana urged communities to rally together but to do so peacefully. "We need to present hope to our young people. We need to present an alternative of people coming together and why diversity is important," Dar said.

Khan, who attended a counter-protest against the far-right riots in Sheffield on the weekend, said it was "important" to show solidarity.

"Asylum seekers are being treated as easy targets for the far right," he said. "We don't want to let the far right get away with it without being opposed."

◀ *Balwinder Singh Rana says the current violence is unprecedented: 'It's never happened at this scale'*
PHOTOGRAPH: ANTONIO OLMOS/ THE GUARDIAN

Tories Rival accuses Jenrick of 'nasty and divisive rhetoric'

Jessica Elgot
Deputy political editor

Robert Jenrick was criticised by a rival for the Tory leadership and Muslim parliamentarians yesterday for saying police should "immediately arrest" protesters shouting "Allahu Akbar", the Arabic phrase that means God is great.

The former immigration minister was speaking on Sky News about the accusations that police had treated far-right marches and violence more harshly than other protests.

Jenrick said on Sky News he had been angered by the way that pro-Palestinian demonstrations had been policed. "I have been very critical of police in the past, particularly around the attitude of some police forces to the protests we saw since 7 October.

"I thought it was quite wrong that somebody could shout 'Allahu Akbar' on the streets of London and not be immediately arrested, project genocidal chants on to Big Ben and not be immediately arrested. That attitude is wrong and I'll always call out the police for it."

▲ *Jenrick's comments on shouting 'Allahu Akbar' were condemned*

Mel Stride, who is also vying for the Tory leadership, said the "suggestion of wholesale criminalisation of the words Allahu Akbar is unwise and insensitive". When Jenrick's comments were first aired, the Tory peer Sayeeda Warsi wrote on X: "Every day before we start parliamentary business in the Commons and Lords we say a prayer and praise God - we say our parliamentary version of Allahu Akbars at the heart of democracy - a process Robert Jenrick is a part of. This language from Jenrick is more of his usual nasty divisive rhetoric - he is such a tool."

Jenrick posted on X later yesterday that he acknowledged it was a religious phrase, but said it could also be used as part of public disorder. Posting a video of masked protesters, he said: "Extremists routinely abuse common expressions for their own shameful ends. All violence must end. All violence must be called out."

▲ *Firefighters battle a blaze at an Asian shop amid rioting last weekend in the Donegall Road area of south Belfast*

PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN LEWIS/ PHOTOPRESS BELFAST

▶ *Omar al-Garady, from Yemen, said his community had been advised to keep their children inside*

PHOTOGRAPH: RORY CARROLL/ THE GUARDIAN

'I don't feel secure'

Migrants targeted in Belfast riots fear hostility runs wide and deep

Rory Carroll
Ireland correspondent

Omar al-Garady stood on the pavement gazing at the ruins of the supermarket where his family used to buy halal chicken and rice. The windows were smashed and the walls were charred, casting an acrid aroma over Donegall Road in Belfast.

"It had everything," he said, eying the interior jumbled with debris and mounds of blackened packets. "The owner was from Syria." As he spoke a car slowed down and a young man stuck his head out the window. He was smiling. "Bye bye shop!" he yelled. "Bye bye!"

Garady did not flinch. Since the spread of the riots in England to Northern Ireland the 35-year-old from Yemen, who works in a metal factory, has adjusted to a new reality. "All my thoughts about the Irish and this city have changed," he said. "I don't feel secure. We've been advised to keep our children inside. I hope in my heart everything will be all right."

The mob that rampaged through this patch of Belfast last Saturday - and there was a rally again on Monday - involved a few hundred people, a tiny minority of residents. But some of the immigrants and refugees who were targeted feared that the hostility went wide and deep.

Mohammad Idris, 50, a refugee from Sudan, fled when a crowd attacked his cafe. "They were shouting 'where is Mohammad?' They burnt it completely," he said. It was not his first time standing in the ashes of his livelihood. Last August - long before the stabbing atrocity in Southport triggered disturbances - a mob burned Idris's computer shop.

He said he was grateful for expressions of solidarity and crowdfunding initiatives to help him and other business owners rebuild, but he planned to move to another part of Belfast. "If I stay it will happen again."

In Belfast there were six arrests during a spate of incidents on Tuesday night. Masked men drove a hijacked car into an estate agency after claims it was letting homes to asylum seekers.

Elsewhere masked men smashed doorways and windows of homes and youths pelted eggs at a supermarket, leaving a 15-year-old to be treated for facial injuries. The supermarket was previously attacked in January and February.

Ten nurses from overseas were planning to leave Northern Ireland, the BBC reported.

Police believe paramilitary groups are contributing to the violence. It does not help that the police are overstretched; the force is supposed to have 7,500 officers but has got 6,300.

> ***'The crowd attacked, shouting "where is Mohammad?" They burnt the cafe. If I stay it will happen again'***
>
> **Mohammad Idris**
> *Belfast resident*

▶ *Mohammad Idris, a refugee from Sudan, at his cafe in Belfast, which was burned down by a mob*

PHOTOGRAPH: RORY CARROLL/ THE GUARDIAN

Another factor is the synergy with far-right activists in Ireland who have targeted asylum accommodation and staged violent protests in the republic; there was a riot in Dublin last November. Several attended a rally in Belfast last Saturday and waved Irish tricolours alongside loyalists with British flags.

Migrants and refugees in the loyalist Donegall Road and Sandy Row area said most residents were welcoming, or at least not overtly hostile, but that a well of resentment, racism and misinformation could perpetuate intimidation and violence.

A cluster of bystanders near Idris's charred cafe appeared to condemn the arsonists.

"Why are they doing this? There's no call for it," said Rob, 45, a maintenance worker. "We're all just here for a short time and should live in peace. What's happening is totally crazy."

There were murmurs of agreement. Adam, 31, said the violence was inappropriate but echoed unionist politicians

who have spoken of "legitimate concerns" over immigration. He then accused newcomers of jumping queues for housing and social welfare and imperilling Northern Ireland's way of life. "Our health waiting lists and income supports are being affected and I worry they will spread jihad. No one wants dark ages' values imposed on modern society."

Adam's partner said some immigrants were welcome. "I respect the Asians, they work hard and respect us. But if you're here just taking things for free, well, what do you expect?" That arsonists had targeted businesses which had created jobs appeared to leave her unmoved.

A man in his 20s joined the group to announce that the previous night about 30 Muslims with bricks and bottles had triggered the latest disturbances but that the media had covered this up. Nods greeted the fictitious claim. "We're a community under rage," he said.

Two blocks away Robert, 80, was sitting outside a pub with a pint and a list of grievances. Muslim children had "swamped" his old school, rendering it unrecognisable, he said. "You're tripping over them."

He hoped loyalists and nationalists would make common cause against newcomers. "Both sides want them out. They should have done it years ago. The flags together, that was good, enough of this carry-on - the housing and benefits and money for nothing."

Robert seethed at the police for "protecting" migrants and accused Muslims of rudeness. "They never say hello." Two minutes later a woman in a hijab, walking with a man and young boy, passed on the pavement. She caught Robert's eye, beamed and said hello before continuing on her way. Robert shook his head, unimpressed. "That's the first time that's happened to me."

Foreign-owned hair salons and shops that escaped the violence around Donegall Road have remained open but employees are bracing themselves. There are rumours of fresh gatherings this week or "protests", a term now synonymous with trouble.

"I don't know what's going to happen," said Adam Ahmed, 34, a refugee from Sudan who was serving behind a counter. "Maybe they'll burn this place. But I'll stay. Where else would I go?"

Southport attack Man who took on killer wishes he had been 'more like Bruce Willis'

Matthew Weaver

A man who suffered a 12cm-deep leg wound tackling the Southport attacker said yesterday he wished he could have done more to prevent the fatal stabbings by behaving like a Bruce Willis action hero.

John Hayes, 63, also called on the government to do more to address the root causes of the unrest that has followed the killing of three girls in the attack on a Taylor Swift-themed dance and yoga class. But he said Southport wanted to distance itself from the unrest as it came to terms with the atrocity.

Bebe King, six, Elsie Dot Stancombe, seven, and Alice Dasilva Aguiar, nine, were killed in the knife attack last week that left nine other children and the class teacher injured.

Hayes, who is a director of a company in the same building as the Hart Space studio where the killings happened, described the attacker as "like a crouching tiger" when he confronted him.

"We locked eyes on each other, and he looked pretty menacing," Hayes told BBC Radio 4's Today programme. He added: "I remember lashing out at this guy. I grabbed his arm holding the knife. We weren't at close quarters. I was trying to keep away from this knife. I tried my level best to get hold of it, but then it became apparent that I'd been stabbed in my leg, and there was sort of a bolt of pain, and I fell backwards."

Hayes expressed regret that he had been unable to do more. He said: "My overriding thought at the time was not for myself, but hugely upset that I couldn't have done more to prevent this guy from doing what he did. I used this phrase to the policeman, I said: 'I would like to have been more Bruce Willis about the whole thing.'"

On Tuesday night, mourners gathered for a memorial service for Alice at St Patrick's church in Merseyside.

Hayes has been released from hospital after the leg wound that almost killed him. He said: "I was lucky it narrowly missed my femoral artery, and I've been told if they had caught that then I probably wouldn't be here. I think the blade went into my leg 12cm."

He added: "I don't believe he managed to hurt anybody else after, and I think in the interim period all the children had managed to evacuate the building, apart from those that I believe were locked in the toilet with one of the yoga teachers. So if nothing else, I had prevented him from doing any further harm."

Hayes said he believed the violence that had followed the attack was prompted by frustration about levels of immigration to the UK. He said: "There appears to be a strong undercurrent of discontent for some time about the levels of immigration, and this is just a catalyst or a trigger but I don't think it's the root cause."

He added: "I'm not particularly politically motivated, but I do get dismayed when I hear Keir Starmer and Yvette Cooper talking about how the police are going to come down with the full force of the law on these people. But they're not actually talking about the root cause, and they need to start listening and understanding that they need to address the cause rather than the symptoms.

"Putting these guys in prison isn't going to deal with the sort of core issues."

▼ *John Hayes, 63, is recovering from a stab wound in the leg he received when confronting the attacker*
PHOTOGRAPH: ITV NEWS/PA

Stab victims Inquest opens into deaths of three girls

Mark Brown
North of England correspondent

A coroner who formally opened inquests into the deaths of three girls stabbed in the Southport knife attack has said it is "impossible to adequately articulate the devastating, lifelong effects" of what happened.

Bebe King, six, Alice Dasilva Aguiar, nine, and Elsie Dot Stancombe, seven, died after the stabbing at a Taylor Swift-themed dance class on 29 July. The senior coroner Julie Goulding said yesterday that the opening and adjourning of the inquests was a "short, sombre, formal process" which would allow the criminal process to now take place.

No family members were present for the hearing at Bootle town hall which lasted about 15 minutes.

Goulding said: "It is impossible to adequately articulate the devastating, lifelong effects the truly tragic events of Monday July 29 2024 have had, and will continue to have, on the parents, families and friends of Elsie, Bebe and Alice.

"The three young children were full of life and energy and will be missed beyond any description my woefully inadequate words may attempt to describe. I therefore offer my deepest condolences to Elsie's, Bebe's and Alice's parents, families and friends."

Opening the inquest into Elsie's death, the coroner's officer James Martindale told the hearing: "A group of 26 children, including Elsie, attended a dance yoga studio at Northwood Business Park, 32-34 Hart Street, Southport, for an organised dance party.

"At some time between 11.40am and 11.50am a male, who has now been identified as Axel Rudakubana, attended the premises and is then alleged to have started attacking those present."

Goulding said Elsie's death was pronounced at 1.53pm at 32-34 Hart Street and she was identified by a police officer using a description of the clothing she was wearing and a photograph. The same description was read for Bebe and Alice.

The hearing was told Bebe was pronounced dead at 1.03pm, outside 22-24 Hart Street, further down the street from the dance studio.

Alice was pronounced dead at 1.20am on 30 July at Alder Hey children's hospital in Liverpool.

Five other children and two adults were seriously injured in the attack.

Rudakubana, 18, from Banks, Lancashire, will stand trial next year after being charged with three counts of murder and 10 counts of attempted murder.

Clockwise from top left, Bebe King, six, Elsie Dot Stancombe, seven, and Alice Dasilva Aguiar, nine

NHS delay to trial of puberty blockers prompts fresh row

Denis Campbell
Health policy editor

Patients will not start being recruited into the first clinical trial to examine the effects of puberty blocking drugs until early next year, months later than had been planned, NHS England has admitted.

The trial, which will study the "potential benefits and harms of puberty suppressing hormones for children and young people", was originally due to start this year.

Up to several thousand children and young people in England who are confused about their gender identity may opt to participate in the trial, sources said.

The trial is to bring forward evidence about puberty blockers after Dr Hilary Cass's landmark review of transgender healthcare published in April said the blockers were an unproven treatment which could also harm people taking them.

The drugs are used to suppress the development of the sex hormones testosterone and oestrogen as well as the development of breasts and facial hair. Cass's report said the NHS should exercise "extreme caution" before giving them to young people.

The previous Conservative government banned use of the blockers, and its Labour successor has backed that stance, with Wes Streeting, the health secretary, saying there is a lack of evidence showing they are safe and able to be used with such a vulnerable group of patients.

NHS England's intention to enrol patients into a study that Cass recommended has prompted fresh controversy about the use of the drugs and how the health service should treat under-18s with gender incongruence.

Naomi Cunningham, the chair of the gender campaign group Sex Matters, said: "We understand why the NHS and Dr Hilary Cass believe that clinical trials of puberty blockers are necessary, but we would urge them to reconsider. Such trials are ethically unjustifiable, given the known risks of permanent damage to fertility, sexual functioning and general health."

> *'Clinical trials of the blockers are ethically unjustifiable given the known risks to fertility and health'*
>
> **Naomi Cunningham**
> *Chair of Sex Matters*

However, when NHS England announced in March that it would no longer prescribe the drugs, the trans rights charity Mermaids criticised the move as "deeply disappointing and a further restriction of support offered to trans children and young people through the NHS, which is failing trans youth".

The high court recently ruled that the ban on the use of puberty blockers in England, Scotland and Wales was lawful, rejecting a legal challenge by the advocacy group TransActual and a young person who could not be named.

In her judgment Mrs Justice Lang said: "The Cass review's findings about the very substantial risks and very narrow benefits associated with the use of puberty blockers, and the recommendation that in future the NHS prescribing of puberty blockers to children and young people should only take place in a clinical trial, and not routinely, amounted to powerful scientific evidence in support of restrictions on the supply of puberty blockers on the grounds that they were potentially harmful."

Critics, including the Good Law Project, have argued that the NHS policy of restricting access to puberty blockers in recent years has led to more young people with gender dysphoria taking their own lives. But a government-commissioned review emphatically rejected that claim.

In future all young people who are referred to what NHS England plans to be ultimately eight new regional gender services for under-18s will be told about the trial and routinely asked if they want to participate.

Those services will replace the gender identity development service which was hosted until its disbandment at the end of March by the Tavistock and Portman NHS mental health trust, in London. Two are already operational, run by two children's hospitals, Great Ormond Street, and Alder Hey, in Liverpool.

▼ *Trans Pride in London last month. Puberty blockers were banned by the previous Conservative government*

PHOTOGRAPH: WIKTOR SZYMANOWICZ/ FUTURE PUBLISHING/GETTY IMAGES

Doctors are 'at breaking point', General Medical Council says

Denis Campbell

NHS doctors are "at breaking point", with almost a fifth cutting their hours and two in five refusing to take on extra work in an effort to avoid burnout, research has found.

A third of medics are "struggling" and unable to cope with heavy workloads that force them to regularly put in extra hours to keep up with the demands for care, the General Medical Council (GMC) said.

Its findings paint a grim picture of the working lives, morale and wellbeing of doctors in the UK.

The GMC, which regulates the medical profession, warned that exhausted, overworked doctors could pose a threat to patients' safety. "UK health services are in a critical state and those who work within them are at breaking point," said Charlie Massey, the GMC's chief executive.

The report was based on a survey of a representative sample of 4,288 of the UK's 380,000 doctors undertaken last autumn. It showed that 19% of doctors had cut their hours over the previous year - the highest proportion since records began in 2019. Similarly, intense work pressures had driven 41% to refuse to take on extra duties.

GPs appeared to be the worst affected by the growing need for care and the rundown state of the NHS, which the Labour government has said is "broken" after 14 years of neglect by the Conservatives.

Family doctors were much more likely (28%) to have reduced their hours compared with the average (19%) in the medical profession, and 48% of GPs said they were struggling, far higher than the 33% average for doctors as a whole.

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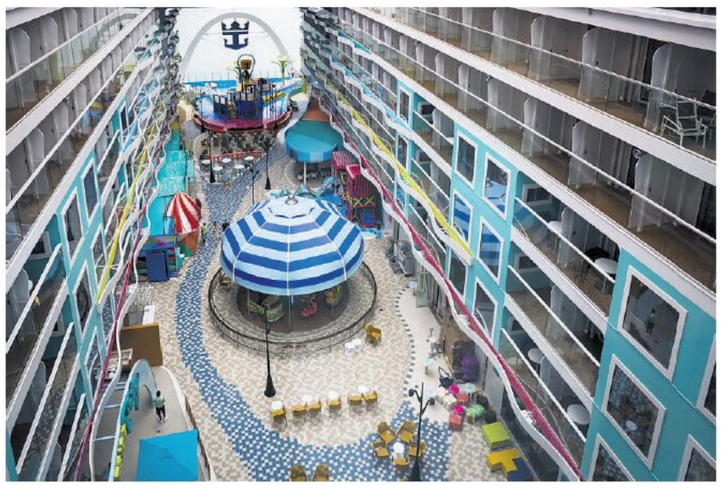
Giant energy-hungry 'cruisezilla' ships have doubled in size since 2000 – study



The world's largest cruise ship, left and below, is 365 metres long, has 20 decks and 40 restaurants, and can carry nearly 10,000 people

PHOTOGRAPHS: REBECCA BLACKWELL/AP; EVA MARIE UZCATEGUI/BLOOMBERG/GETTY

Ajit Niranjan

The huge liners sometimes known as "cruisezillas" are getting bigger than ever, according to new research which has found that the world's biggest cruise ships have doubled in size since 2000.

If the industry's growth does not slow, the biggest ships in 2050 will be eight times larger, in terms of weight, than the Titanic – the largest ship on the seas before it sank a century ago, according to campaign group Transport and Environment (T&E), which found that the number of cruise ships has risen more than twentyfold since 1970. "Today's cruisezillas make the Titanic look like a small fishing boat," said Inesa Ulichina, a sustainable shipping analyst at T&E.

Industry projections suggest about 35 million passengers will travel the seas on cruise ships this year – a 6% increase from pre-pandemic levels which analysts attribute to rising wealth. Research published by JP Morgan in June found that demand for cruises "remains robust", with no historical lead indicators showing signs of softening. It noted that the cruise industry has moved beyond its core demographic of baby boomers to increasingly attract millennials.

But the highly energy intensive sector has a carbon footprint to match, and experts struggling to clean up the industry reacted with alarm to the T&E report. Cruise ships pumped out 17% more carbon dioxide in 2022 than they did in 2019, the report found, and methane emissions shot up 500% over the same time period.

Stefan Gössling, a professor at Linnaeus University in Sweden who researches tourism and climate change, said cruise ships play a minor role in global tourism but that "hardly any form of tourism is more energy intensive than cruises – specifically in combination with a flight to the point of departure."

The report comes as European ports deal with an influx of cruise ships during summer holidays marred by heatwaves made hotter by climate change. After locals complained about pollution and what they see as "overtourism", a handful of ports have cracked down on ships.

Barcelona has announced plans to join Amsterdam in taxing cruise visitors, who often only spend a few hours in the city, while Amsterdam voted to close its central cruise terminal, as Barcelona did in October.

Venice has banned big cruise ships from entering its damaged lagoon.

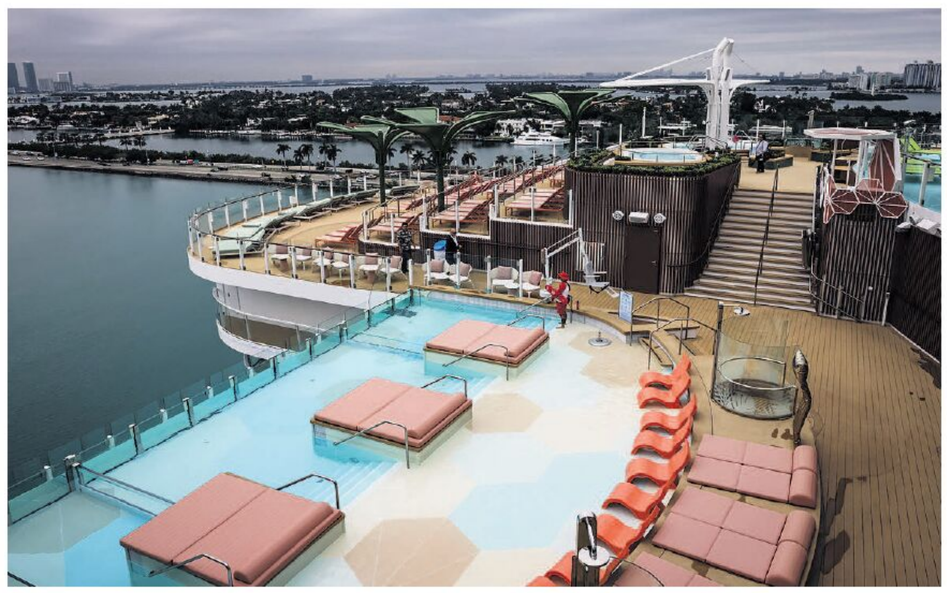
But the industry continues to boom. The world's largest cruise ship was built in Turku, Finland, and launched in January this year by Royal Caribbean. Spread across its 20 decks are 40 restaurants, seven swimming pools, a theatre and a park. The 365-metre-long vessel can carry nearly 10,000 people and is powered by burning liquefied natural gas (LNG) – a fuel that emits less CO2 than regular marine fuel but can heat the planet more through the release of methane.

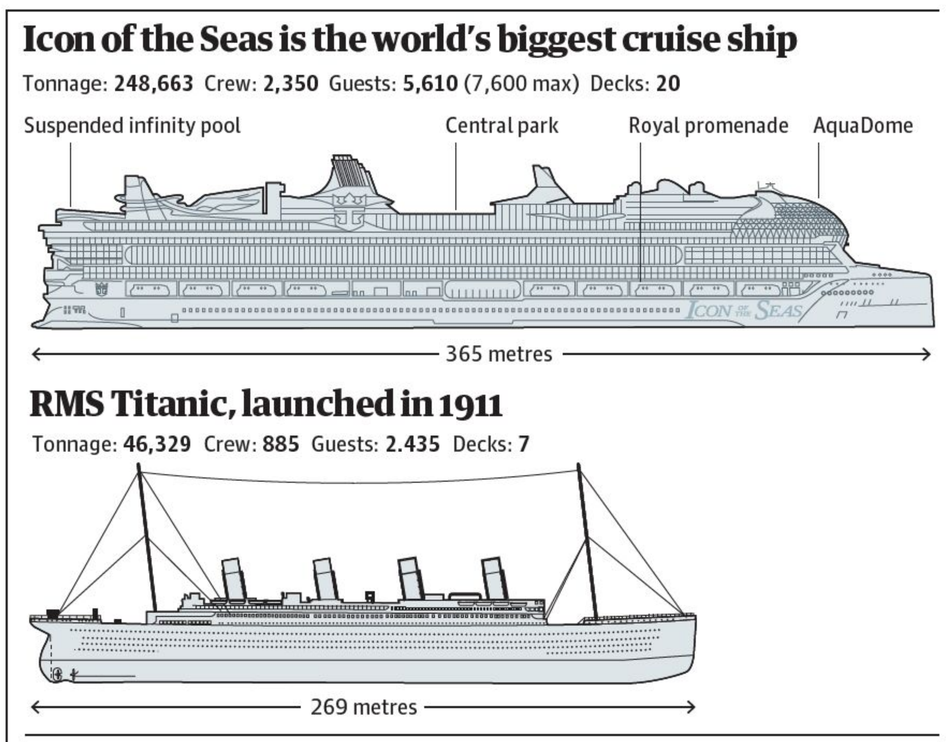
"This study demonstrates the risks of a growing cruise entertainment industry," said Bryan Comer, who runs the marine programme at the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT).

Cruise ships face few engineering restrictions on their size beyond the limits of the ports in which they berth. As demand for luxury travel has boomed, operators have chased economies of scale and built bigger boats. The total lifetime revenue that can be generated by adding extra passengers is greater than the expense of building a bigger ship and hiring more crew, said Comer. "Plus, everyone wants to have the biggest ship."

The biggest ship in 2000 was Royal Caribbean's Voyager of the Seas, with a gross tonnage (GT) of 137,276.

Since then, the average size of the 10 largest ships has doubled from 103,000 GT to 205,000 GT. Cruise Lines International Association, the world's largest cruise ship trade body, said the global fleet was "more energy efficient than ever", with average emissions per ship having fallen 16% in the last five years. However, experts have recommended they switch from burning fossil fuels to cleaner alternatives.





Source: Royal Caribbean International, Royal Museums Greenwich

Vet swims to the rescue of calf herd trapped by rising tide

Amelia Hill

A herd of calves was saved from drowning when a vet engaged in a midnight marathon swim against the tide to guide them to safety.

The 10-week-old animals broke out of Bodrugan Barton farm in Cornwall and became stranded on rocks at Colona beach in the early hours of last Thursday, with the tide rising.

Their plight was discovered after a group of people on a nearby boat were kept awake by the sound of distressed mooing. They alerted police, who contacted the farmer, Robin Kendall, to tell him his Wagyu calves, worth about £250 each, had been spotted off the beach.

The calves had escaped from their field through an open gate before crossing three other fields to reach the shore. They ended up on a rocky area as the rising tide flooded the beach behind them.

"There was probably 30 metres of water between me on the beach and the calves," Kendall's father, Tim, told the Times. "All we could see was calf eyes because it was so dark.

"Shining the torch across the bay, we could see loads of eyes glinting back at us. There wasn't enough space on the rock for the calves to stand on and the water had risen to midway up their bodies, past the top of their legs. They were all scrabbling to stay on this ever-shrinking rock."

The men were able to escort a small number of calves to safety but then had to call on Kendall's wife, Polly Dugmore, a country vet. She leapt into action, donning a wetsuit and lifejacket. Over 90 minutes, she swam the terrified calves to safety.

Kendall used a boat to tow some calves while his father and the coastguard lit the scene with torches.

Dugmore said: "I managed one or two at a time to swim them to shore by just sort of swimming behind them and acting like a bit of a rudder and just kept turning them so that they were heading towards the rocks."

Dugmore said six of the calves had been quite easy to swim to shore but four panicked and tried to swim out to sea. "You get more physical ability by the adrenaline surge," she said.

The herd of 30 calves was trapped by the rising tide off Colona beach

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Supreme court bars Begum's appeal in UK citizenship case

▲ *Shamima Begum, now 24, was 15 when she left London to live in Syria*

Rajeev Syal

Shamima Begum's legal fight to restore her UK citizenship has received a significant blow from the supreme court, which refused to hear an appeal.

Three judges from the UK's final court of appeal ruled "the grounds of appeal do not raise an arguable point of law". It confirms a previous ruling that the then home secretary, Sajid Javid, had the power to set aside concerns that she may have been a victim of child trafficking when she left east London as a schoolgirl and travelled in secret with two friends to live under Islamic State in 2015.

Begum's lawyers argued the 2019 decision to revoke her British citizenship, shortly after she was found in a Syrian refugee camp, was unlawful on four grounds. They argued she was trafficked as a 15-year-old, which the authorities should have prevented. They claimed Begum had the right to address Javid before her citizenship was revoked, which was denied.

The supreme court said, however, that right "would be liable to undermine the effectiveness of such a decision in cases concerned with national security".

Begum's lawyers confirmed they plan to take the case to Strasbourg. Birnberg Peirce said in a statement: "On behalf of Ms Begum we ... will take every possible legal step, including to petition the European court of human rights."

Last year Begum, now 24, lost her first appeal against the decision to revoke her citizenship on national security grounds at the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (Siac). Earlier this year, three judges at the court of appeal unanimously dismissed her bid to overturn the Siac decision.

Maya Foa, the joint executive director of Reprieve, said: "If Shamima Begum has committed crimes, she can be charged and prosecuted in a British court. The UK is more than capable of handling the case of a 15-year-old schoolgirl who was groomed online by an organised trafficking operation.

"Court of appeal judges recognised that Shamima Begum had her citizenship stripped for political reasons, not on the basis of national security, but concluded they were not able to check the extreme powers currently wielded by the home secretary. The supreme court has now agreed that, in practice, stripping Ms Begum's citizenship leaves her stateless.

"Exiling British nationals like Ms Begum is about politics, not the law. The prior government's failed do-nothing approach must be abandoned. Our politicians should take responsibility and repatriate the small number of British families in this position so their cases can be dealt with here in Britain."

Speaking in February, Dame Sue Carr, one of the appeal judges ruling on the case, said: "Ms Begum may well have been influenced and manipulated by others but still have made a calculated decision to travel to Syria and align with Isil [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant].

"It could be argued the decision in Ms Begum's case was harsh. It could also be argued that Ms Begum is the author of her own misfortune. But it is not for this court to agree or disagree with either point of view.

"The only task of the court was to assess whether the deprivation decision was unlawful. Since it was not, Ms Begum's appeal is dismissed."

Tale of a tub
Bath Time for Grace, from Hannah Maule-ffinch's photographic series about a remote community, Life on Jura, Inner Hebrides. The collection is one of the finalists in the documentary category in this year's AOP photography awards.

PHOTOGRAPH: HANNAH MAULE-FFINCH

New gene therapy hope for people with rare blood condition

Tobi Thomas
Health and inequalities correspondent

People in England living with a rare genetic blood disorder are to be offered a "life-changing" new treatment on the NHS. Casgevy, a one-off gene therapy, has been approved for use by NHS England to treat people with a severe form of thalassaemia.

About 460 patients with transfusion-dependent beta thalassaemia could be eligible for the treatment after it was approved by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Nice) yesterday.

Thalassaemia is the name for a group of inherited blood disorders in which too little haemoglobin is produced by the body. It affects about 2,300 people in the UK, mainly those from a Mediterranean, Asian or Middle Eastern background. Many people with beta thalassaemia are not expected to live beyond their 50s.

Casgevy works by editing a gene in a recipient's bone marrow stem cells so that the body produces functioning haemoglobin.

It is hoped that the therapy will be a lifetime cure. In international clinical trials, 93% of patients with beta thalassaemia did not need a blood transfusion for at least a year after receiving the treatment.

Amanda Pritchard, the chief executive of NHS England, said: "This is a historic moment for people living with beta thalassaemia. Ordinarily, patients experience painful side-effects and undergo regular transfusions, which severely impact their quality of life, but this therapy offers people a life free from that as well as the hope of living longer.

"This is the latest in a series of revolutionary gene therapies to be secured by NHS England over the past five years - and thanks to funding through our Innovative Medicines Fund, this one-off therapy will be fast-tracked to patients."

Prof Bola Owolabi, the director of the national healthcare inequalities improvement programme at NHS England, said: "This is an incredibly exciting step forward in the treatment of thalassaemia and could drastically change the lives of those living with what can be an extremely painful condition."

Romaine Maharaj, the executive director of the UK Thalassaemia Society, said: "With Nice's approval of gene therapy for transfusion-dependent thalassaemia, we stand on the brink of a revolutionary breakthrough.This transformative treatment offers patients a life-changing opportunity, enabling them to repair their own cells and embrace a future free from the challenges of their condition. It is a beacon of hope that underscores the power of innovation in medicine."

Ocado begins tests of reusable packaging in home deliveries

Sarah Butler

Ocado is testing offering everyday products such as pasta, rice and washing liquid in refillable packaging in a first by an online supermarket. The scheme will trial a reusable vessel that can hold food or laundry products at no extra cost to customers.

The first phase of the trial, starting this month, will include 2kg packs of basmati rice and 1kg of penne pasta. Phase two, coming later this year, will add 3-litre containers of liquid detergent and fabric conditioner.

The initial trials will involve rice and pasta

The reusable containers are prefilled with product and delivered to customers with the rest of their shop. Containers are returned to drivers when empty and then washed and refilled by suppliers.

Simon Hinks, product director at Ocado Retail, said: "Most people understand the concept and know it works in a physical store, but this trial brings [refillable packaging] straight to customers' doors. Our customers are already used to giving their bags back to our drivers for recycling - so this is a really sensible next step."

Ocado says each vessel can replace up to five single-use plastic items and is designed to be used more than 60 times. It claims that if every household in the UK reused just one item per week, it would eliminate 1.4bn items of single-use packaging a year.

Last year, a report by the environment committee suggested that increasing the uptake of reusables was essential for reducing packaging use in the UK.

Rob Spencer, the director of GoUnpackaged, said: "An industry-wide approach will lead to a reuse system that works for everyone in the supply chain and make it easier for shoppers to engage with reuse via online shopping."

▼ Quincy Hall, left, beat Matthew Hudson-Smith, right, and Muzala Samukonga, centre, in the 400m
PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

'It was crazy': Hudson-Smith pipped at line to take silver in men's 400m final

Daniel Boffey
Stade de France

Matt Hudson-Smith missed out by four-hundredths of a second on a first British Olympic gold in the men's 400m since Chariots of Fire's Eric Liddell but a slew of silvers kept Britain neck-and-neck with France in the Olympic medal table.

It was a lightning-quick affair in the Stade de France last night, with both Quincy Hall, of the US, and Hudson-Smith, from Birmingham, putting in the fastest runs of their careers in a race that was decided in the final few metres. Hall's 43.40 was the fifth fastest of all time, while the British runner, who had been favourite for gold, beat his own European record with a time of 43.44. Muzala Samukonga of Zambia took bronze in 43.74.

Hudson-Smith, who was leading for much of the home straight, was furious with himself, burying his head in his father's shoulder in the stands while Hall, wrapped in the stars and stripes, revelled in the crowd's acclamation.

For all of his evident disappointment, the silver was a tribute to the British racer's resilience after coming back from a suicidal moment just three years ago when injuries and a loss of sponsorship, along with huge medical debts, had brought him to his lowest ebb.

Hudson-Smith was not to emulate Liddell's triumph in Paris in 1924, as immortalised in the 1981 film Chariots of Fire, but speaking after the race he recognised his achievements, adding that his "time is going to come".

He said: "It was crazy. Sometimes the journey is better than the result and it's been a hell of a journey. I'm just grateful.

"I've got an Olympic silver medal and how many people can say that? I've been the bridesmaid a couple of times now but my time is coming. I'm just happy and grateful. My family are here. I didn't know they were here so that was a bit of a shock. I hate them watching me and my parents don't really watch me as they hate watching me as much as I hate them watching so it's crazy that they came."

Reflecting on the race, he added: "I ran it exactly the way my coach told me to. We knew it was going to come down to the last 50 and I thought I had it but he had an extra gear. I hit the gear a little bit too late. As we came up he had one step on me and that was it. But I'm healthy. This is just the start and time to build."

Both Britain and France have won 49 medals in Paris, although the host nation have 13 golds to the British 12, putting them in fourth place behind the US, China and Australia.

A gold had seemed within reach for Team GB in the velodrome earlier yesterday as well but a saddle slip sent the men's pursuit team of Ethan Hayter, Dan Bigham, Ethan Vernon, Charlie Tanfield and Ollie Wood off course - and that allowed Australia to top the podium.

Team GB had been straining to make up 0.17sec over the final 500 metres of the 4km race when Hayter appeared to touch wheels with a team-mate and come off his saddle.

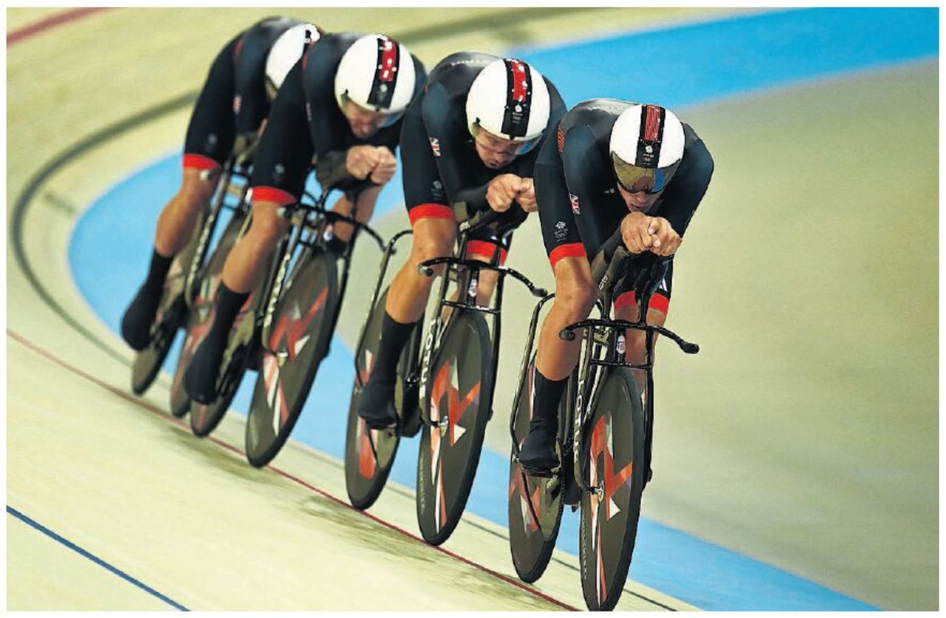
Hayter, 25, from London, said: "We were so close and I could see it. It was nearly five laps at the end and I just really gave too much, and my whole body went weak and I really struggled to hold myself on the bike in the end.

"Sorry to the guys, but I think we gave everything and we can be proud of that silver medal. It was really there for the taking for us. We went out to get it but just came short in the end, so it's a shame.

Bigham, 32, from Newcastle-under-Lyme, suggested they had asked too much of Hayter as anchor. He said: "We rode the fastest ride we have ever done on every ride. We were in the best form and the best kit, and literally we all gave it everything.

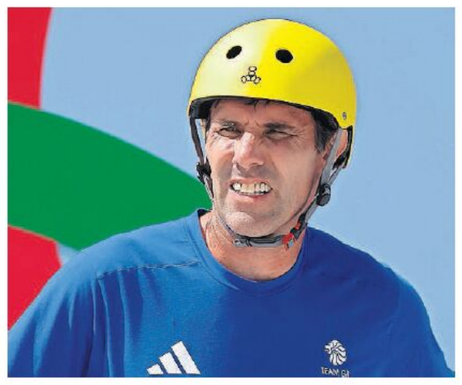
"You are riding quicker than you have ever ridden before, and as Ethan said, we probably gave it that little bit too much. We are really leaning on him at the moment because he is anchoring the team and he has the legs to do it. At the end of the day, Ethan is still human ... and we maybe

◀ Team GB's George Mills and Spain's Thierry Ndikumwenayo take a tumble in the first round of the 5,000m



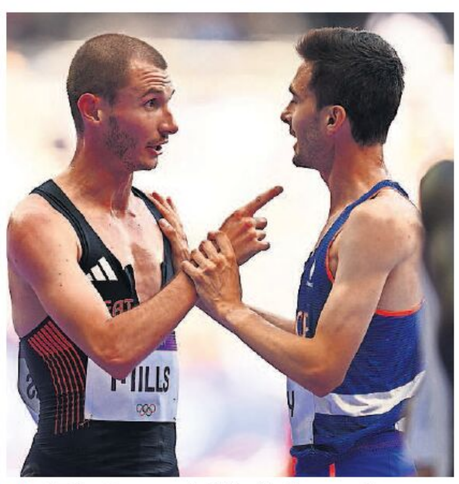
▲ Ethan Hayter, Daniel Bigham, Charlie Tanfield and Ethan Vernon on their way to a silver medal in the men's team pursuit event

PHOTOGRAPH: RICARDO MAZALAN/AP



▼ Bronze medallists Elinor Barker, Josie Knight, Anna Morris, Jessica Roberts; (right) Andrew Macdonald

PHOTOGRAPH: MATTHEW CHILDS/ REUTERS



▲ GB's George Mills, left, confronts France's Hugo Hay after their heat

gave him a bit too much work to do there."

The cycling silver marked the 1,000th medal for Team GB at the Olympics. British and Northern Irish athletes have competed at every single Games in the modern period, since the first in Athens in 1896.

Britain's Elinor Barker, Anna Morris, Jess Roberts and Josie Knight added to the grand total by taking a bronze in the women's team pursuit, making it four medals from four events in the velodrome. Morris, 29, from Cardiff, said: "It was my last chance to take in that atmosphere of this Games and I was already thinking I wanted to do it all over again and I hadn't even done my final race yet."

Team GB's 51-year-old skateboarder Andy Macdonald won over the crowd - but not the judges - with his outing at the skate park. The veteran's run was greeted with whoops from the stands - especially when he performed the signature nollie heelflip move that he invented in the 1990s - but his high score of 77.66 only took him to 18th place.

George Mills will have a chance to add to the Paris medal haul after he was reinstated to Saturday's 5,000m final. Mills had an altercation with France's Hugo Hay after a collision on the final lap brought him and three other runners down but left the Frenchman on his feet. Officials later agreed the British runner had been disadvantaged and put him through to the final.

Mills, 25, said: "I think it's pretty clear. I got stepped out on as I was about to kick in the home straight and boom, the French lad took me down." Asked what he had said when he confronted Hay, he replied: "I'm probably not allowed to say."

There remains uncertainty over whether the 10km swim marathons will be raced in Paris as a result of the level of *E coli* in the Seine. The women's race is scheduled to start at 7.30am today, but the swimmers will find out whether it is going ahead at 4am. The men's race is due to start at the same time tomorrow.

'Bizarre' Coca-Cola criticised over level of waste

Angelique Chrisafis
Paris

◀ A server at the Games in Paris fills an 'eco-cup' from a plastic bottle. Green campaigners have criticised the practice as 'surreal'

PHOTOGRAPH: ED ALCOCK/ THE GUARDIAN

The Paris Olympics promised to be the most eco-friendly Games in history, reducing by half the amount of single-use plastic compared with London 2012.

But French environmental groups have criticised what they called a "bizarre" and "surreal" sight at certain venues' drinks stands run by the main sponsor, Coca-Cola. Servers can be seen filling plastic reusable, so-called "eco-cups" from 50cl plastic bottles, amassing sacks of empty bottles for recycling.

Environmental campaigners said millions of plastic drink bottles being needlessly poured into millions of plastic cups was a double use of plastic and amounted to "greenwashing".

Coca-Cola, one of the world's top plastics producers, is the only company supplying the 18m drinks at the Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games, including Coke, Fanta and Sprite, which are sold to paying spectators and provided to athletes at the edge of the pitch.

The company said it "supports the Games' ambitions to reduce single-use plastic" and was committed to reducing waste. It said more than half of its drinks at the Olympics - 9.6m - were "without single-use plastic" after it installed 700 soda fountains and brought in glass bottles.

But it added that where soda fountains could not be installed, about 6.2m drinks would be served to the public from recycled plastic bottles and would be poured into reusable cups. Coca-Cola would keep the empty plastic bottles in order to ensure they were all recycled. It said it could not set up soda fountains at all Games sites because of technical and logistical constraints.

At Games venues including the aquatics centre, Roland Garros and the Stade de France, when spectators were given a plastic cup that could be returned to reclaim a €2 (£1.70) deposit, many were surprised to see it filled from a small plastic bottle.

Ingrid Vanhée, from the biodiversity association Noé, posted photos of plastic cups and bottles at the Stade de France, saying she felt spectators were being "taken for idiots" and that the company was trying to "win the gold medal for greenwashing".

The centrist MP Philippe Bolo posted from a handball event asking why, if reusable cups were being used, they were not being filled from fountains.

The regional councillor and French Green party spokesperson Sophie Bussière said: "This is not a good showcase for France or Coca-Cola. We really cannot keep ruining magnificent moments of collective celebration such as the Olympics with this type of behaviour of environmental delinquents."

> *'We cannot keep ruining the Olympics with this behaviour'*
>
> **Sophie Bussière**
> *French Green party*

Marine Bonavita, project leader at the NGO Zero Waste France, said: "Taking a plastic bottle and pouring it into a plastic reusable cup is not our vision of zero plastic ... It is not just shocking to NGOs but to citizens, and that's why people are posting about it on social media."

Refreshments for many athletes are served in sealed, single-use, recycled plastic bottles to guard against drinks being spiked. This required an exemption on public health grounds from France's anti-waste law, which bans the distribution of single-use plastic bottles in venues open to the public.

There are about 13m reusable plastic cups available to spectators. Muriel Papin, of the association No Plastic in My Sea, said it was "surreal" to see drink from plastic bottles poured into plastic cups, describing it as "heresy, a waste of time and two plastics instead of one".

She said that because the reusable cups were eye-catchingly branded with Coca-Cola colours specific to the Paris Games, some spectators could see them as collectors' items and not return them. "If people don't give back the reusable cups, if they take them home and put them in a cupboard or throw them in a bin in the street - it's waste," Papin said.

At the Stade de France, several people said they had not realised they could return them. Others said they would keep them as souvenirs.

Rikke, a marketing manager from Denmark, watching the athletics, said: "I like the cup's design, I've got Hard Rock drinking glasses at home and I'll add this to them."

'Despair' Indian wrestler over 50kg limit by weight of banana

Ewan Murray
Paris

India's Olympic contingent were left devastated yesterday after one of their marquee athletes, the female wrestler Vinesh Phogat, was disqualified hours before her gold medal match for exceeding the 50kg restriction by the weight of a medium-sized banana (100 grams) despite cutting off her hair in an attempt to fight for gold.

The prime minister of India, Narendra Modi, posted on social media about his "despair" over the highly unusual situation involving the athlete, nicknamed the Lioness of India.

Phogat had been due to face Sarah Hildebrandt of the United States in this evening's final. She had been within the designated weight before three fights on Tuesday but was tested again yesterday morning in accordance with competition rules. Phogat had been running and skipping overnight to lower her weight, but failed by 100 grams.

Vinesh Phogat even cut her hair to pass the test

Modi called Phogat a "champion among champions" and "India's pride" in a message to the wrestler.

Abhinav Bindra, a shooter who won India's first individual Olympic gold in 2008, said he was "completely gutted". "Sometimes you don't need a gold medal to be a true champion to people," he added.

India's chief medical officer, Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala, said: "Wrestlers usually participate in a weight category less than their natural weight. It gives them an advantage since they are fighting with [opponents who aren't as strong]. The process of weight cut involves a calculated restriction of food and water along with sweating from exercises and sauna till the morning weigh-in.

"Vinesh's nutritionist had calculated this to be 1.5kg. However, Vinesh was found to be 100g over her 50kg weight category."

Phogat had reduced Japanese journalists to tears by defeating the top seed, Yui Susaki, in the opening round.

'Shocking' rise in antisemitic incidents in UK over past year

Harriet Sherwood

The number of antisemitic incidents in the UK more than doubled in the first half of 2024 compared with the same period last year, with the rise attributed to the war in Gaza, according to a leading Jewish charity. While 1,978 incidents were recorded for the first six months of this year, in 2023 the number was 964.

The Community Security Trust (CST), which monitors antisemitism and provides security for Jewish communities in Britain, called the figures unprecedented and shocking.

"This is a hatred that, while deeply rooted, adapts to current social, political and cultural contexts. The most common form of political or ideological discourse present in antisemitic incidents reported to CST throughout the first half of 2024 referenced, or was linked to, Israel, Gaza, the Hamas terror attack or the subsequent war, alongside anti-Jewish language or targeting," the CST said.

There was evidence of "political or ideological rhetoric or motivations" in more than seven in 10 incidents recorded by the CST.

Many of the incidents involved schoolchildren, school staff or school property, and the CST also logged a sharp rise in anti-Jewish hate incidents on university campuses and other higher education settings.

The report said: "One reason why incident levels have remained so high for so long is that this war has lasted longer than any previous conflicts in Israel and Gaza. Images of death and destruction have continued to circulate in mainstream and social media, anti-Israel protests have persisted, as have vigils for the hostages kidnapped by Hamas." This had led to "heightened feelings of uncertainty and fear among Jewish people, who know that they may become proxy targets for hostility towards Israel".

The CST recorded 121 incidents of assault, an increase of 41%, while cases of damage to Jewish property rose by 246%.

Yvette Cooper, the home secretary, said: "The soaring levels of antisemitic hate outlined in this report are truly appalling, and we must never relent in our work to root out this hatred in all its forms."

In Scotland and Wales, in store alcohol prices may be higher and alcohol may not be sold before 10am in accordance with Scottish laws.
South African Sauvignon Blanc Rosé 75cl, £4.99 per 75cl. Offer available 5 – 11 August. Subject to availability. Offer available while stocks last.
Products and prices may vary in store, Scotland, Wales and Aldi Local and online.
be drinkaware.co.uk

Warning after surge in weapon attacks on cats

Helena Horton
Environment reporter

Weapon attacks on cats in England and Wales more than doubled in the first half of this year compared with the same period in 2023, prompting a warning by the RSPCA about a rise in violence against animals.

Data released yesterday by the animal charity shows 44 cats were shot with a weapon such as an air gun, slingshot, catapult or crossbow from January to June 2024, compared with 18 in the same period last year.

Weapon attacks on animals in general have risen, with a 23% increase from 300 in 2022 to 370 last year.

In 2024, 44 cats have been shot with a weapon

'Unspeakably cruel'

23%
The scale of the increase in reported weapon attacks on animals, from 300 in 2022 to 370 last year

61
Number of weapon attacks recorded in Kent from 2020-23. In Greater London the figure was 52

896
The total number of weapon attacks on animsals recorded between 2020 and 2023

The RSPCA has advised people to remain vigilant to such abuse, with cases usually peaking in the summer months. The RSPCA lead wildlife officer, Geoff Edmond, said people often committed the acts of violence for amusement.

"It is unspeakably cruel and totally unacceptable to shoot animals for 'fun' like this – or to harm them for target practice – but, sadly, we receive nearly 200 reports every year."

Cats often sustained life-changing injuries, commonly blindness, from being shot with a weapon and in some cases they died.

The RSPCA has highlighted the case of Rocket, a tabby found in Nottinghamshire who had been shot twice by an airgun. He lost an eye and was left with life-changing injuries.

The charity said crossbow attacks were on the rise, with 11 incidents in 2023, compared with seven in 2022, and incidents involving catapults and slingshots also rose, from 27 to 28.

A total of 896 weapon attacks on animals were recorded between 2020 and 2023. The highest number of attacks was in Kent, where 61 incidents were recorded. This is followed by Greater London with 52, and the West Midlands and Merseyside, which had 36 incidents each.

Edmond added: "These weapon attacks are horrific, but what we see is likely only the tip of the iceberg.

"While most people will be appalled by attacking animals in this way, sadly, the RSPCA's experience shows that there are people out there who are deliberately targeting wildlife, pets and farm animals with guns, catapults and crossbows. These weapons cause horrific pain and suffering.

"But we are doing all we can to change things. As more and more police forces are seeing worrying levels of weapons-related incidents, we are helping to develop Operation Lakeshot, a police-led partnership initiative initially established by Essex police and the Metropolitan police, which aims to tackle these worrying crimes against wildlife."

Recent incidents recorded by the RSPCA team include Narla, a three-year-old cat from Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire, who in April was shot in the abdomen with an air gun and the pellet ruptured her spleen. Thanks to expert veterinary care, she survived her ordeal.

A fox in Chatham, Kent, had to be euthanised after being shot with a catapult by a group of teenagers in May this year.

In July, a dead hedgehog was found in Newbury with a 10mm diameter metal ball lodged in his skull, suggesting he had been targeted with a catapult.

Stakeknife inquiry chief voices concern over timing of fresh documents from MI5

Daniel Boffey
Chief reporter

The police chief investigating murders allegedly carried out by Freddie Scappaticci, a British agent in the IRA known as Stakeknife, has expressed alarm that hundreds of pages of files providing "new investigative leads" have been found by MI5 a year after Scappaticci's death.

Sir Iain Thomas Livingstone, a former head of Police Scotland who leads Operation Kenova, has written to the Northern Ireland secretary, Hilary Benn, to highlight the troubling timing and warn that the new intelligence raises questions about MI5's previous claims of knowledge about Stakeknife.

Scappaticci, who was accused of torturing and murdering multiple victims while simultaneously running an IRA enforcement unit and working for the British state in the 1980s, escaped justice when he died in hiding last April at the age of 77.

Operation Kenova has been investigating Stakeknife's crimes for nearly eight years and had been promised unfettered access to intelligence by the security services. Despite this, an interim report in March by Livingstone's predecessor, Jon Boutcher, had complained of apparent attempts by MI5 to stall the investigation.

In his letter to Benn, Livingstone reveals he was informed in April that MI5 had found fresh files relating to Stakeknife. Further intelligence was discovered in subsequent weeks and Livingstone was told last month of another find.

The belated disclosures come weeks before the introduction of the controversial Legacy Act, which shuts down inquests and limits investigations related to the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

Livingstone writes to Benn: "It is, of course, of great concern that further material continues to be given to Operation Kenova by MI5 nearly eight years after Operation Kenova commenced; after all the DPPNI [Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland] determinations in the prosecution reports have been made; following the publication of the Operation Kenova interim report; and weeks before the introduction of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023."

Livingstone writes that the documents also seemingly contradict evidence previously given by MI5 about Stakeknife, who went into hiding after his identity was revealed in 2003 by the media. Livingstone writes: "From the due diligence carried out, our initial assessment is that the files received from MI5 contain significant new material which appears to point to new investigative leads not previously known."

▲ *Freddie Scappaticci was a British agent in the IRA known as Stakeknife*

> ***'The files contain material which appears to point to new leads'***
>
> **Sir Iain Thomas Livingstone**

He concedes the material "does not indicate further murders of individuals that involved the agent Stakeknife" but adds that it "does appear to cast doubt on some of the documents and witness evidence obtained by Kenova and some statements made in the interim report".

The interim Kenova report examined 101 murders associated with the IRA's "nutting squad", responsible for interrogating and torturing those suspected of passing information to the security services. Sources close to the investigation said Stakeknife could be personally linked to at least 14 murders and 15 abductions.

Operation Kenova has cost £40m but has not resulted in a single prosecution despite multiple recommendations to the prosecution service in Northern Ireland. It is prohibited from naming Scappaticci as Stakeknife due to a government policy but a request has been made to make a formal identification in its final report, due before spring.

Radar network to protect UK from 'space warfare' to be built in Wales

Jessica Elgot
Hannah Devlin

Plans for a network of radars tracking deep space activity to help protect the UK from "space warfare" are to go ahead in Pembrokeshire, despite the opposition of local campaigners.

The 27 radar dishes planned for the St Davids peninsula will be 20 metres high and able to track objects as small as a football, and will be part of a network planned around the globe.

The Deep Space Advanced Radar Capability (Darc) will be developed at Cawdor barracks by the Ministry of Defence (MoD). The plans are part of the Aukus defence partnership between the UK, US and Australia and will involve a network of ground-based radars in all three countries to monitor, track and identify objects more than 22,000 miles from Earth.

John Healey, the defence secretary, said there would be local consultation on the plans but that they would secure jobs and were crucial for future defence.

"Space plays a crucial role in our daily lives – from our mobile phones to banking services," he said. "It is also used by UK defence to conduct vital tasks such as supporting military operations, navigating forces and gathering intelligence."

Healey added: "This new radar programme will not only enhance our awareness of deep space but also help protect our space assets alongside our closest partners."

▲ *The installation of 26 radar dishes is planned on the St Davids peninsula in Pembrokeshire*
PHOTOGRAPH: DREW BUCKLEY/ALAMY

Space is an emerging frontier for warfare in a world that is increasingly dependent on satellite technology.

"This is a big deal in the sense that we don't have enough space domain awareness," said Dr Mark Hilborne, who leads the space security research group at King's College London. "There is a concern about increasing military activity and increasing belligerence in space. We need more eyes on the sky."

Darc's reach matches the distance of geostationary orbit rather than being deep space. It is designed to provide more detailed intelligence about the nature and activity of satellites, which are projected to increase in number from about 9,000 this year to 60,000 by 2030, with applications including telecommunications, GPS, weather forecasting and military surveillance.

"You don't always know what's on board a satellite or what its operators' intentions are, and whether they are malevolent or worrying," said Hilborne.

Earlier this year, the Pentagon accused Russia of launching a "counter space weapon" that was seen stalking a US government satellite. In another instance, a "Russian doll" satellite released a second smaller satellite that launched a projectile in a presumed demonstration of anti-satellite capabilities.

There also have been increasing instances of GPS and communications satellites being electronically jammed and the use of lasers to temporarily "dazzle" satellites' optical sensors.

"Those kinds of subthreshold activities are happening all the time," said Hilborne.

The radar system is expected to be operational by 2030 and work can start to redevelop the site once safety requirements and environmental impact assessments are submitted.

Cawdor barracks is home to a British amy signals regiment that is due to relocate from 2028, and the MoD said plans to redevelop the site for the radar station would secure at least 100 jobs.

However, local residents launched a campaign in May calling the Darc project "one of the most health-hazardous, tourism-ruining, skyline blighting military installations ever proposed anywhere in the UK".

Prospective homebuyers focus more on beds than boilers

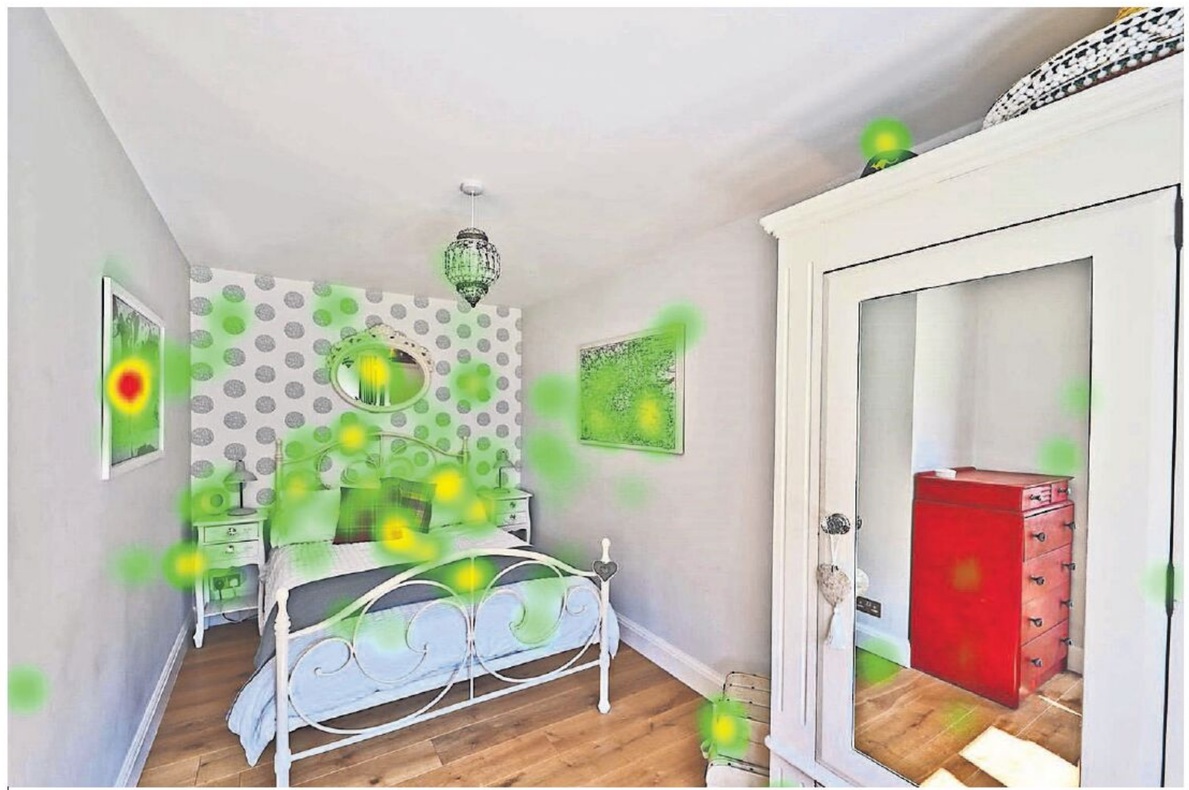
Mahika Ravi Shankar

A fifth of homebuyers spend less than 20 minutes looking at a home before deciding to make an offer, with viewers more likely to focus on artworks and furniture than structural features, research suggests.

The average time looking around a property before settling on buying it was about 49 minutes, according to a survey of people who have attended viewings in the past five years.

With the latest data from Halifax released yesterday putting the average UK property price tag at £291,268, that equates to just under £6,000 a minute of deciding time.

Of the 2,000 people polled, 28% had only visited a property once before putting in an offer, with the number of viewings averaging 2.1.



Heatmaps show which elements in a room got the most attention, with househunters who wore eye-tracking glasses focusing more on paintings and mirrors than ceilings and floors
PHOTOGRAPH: ZOOPLA

49
Average time, in minutes, spent looking around a property before deciding to buy it

28%
Proportion of 2,000 people surveyed who visited a property only once before putting in an offer

Impermanent, cosmetic features appear to draw just as much – if not more – attention than home essentials. A quarter of people admitted to looking at pictures of the family who were living in the property, while a similar proportion (24%) check out their home tech.

Nearly two-fifths (37%) admire their furniture and one in seven (14%) go as far as to peek into drawers and cabinets. One in eight (13%) test how comfortable the owner's bed and sofa are, according to the poll carried out for the property website Zoopla by Mortar Research in June.

That finding is backed up by separate research by Zoopla, which used eye-tracking glasses to record what five homebuyers were really looking at while viewing a house.

Rather than structural, practical elements, the viewers were drawn to the ornamental aspects of a property – often items that would not be there when the next occupants moved in.

Mirrors, plants and pictures got more attention than flooring, walls and features, the heatmaps showed.

Some of the most gazed-at items were decorative, such as paintings in the dining room and bedrooms, or the residents' possessions including cosmetics or hand soaps.

In the hallway, more time was spent looking at coat racks, rugs and ornaments than the ceiling, flooring, radiator and walls. According to the survey, just half of prospective buyers checked the condition of the boiler in a new property. Fewer checked the water pressure (25%), wifi strength (24%), attic (23%) or cellar (19%).

Damp can cause major, even dangerous, issues further down the line, but 38% of buyers did not check for it, and 58% said they had failed to check for condensation. This is corroborated by the eye-tracking results in the bathroom and shower.

The ceiling, which is most prone to damp and condensation, was looked at for the lowest proportion of time – 3%, or just 0.34 seconds.

Daniel Copley, a consumer expert at Zoopla, said it was important for homebuyers, about to embark on the most expensive purchase many will ever make, to be fully informed. "It's crucial to inspect all elements, in order to save yourself time and money further down the line."

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◀ *The outdoor setting for Jordan Fein's production emphasises the community's vulnerability*
PHOTOGRAPH: MARC BRENNER

Theatre Spine-tingling classic makes most of sublime setting

Fiddler on the Roof
Regent's Park Open Air theatre, London
★★★★★

Mark Lawson

By starting Fiddler on the Roof at 7.45pm, Jordan Fein's revival contrived that Sunrise, Sunset – the musical's devastating lament for the speed of spent life – was sung as darkness fell on Regent's Park. Only outdoor theatre could contrive such a sublime effect.

But there are other benefits. Trevor Nunn's memorable 2018 version used the tight confines of the Menier Chocolate Factory to emphasise the cheek-by-jowl poverty and claustrophobia of the Anatevka shtetl in 1905, while Fein uses his venue to emphasise the community's vulnerability – literally with no roof over their heads and surrounded by woods from which the Russian tsar's pogrom police suddenly appear.

Where Nunn emphasised tragedy, Fein foregrounds comedy, setting the piece in the tradition of deflective Jewish humour from Sholem Aleichem (Fiddler's source author) to Mel Brooks. Tevye's Dream, in which the milkman father of five daughters resurrects his late mother-in-law to break a wedding bargain, is played as farce (choreography by Julia Cheng).

As Tevye, Broadway import Adam Dannheisser perfectly times the one-liners ("Am I gonna have another dream?" when another filial match unravels) but also conveys the character's deep faith: in If I Were a Rich Man, the true bonus of wealth is more time for synagogue. Lara Pulver as his wife, Golde, radiates the brains and determination – a 60-year-old show about marrying off daughters is surprisingly feminist – that have made an arranged marriage in extreme poverty work.

Fein (who revolutionised Oklahoma! at the Young Vic) and musical supervisor Mark Aspinall subtly tweak the soundscape. The title character, thrillingly fiddled by Raphael Papo, shadows Tevye, duetting and adding cadenzas. The show's final notes are a surprise, throwing the action forwards.

As score and text, Fiddler is not, for me, quite the equal of two other Broadway classics simultaneously available in London: Guys & Dolls (at the Bridge) and Kiss Me, Kate (at the Barbican). Some of their best songs come after the interval, while Fiddler frontloads its showstoppers. But the work always soars in performance and this version demonstrates its depth.

The theatre has employed extra security owing to pro-Palestinian protests. Beyond the horror of creatives being targeted for assumed affiliations, the reaction misrepresents the piece.

It was written in 1964 to reflect the Holocaust through an earlier persecution. But later productions, including this one, invite the audience to see the chorale, Anatevka – spine-tinglingly sung here by two dozen cast members with the cohesion of a real community – as a broader reflection of displacement and refugee status.

Until 21 September

▲ *Amanda Abbington as a mother whose daughter has been raped*

Theatre Flawed but vital memoir of a real-life trauma

When It Happens to You
Park theatre, London
★★☆☆☆

Chris Wiegand

When her daughter was raped, the novelist Tawni O'Dell felt that her maternal promise to protect her had been broken. In the following months, their relationship deteriorated as each attempted to find their own way through trauma. O'Dell wrote the "theatrical memoir" as part of that process and performed in its off-Broadway production in 2019.

In the European premiere, Amanda Abbington takes the role of the mother, Tara, and Rosie Day is the daughter, Esme. A stylised and erratic opening sequence establishes a pattern of flashing back and forward so the raw anguish of events in the moment is tempered by a reflective tone.

At its most powerful, the play captures a gulf of disconnection between parent and child. O'Dell focuses on the mother and daughter but also includes Esme's brother Connor (Miles Molan) and supporting roles (Tok Stephen), all four actors ever-present on stage.

There is a stream of humour, bringing a verisimilitude of the fun and levity in family dynamics, but a crucial, palpable sense of familial bonds is absent. There is also too much thinly sketched plot and some needless peripheral roles.

Zahra Mansouri's set establishes urban anonymity and the freezing effect of shock. Jez Bond's 90-minute production has the pace of a thriller, with abrupt switches in Sherry Coenen's lighting and jagged bursts of sound by Melanie Wilson. It can all distract from the script.

Yet the play foregrounds the long-term effects of sexual assault. Its message remains essential, even if the medium is flawed.

Until 31 August.
Rape Crisis offers support on 0808 500 2222 in England and Wales, 0808 801 0302 in Scotland or 0800 0246 991 in Northern Ireland

Fringe Raw and radical one-woman show brings a country great to life

June Carter Cash: The Woman, Her Music and Me
Summerhall, Edinburgh
★★★★☆

Mark Fisher

The most powerful country songs are those written from the heart. In the words of Harlan Howard, it is about "three chords and the truth". Actor Charlene Boyd has applied the same principle to her bold and exposing one-woman play.

It is less a show about June Carter Cash than a show about making a show about the feted singer.

Spiked with political rage, it is a story of Boyd finding common voice with the woman who co-wrote Ring of Fire only to be eclipsed in fame by her husband Johnny Cash and repeatedly sidelined by a sexist industry.

The play begins like a tribute act as Boyd prowls the cabaret tables with big hair, long dress and Appalachian accent. But this is a play started in lockdown when Boyd was newly divorced and feeling a mother's guilt, and it is not long before the actor looks behind the singer's cornball comedy act at the Grand Ole Opry to find a woman of resilience and creativity.

"Anyone can write a life of June Carter Cash," the singer's daughter Carlene tells Boyd when she meets her on a 10-day American odyssey.

"But only you can write about why this story matters to you."

In Cora Bissett's inventive production for the National Theatre of Scotland and Grid Iron, on an expansive set by Shona Reppe that is half dressing room, half Nashville stage, it is advice Boyd accepts wholeheartedly. She is not above joining her three-piece band on I Walk the Line, but the show's tremendous emotive power comes from her willingness to talk about class, money, insecurity, misogyny and motherhood directly.

Far from fan worship, this is an act of artistic connection – raw, radical and revealing.

Until 24 August. Then touring until 22 September

▲ *Charlene Boyd brings out June Carter Cash's strength and creativity*

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NHS IT firm faces fine of £6m over hack of medical records

Matthew Weaver

A software provider faces being fined more than £6m over a 2022 ransomware attack that disrupted NHS and social care services in England, the data protection regulator has announced.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) said it had provisionally found that Advanced Computer Software Group had failed to implement measures to protect the personal information of 82,946 people who were affected by the attack, which included some sensitive information.

The firm provides IT and software services to organisations around the country, including the NHS and other health providers, handling information as part of its role as a data processor.

In August 2022, hackers accessed the firm's health and care systems via a customer account that did not have multifactor authentication.

The attack led to disruption to critical services such as NHS 111, and data taken included phone numbers and medical records, as well as details on gaining entry to the homes of nearly 900 people.

An internal NHS England memo leaked to the Guardian at the time disclosed: "A number of NHS services, including NHS 111, some urgent treatment centres and some mental health providers use software that have been taken offline." It added: "This presents a significant challenge to these services."

The information commissioner, John Edwards, said the incident showed how important it was to prioritise information security.

He said: "Losing control of sensitive personal information will have been distressing for people who had no choice but to put their trust in health and care organisations.

"Not only was personal information compromised but we have also seen reports that this incident caused disruption to some health services, disrupting their ability to deliver patient care.

"A sector already under pressure was put under further strain due to this incident."

Edwards said he hoped the fine would encourage companies to better protect private data.

He said: "For an organisation trusted to handle a significant volume of sensitive and special category data, we have provisionally found serious failings in its approach to information security prior to this incident.

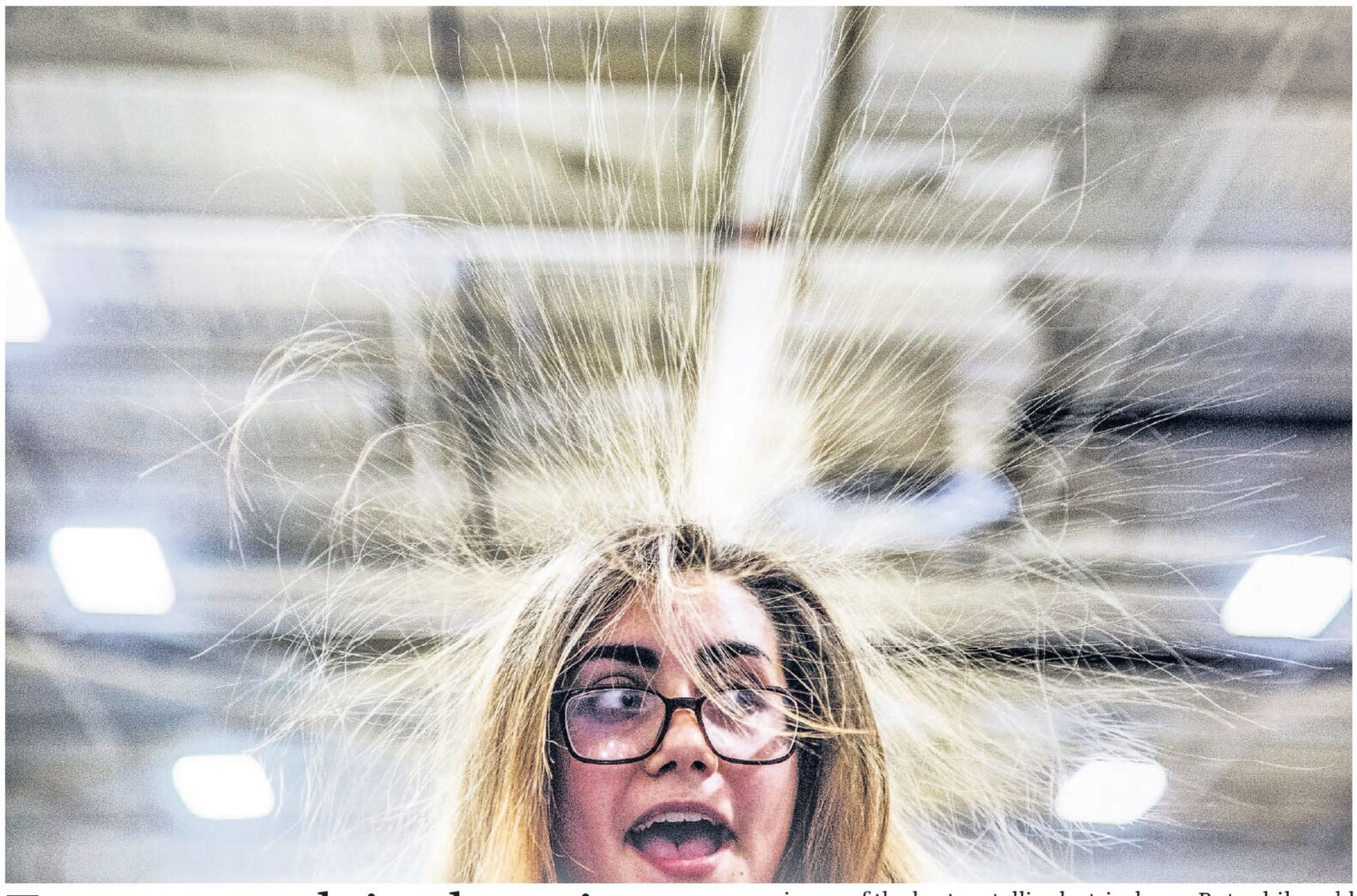
"Despite already installing measures on its corporate systems, our provisional finding is that Advanced failed to keep its healthcare systems secure. We expect all organisations to take fundamental steps to secure their systems, such as regularly checking for vulnerabilities, implementing multifactor authentication and keeping systems up to date with the latest security patches.

"I am choosing to publicise this provisional decision today as it is my duty to ensure other organisations have information that can help them to secure their systems and avoid similar incidents in the future.

"I urge all organisations, especially those handling sensitive health data, to urgently secure external connections with multifactor authentication."

The ICO said its findings were provisional and no conclusion should yet be drawn on whether there had been a breach of data protection law.

The regulator said it would consider any representations from Advanced before making a final decision on the matter.



In warm weather there is often less water in the air to carry away electric charges, which can result in static

PHOTOGRAPH: WHITNEY HAYWARD/ PORTLAND PRESS HERALD

Experts explain the science behind foiling static hair

Hannah Devlin
Science correspondent

It is one downside of hot, dry weather: static hair that sticks up in a Worzel Gummidge-style halo.

Now a viral TikTok video has suggested a simple solution for static frizz that does not require sprays or straighteners. Simply smoothing hair down with a piece of aluminium foil appears to magically produce a sleek silhouette.

The trick works by discharging static that builds up on hair after it is brushed. In warm weather, air humidity is often lower, meaning there is less water in the air to conduct the electric charges away from hair. Fine hair, which lifts up more easily, is particularly susceptible.

"The frizz is caused by static charge," said Prof Richard Syms, of Imperial College London. Different hairs will be either positively or negatively charged, meaning individual strands repel each other. Aluminium is one of the best metallic electrical conductors, meaning when it touches the hair it carries excess charges away.

"Wiping one material with another can transfer charge between them through a process called the triboelectric effect," said Syms. "In this case, the charges initially transfer to the tinfoil. The tin foil is a conductor, and allows charges to be conducted away." From the foil, the charge will transfer to your hand and down to the floor – unless you are wearing insulating shoes, so this may work better without wearing rubber-soled boots.

The basic concept of static electricity is that when two objects are rubbed together, electrical charges are transferred from one to the other, leaving one object positively charged and the other negatively charged.

But while rubbing balloons on heads is a school science staple, the physics of static electricity is complicated. It is not easy to predict which of a pair of materials will become negatively charged (gaining extra electrons) and which will be positively charged (losing electrons).

"The sources I see on the web indicate that hair is often positive," said Laurence Marks, emeritus professor of materials science and engineering at Northwestern University, author of a landmark paper on the theory of static electricity. "However, none of them actually seem to have measured it, so it could be an urban myth."

Using a metal hairbrush may reduce static in the first place. Another option is just waiting for the effects of static to naturally disperse.

Cats may mourn death of fellow pets – even when they are dogs

Hannah Devlin

Cats are often considered aloof, independent and fickle in their affections. But, research suggests, they also show signs of grieving after the death of another pet in the same household – even when it is the family dog.

Some cats struggled to sleep, went off their food or made yowling noises. Others were more needy around their caregivers or went off their favourite games, owners reported.

The team behind the work said the findings challenged the view that cats were antisocial and suggested that the psychological experience of loss may be universal.

"They [cats] engaged less in sleeping, eating and playing but more in seeking attention from humans and other pets, hiding, spending time alone and appearing to look for their lost companions," the authors, from Oakland University in the US, wrote in their study, which was published in Applied Animal Behaviour Science.

Mourning is known in the animal kingdom, with elephants, dolphins and chimpanzees, for example, performing complex behaviours such as guarding the body of a companion after death. A recent study by Italian researchers suggested the phenomenon extends to dogs.

In the study, the caregivers of more than 450 cats who had another pet, a cat or a dog, that had died recently were asked about the surviving cat's behaviour. In about two-thirds of cases the deceased pet was another cat and the rest were dogs.

"Unlike dogs, we tend to think that cats are aloof and not social," Prof Jennifer Vonk, a psychologist at Oakland University and a co-author of the work, told the Times. However, she noted, in the wild cats tended to band together and form hierarchies. "I think we've been mischaracterising them," Vonk said.

While the results support the idea that cats grieve, another possibility is that owners project their own heartache. "Consistent with this hypothesis, caregivers who experienced greater grief were more likely to report increases in their surviving cats' sleep, spending time alone and hiding following the death," the researchers added.

Some cats went off their food or made yowling noises after a death

'Violence is our enemy': new interim leader urges peace as he returns to Bangladesh

Amrit Dhillon *New Delhi*
Redwan Ahmed *Dhaka*
Kaamil Ahmed

The Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, who is to lead an interim government in Bangladesh, has urged people in the country to "refrain from all kinds of violence" following a mass uprising which included communal attacks.

Concern is rising in Bangladesh and India over continuing violent unrest after the ousting of the former prime minister Sheikh Hasina; in particular, there have been attacks on Hindu homes, shops and temples.

In a statement, Yunus, who agreed to lead an interim government, congratulated the "brave students who took the lead" in the protests, and described the resignation of Hasina on Monday as "our second victory day", referring to Bangladesh's independence day in 1971.

But he warned: "Let us make the best use of our new victory. Let us not let this slip away because of our mistakes. I fervently appeal to everybody to stay calm. Please refrain from all kinds of violence. I appeal to all students, members of all political parties and non-political people to stay calm. This is our beautiful country with lots of exciting possibilities."

Yunus, widely seen as a stabilising figure, was in France but planning to travel back to Bangladesh today.

Violence against Hindus appears to have started just hours after Hasina resigned and fled the capital, Dhaka, on Monday. Images of Hindus being lynched by mobs, temples set on fire and businesses looted, have flooded social media in India.

There are more than 13 million Hindus in Bangladesh - almost 8% of the population, which is predominantly Muslim - and many are traditionally supporters of Hasina's party, the Awami League. The party, which has close ties with India, is secular. Its rival, the Bangladesh Nationalist party (BNP), and the hardline Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami, backed the protests.

In the vacuum left by Hasina's exit, groups opposed to her rule targeted Awami League followers, who include Hindus and Muslims.

Tarique Rahman, son of the BNP leader, Khaleda Zia, and acting chair of the party, appealed to Bangladeshis to keep everyone safe. "It is our duty to protect all Bangladeshis, irrespective of religion and politics, from discriminatory violence, and not to harass any particular community, create division, or seek vengeance," he said in a post on X.

▲ *Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus is due to fly in today from France*

In the old quarter of Dhaka, Muslims stood side by side with their Hindu neighbours to protect a Hindu temple from a violent mob. Student leaders have formed volunteer groups to help guard other sites.

But alarm is growing in west Bengal, which is the closest Indian state to Bangladesh, sharing a 1,360-mile border. An Indian parliamentarian who belongs to the ruling Bharatiya Janata party said India should prepare to see an influx of Hindu refugees.

"If this situation doesn't come under control, mentally be prepared to give refuge to 10 million Hindu refugees. If the situation is not controlled there, Jamaat and radicals will take control," said Suvendu Adhikari.

India's minister for external affairs, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, told MPs yesterday he was "deeply concerned" over the safety of the Hindu minority.

Some rightwing Hindu religious leaders in India have called for the country to act. The self-appointed spiritual leader Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev said anti-Hindu violence in Bangladesh was not merely an internal matter and India should "stand up and act" to protect Hindus.

In a post on X, Vasudev said: "It is our responsibility to protect these people, who belong to this civilization, from these shocking atrocities."

The former diplomat Neelam Deo told the Guardian that any possible influx of Hindus into India depended on how widespread the violence became and how close the affected areas were to the border with India.

She said that, if news reports were true that violence had broken out in 27 of Bangladesh's 64 districts, the violence was already widespread.

"The army will have to take action and show that attackers will not get any impunity. But it's also important for people in Bangladesh to stop demonising the Awami League. If that continues, then both its Muslim leaders are vulnerable and so, of course, are its Hindu supporters."

Media in India reported that the country had brought home 190 non-essential staff at its high commission in Dhaka. Indian diplomats and other staff were still in the country.

India and Bangladesh have maintained close security, trade, investment and defence cooperation. But New Delhi fears that an unstable neighbour, in which the Jamaat-e-Islami might have a greater role, will allow China and Pakistan more influence in its affairs.

Who is Muhammad Yunus?

Muhammad Yunus, 83, known as the "banker to the poorest of the poor", is a longstanding critic of Sheikh Hasina. He called her resignation the country's "second liberation day"; she once called him a "bloodsucker".

Born in 1940 in Chattogram (formerly Chittagong), a seaport and the second largest city in Bangladesh, he received his PhD from Vanderbilt University in the US and taught there briefly.

An economist and banker by profession, Yunus was awarded the Nobel peace prize in 2006 for pioneering the use of microcredit to help impoverished people. He is credited with lifting millions out of poverty, founding Grameen Bank in 1983 to provide small loans to entrepreneurs who would not normally qualify.

In January, Yunus was convicted of violating Bangladesh's labour laws in a trial decried by his supporters as politically motivated.

In the previous year, more than 100 Nobel laureates signed an open letter calling for the charges against him to be suspended. Amnesty International said the case was "emblematic of the beleaguered state of human rights in Bangladesh, where the authorities have eroded freedoms and bulldozed critics into submission".

Yunus told Indian media on Tuesday that "today should be about celebration". He played down any fears over instability in Bangladesh and called the ridding of Hasina "a revolution".

He told NDTV: "We got rid of a very authoritarian government. We are enjoying it, we are enjoying our freedom and a new era is opening for Bangladesh." Associated Press

Dhaka Student army swaps placards for brooms as the clean-up begins

Kaamil Ahmed
Redwan Ahmed *Dhaka*

Students have been out in force on the streets of Dhaka - no longer protesting, but instead working to put a city back together after the dramatic events of the past few days. They have been cleaning up roads, directing traffic and helping to maintain order.

"We're living in extraordinary times. Protests can lead to unintended consequences, but they're driven by a cause. Now it's our responsibility to help restore normalcy. We're just doing our part," said one volunteer at a busy intersection in the Mirpur neighbourhood as they cleared glass and debris from a police box that had been set alight.

Nearby, other students were directing Dhaka's notorious traffic, as police officers had deserted traffic posts or been deployed elsewhere.

Holding up handmade signs urging: "Stop! Follow the Traffic Rules", they encouraged pedestrians to keep to pavements and footbridges. "Our protests might have ended, but our duty

Carles Puigdemont
Police search sewers as separatist vows return
Page 26

Deep dive
Camera-mounted sea lions offer new insights
Page 28

to the nation persists," explained Faiza, 19.

The students are keen to protect their movement's integrity, something that endeared it to Bangladeshi society and mobilised wider support for the protesters, who many in the country are saying have pulled off a gen Z-led revolution.

"I was there from the very first moment and have stayed with the movement because the quota law was against our rights - it was illogical. Students working by our own merit were being denied jobs," said Ashin Roy, a 22-year-old student at Dhaka University.

"We really felt good that everybody supported us and in the end, democracy has won. We celebrated like we got our victory back, just like in 1971.

"But now I'm worried that the situation in my country is very bad, that minorities are being oppressed. I want an election now so the people can choose a leader who truly works for us."

After weeks of protests and a government response that killed almost 300 people, the military took charge on Monday and has included student leaders in negotiations, accepting their demand to include Muhammad Yunus in an interim government.

The wait is an anxious one, but there is hope for a break from a political order that has for decades been defined by bitter rivalry between the established political parties.

"I have no faith in an army-backed interim government. I do not trust the military. The revolution should lead to a new interim government that is supported - but not controlled - by the military," said Tamanna Islam, 25, an engineering student at one of Dhaka's universities.

She said students had been establishing neighbourhood groups in response to attacks on Hindus and other minority groups, but as students, they eventually want to return to their studies.

▲ *Protesters outside the Bangladesh Nationalist party HQ during the rally in Dhaka on Wednesday* PHOTOGRAPH: RAJIB DHAR/AP

"Hopefully, existing parties will realise their traditional corrupt practices are no longer viable. Our country has tremendous potential that should not be squandered under unworthy leadership," she said. "We've ousted this regime and will do so again if the new leaders fail to meet our expectations. I hope that future parties will engage with students and civil society to avoid repeating past mistakes."

Esrat Karim, 35, the founder of the Amal Foundation, said the student movement had given her hope for the future. "The violence against the students woke me up. The courage they have, the dignity, their conscience - hats off to them. People call gen Z self-centred, but actually they are very giving, very conscious, and now they've overturned the government. There's nothing they can't do."

Court dissolves party that vowed to reform Thai monarchy laws

Rebecca Ratcliffe
South-east Asia correspondent

Thailand's constitutional court has ordered the dissolution of the country's most popular party, and banned its leaders from politics for 10 years, over the party's election pledge to reform strict lese-majesty law.

Move Forward, a youthful pro-reform party, won the most votes in the 2023 election after pledging big changes to the country's political system, including a promise to amend a law that punishes criticism of the monarchy with up to 15 years in prison for a single charge.

However, the party and its leader were blocked from taking power by military royalist opponents, and have since faced legal cases.

The constitutional court decided unanimously yesterday to dissolve the party, and ban its executive committee from politics for 10 years, including its former leader Pita Limjaroenrat.

The case followed a decision by the same court in January, which ruled that its pledge to reform lese-majesty law was unlawful and that it must cease such efforts.

Speaking at the party's headquarters after the verdict, Pita said their movement would continue and there would be a new party and leadership.

"I understand that you might feel disappointment, angry, resentful, or you might have tears. I won't blame you. Today, for one day, let us be sad and angry as much as needed. "Tomorrow we will draw a line in front of us and we will walk across it. We will take the resentment, anger, the energy that exists now, we will not let it consume us. We will ... let it explode in every voting booth."

Supporters cheered MPs and chanted "move forward, march on", a slogan the party has used in the run-up to the verdict. MPs wore black for the occasion.

Details of the party's successor, which Move Forward MPs can join, will be announced tomorrow.

Thailand's courts have frequently dissolved political parties and banned politicians. The country has had two coups since 2006 amid an ongoing power struggle between popular parties and the conservative establishment.

Move Forward's predecessor, Future Forward, was disbanded by a court ruling in 2020 for violating election funding rules, in a case its supporters said was politically motivated. The judgment triggered mass youth-led protests which called for changes to make the country more democratic, and broke a longstanding taboo by calling for reform of the royal family.

At least 272 people have since been charged with lese-majesty. In May, the political activist Netiporn Sanaesangkhom, 28, who was charged under the law, died in pre-trial detention after spending 65 days on hunger strike calling for an end to the imprisonment of political dissidents.

Move Forward had appealed to young people who took part in such protests; it also managed to attract support from a much wider cross-section of voters who wanted political change after almost a decade of being ruled by the former coup leader Prayuth Chan-ocha.

Chaithawat Tulathon, the party's outgoing leader, said the new ruling set a dangerous precedent for interpreting the law and constitution.

"The impact of today's verdict risks, in the long-term, making our constitutional monarchy system mutate into another system," he said.

▲ *Move Forward's former leader Pita Limjaroenrat yesterday after the Thai court agreed to dissolve the party* PHOTOGRAPH: CHALINEE THIRASUPA/REUTERS

▼ Paris
Team GB's Jordan Houlden after a dive in the men's 3m springboard semi-final. He qualified for today's final PHOTOGRAPH: ADAM PRETTY/GETTY

▼ Damaged properties in the town of Sudzha following the attacks by Ukrainian forces on Tuesday
PHOTOGRAPH: GOVERNOR OF KURSK/AFP/GETTY

Putin meets top military advisers as Ukrainian forces extend incursion into Kursk

Dan Sabbagh
Kyiv

Ukraine's surprise incursion into Russia's Kursk region continued into a second day yesterday, prompting Vladimir Putin to convene a meeting with his top defence and law enforcement officials.

A report from one Russia military blogger suggested Ukrainian forces had advanced northwards, possibly as far as nine miles from the border, along a highway north of the border village of Sverdlikovo and near a major natural gas transmission hub, but this could not be verified.

Russian sources reported that a force of several hundred soldiers had crossed a lightly defended part of the border on Tuesday morning, in what appears to be one of the largest incursions into Russia since the war began in February 2022.

Russia's defence ministry had claimed to have repelled the raid on Tuesday, but acknowledged at lunchtime yesterday that fighting was ongoing. It said air and missile strikes and artillery fire had been used against the invaders, inflicting 260 casualties and knocking out 50 armoured vehicles.

In televised remarks at the start of a meeting with members of the Russian government, Putin described the raid as a major provocation. He later met Russia's top military figures. The chief of general staff, Valery Gerasimov, told Putin that Russian forces were battling Ukrainian forces near the border and would push them back into their own territory.

The acting governor of Kursk oblast, Alexei Smirnov, said he had introduced a state of emergency in the border region, though it was unclear what measures that entailed. Civilians were being evacuated from frontline areas and 300 people were housed in temporary accommodation overnight.

Ukrainian officials have remained quiet as the incursion has developed, anxious perhaps not to appear triumphant or to give away too much information about Kyiv's intentions.

Russia said the attack had begun at about 8am on Tuesday, when Ukrainian troops crossed the border between the villages of Nikolayevo-Daryino and Oleshnya, with the apparent intention of heading both north and east.

The attack is most likely to be an attempt by Ukraine, whose defences are stretched on the eastern Donbas front, to divert some Russian forces to defend a part of the frontline that has been largely inactive since early 2022.

Critics in Ukraine, however, argue that such assaults serve no long-term military purpose. Anti-Kremlin Russian groups launched attacks from Ukraine into Belgorod and Kursk regions in March, but were repelled with no strategic gain.

This time the operation appears to be an attack by Ukraine's military rather than Russian opposition groups. Russia said it was led by Kyiv's 22nd mechanised brigade.

Fighting was taking place in and around the town of Sudzha, about 6 miles from the border. A local Russian Telegram channel released a short video showing bombed rural homes, which it said demonstrated the "situation today".

The main operational gas pipeline into Europe runs near Sudzha, where a metering station monitors the reduced Russian supplies to countries such as Austria and Hungary. Ukraine has allowed gas to continue flowing through as part of a contract that expires at the end of 2024.

Other speculation has suggested that a target of the incursion could be the Kursk nuclear power plant, but the facility is 35 miles from the border and beyond the capabilities a force of several hundred - or thousand.

Russia has been pouring soldiers into Ukraine. Its force in the country is estimated at about 520,000, two to three times the size of the original invasion force. Ukraine, meanwhile, is finding it challenging to mobilise fresh recruits and is being pushed back in certain parts of the eastern front, particularly the central Donbas towards Pokrovsk.

Additional reporting **Pjotr Sauer**

Source: Institute for the Study of War with AEI's Critical Threats Project

▲ Carles Puigdemont has been in self-imposed exile for seven years

Exiled leader of separatists plans return to Catalonia

Lili Bayer *Brussels*
Stephen Burgen *Barcelona*

The fugitive Catalan separatist leader Carles Puigdemont has said he will return to Spain today, risking probable arrest in a move that could destabilise the country's ruling coalition.

Puigdemont, who has been living in self-imposed exile in Belgium for seven years after organising an illegal independence referendum in Catalonia, has said that he will be at the Catalan parliament in Barcelona as it swears in the region's new leader.

In a video message yesterday, Puigdemont said: "In normal democratic conditions, for an MP like me to announce his intention to attend that session would be unnecessary, it would be irrelevant - but ours are not normal democratic conditions.

"There are two members, former regional minister Lluís Puig and myself, who cannot attend freely," he noted, adding: "This challenge must be answered and confronted."

In May, Spain's parliament approved a divisive amnesty law that the socialist prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, had offered to Catalan separatists in return for helping him back to power. It applies to about 400 people involved in a symbolic independence referendum in 2014 and the illegal poll three years later.

But in July, Spain's supreme court upheld arrest warrants for Puigdemont and others who are charged with misuse of public funds, ruling the amnesty did not apply to them.

Police have reportedly been tasked with ensuring Puigdemont does not enter the Catalan parliament, limiting access to the area, carrying out room-by-room searches and even searching the sewers. "These are standard security procedures that are carried out before any investiture ceremony," a spokesperson for the Mossos d'Esquadra told Politico.

Puigdemont's arrival and probable arrest could create a headache for the Sánchez government. The conservative People's party (PP) came first in last year's snap election but failed to win sufficient support to form a new government. That allowed Sánchez's socialist party to try to govern, but he could only do so by giving the amnesty as a concession to Catalan parties - a move that has sparked demonstrations across the country.

Green boost: Walz adds strength on climate policy to Harris's campaign for US presidency

▲ *Top, Tim Walz with his 2023 green energy bill; above, with Kamala Harris at a Wisconsin rally yesterday* PHOTOGRAPHS: AP; CHARLES REX ARBOGAST

Dharna Noor
Oliver Milman

Environmental groups in the US have welcomed the announcement of Tim Walz, the governor of Minnesota, as Kamala Harris's running mate in the presidential election, as the pair continued their battleground tour with rallies in Wisconsin and Michigan yesterday.

"Like Vice-President Harris, Governor Walz knows that climate change is the existential threat of our time," said Ben Jealous, the executive director of the Sierra Club, one of the US's oldest and largest environmental advocacy groups. "The Harris-Walz ticket is one that understands the fight before us."

Known as a "climate champion" in green advocacy circles, Walz has forged a robust climate record during his two gubernatorial terms, notably by signing one of the strongest green energy bills into law last year.

The policy requires Minnesota to eliminate carbon from its electricity generation by 2040 and obtain 100% of its utilities from carbon-free sources. Only a handful of states are requiring the switch at such a pace.

"This law, even more ambitious than similar measures in traditionally progressive states, showcases the kind of forward-thinking leadership our country needs to address the worsening climate crisis," said Cassidy DiPaola, communications director for Fossil Free Media, a nonprofit pushing for the swift transition away from fossil fuels.

The governor has also funded clean energy career training and allocated $2bn (£1.6bn) to natural resources, climate and energy projects in a bill that has been compared to the Inflation Reduction Act.

In 2019, he formed a climate crisis sub-cabinet and advisory board within his administration and, three years later, announced a plan aiming to slash planet-heating emissions in half by 2030 and boost the proportion of electric cars on Minnesota roads to 20%.

"This issue will transcend whoever's elected," Walz said at the time. "This issue is not going away."

Under Walz's leadership, Minnesota also tackled planet-heating pollution in the building sector by updating its commercial buildings codes and energy efficiency rules, while lowering utility costs for low-income households. It also took on pollution from per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), known as "forever chemicals", when Walz signed one of the country's broadest bans on the pollutants last year.

The state also prioritised environmental justice. In 2022, Walz's budget called for a $200m investment in clean water and wastewater, and later that year he signed a bill investing $240m in lead pipe replacement.

The governor has been praised for his environmental rhetoric; Time magazine called him one of the "country's most skilful climate communicators" for his ability to tie green policies to the need for economic development and jobs.

His appeal is broad enough that on Tuesday both Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the Democratic congresswoman who has championed the Green New Deal, and Joe Manchin, the conservative former Democratic and now independent senator and coal baron, welcomed Walz's selection.

Lori Lodes, executive director of the advocacy group Climate Power, said: "Voters will have a clear choice between a Harris-Walz ticket, who will fight for our clean energy future that lowers harmful pollution and creates safer communities, or a Trump-Vance administration whose pro-polluter, extreme Maga agenda will give big oil a free pass to profiteer and pollute."

The former president Barack Obama praised the governor yesterday on his "values and the integrity" after a raucous reception for Harris and Walz at a rally in Philadelphia, writing on X: "Governor Walz doesn't just have the experience to be vice-president, he has the values and the integrity to make us proud. And as we saw last night, Kamala Harris and Tim Walz make a great team."

The vice-president and her new running mate were due to address a crowd in Eau Claire in Wisconsin yesterday before heading to Detroit.

Walz's record on climate is viewed less favourably by Donald Trump's campaign, which has already called him a "west coast wannabe".

"From proposing his own carbon-free agenda, to suggesting stricter emission standards for gas-powered cars, and embracing policies to allow convicted felons to vote, Walz is obsessed with spreading California's dangerously liberal agenda far and wide," said Karoline Leavitt, the Trump campaign's press secretary.

But environmentalists say that by choosing Walz – who this week said "One person's socialism is another person's neighbourliness" – the Harris campaign could help energise progressive voters.

"This decision shows Kamala Harris is taking seriously what is needed to rebuild the 2020 Biden-Harris coalition and energise young people, people of colour, and union voters," said Stevie O'Hanlon, communications director for the environmental justice group the Sunrise Movement.

Veteran banyan tree staging comeback after Hawaiian fires

Associated Press

When a deadly wildfire tore through Lahaina, on the Hawaiian island of Maui, in August 2023, flames scorched the 151-year-old banyan tree in the historic town's Front Street.

But the sprawling tree managed to survive the blaze and now, thanks to arborists and dedicated volunteers, parts of it are now growing back and even thriving.

For generations the tree, towering to more than 60ft (18 metres) and anchored by multiple trunks spanning nearly an acre, served as a gathering place along Lahaina's waterfront. It was planted in 1873, shipped from India as a gift to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the first Protestant missionaries seeking to live in Lahaina.

While some have seen the tree as a symbol of colonial rule, others have considered it the heart of the oceanside community.

The fire in 2023, which erupted on 8 August and killed more than a hundred people, devastated the tree too, charring it and blackening its leaves. Due to the intense heat about half of the branches died, said Duane Sparkman, chair of the Maui county arborist committee. "Once that section of the tree desiccated, there was no coming back," he said.

But other parts of the tree, with dead branches removed, are now growing back and are healthy.

Sparkman said there were plans to install vertical tubes to help the tree's aerial roots. "You see a lot of long branches with hundreds of leaves back on the tree," he said, adding that some branches were even producing fruit.

Sparkman estimated that Lahaina lost about 25,000 trees in the fire. This included the domestic fruit trees grown in gardens as well as trees significant in Hawaiian culture, such as the *ulu*, or breadfruit, tree; the fire charred all but two of the dozen or so that remained.

▲ *Leaves sprouting this summer on the 151-year-old banyan tree in Lahaina, Hawaii, despite the devastating fire of a year ago* PHOTOGRAPH: NMARIO TAMA/GETTY

'In our DNA' Iceland's president on the push for gender equality

Miranda Bryant
Nordic correspondent

Halla Tómasdóttir was just 11 years old when Vigdís Finnbogadóttir became Iceland's head of state – and in the process the world's first democratically elected female president.

This, she said, "planted a seed" that would influence her career as an entrepreneur and her view on female leadership, ultimately leading her to follow in Vigdís's footsteps to become the second woman in the role.

While she did not know then that she would run for office herself, growing up with a female president had a profound impact on her. "Ever since then she was a role model for me and all of us who thankfully grew up during her presidency of 16 years," Halla, who took office last week, said in an interview with the Guardian.

She was inspired by her approach to equality, nature, culture and international relations. "It planted a seed in me that influenced how I think about leadership," she said.

Having previously run for president, narrowly missing out to her predecessor Guðni Jóhannesson, who stood down after eight years in office, she said her inauguration last Thursday was "truly magical".

The feminist entrepreneur, who started an investment fund with the musician Björk at the height of Iceland's 2008 financial crisis, was chief executive of Sir Richard Branson's non-profit the B Team, and has given a Ted talk on applying "feminine values" to finance, won more than 34% of the vote in Iceland's June elections, beating the former prime minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir. She campaigned on issues including artificial intelligence, tourism and the impact of social media on young people's mental health.

▲ *Halla Tómasdóttir won more than 34% of the vote in the June elections*

"One of the things I'm the proudest of when it comes to the campaign this spring was that young people really showed up and turned out and we had 80% voter participation in Iceland," she said. "That's beautiful. I'm proud of the fact that 75% of the vote went to female candidates."

She joins a shrinking number of female leaders across the Nordics. Katrín, who stood down as Iceland's prime minister to run for president, was replaced by a man, while Sweden and Finland recently replaced former prime ministers Magdalena Andersson and Sanna Marin with men. Denmark's long-serving queen, Margrethe II, stood down earlier this year to make way for her son, King Frederik X.

Despite this, Halla said, gender balance was "built into our DNA in the Nordics" and that she would do everything she could to be a role model across the region and internationally. What was happening was simply a "generational shift". Meanwhile, she believes her husband, Björn Skúlason, will provide a good example of how to be a supportive partner to a successful woman.

"I will continue to push the very philosophy that has characterised everything that I have done – that profit has to be achieved on the back of principles and those principles need to be humane, they need to be about the long-term sustainability of humanity and our social contract," she said.

Generational and racial inequality were at the centre of the world's biggest challenges, she said, particularly the climate crisis. "If we don't do better today, our children and grandchildren are facing a much harsher reality than we have enjoyed."

Australia's sea lions take 'slow TV' to new depths

Graham Readfearn

The Australian sea lions glide and dart through underwater tunnels, over sea grass beds and rocky reefs, searching for a meal and dancing with dolphins around a giant bait ball of fish – all the action captured by cameras on their backs.

"I can watch this stuff for hours," said Prof Simon Goldsworthy. "It's like the best slow TV ever. You just don't know what you're going to see next."

His "slow TV" is the result of new efforts to employ sea lions to map the ocean floor – and their own habitats – by mounting cameras with satellite tracking technology on their backs.

So far, eight females from two seal colonies have provided almost 90 hours of video, helping scientists to map 5,000 sq km (1,900 sq miles) of habitat. The sea lions have mapped rocky reefs and sea grass meadows along the continental shelf, and shown the researchers the places that are important to them.

With that information, conservationists will have much clearer ideas on how to protect Australia's only native seal. Numbers have crashed by 60% in the past 40 years, leaving only about 10,000 of them mostly spread thinly across 80 breeding sites along the south and west coastlines.

Goldsworthy, of the South Australian Research and Development Institute, has been studying the seals for 25 years and said the cameras were a gamechanger.

"Information has been so elusive," he added. "Now we get this amazing, exquisite detail. They're giving us a window into their world that we haven't had before."

To trial the cameras, scientists first had to attach them. After darting the sea lion with a sedative, researchers stuck the camera on to a piece of fabric, which was then attached to the sea lion's fur. The fabric will fall off at the next moult.

▲ *Australian sea lions are helping to map the seabed with video cameras scientists attach to their backs, right*
PHOTOGRAPH: ALISTAIR POLLOCK/GETTY

One revelation from the footage, Goldsworthy said, came when one female sea lion took her pup out to show it how to hunt.

The team also discovered that individual animals had different tastes – some liked to eat lots of cod, others went for octopus, rays or cuttlefish.

The study outlining the sea lions' camera work was published in the journal Frontiers in Marine Science.

Man jailed for four months after punching Danish PM

Miranda Bryant
Nordic correspondent

A man has been sentenced to four months in prison after being found guilty of attacking the Danish prime minister.

The 39-year-old Polish man – who Danish authorities have ruled cannot be named in the media – punched Mette Frederiksen in the right arm, leading the prime minister to lose her balance, while she was out in Copenhagen in June during the run-up to the EU elections.

The Social Democrat leader suffered whiplash and was taken to hospital for a checkup after the incident, just before 6pm on 7 June. She said the attack had given her "a big scare" and cancelled several events.

In a ruling by the Copenhagen city court, the assailant was convicted of violence against an official while in office. The defendant, who pleaded not guilty, accepted the jury's unanimous verdict, according to the broadcaster DR.

He was also found guilty of several unrelated charges including embezzlement and mortgage fraud.

The man, who has lived in Denmark for five years, will be deported after serving his sentence. He was also banned from re-entering the country for six years.

During the trial, which started on Tuesday, the man said he recognised the prime minister and recalled "standing face to face" with her. But, he said, he did not remember anything else until he was arrested because he was "too drunk".

One of Frederiksen's bodyguards said in the trial that the man had said something incomprehensible to the prime minister before passing her and giving her a "hard blow with a clenched hand on the shoulder". This, he said, caused Frederiksen, 46, to briefly lose balance before her attacker was arrested. He appeared to recognise the prime minister before hitting her.

In the days after the attack, Frederiksen said she was "not quite myself". She said: "It was a big scare. In that situation, you need some time with your family and those close to you."

The attack on Frederiksen was part of a series of violent incidents against European politicians. Weeks before, in May, Slovakia's prime minister, Robert Fico, was shot and seriously injured, and two German politicians were also injured in two other separate attacks.

> ***'In that situation, you need some time with your family'***
>
> **Mette Frederiksen**
> *Danish prime minister*

FTSE 100	All share	Dow Indl	Nikkei 225	£/€	£/$
+140.19	+71.81	+80.46	+414.16	1.1637	1.2721
8166.88	4462.58	39078.12	35089.62	+0.0013	+0.0013

Business

Thames Water turnaround to be independently monitored

Alex Lawson
Helena Horton

The water industry regulator is to appoint an independent monitor to supervise Thames Water's turnaround plan after it breached its licence conditions when some of its debt was downgraded to junk status.

Ofwat said yesterday that the monitor would have access to the company's financial information as the UK's biggest water company attempts to avoid a government-handled administration.

Thames's credit rating was downgraded twice by the ratings agencies Moody's and S&P in July, breaching its licence conditions.

Ofwat said it had launched a 10-day industry consultation after provisionally accepting a series of undertakings "in lieu of imposing an enforcement order" on Thames, which would have been triggered by the downgrades. The order could have included a fine of up to 10% of annual turnover, equating to hundreds of millions of pounds.

The water company, which has 16 million customers in London and Thames Valley, has promised to appoint new independent directors, improve its business plan and "use all reasonable endeavours to raise substantial equity investment".

David Black, Ofwat's chief executive, said: "We are clear that Thames Water needs to remedy its licence breach, turn around its operational performance and secure backing from investors to restore its loss of investment-grade credit rating.

"These enforceable commitments will include our putting an independent monitor into the business, to report back to us on what is happening to drive meaningful change in performance, and to ensure appropriate expertise is added to their board. We will continue to monitor progress very closely and will not hesitate to take any further action if necessary."

Thames Water was put into special measures by Ofwat last month, and its five-year business plan - submitted in Ofwat's PR24 price review process - was deemed "unsatisfactory" by the regulator in its draft response, published in July. It has a £15.2bn debt mountain, but has said it has enough cash to continue trading until at least May 2025. If it fails to secure new investment it could be placed into a special, government-handled administration.

£15.2bn
Debt at Thames Water, which needs an additional £2.5bn from investors to fulfil its business plan

On Tuesday, Ofwat proposed a penalty of £104m for Thames as three water companies were fined a record £168m between them for a "catalogue of failures" over illegal sewage discharges into rivers and the sea.

Steve Reed, the environment secretary, has said Thames will not be temporarily nationalised as it remains "financially viable" and should be "given space" to raise funds.

Thames needs an extra £2.5bn from investors to fulfil its business plan. Ofwat has said Thames can increase bills by £99 to £535 a year over the next five years, £92 less than the rise it sought.

Ofwat has provisionally said it can spend £16.9bn of a proposed almost £22bn as it attempts to upgrade ageing infrastructure.

A spokesperson for Thames Water said: "We note that Ofwat is minded to accept the undertakings we have proposed but understand the need for them to consult before doing so. We remain focused on working with Ofwat to secure an investible PR24 determination, which is key to attracting equity into the business."

Glencore bows to shareholders and scraps plan to spin off its coal division

Jillian Ambrose

Glencore has scrapped plans to spin off its coal business after shareholders urged the commodities company to hold on to the highly profitable but heavily polluting division.

The FTSE 100 company said an overwhelming majority of its shareholders favoured retaining the coal business over its plan to list the division as a separate company on the New York stock exchange.

More than 95% of Glencore's investors favoured keeping the business primarily on the basis that the fossil fuel would enhance the company's "cash-generating capacity", which would "accelerate and optimise the return of excess cashflows to shareholders", the company said.

"They recognise that cash is king," said Gary Nagle, the company's chief executive.

Nagle drew up the now defunct restructuring plan last year, saying it would help create more shareholder value for both companies by listing them in separate markets.

Under the plans, Glencore was expected to merge its own coal business with the steelmaking coal division of its recent acquisition, Canada's Teck Resources, and list the new company in New York.

Glencore emerged as one of many fossil-fuel companies expecting to tap the US markets, where investors tend to take a more lenient view on polluting companies than many European investors.

Tribeca Investment Partners, an Australian hedge fund, wrote to Glencore this year to urge the company to keep hold of its coal division and move its primary market listing from the UK to Australia, where it employs more than 17,000 staff at coalmines across the country.

It said the London Stock Exchange was "no longer the home of mining" because of the "low appetite for mining investment" among climate-conscious Europeans. But Nagle said the industry was now a "dynamic space" in which views on environmental, social and governance (ESG) had "moved materially".

"The ESG pendulum has swung back over the last nine to 12 months," he said. "The world has recognised the need for coal as we decarbonise."

Glencore confirmed the board would heed the calls to retain the coal division alongside a 33% slump in its underlying profits for the first half of the year to $6.3bn (£5bn), compared with $9.4bn last year.

Inside story
Inside Out 2, right, the most successful animated film ever, took over $1.5bn (£1.2bn) globally and helped Walt Disney return to profit in the last quarter, with pre-tax income of $3.1bn, up from a $100m loss in 2023.

PHOTOGRAPH: DISNEY

UK jobs market cools alongside slowdown in wage growth

Richard Partington
Economics correspondent

The UK's largest employers have warned that the jobs market is cooling amid a slowdown in wage growth in July and a fall in vacancies, extending an almost two-year downturn in hiring demand for permanent staff.

Figures from the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) and KPMG showed a fall in permanent staff placements in July as large employers made more redundancies and hired fewer new starters.

In a survey of 400 recruitment and employment consultancies, the fall in staff appointments was mirrored by a slowdown in wage growth. While firms continued to increase pay rates to recruit candidates, wage growth fell slightly on the level in June and was below the monthly trend.

According to the REC/KPMG report on jobs, compiled by S&P Global, the number of vacancies fell in July while demand for hiring was subdued.

Kate Shoesmith, the REC's deputy CEO, said: "The weaker growth in both salaries and temp pay suggests that employers are keeping pay in line with inflation, as the Bank of England wants, and the interest rate cut is welcome. Employers will need more of the same to maintain confidence."

Business view
Nils Pratley

Companies are free to choose where they advertise. Musk's lawsuit should be thrown out

It is less than a year since Elon Musk told advertisers who were shunning his social media site, X, that they could take their business elsewhere. In fact, he encouraged them to do so.

"Don't advertise," he said, amid a backlash over his endorsement of an antisemitic tweet. "If someone's going to try to blackmail me with advertising, go fuck yourself."

The instruction had the virtue of clarity. Advertisers who took the view that X had become a poisonous sewer under Musk – or even just those who regarded the site as the wrong place to promote soap – could seek alternative outlets. And X would thrive or fail without them.

Now Musk has had a change of heart, and X has launched a lawsuit in Texas claiming it is the victim of an "illegal boycott" by advertisers. The consumer goods groups Unilever and Mars, the Danish windfarm operator Ørsted and the US healthcare group CVS Health are the targets, alongside a body called the Global Alliance for Responsible Media (Garm). The companies, supposedly, withheld "billions of dollars in advertising revenue" from X in a malicious conspiracy that violated US antitrust law.

It is probably unwise to predict what a US court might decide, but this case deserves to be thrown out for being ridiculous.

"No small group of people should be able to monopolise what gets monetised," argued the X chief executive, Linda Yaccarino, as if companies should be compelled – by whom? – to advertise on certain media outlets. Come on, you're running a profit-seeking business, like most of the rest of the media world. If you can't make the revenues stack up, that's your problem.

▲ *Elon Musk told advertisers to leave X, then complained when they did so*

> *There's no mystery as to why X's revenues are falling. Trust levels with advertisers are low, and Amazon and co deliver more bang for the buck*

To see how advertisers think in practice, read the testimony from Herrish Patel, president of Unilever USA, who explained in detail to a US House of Representatives committee last month how the company allocates its advertising dollars.

Unilever was stung by an early case on Facebook of ads for its Dove soap being placed next to posts glorifying rape and domestic violence. The company drew the understandable lesson that it wanted to deal with "responsible" platforms that took more care. "Similarly, the Unilever brands that are trusted and appeal broadly to all Americans are not served by content that is divisive or politically polarising," Patel wrote. In 2020 – long before Musk bought Twitter – Unilever "pulled back" from social media advertising.

These days, he said, only 20% of the firm's advertising goes on social media platforms, and less than 1% to digital news. The bulk of the digital spend is directed at the websites of Amazon, Walmart and Target for the boring reason that shoppers there are close to making buying decisions. That is not a conspiracy; it is an advertiser assessing its commercial interest.

The House judiciary committee somehow swallowed the Musk-friendly line that members of Garm were engaged in antitrust behaviour, but it's hard to see how that conclusion fits the facts. Garm is mostly concerned with allowing companies to know where their digital advertising appears. The choice of where to spend remains with the company.

There's really no mystery as to why X's revenues are falling. Trust levels with advertisers are low, and the likes of Amazon deliver a bigger bang for the same buck. You can see the same process in the UK, where big supermarket chains are investing heavily in "retail media" and sharing data insights from their operations with brand companies.

The company could help itself by investing in content moderators. But it's all competition in action. Even if X, miraculously, were to win its attention-seeking lawsuit, advertisers will still form their own views on where they get the best returns and where they have "brand safety", as they put it. A "free speech absolutist", you'd think, would understand that.

Tour highlights

- Stare in awe at the active Poás Volcano and visit a coffee plantation
- Embark on a guided walk through the enchanting Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve
- Learn about local plantations during an El Trapiche tour
- Return flights from the UK to San Jose
- Fully escorted by a friendly, experienced tour manager and expert naturalist (with the exception of the duration of your stay at the Cariblue Beach & Jungle Resort)
- Meander around a local palmito plantation and taste an array of products
- Be led by a naturalist guide to Ots La Selva Biological Station
- Embrace ample time to unwind at a Caribbean beach resort
- 11 nights' bed and breakfast accommodation at hotels in San Jose (1 night), Monteverde (2), Arenal (3), Sarapiqui (2), Puerto Viejo de Talamanca (3), plus one night on the plane
- 11 breakfasts, six lunches and five dinners

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◀ *Rachel Reeves, the chancellor, has been meeting the bosses of Canada's big pension schemes*
PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MACLEOD/ THE GUARDIAN

Public pensions Why is Reeves considering copying Canada?

Kalyeena Makortoff
Banking correspondent

The chancellor, Rachel Reeves, met the bosses of Canada's big retirement schemes in Toronto yesterday, prompting speculation that Labour is planning to bring the country's public pension model to the UK. But what would that entail and could such a change work?

How do Canadian-style pension schemes differ from the UK model?
Canada's public sector pension schemes, like those in Norway and Australia, have been consolidated into larger funds managed in-house by professional investors. Once pooled, such funds can invest larger sums of money into a wider range of riskier and long-term assets such as infrastructure, start-ups and private equity.

Canada's top schemes, known as the Maple 8, collectively manage about $2tn (£1.1tn) worth of taxpayer-backed pension schemes for the likes of teachers, council staff and healthcare workers.

In the UK there is a focus on reforming one single, but huge, portion of pensions: the LGPS (local government pension scheme). One of the largest defined benefit schemes in the world, it has 6.5 million members and £360bn in assets. However, the scheme comprises 86 individually managed retirements funds that vary in size: while Orkney had about £500m in assets, as of 2022, Greater Manchester had about £27bn.

Those pushing for consolidation say a pooled LGPS fund could deploy large sums of cash to growing businesses and infrastructure projects, including in the UK. They also say pooling would save at least £1bn in fees paid to lawyers, banks, advisers, asset managers and actuaries each year.

Is this idea new?
There have been attempts to create superfunds over the past decade.

In 2015, the then prime minister, David Cameron, started to push LGPS funds into larger pools, with the aim of cutting investment costs and allowing collective investment in assets such as infrastructure. However, there was no immediate deadline for moving assets into intermediate vehicles, which came under fire for adding another layer of costs. Only £145bn, or 39%, of LGPS assets have been transferred to the eight current pools, according to the Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association.

Last autumn, the Conservative then chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, hinted at further consolidation, saying that by 2040, all local government pension fund assets would be invested in vehicles worth £200bn or more, leading many to speculate he wanted just two or three pools. However, so far governments have stopped short of introducing laws that would compel schemes to do so.

Why hasn't this been done yet?
It is largely a matter of politics. For one thing, responsibility is divided across government departments – including the Treasury, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and local authorities – making it harder for ministers to make sweeping decisions without cooperation.

However, some believe that the Labour government's decision to appoint Emma Reynolds as a cross-department parliamentary secretary at both the Treasury and DWP could smooth this hurdle.

Meanwhile, few governments have been keen on bureaucratic battles with local councillors, who do not want to give up control of how pension money is invested.

Toby Nangle, an analyst and pensions expert, says: "These are locally elected politicians making decisions that will impact local government. Councillors take their responsibilities very seriously, and feel they should have some say in things which are going to affect their services and their council tax."

And proponents of a more fractured model argue that it will affect the diversity of investment.

The Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association, a trade association, says it is keen to work with the government on reforms but warned about the potential tax and legal costs of moving assets into larger pools: "The transfer of assets should be undertaken in an efficient and effective way with a focus on avoiding loss of value."

Traffic-light system could rate schemes on value

Workplace pension schemes could be rated with a traffic-light system under plans designed to help savers get the most out of their retirement savings.

About 16 million workers save for retirement through defined contribution pension schemes where the income they will receive depends on factors including performance of funds they are invested in and charges. Those not wanting to make decisions on where their money is invested rely on workplace providers' default schemes.

Under a framework proposed by the Financial Conduct Authority, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Pensions Regulator, these schemes would be compared on publicised metrics demonstrating value. They would be publicly rated red, amber or green, with only green representing value for money.

Schemes would be rated as amber if regulators believed they could be improved within a reasonable time. Firms running red-rated schemes would be obliged to consider moving savers to an alternative arrangement.

The consultation paper said value for money was not just focused on charges, as the cheapest schemes would not necessarily provide the best pensions in the long term.

The pensions minister, Emma Reynolds, said: "Last year, over £130bn was saved into workplace pension schemes – money which we want to see working hard for future pensioners ... Our pension bill and pensions review will make pensions fit for the future, and having an effective value for money framework will lay the foundations for this."
Hilary Osborne

House prices forecast to rise through year after jump of 0.8% in July

Jack Simpson

UK house prices increased by 0.8% in July, and lower mortgage rates are expected to lead to continued growth throughout the rest of the year, according to the mortgage lender Halifax.

The average house price in July was £291,268, a 0.8% increase on the £289,042 recorded in June. It marks a significant rise after three subdued months during which there were increases of between 0.1% and 0.2%. The annual growth rate rose to 2.3%, the highest since January this year.

Amanda Bryden, the head of mortgages at Halifax, said that last week's Bank of England base-rate cut and the reduction in mortgage rates from leading providers was encouraging for people hoping to buy new homes or move up the housing ladder. "Against the backdrop and potential further base rate reductions, we anticipate house prices to continue a modest upward trend."

Last week the bank reduced interest rates from 5.25% to 5%, the first cut in four and a half years. However, it said savers should not expect more large cuts in the coming months as it will attempt to ensure the rate of inflation does not return to the high levels of the last two years.

Last week lenders such as Halifax, NatWest and Santander, cut interest rates by up to 0.2 percentage points. Nationwide started offering a sub-4% deal for some new buyers.

Sam Mitchell, the chief executive of Purplebricks, said: "With lenders already slashing mortgage rates ... buyers are beginning to move ahead with purchasing decisions they've been putting off for months."

However, these rates are still much higher than was the case before and just after the coronavirus pandemic, and Bryden warned that affordability constraints and lack of available property posed challenges for prospective homeowners.

In London the average property now costs £536,052, up 1.2% on last year's figure. Northern Ireland experienced the biggest rise in prices, with the average cost of a home rising 5.8% to £195,681 in July. The second biggest increase was in the north-west of England, with prices rising by 4.1% across the month to £232,489.

▲ *Last week's cut in interest rates is expected to fuel further price rises*

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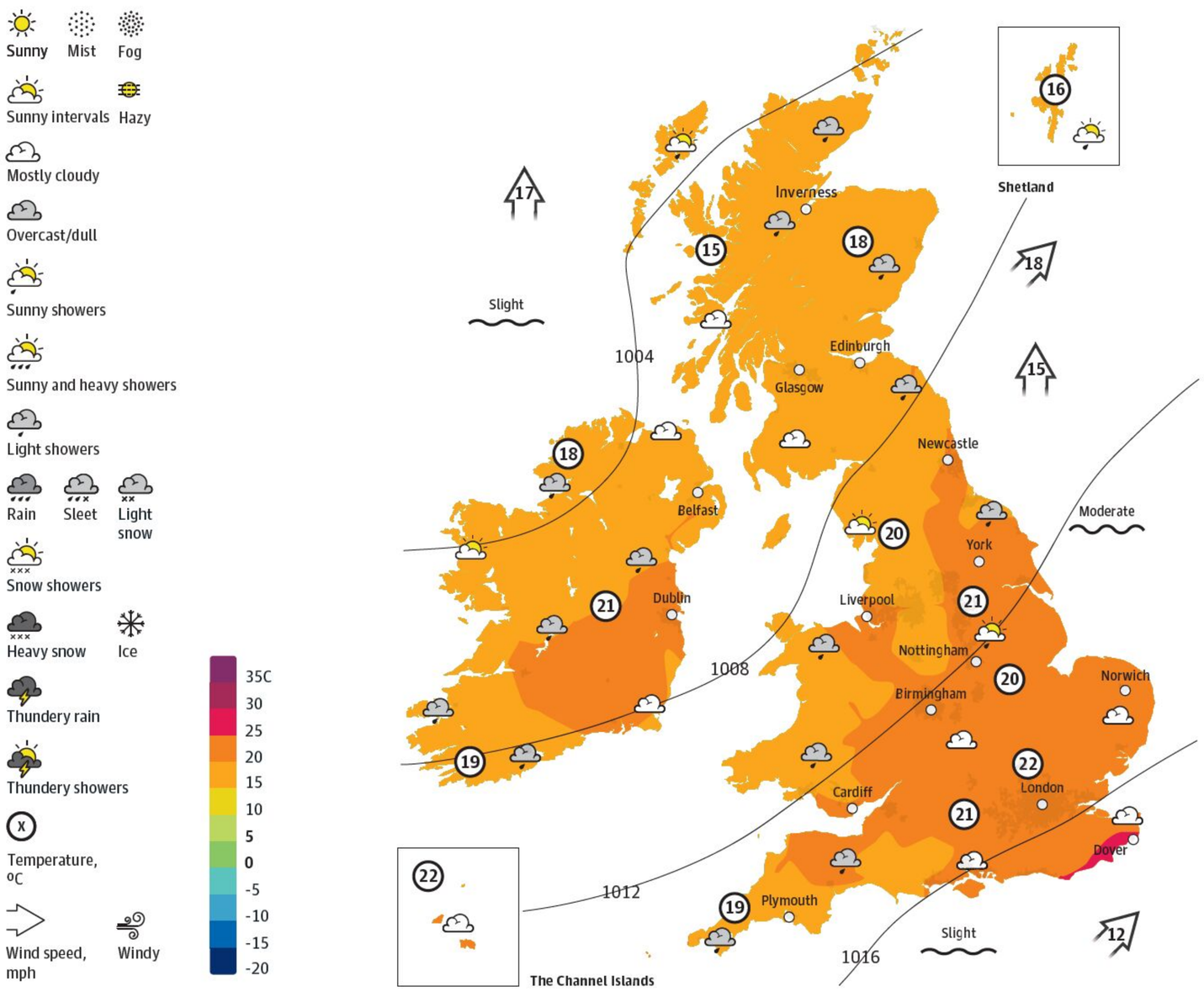
Weather
Thursday 8 August 2024

UK and Ireland Noon today



Forecast

Low 15 High 21
Tomorrow

Low 13 High 22
Saturday

Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

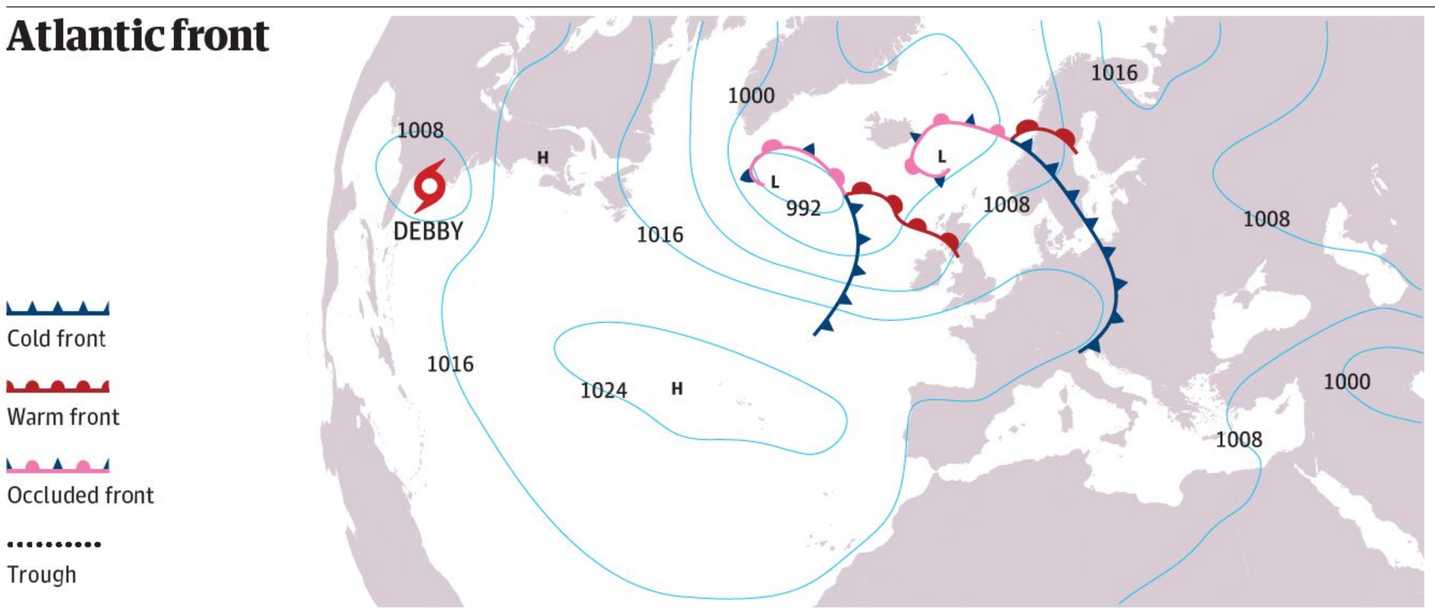
Latest	
06 Aug 2024	424.63
Weekly average	
28 Jul 2024	424.88
07 Aug 2023	420.83
07 Aug 2014	397.65
Pre-industrial base	*280*
Safe level	*350*

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

	Lows and highs		Precipitation	Air pollution
London	18	22	25%	Low
Manchester	15	20	90%	Low
Edinburgh	13	19	90%	Low
Belfast	12	19	60%	Low
Glasgow	13	18	90%	Low
Inverness	13	18	75%	Low
Leeds	15	20	85%	Low
Liverpool	15	21	80%	Low
Newcastle	13	19	70%	Low
Sheffield	15	21	75%	Low

Atlantic front



High tides

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Aberdeen	**0417**	4.1m	**1649**	3.8m
Avonmouth	**1032**	12.0m	**2241**	12.1m
Barrow	**0220**	8.8m	**1441**	8.4m
Belfast	**0209**	3.5m	**1433**	3.0m
Cobh	**0834**	3.8m	**2052**	3.8m
Cromer	**0927**	5.0m	**2207**	4.5m
Dover	**0214**	6.2m	**1427**	6.4m
Dublin	**0221**	3.9m	**1448**	3.6m
Galway	**0830**	4.7m	**2039**	4.8m
Greenock	**0318**	3.5m	**1604**	3.0m
Harwich	**0256**	3.7m	**1501**	3.8m
Holyhead	**0113**	5.4m	**1334**	5.1m
Hull	**0920**	7.2m	**2148**	6.7m
Leith	**0543**	5.3m	**1804**	5.1m
Liverpool	**0201**	8.9m	**1421**	8.6m
London Bridge	**0506**	6.8m	**1715**	6.7m
Lossiemouth	**0245**	4.0m	**1514**	3.6m
Milford Haven	**0925**	6.4m	**2138**	6.5m
Newquay	**0817**	6.4m	**2030**	6.6m
North Shields	**0624**	4.9m	**1854**	4.6m
Oban	**0855**	3.7m	**2101**	3.8m
Penzance	**0748**	5.0m	**2003**	5.2m
Plymouth	**0900**	5.0m	**2106**	5.2m
Portsmouth	**0225**	4.3m	**1500**	4.4m
Southport	**0128**	8.6m	**1348**	8.3m
Stornoway	**0957**	4.3m	**2159**	4.5m
Weymouth	**0908**	1.0m	**2116**	1.2m
Whitby	**0700**	5.4m	**1928**	5.1m
Wick	**0215**	3.4m	**1442**	3.0m
Workington	**0225**	8.0m	**1447**	7.6m

Sun & Moon

Sun rises	0535
Sun sets	2035
Moon rises	0946
Moon sets	2158
First Quarter	12 Aug

AccuWeather.com

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2024

Lighting up

Belfast	2111 to 0550
Birm'ham	2045 to 0541
Brighton	2033 to 0540
Bristol	2046 to 0548
Carlisle	2059 to 0536
Cork	2110 to 0610
Dublin	2107 to 0555
Glasgow	2109 to 0538
Harlech	2056 to 0549
Inverness	2115 to 0530
London	2035 to 0537
M'chester	2051 to 0540
Newcastle	2055 to 0531
Norwich	2034 to 0528
Penzance	2053 to 0603

Weatherwatch

Understanding the nuances of urban weather, and in particular the heat island effect that makes built-up areas hotter than their surroundings, requires detailed local information. But some areas lack local weather stations, so Brookhaven National Laboratory in the US is sending mobile weather vans to caravan parks in Arizona to measure the microclimate conditions precisely.

Static caravan communities are often low income, and poor insulation and other factors make their inhabitants especially susceptible to the health effects of heat. Last year there were a record 987 heat-related deaths in Arizona. But as there are less likely to be local weather stations in poorer neighbourhoods, there may be "data deserts" in the areas most at risk. Hence the weather vans, which are equipped to measure ground and air temperature, wind speed and direction, cloud cover and pollution levels.

The researchers are working in partnership with social scientists in an effort to build a fuller picture of how heat may affect the most vulnerable communities and help evaluate possible ways to mitigate the effects of hot weather.

David Hambling

Around the world

Algiers	33	Lisbon	28
Ams'dam	22	Madrid	40
Athens	33	Malaga	30
Auckland	14	Melb'rne	14
B Aires	7	Mexico C	25
Bangkok	34	Miami	33
Barcelona	31	Milan	33
Basra	47	Mombasa	28
Beijing	33	Moscow	20
Berlin	23	Mumbai	30
Bermuda	30	N Orleans	36
Brussels	23	Nairobi	22
Budapest	28	New Delhi	30
C'hagen	22	New York	22
Cairo	36	Oslo	22
Cape Town	15	Paris	27
Chicago	28	Perth	19
Corfu	35	Prague	24
Dakar	31	Reykjavik	13
Dhaka	31	Rio de J	30
Dublin	21	Rome	32
Florence	35	Shanghai	40
Gibraltar	29	Singapore	32
H Kong	33	Stockh'm	21
Harare	27	Strasb'g	26
Helsinki	23	Sydney	20
Istanbul	31	Tel Aviv	32
Jo'burg	23	Tenerife	26
K Lumpur	32	Tokyo	33
K'mandu	28	Toronto	23
Kabul	32	Vancouv'r	26
Kingston	32	Vienna	28
Kolkata	32	Warsaw	25
L Angeles	30	Wash'ton	25
Lagos	28	Well'ton	13
Lima	18	Zurich	25

Katarina Johnson-Thompson opens her campaign for a first Olympic heptathlon medal this morning

Paris 2024

Sport

Today

Weather
27°

Highlights

6.30am
Once more into the Seine

An early start for the open-water swimmers. The women's 10km final is due to take place in the Seine, shuttling the 800m between Pont de l'Alma and the ornate Pont Alexandre III, though despite the triathlon events going ahead in the river, it has not been plain sailing. Training was cancelled on Tuesday when tests showed the levels of the enterococci bacteria in the water had dropped back below the required standard, although *E coli* levels were still deemed acceptable. Vaires-sur-Marne, scene of the rowing and canoeing events, is on standby just in case.

9.05am
It's KJT time

If it's August, Katarina Johnson-Thompson is in the headlines: in August 2021 she pulled up with a calf injury in Tokyo; 12 months later she won heptathlon gold at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham; fast-forward to August 2023 and she was wrapped in the union flag in Budapest as world champion. This morning a new adventure begins for the 31-year-old: the two-day event opens with the 100m hurdles, where GB's Jade O'Dowda joins her in the first heat, and three of the other seven events follow (see schedule, right).

8.25pm
Track showdown

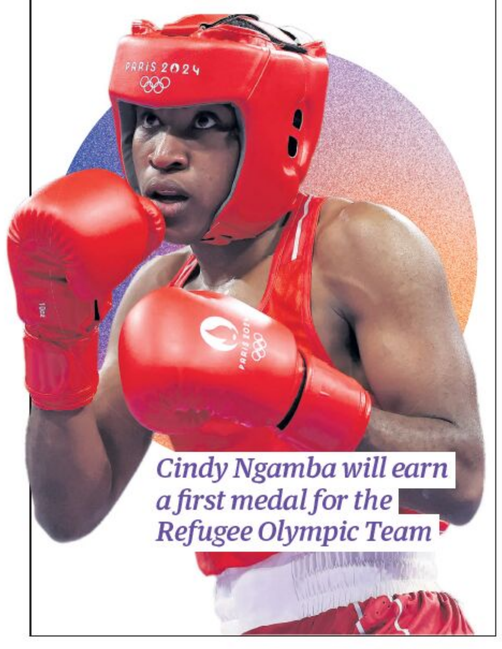
The anticipated 400m hurdles clash between Femke Bol of the Netherlands and Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone of the USA, the two fastest women of all time, could be one of the highlights of this year's athletics competition. The American spent last year focusing on the flat and returned to the hurdles in Atlanta in May with the fastest time of the year so far, a mark that Bol beat 12 days later. The Dutchwoman has also impressed on the flat in the past couple of years, breaking the world indoor record twice, but this is where they are best.

8.39pm
Jones the kick's hat-trick

Jade Jones was heading for an unprecedented hat-trick of gold medals going into Tokyo. The two-time Olympic taekwondo champion was hoping to add to her haul from London and Rio but crashed out in the early rounds at the last Games. Then her build-up to Paris was rocked by a doping case where she avoided a ban over a refused test because of "very exceptional circumstances". No taekwondo athlete has won three gold medals so the popular 31-year-old Welsh fighter's bid for a place in history gets under way from 8.10am, with the gold-medal contest starting at 8.39pm.

9.18pm
Ngamba's medal hunt

Cindy Ngamba grew up in England, went to school and university in England and has won national boxing titles in England, but is unable to represent Great Britain because she has repeatedly been denied citizenship. Instead the 25-year-old was the flag bearer for the Refugee squad in Paris and next faces Panama's Atheyna Bibeichi Bylon in the 75kg semi-final at 9.18pm. With both losing semi-finalists awarded bronze, the Cameroon-born fighter is assured of a medal at Paris 2024, a first for the Refugee Olympic Team.



Cindy Ngamba will earn a first medal for the Refugee Olympic Team

Today's TV

Live
Discovery+ All events live
BBC One 8am-1pm, 1.45-6pm, 7-10pm
BBC Two 1-1.45pm, 6-7pm
BBC● 6.20am-11pm
Eurosport 1 8am-9pm
Eurosport 2 6.25am-10.30pm

Highlights
BBC One 10.40pm
Eurosport 1 9pm

Schedule Day 13

Sport	Session	Time and details
Athletics	Women's heptathlon	**09:05** 100m hurdles **10:05** High jump **18:35** Shot put **19:55** 200m
	Women's shot put	**09:25** Qualification
	Women's 100m hurdles	**09:35** Repechage
	Women's 4x100m	**10:10** Round 1
	Men's 4x100m	**10:35** Round 1
	Men's 800	**11:00** Repechage
	Women's 1500m	**18:35** Semi-final
	Women's long jump	**19:00** Final●
	Men's javelin	**19:25** Final●
	Men's 200m	**19:30** Final●
	Women's 400m hurdles	**20:25** Final●
	Men's 110m hurdles	**20:45** Final●
Basketball	Men's	Semi-finals **16:30** France v Germany **20:00** USA v Serbia
Beach volleyball	Men's	**16:00, 17:00, 20:00, 21:00** Semi-finals (the two men's timeslots tbc)
	Women's	**16:00, 17:00, 20:00, 21:00** Semi-finals (the two women's timeslots tbc)
Boxing	Men's 57kg	**20:30, 20:46** Semi-finals●
	Women's 75kg	**21:02, 21:18** Semi-finals●
	Men's 51kg	**21:34** Final●
	Women's 54kg	**21:51** Final●
Canoe sprint	Women's C1 200m	**09:30** Heats **11:40** Quarter-finals
	Men's C2 500m	**10:20, 10:30** Semi-finals **12:20** Final B **12:30** Final A●
	Women's K4 500m	**10:40** Semi-final **12:40** Final A●
	Men's K4 500m	**10:50, 11:00** Semi-finals **12:50** Final A●
Cycling (track)	Men's omnium	**16:00** Scratch **16:38** Tempo **17:25** Elimination **18:27** Points●
	Women's keirin	**16:18** Quarter-finals **17:15** Semi-finals **18:01** Placing 7-12 **18:11** Final●
	Men's sprint	**17:01, 17:47, 18:18** Quarter-finals **19:04** Placing 5-8
Diving	Women's 3m	**09:00** Semi-final
	Men's 3m	**14:00** Final●
Football	Men's	Bronze match● **16:00** Egypt v Morocco
Golf	Women's	**08:00** Round 2
Handball	Women's	**15:30, 20:30** Semi-finals
Hockey	Men's	Bronze match● **13:00** India v Spain Gold match● **18:00** Germany v Netherlands
Modern pentathlon	Men's	**10:00** Fencing ranking
	Women's	**13:30** Fencing ranking
Rhythmic gymnastics	Individual	**09:00, 14:00** All-around qualifying
Sailing	Men's kite	**11:13** Semi-finals (each six races) **14:40** Final● (six races)
	Women's kite	**12:13** Semi-finals (each six races) **15:40** Final● (six races)
Sport climbing	Women's boulder & lead	**09:00** Semi-final (lead)
	Men's speed	**11:28** Quarter-finals **11:46** Semi-finals **11:55** Final●
Swimming	Women's 10km	**06:30** Final●
Table tennis	Men's team	**09:00** Semi-final
	Women's team	**14:00, 19:00** Semi-finals
Taekwondo	Men's -68kg	**08:00** Round of 16 **13:30** Quarter-finals **15:11** Semi-finals **18:30** Repechage **19:19, 19:51** Bronze bouts● **20:23** Gold bout●
	Women's -57kg	**08:10** Round of 16 **13:40** Quarter-finals **15:24** Semi-finals **18:40** Repechage **19:35, 20:07** Bronze bouts● **20:39** Gold bout●
Volleyball	Women's	Semi-finals **15:00** Brazil v USA **19:00** Turkey v Italy
Water polo	Women's	Placing 5-8 **12:00** Italy v Canada **17:00** Greece v Hungary Semi-finals **13:35** Netherlands v Spain **18:35** Australia v USA
Weightlifting	Women's 59kg	**14:00** Final●
	Men's 73kg	**18:30** Final●
Wrestling	Men's g/r 67kg	**10:00** Repechage **18:30** Bronze bout● **18:55** Gold bout●
	Men's g/r 87kg	**10:00** Repechage **19:05** Bronze bout● **19:30** Gold bout●
	Womens f/s 53kg	**10:00** Repechage **19:50** Bronze bout● **20:15** Gold bout●
	Men's f/s 57kg	**10:30** Round of 16 **11:50** Quarter-finals **17:15** Semi-finals
	Men's f/s 86kg	**10:30** Round of 16 **11:50** Quarter-finals **17:35** Semi-finals
	Women's f/s 57kg	**10:30** Round of 16 **11:50** Quarter-finals **17:55** Semi-finals

Germany's Christopher Rühr, and Jonas de Geus of the Netherlands

Olympics live
Follow the action with us
theguardian.com/sport

In brief

Climbing

British pair qualify for boulder and lead final

The British pair Toby Roberts and Hamish McArthur have qualified for sport climbing's boulder and lead final. Roberts finished second in qualifying after the semi-final lead section on 122.2 points, with McArthur placed eighth on 79.3. The top eight climbers progressed to tomorrow's final, with Japan's Sorato Anraku leading the way on a score of 137. "I'm feeling really good," the 19-year-old Roberts said after scoring 68.1 points on lead. "I've just got to go in there with a clear head and not put any expectation on myself." **PA Media**

Diving

Houlden springs into final on Olympic debut

Great Britain's Jack Laugher and Jordan Houlden have both progressed to the men's 3m springboard final, securing their spot in tomorrow's showpiece with third and fifth-placed finishes, respectively. Laugher, who won bronze in the event at Tokyo 2020, consistently held third place throughout and finished on a high with 82.80 on his final dive. Houlden earned his spot with 445.55 points to reach the final on his Olympic debut. Team GB's Yasmin Harper and Grace Reid also made it safely through to tomorrow's semi-finals in the women's 3m springboard. Harper finished ninth and Reid an impressive fifth. **PA Media**

Sailing

Beckett's bronze hopes dashed by bad weather

Micky Beckett agonisingly missed out on bronze when the dinghy medal race was abandoned. Light wind conditions have plagued the regatta in Marseille, but he began the race in fourth, almost certain of moving up to third place only for officials to decide conditions had changed and call it off. They started again around an hour later but the 29-year-old Welshman picked up three penalties and crossed the line last, relegating him to sixth overall. **PA Media**

Old Trafford will be kept if United build new stadium

Manchester United do not plan to demolish Old Trafford if they build a new stadium. Their home ground since 1910 would probably be scaled down to 30,000 capacity for use by the women's team and academy.

With the women playing most home games about 15 miles away in Leigh, such a move would be a significant upgrade for them, but the plan would also be carried out with history in mind.

Preserving Old Trafford would mean statues of Sir Alex Ferguson, Sir Matt Busby and Denis Law, and one of Law together with George Best and Sir Bobby Charlton would remain untouched, as would the clock commemorating the Munich disaster and the central tunnel on halfway that is the only surviving part of the original stadium designed by Archibald Leitch.

Sir Jim Ratcliffe wants United to decide on their stadium plans by December and favours a new facility with a capacity of 100,000 that would cost more than £2bn and take about six years to complete. That would be constructed next to Old Trafford, allowing the use of the existing venue until the new one is ready.

▲ *The statue of Charlton, Best and Law was unveiled in May 2008*

Old Trafford now holds as many as 74,310 spectators and has never had a capacity lower than about 44,000. The women's team are due to play three Women's Super League games there this season, including their opening game next month against West Ham.

Rodri and Morata get one-game bans for Gibraltar chant

Rodri and Álvaro Morata have been banned for one Spain match by Uefa for chanting "Gibraltar is Spanish" during celebrations in Madrid for the Euro 2024 final win against England.

Rodri, who plays for Manchester City, and Morata, a Milan striker, chanted "Gibraltar es Español" on stage in front of a massive crowd. The Gibraltar Football Association described it as "provocative and insulting" and complained to Uefa.

Uefa said the players were banned "for failing to comply with the general principles of conduct, for violating the basic rules of decent conduct, for using sporting events for manifestations of a non-sporting nature and for bringing football ... into disrepute."

Spain's next match is away against Serbia in the Nations League next month. "This decision sends a clear message football must remain a platform for promoting peace, understanding and fair play, free from offensive actions such as the chants," the Gibraltar FA said. **Guardian sport**

ADAM DAVY/PA

Gunners hit four Arsenal eased to a 4-1 friendly win over Bundesliga winners Bayer Leverkusen at the Emirates Stadium last night. Mikel Arteta's side raced into a 3-0 half-time lead with well-worked goals from Oleksandr Zinchenko, Leandro Trossard and Gabriel Jesus (above). Kai Havertz shone against his old club and stabbed in for 4-0 on 65 minutes. Adam Hlozek dinked a consolation for Leverkusen, who went 51 games unbeaten last season. **Guardian sport**

Football In brief

Liverpool

Euros winner Zubimendi lined up for £51m move

Liverpool have identified Real Sociedad's Martín Zubimendi as their first major signing of the summer. It is understood the Euro 2024 winner with Spain, who has a reported release clause of £51m, is viewed as a viable option to fill the defensive midfield role. That position has been in need of strengthening since the departure of Fabinho 12 months ago. The Japan international Wataru Endo was brought in from Stuttgart late in the window for £16m after Liverpool missed out on a couple of other targets but the now 31-year-old was viewed as a short-term solution. For a large proportion of last season Alexis Mac Allister was deployed as a No 6 and last month Liverpool rejected a £12m bid from Marseille for Endo. A move for the 25-year-old Zubimendi would be the first significant business for the new sporting director, Richard Hughes, who said last month that July would be quiet due to international tournaments but August would bring "a crescendo" of transfer activity. **PA Media**

Fulham

Club stalwart Ream leaves for Charlotte FC

Fulham's Tim Ream has joined the MLS side Charlotte FC after nine years with the club in which the defender made 312 appearances, second only in the 21st century to Tom Cairney. "The memories made, the connections formed and the people met along the way have made my time at Fulham more than special," the 36-year-old said. Fellow centre-back Tosin Adarabioyo has also left Fulham this summer, moving to Chelsea on a free transfer, while Spanish central defender Jorge Cuenca, 24, has joined from Villarreal for £5.75m. Meanwhile, Burnley have signed former England Under-21 goalkeeper Etienne Green on a three-year contract. The 24-year-old joins from Ligue 1 side Saint-Etienne and will provide competition for current England Under-21 keeper James Trafford. "I have always wanted to play for an English club, so to be here at a club like Burnley with the rich history is amazing," said Green, who was born in Colchester but moved to France aged four. **PA Media**

Results

Olympics

ATHLETICS

Men: 400m: Final: 1 Q Hall (US) 43.40sec; **2** M Hudson-Smith (GB) 43.44; **3** M Samukonga (Zam) 43.74; **4** J Richards (Tto) 43.78; **5** K James (Grn) 43.87; **6** C Bailey (US) 44.58; **7** S Ogazi (Ngr) 44.73; **8** M Norman (US) 45.62

Men: Discus Throw: Final: 1 R Stona (Jam) 70.00m; **2** M Alekna (Lit) 69.97; **3** M Denny (Aus) 69.31

Men: 110m Hurdles: Semi-final 2: 1 R Broadbell (Jam) 13.21sec; **2** F Crittenden (US) 13.23; **3** L Mendy (Sen) 13.34. **Selected other: 7** T Ojora (GBr) 13.47

Men: 400m Hurdles: Semi-final 3: 1 R Benjamin (US) 47.85sec; **2** R Clarke (Jam) 48.34; **3** W Happio (Fr) 48.66. **Selected other: 8** A Chalmers (GB) 56.52

Women: Pole Vault: Final: 1 N Kennedy (Aus) 4.90mtrs; **2** K Moon (US) 4.85; **3** A Newman (Can) 4.85

Women: 400m: Semi-final 1: 5 V Ohuruogu (GB) 51.14sec. **Semi-final 2: 3** L Nielsen (GB) 50.69sec. **Semi-final 3: 2** A Anning (GB) 49.47sec

Mixed Marathon Race Walk Relay: 1 Spain 2hr 50min 31sec; **2** Ecuador 2:51:22; **3** Australia 2:51:38

Men: 3000m Steeplechase: 1 S El Bakkali (Mor) 8:06.05; **2** K Rooks (US) 8:06.41; **3** A Kibiwot (Ken) 8:06.47

Men: 800m Round 1 - Heat 4: 2 E Giles (GB) 1min 45.93sec. **Heat 5: 1** B Pattison (GB) 1min 45.56sec. **Heat 6: 3** M Burgin (GB) 1min 45.36sec

Men: 5000m: Round 1 - Heat 1: 13 P Dever (GB) 14min 13.48secs; **18** G Mills (GB) 14:37.08. **Heat 2: 18** S Atkin (GB) 14min 02.46sec

Women: 100m Hurdles: Round 1 - Heat 2: 2 C Sember (GB) 12.72

Women: 1500m: Repechage Round - Heat 2: 2 R Walcott-Nolan (GB) 4min 06.73sec

GOLF

Women: Individual Stroke Play: First round: 1 C Boutier (Fr) 65; **2** A Buhai (SA) 68; **3** G López (Mex) 70; **4** M Metraux (Swi) 70; **5** M Uribe (Col) 70; **6** L Vu (US) 70; **7** C Borge (Nor) 71; **8** Lin X (Chn) 71; **9** D Dagar (Ind) 71; **10** M Lee (Aus) 71. **Selected others: 34** G Hall (GB) 74; C Hull (GB) 81

CYCLING TRACK

Men: Team Pursuit: Bronze Final: 1 Italy 3min 44.197sec; **2** Denmark 3:46.138. **Final: 1** Australia 3min 42.067sec; **2** Great Britain (E Hayter, D Bigham, C Tanfield, E Vernon) 3:44.394

Women: Team Pursuit: Bronze Final: Great Britain (E Barker, J Knight, A Morris, J Roberts) 4min 06.382sec bt Italy 4:08.961. **Final:** United States 4min 04.306sec bt New Zealand 4:04.927

Men: Sprint: Qualifying: 5 J Carlin (GB) 9.247sec; **7** H Turnbull (GB) 9.346

Men: Sprint: 1/32 Finals: 1 J Carlin (GB); **2** T Rorke (Can); **1/32 Finals: 1** H Turnbull (GB); **2** Zhou Y (Chn)

Women: Keirin: First Round: 3 K Marchant (GB). **First Round: 1** E Finucane (GB). **Repechages: 2** K Marchant (GB)

Women: Team Pursuit: First Round: 1 United States 4min 04.629sec; **2** Great Britain 4:04.908

BASKETBALL

Women: Quarter-finals: Spain 66 Belgium 79; Germany 71 France 84

BOXING

Men: +92kg: Semi-finals: B Jalolov (Uzb) bt N Tiafack (Ger) 5-0; **A Ghadfa Drissi El Aissaoui** (Sp) bt D Aboudou Moindze (Fr) 5-0

DIVING

Men: 3m Springboard: Semi-finals: 3 J Laugher (GB) 467.05pts; **5** J Houlden (GB) 445.55

HOCKEY

Women: Semi-finals: Netherlands 3 Argentina 0; Belgium 1 China 2 (SO)

SAILING

Women: Dinghy: Medal Race: 1 M Bouwmeester (Neth) 38pts (gold); **2** A Rindom (Den) 61 (silver); **3** L Host (Nor) 75 (bronze) . **Selected other: 12** H Snellgrove (GB) 108

Men's Dinghy: Medal Race: 1 M Wearn (Aus) 40pt; **2** P Kontides (Cyp) 56; **3** S Peschiera (Per) 80. **Selected other: 6** M Beckett (GB) 87

SKATEBOARDING

Men: Park: Final: 1 K Palmer (Aus) 93.11pts; **2** T Schaar (US) 92.23; **3** A Akio (Br) 91.85

Men: Park Prelims: 17 A MacDonald (GB) 77.66pts

SPORT CLIMBING

Men: Boulder & Lead: Semi-finals: 3 T Roberts (GB) 54.1pts; **8** H McArthur (GB) 34.2

Women: Speed: Bronze Final: A Kalucka (Pol) bt R Sallsabillah (Ina)

Women: Speed: Gold Final: A Miroslaw (Pol) bt Deng L (Chn)

ARTISTIC SWIMMING

Team: Final: 1 China 996.1389pts; **2** United States 914.3421; **3** Spain 900.7319

Football

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Third qualifying round: First leg Jagiellonia 0 Bodø/Glimt 1; Slavia Praha 3 Union SG 1; Slovan Bratislava 2 APOEL 0

CONFERENCE LEAGUE

Third qualifying round: First leg Häcken 6 Paide 1; København 1 Banik Ostrava 0; Paks 3 Mornar 0; St Gallen 2 Slask Wroclaw 0

HIGHLAND LEAGUE

Brechin 2 Inverurie Loco Works 0; Buckie 1 Fraserburgh 3; Clachnacuddin 0 Nairn 2; Deveronvale 2 Huntly 2; Formartine 1 Turriff 2; Forres 1 Brora 4; Keith 1 Banks O' Dee 2; Lossiemouth 3 Rothes 2; Wick 2 Strathspey 1

LOWLAND LEAGUE

Caledonian Braves 1 East Stirlingshire 0; Stirling University 1 Cowdenbeath 1

Cricket

METRO BANK ONE-DAY CUP

Group A Northampton Northamptonshire 155 (Saif Zaib 57). Somerset 156-3 (ARI Umeed 63). Somerset beat Northamptonshire by seven wickets.

The Rose Bowl Hampshire 295-8 (JJ Weatherley 93, NRT Gubbins 62). Derbyshire 152 (DC Kelly 5-19). Hampshire beat Derbyshire by 143 runs.

New Road Kent 259 (G Stewart 78, CH Stobo 72). Worcestershire 260-7 (JD Libby 75, RP Jones 57). Worcestershire beat Kent by three wickets (D/L Method).

Group B Bristol Sussex 132-9 (AS Dale 4-15). Gloucestershire 133-2. Gloucestershire beat Sussex by eight wickets (D/L Method).

THE HUNDRED WOMEN

Trent Bridge Trent Rockets 158-5 (NR Scrivens 55). London Spirit 127-7. Trent Rockets beat London Spirit by 31 runs.

THE HUNDRED MEN

Trent Bridge Trent Rockets 166-4 (AD Hales 68). London Spirit 144 (Rashid Khan 4-24). Trent Rockets beat London Spirit by 22 runs.

FIRST MEN'S TEST (first day of five)

Port of Spain South Africa 45-1. South Africa scored 45 runs for the loss of one first-innings wicket against West Indies.

THIRD MEN'S ONE-DAY INTERNATIONAL

Colombo Sri Lanka 248-7 (WIA Fernando 96, BKGM Mendis 59). India 138 (DN Wellalage 5-27). Sri Lanka beat India by 110 runs.

Tennis

WTA NATIONAL BANK OPEN (Toronto, Canada)

First round: D Shnaider (Rus) bt H Dart (GB) 6-3 3-6 7-6 (7-2)

Fixtures

Football (7pm unless stated)

Olympics

Men: Third-place final Egypt v Morocco (4pm)

Europa League

Third qualifying round: First leg Celje v Shamrock (7.15pm)

Conference League

Third qualifying round: First leg Ballkani v Larne; St Patrick's v Sabah (7.45pm); St Mirren v Brann (7.45pm)

Rugby league

Betfred Super League

St Helens v Salford Red Devils (8pm)

Cricket (11.30am unless stated)

The Hundred Women

Oval Invincibles v Southern Brave, The Oval (3pm); Welsh Fire v Northern Superchargers, Sophia Gardens

The Hundred Men

Oval Invincibles v Southern Brave, The Oval (6.30pm); Welsh Fire v Northern Superchargers, Sophia Gardens (3pm)

Metro Bank One-Day Cup

Group A Lancashire v Middlesex, Emirates Old Trafford (11am). **Group B** Warwickshire v Glamorgan, Edgbaston (11am); Yorkshire v Leicestershire, Scarborough (11am)

Greg Wood's racing tips

Yarmouth 2.15 Exceed **2.45** Help From Above **3.15** Overture **3.45** Keen Interest **4.15** Gultari **4.45** Dashing Donkey

Brighton 2.30 Little Boy Blue **3.00** Praetorian **3.30** Mumayaz **4.00** Open Secret **4.30** Temur Khan **5.00** Tres Chic

Chepstow 5.30 Azahara Palace **6.00** Lahab (nap) **6.30** Muscika **7.00** Miss Attitude **7.30** Lieber Power **8.00** Have Secret **8.30** Carrytheone

Sandown 5.45 Global Esteem **6.15** Pearl Of Windsor **6.45** Pride Of Arras **7.15** Midnight Rumble **7.45** Smart Hero **8.15** Atlantis Blue (nb)

◀ *Mateo Joseph (left) and Georginio Rutter have hit form for Leeds in pre-season*
MARK KERTON/SHUTTERSTOCK

From the top to the drop: what to expect in the Championship

Leeds, Luton and Burnley have promotion potential, while Wayne Rooney has it all to do at new club Plymouth

Louise Taylor

Promotion contenders

If England's top flight is a poorer place without **Leeds**, the Championship can only be enhanced by the presence of Daniel Farke's often thrillingly attacking team and their partisan fans. After losing the playoff final against Southampton last season, Leeds are on a mission to secure automatic promotion and, despite losing their gifted young midfielder/right-back Archie Gray to Tottenham and the Netherlands Under-21 winger Crysencio Summerville to West Ham, they look in decent shape to fulfil that aim. Hopes are high that the USA attacking midfielder Brenden Aaronson, back after a season on loan in the Bundesliga at Union Berlin, will shine.

Burnley have lost their manager Vincent Kompany to Bayern Munich but with Scott Parker at the helm they should be well placed to return to the Premier League at the first attempt. If Parker's experience of winning promotion from the second tier with Bournemouth and Fulham can only help, the signing of the Belgium winger Mike Trésor and the France Under-21 defender Maxime Estève after successful loans last season suggest those parachute payments are being invested sensibly.

Middlesbrough have produced two recent England managers in Steve McClaren and Gareth Southgate and it would not be that big a surprise were Michael Carrick to follow in that pair's footsteps. The former England midfielder signed a new long-term contract this summer and, despite the loss of his highly regarded first-team coach Aaron Danks to Bayern Munich, there is a quiet belief the top two is reachable for a young side who finished last season strongly, ending eighth.

Much may hinge on the striker Emmanuel Latte Lath staying fit but – in Seny Dieng, Rav van den Berg, Hayden Hackney and Isaiah Jones – Boro boast talent in important positions.

No one who watched **Luton** in Premier League action last season will underestimate Rob Edwards's resilient and streetwise side but their hopes of automatic promotion may be hampered by the string-pulling midfielder Ross Barkley's move to Aston Villa.

Playoff hopefuls

Liam Rosenior paid a rather harsh price for **Hull**'s narrow failure to make the top six last season so now it is over to Tim Walter to satisfy the ambitions of the club's owner, Acun Ilicali. Walter's task is complicated by the loss of the winger Jaden Philogene to Aston Villa, who could take some replacing.

Sunderland routinely attract crowds of more than 40,000 to the Stadium of Light where their new French coach, Régis Le Bris, will be expected to transform a talented but young squad into promotion challengers while getting the best out of Jobe Bellingham (Jude's younger brother), Jack Clarke and Dan Neil.

The US businessman Shilen Patel's takeover of **West Brom** last February was expected to preface promotion sooner or later and with Carlos Corberán as manager the losing playoff semi-finalists of last season should be back in the hunt for a top-six finish. A possible hitch could be the EFL restrictions on transfer activity as the club struggles to meet profit and sustainability rules.

Norwich, too, fell in the semi-finals but appear a bit of an unknown quantity after replacing David Wagner with the 35-year-old Dane Johannes Hoff Thorup, while Mark Robins's **Coventry** should not be discounted.

Chris Wilder has a highly impressive pedigree as a serial EFL promotion-winner but he is embarking on a major rebuild at the relegated **Sheffield United** and an immediate top tier return may be beyond the Blades.

▼ *Oliver Arblaster (right) impressed in his few Premier League outings*
PETER POWELL/EPA

Emmanuel Latte Lath's goals will be key for Boro

Relegation candidates

All eyes will be on **Plymouth**, where Wayne Rooney begins his latest managerial adventure. **Oxford**, **Cardiff** and **Portsmouth** could struggle, too.

Three youngsters to watch

Rav van den Berg *Middlesbrough, 20*
In May, the accomplished 6ft 3in defender won Middlesbrough's awards for player of the season and young player of the season. Given that he turned 20 last month that represented quite some achievement in his maiden campaign after arriving from PEC Zwolle. The Netherlands Under-21 international can operate across the backline with technical assurance, passing out swiftly and purposefully, but is most usually seen at right-back or in his preferred central defensive role. Milan, Roma, Borussia Dortmund and Tottenham are among the clubs tracking a player sufficiently mature to have occasionally worn the captain's armband.

Oliver Arblaster *Sheffield United, 20*
The England Under-20 midfielder has already captained his side. His composed performances during a handful of central midfield outings in the Premier League last spring offered Blades fans rare cause for optimism as their club hurtled towards relegation. All vision, technique and tenacity, Arblaster spent the first part of that campaign on loan at Port Vale but was recalled in January and Wilder is expected to reconstruct his side around a precocious talent with an eye for goal.

Mateo Joseph *Leeds, 20*
The forward has impressed in pre-season and seems set to show why he is a Spain Under-21 international after representing England at under-20 level. Given that his father is English and a cousin of Emile Heskey, Joseph has been involved in something of an international tug-of-war, but the pull of his mother's country – he was born and brought up in Santander, in northern Spain – won the day. Strong and technically proficient, the former Espanyol player, sometimes likened to a young Sergio Agüero, has been at Leeds for two years and appears ready to graduate from promising substitute cameos to a central starting role.

Tennis

Nadal to miss US Open and play Laver Cup

Rafael Nadal has confirmed he will miss the US Open this month and play next at the Laver Cup in September.

The 22-time grand slam title winner, 38, hinted after his Olympic Games exit in Paris that he would skip the final major tournament of the year at Flushing Meadows.

Nadal has won the US Open on four occasions but competed there once since his 2019 triumph after a number of injury struggles in recent years.

Posting on X, Nadal wrote: "I have decided not to compete at this year's US Open.

"I will miss those electric and special nights in NYC at Ashe, but I don't think I would be able to give my 100% this time. My next event will be the Laver Cup in Berlin." **PA Media**

▲ *Rafael Nadal appears to be nearing retirement as he misses the US Open*

Sport unites

Clubs asked to promote tolerance

Continued *from back page*

of tensions. "Today, and over the coming days, we ask supporters everywhere to stay safe, respect each other, celebrate the diversity of our communities and show the world the best of rugby league," the RFL said.

Super League's Hull FC called for "calm, cohesion and tolerance" after unrest in the city last weekend, with more expected in the coming days. "We ask our supporters to stay safe by strictly avoiding any pockets of disorder that may occur across the city tonight and over the coming days," the club said.

The RFU also posted a statement on X condemning "all acts of racism and violence", adding: "They do not reflect the sport of rugby union, nor its values. For our clubs, we encourage you to put your arms around your respective communities and keep yourselves and your neighbours safe. Rugby is all about uniting communities. No more so than at times like these."

Clubs in a number of sports have been preparing for the possible impact caused by any unrest in their local areas, which could have implications on the policing of matches.

The DCMS declined to comment.

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France says so long and thank you

Nikola Karabatic acknowledges the acclaim from players, coaches and crowd after the game
SAMEER AL-DOUMY/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

'End of my first life': Karabatic bids emotional farewell

France lose in overtime after failing to close out quarter-final to end handball legend's chance of fourth gold

Nick Ames
Stade Pierre Mauroy

Nikola Karabatic looked around, up to the gods and to either side. More than 26,500 people were on their feet, celebrating him and chanting his name, the noise echoing around this repurposed football stadium as it had all afternoon.

At ground level, his colleagues joined their German counterparts in leading the acclaim. One of the great French sporting careers was finally over, although nobody could quite say how. This handball quarter-final was an all-time classic: an occasion of suitable pitch for an icon to bow out.

How could France have fluffed their lines like this? Karabatic is 40, the best player in history and a three-time Olympic gold medallist. He has seen it, done it, won it all and the plan was that he would sign off with another title for the Tokyo 2020 champions.

For most of the match *Les Bleus*, a shadow of themselves in the group stage, seemed to have understood the stakes. With 13 seconds left they were two goals clear; with six to play the margin was one but all they had to do was retain possession or simply take a pot shot.

The France coach, Karabatic's former teammate Guillaume Gille, called a time out and it gave their opponents a chance to reset. They had seemed resigned to the hosts running down the clock but could now prime themselves to throw whatever energy remained into winning back that ball.

Even so, it was an astonishing blunder that left Dika Mem, who had been virtually faultless, pounced on by Renars Uscins to begin a move the same player emphatically finished. Heads sunk into hands around all three of the deep, vertiginous stands in use. The clock showed 60 minutes.

With two minutes of overtime left and Germany, grasping their second chance, winning 34-33, it was time for Karabatic to make his return. He has been used sparingly in his dotage, time catching up with the body if not an ever agitated mind.

Since half-time he had watched from the bench, draped in a pink towel, jumping to his feet at moments of joy and cajoling as the hits got harder in an increasingly brutal contest.

"This could be the last one," he had whispered to his brother, Luka, during a group-stage meeting with Hungary when France dragged themselves out of a hole. If this Hail Mary did not work, a shuddering end really would be the outcome now.

It came, again with the final action, when the Germany goalkeeper, David Späth, spread himself and made a vital block from Valentin Porte. Späth wheeled away in ecstasy while Karabatic draped his arm around a seemingly tearful Porte. At 35-34, the race was run.

Karabatic came on late but could not earn France a win

"I'll cherish my last moment with my teammates in the locker room, maybe drink a beer and reflect on everything and also be there to cheer them up because it's a tough moment for us," Karabatic said.

"I never wanted to look back because I always wanted to look forward, but now it's the end of my first life so tomorrow I'll reflect on that and enjoy the ride I've had."

What a journey it has been. Take a survey of posters in the Paris metro and you will soon land upon Karabatic's visage. Born in Serbia to a handball-playing father and raised in France since he was three and a half, he ended up reshaping a sport in his own image. Karabatic was a formidable all-rounder, immovable in defence and simply clinical with ball in hand. He brought the next generation with him while remaining a level above the rest, being named the world's star turn three times. As fans flocked to the stadium, his was the name on the back of those blue shirts.

"I would have loved to live that with a medal around my neck," he said of the emotional farewell.

Some of France's squad had been unhappy when plans were drawn to host the handball in Lille, feeling they were effectively being excluded from a lavish Parisian knees-up. It was agreed to hold the group phase at a much smaller arena in Porte de Versailles before heading north for the business end.

Nobody could say they had missed the party here. The atmosphere was hair-raising, goals and saves celebrated gutturally, *La Marseillaise* belting out when France needed a lift and the ambience benefiting from the absence of an overbearing master of ceremonies. The support were left to their own devices and responded exhilaratingly.

They still stood, momentarily hushed, wondering what had struck them after Späth made his decisive intervention.

Luka Karabatic, silver-haired but at 36 the junior sibling, could offer no explanation for the malfunction that had effectively signed off his brother's retirement. "It's a lot to process and we're going to need some time to digest everything," he said, before describing his immediate post-match encounter with Nikola. "Just giving him a hug, giving each other our arms, just being grateful for the chance we had to be together in this incredible team, in front of this incredible crowd."

It was an event to testify that handball, a deeply serious sport across swathes of Europe, can stir the senses through action and storylines.

For the elder Karabatic, the tale of a glorious finale had already been pencilled into this summer's agenda. How cruelly it was scratched out, but what a legacy he leaves behind.

"The pain of the loss is still there," he said. "But I'm very proud of what I've achieved."

Taekwondo

Trail blazer

Palestine teen battling for recognition for his country

18-year-old Palestinian and Saudi Arabia's Abutaleb two with extraordinary stories

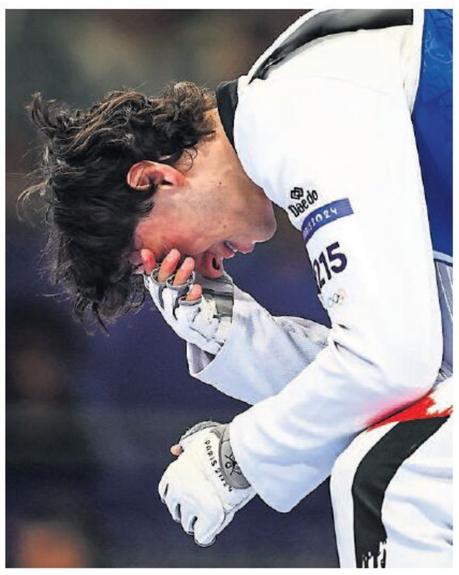
Tumaini Carayol
Grand Palais

As his dreams of competing for a taekwondo medal evaporated in the final moments of his second contest of the day, Omar Yaser Ismail fell to his knees in disbelief. Even after his opponent, Adrián Vicente, comforted him and the audience recognised his efforts with a long, warm ovation, he remained rooted to the spot, unable to come to terms with defeat.

Ismail's ambitions were far greater than his final result in the taekwondo 58kg weight division yesterday, but as one of eight athletes representing Palestine at the Olympic Games, simply making it to Paris was a significant feat.

While seven of the Palestinian athletes secured their berths through the International Olympic Committee's quota system, which offers placements to underrepresented Olympic committees, the 18-year-old is here because of his performances at the Asian Taekwondo Olympic qualification tournament. Ismail is the first Palestinian athlete to ever directly qualify for the Olympics in any combat sport.

His family hails from the West Bank but his parents emigrated to Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates in 2003, two years before he was born. At a time when Israel's air attacks and ground incursion into Gaza have killed more than 30,000 Palestinian people, including estimates of more than 300 Palestinian athletes and sporting officials, Ismail and other Palestinian competitors have used their platforms to shed light on the plight of the population they represent. "This is all for Palestine," he said. "It's true that we play and fight, but the real heroes are the children of Palestine and the children of Gaza."



▲ *Omar Yaser Ismail is devastated after his defeat in the last 16*

As a child, Ismail came into contact with taekwondo by chance; he would go off to watch his brother and friends at their training sessions. It soon became his own sport. From those beginnings, Ismail found himself at the Olympics under the glorious dome roof of the Grand Palais, a stunning setting for professional sport, on an opening day of a taekwondo competition ripe with meaningful storylines.

In his first match of the competition, Ismail faced the refugee athlete Hadi Tiranvalipour. Formerly representing Iran, Tiranvalipour was a member of his country's national team and also a sports presenter until he was fired from his job after speaking out in favour of women's freedom. As he left Iran, his travels would take him through Turkey to Italy, where he spent his first 10 days living in a forest.

The opening day also threw a spotlight on the first Saudi woman to qualify by merit for the Olympics. Dunya Abutaleb took to taekwondo at a time when Saudi Arabia had banned women from entering sport clubs and girls from playing sports at school. After being introduced to taekwondo by her father, she spent her formative years training only with boys and wearing a head covering to disguise herself as one. After her gender was revealed, she was barred from the club and had to train at home with her brother's coach.

Abutaleb has since built a notable career, winning bronze medals at the 2022 world taekwondo championships and the Asian Games. Yesterday, she won her opening bout against Abishag Semberg of Israel, an Olympic bronze medallist from Tokyo 2020.

It seemed for some time that Abutaleb was on her way to a routine defeat but, with 19 seconds to go in the second round, she gave a full exhibition of her resilience as a sweet kick connected with Semberg's head. After narrowly edging out that round, she dominated the final round. After the bout, Abutaleb did not shake Semberg's hand.

Although Abutaleb lost her second match to Panipak Wongpattanakit comprehensively, the Thai fighter eventually reached (and won) the final, which allowed Abutaleb into the repechage, where she eventually fell to Iran's Mobina Nematzadeh in the bronze medal match.

Meanwhile, after efficiently defeating Tiranvalipour in the qualifying round, Ismail faced Vicente, a bronze medallist at last year's world championships, in the round of 16. Although Vicente dominated the opening round of their contest, Ismail established a narrow lead in the next round with five seconds to go, a third round seemingly beckoning. Instead, the Spaniard landed two fierce kicks to snatch victory right at the close. After the clock counted him out, Ismail was inconsolable.

Eventually, he departed the arena. He still looked devastated as he walked through the media zone alone without stopping for any interviews. But he left the Grand Palais showing that he can be competitive, that he has a promising future and, perhaps most notably, that at only 18 he is now flying his flag on stages that no other Palestinian athlete is currently able to get to.

▼ *Fernando Dayan Jorge Enriquez shows his power in the 1,000m canoe single*
EBRAHIM NOROOZI/AP

Canoeing

'I lived like all Cubans, I was no longer in the bubble of sports'

A national hero after his gold in Tokyo, Fernando Dayan Jorge Enriquez now proudly flies the flag for refugees

Andy Bull
Vaires-Sur-Marne Nautical Stadium

It is 1,000m to the finish line at the flatwater sprint canoeing course, but the man in lane three of the second heat has come a hell of a lot further than that to make it there. If you were paying close attention during Tokyo 2020, you may remember Fernando Dayan Jorge Enriquez. If you are Cuban you absolutely do. He won the country's first gold medal in canoeing, when competing with Serguey Torres in the two-man 1,000m sprint.

The win turned Jorge into a national hero. Thomas Bach, the International Olympic Committee president, came to congratulate them and Granma, the official paper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, carried several long, lavish reports, describing it as a "Cuban Feat" and an "Electrifying Victory".

It was a great race. The Cuban pair trailed China and Germany all the way to the final few metres, when they pushed past into first. Torres, 34, gave all the credit to Dayan Jorge, who was 22. "This boy gave me the desire to fight," he said. "He has put his hand on my shoulder and told me: 'Come on, you can.' This young man is destined to become one of the great Cuban athletes, and a super hero of world canoeing."

There was talk in the papers about how the national federation were going to build a team around him for Paris and Los Angeles and plans to pair him with another up-and-coming Cuban canoer called José Ramón Pelier Cordova. Pelier Cordova made it to Paris with the Cuban team. But Dayan Jorge didn't. He is here competing for the Olympic Refugee Team.

It is hard for Dayan Jorge to talk about why. He doesn't speak much English and he has to measure his words. He has talked about how, when he returned to Cuba after the Olympics, the country was in the worst economic crisis since the revolution and how unhappy he felt at being made to play at public relations for a failing government.

"We had six months of vacation and I lived like all Cubans, I was no longer in the bubble of sports," he said in an interview. "They also wanted to make me part of the government's farce and I didn't want to. That's why I deserted."

Six months after the Tokyo Games, Dayan Jorge and the rest of the Cuba squad travelled to Mexico City for a three-week training camp. In all the hustle-bustle of the airport, Dayan Jorge slipped away from his teammates and coaches and disappeared towards the US border. It took him a fortnight to make the journey. He left his gold medal, and everything else, behind him in Cuba and travelled incognito because he was worried about the risk of being kidnapped and held for ransom if one of the people-smuggling gangs found out he was an Olympic champion.

Finally, he reached the Rio Grande. He had to swim across and, fit as he is, he says he only just made it. Dayan Jorge's first real step on to US soil was followed by another back the way he came. He heard a woman screaming in midstream behind him. She was holding on to a rope and her husband was trying to pull her to shore, but the current was so strong that she let go. Her husband was chasing after her, but she was moving too quickly for him. Dayan Jorge went back in to rescue her. He confirmed the story after his race with a simple "yes, that's true".

> ***'I feel proud to represent more than 100 million displaced people around the world'***

On the far bank, Dayan Jorge was arrested and held for a fortnight by the US authorities before he was granted asylum. He wound up in Miami, where he is working as a plumber and doing his training on the canals around the city. He is one of almost half a million Cubans who have made this journey, or another just like it, in the years since the end of the pandemic.

He had no idea whether he was going to be able to compete in Paris until he found he had been awarded an IOC refugee scholarship in April. "I feel proud to be able to represent more than 100 million displaced people around the world," he said.

There has been a cost. When he first defected, Granma published a terse statement from the National Federation that accused him of "indiscipline that destroyed years of intense work and aspects of the development strategy of that sport. It said he "turned his back on the commitment to his sport and his people". He laughs when I ask if old friends and teammates have been warm towards him in Paris. "No."

The Cuban Olympic Committee has complained to the IOC about his inclusion. It says he is not a refugee at all, that he was never persecuted or uprooted, but simply chose to leave. It has demanded the IOC expel him.

Dayan Jorge did not make it to the semi-finals here. But he says he is dreaming about competing in Los Angeles four years from now. He is a proud man and like Torres, his friend and teammate in Tokyo said when they won that gold, "a very brave one" too.

An inspiration to all 51-year-olds in cargo shorts

GB's 'Rad Dad' Andy Macdonald has the time of his life flipping and twirling on the skateboard ramps at La Concorde, watched by **Barney Ronay**

The Paris 2024 Olympics has been very good at dishing up moments of colour and intrigue. On a baking afternoon in the shade-less stands of the Place de la Concorde it delivered something new, a moment in the sun for 51-year-old men in cargo shorts everywhere. Welcome to the shock of the old. Welcome to the first and ideally final instalment of Dad Bloke Summer.

Olympic skateboarding has already made its mark in Paris and Tokyo. This is a thrilling sport. The women's competition on Tuesday was captivating. A day later the men's heats provided something else, not just a high-end medal competition eliminator but a stage for the 51-year-old Andy Macdonald to take to the ramps in the colours of Great Britain. Yes, really.

Although Macdonald is a specific kind of cargo-shorted 51-year-old. This isn't Bob from Leicester who's giving it a go, or someone's dad who got bored in the garden. Macdonald is a skateboard legend. Winner of eight gold medals at the X Games. Turned pro at 12. Longtime pal of Tony Hawk and face of the 1999 computer game Skateboarding Featuring Andy Macdonald, which is a skateboarding game featuring Andy Macdonald.

And yes, it is easy to see the flaws in this arrangement. The smart response to this will be to laugh vaguely and reproduce the image of Steve Buscemi holding a skateboard over his shoulder saying: "How do you do, fellow kids". The 51-year-old men in cargo shorts community rejects that image. We need new heroes now.

And yes also, Macdonald's father was born in Luton, hence his qualification for Team GB, but seeing him in the flesh, feeling his star charm, the TV tan, the celebrity teeth, the thought occurred that if you were asked to imagine the least - with all due respect - Luton person possible, this is probably who you'd come up with.

And yes once again, to qualify for a GB Olympic spot he defeated a 12-year-old boy, which, as one 51-year-old dad to another, is kind of against the code. Point made. But you might just want to kind of let him do it. Maybe go and sit in the car and listen to a podcast. For all that this was a lovely occasion, and an excellent level of competition. Mainly, it was an uplifting spectacle, and not just for 51-year-old men or 51-year-old women or older people generally, but for anybody who wants to be inspired to do things. But mainly it was inspiring for 51-year-old men in cargo shorts.

Macdonald may not have been out there embodying Luton skateboard culture. But by the end, watching him work the crowd, beaming unstoppably, it was hard to avoid the sense he was representing another nation here: 51-year-old men in cargo shorts.

Looking around at the other ageing men of the press seats, also in cargo shorts, worn now like replica kit, it was hard not to feel seen. This is our flag. We have our Marchand, our Biles. We have ... oh. Nothing. Just talking to myself.

In reality this was just a great sporting event. The Arena at La Concorde is spectacular, a kind of urban canyon housing a series of slopes and ramps. The staging is lively and fun, the brilliance of the athletes obvious. Skateboarding is one of the best new Olympic sports, one that anyone can do, that doesn't require a horse or a functioning dock, just a piece of wood with wheels and a slope.

He was doing it MCC handbook style, solid and dad-ish, like a man expertly setting up a tent

The preliminaries were in the morning. From there only eight of 22 skaters would go through to the afternoon final. Macdonald was listed to go last. And as the heat built to peak, that final group appeared. Macdonald got a huge ovation as he was announced. He still looks lean and fit, just dad-fit next to these essentially weightless teens and 20-somethings. He did a groovy hand gesture for the cameras (don't do that) and high-fived another guy with long tangled surfer hair (also don't do that). He's a career champion. He's also a 51-year-old dad in cargo shorts. Is this really going to be OK?

Macdonald lapped up the applause after his first run

First up was Luigi Cini, 22, and from Curitiba in Brazil, who reeled off a round of brilliant tricks and took an impressive score of 89.10. Steven Piñeiro of Puerto Rico looked sublime. Third was Keefer Wilson, 17 and stunningly good.

As Macdonald stood there watching this you wondered if he might have one of those, yeah, maybe just go for a run instead moments. Doe anyone want a drink? I think the parking might be running out. Instead he stepped up, launched himself into the empty air, and it was all just fine, expert, controlled. There were flips and turns and one 360 twirl.

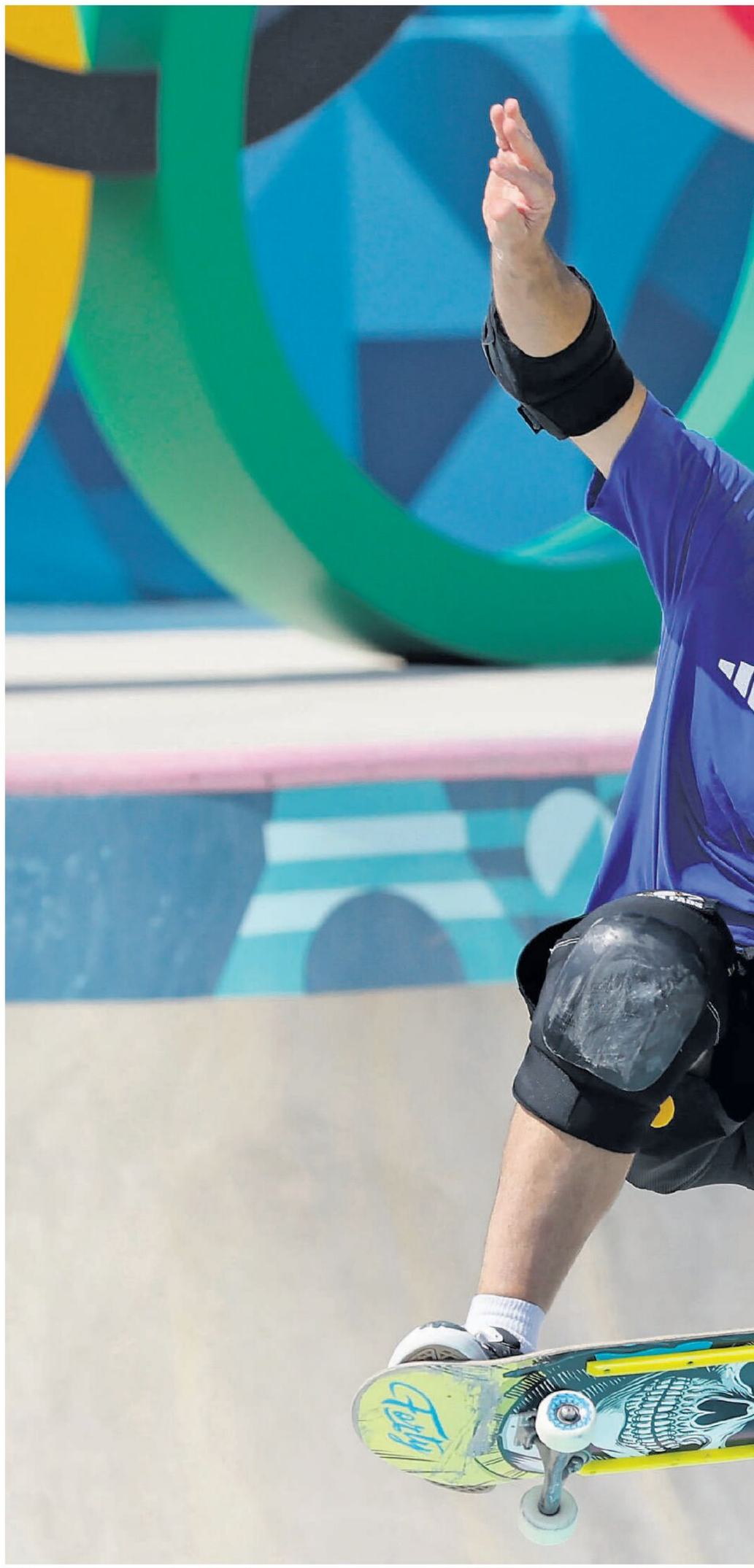
He didn't really do big air, or lots of intricate moves. He did it the old way, and people in their forties and fifties might recognise this. As you age, so do your skills. You play old-fashioned football, with maybe a wall pass or a through ball. In cricket you bat suddenly like someone from the 1950s, high elbow, no run there.

Macdonald was doing it MCC-handbook style, solid and dad-ish, like a man expertly setting up a tent, and it was all fine and good right up until the moment he fell on his backside doing his final leap, but leapt up smiling and saying no really it's fine, I'm fine, how are you.

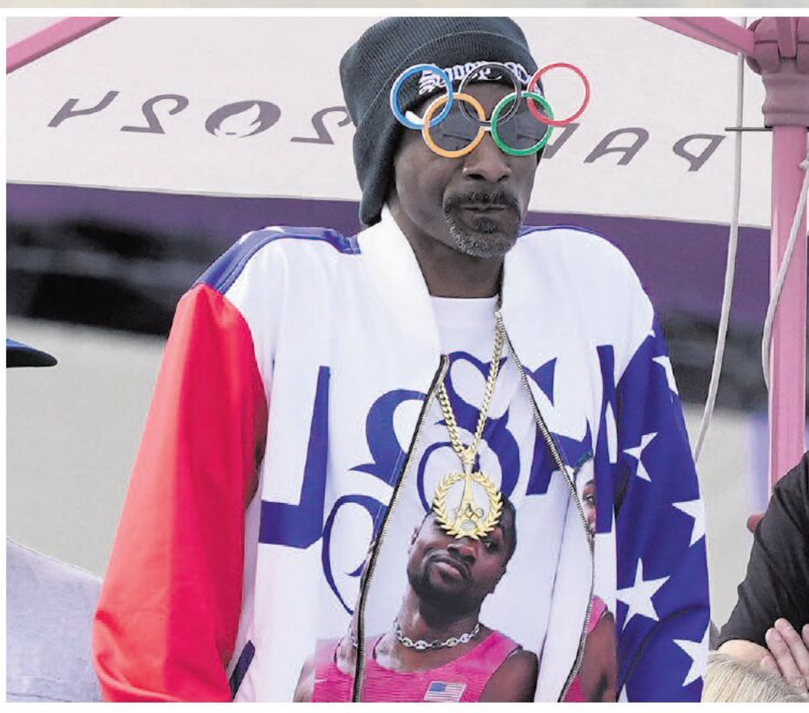
The ovation was huge. He waved. Second time around he hit 76.61. Third time out he was even better, hauling himself into 18th place. Crucially he didn't fall off again, as pretty much everyone else did, which felt a bit like your dad winning at ping-pong because he stayed to put the table away.

The cheers were once again huge as he twirled his board and grinned for the cameras, having the time of his life out there. Later, he was late to talk to the press, drawing some not entirely unserious talk about needing to sit in a chair for a bit or just resting his eyes. But he looked fresh and pumped in the mixed zone, thrilling the gathered hard core of cargo-shorted 50-something men, who asked age-appropriate questions like how's your wife (frankly, it was a surprise no one asked for tips on a good organic IPA, or asked what do they call the judge with no fingers, answer: Justice Thumbs).

But by then Macdonald had already charmed everyone present, and offered in the process the most obvious reason for his presence here, the fact that he is a superstar and that this will just be good for skateboarding. Plus, right off the bat, he gave the perfect dad-level soundbite: "If they're giving away gold medals for whoever has the most fun, I got it wrapped up, right?" Yes king. Preach.



▶ *Snoop Dogg and skateboard legend Tony Hawk were in attendance at La Concorde*
FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP



▶▶ *Tom Schaar of Team USA grabs some big air on the way to his silver medal*
TOM JENKINS/ THE GUARDIAN

Veteran of the park still going strong

Andy Macdonald, 51, was an established name in the sport before many of his competitors were born
TOM JENKINS/ THE GUARDIAN

Boxing

Second gender row boxer Lin into gold medal match after comfortable victory

Tumaini Carayol
Roland Garros

Taiwan's Lin Yu-ting will compete for an Olympic gold medal after she defeated Esra Yildiz Kahraman by unanimous decision in their women's 57kg semi-final.

Lin has been subjected to a gender eligibility row after being banned by the International Boxing Association (IBA) from last year's world championships. Despite the furore, she has remained focused and will face Julia Szeremeta of Poland in the final. "I really enjoyed that fight," Lin said.

The IBA, which is run by the Russian businessman Umar Kremlev and funded by the Russian state oil company Gazprom, was stripped of recognition as boxing's governing body and expelled from the Olympics over various concerns, including corruption and financial transparency.

Since the furore, many Taiwanese officials have come to Lin's defence. The Taiwanese President, Lai Ching Te, has written numerous messages in support of Lin on social media and on Tuesday, the Taiwan sports administration threatened the IBA with legal action due to its "continued publication of false information" regarding the eligibility of Lin and Algeria's Imane Khelif.

Esra Yildiz Kahraman makes a gesture that has been taken as a reference to XX chromosomes

After the defeat, Lin and Kahraman shook hands and the Turk briefly spoke with Lin's longtime coach, John Tseng Tzu-Chiang, before opening the ropes to help Lin leave the ring.

As she walked back to her side of the ring, however, she put her fingers together to form an 'X' and presented it to the different sides of the ring. It was a similar gesture to the one made by Lin's defeated opponent, Svetlana Staneva, in the previous round, which some have interpreted as a reference to XX chromosomes.

Lin arrived to cheers, with cries of "Yu-Ting, Jia You" ("Come on, Yu-Ting") ringing out throughout. While Kahraman landed blows early on, Lin controlled the early stages. She ended the first round with all five judges scoring it in her favour.

Lin and Kahraman began the second round with a series of high-octane exchanges but throughout the contest the Taiwanese used her superior length brilliantly.

While Kahraman was more proactive, Lin danced around with ease, creating distance between the two boxers and patiently waiting for her moments to counter. It was a cool and confident performance.

Each successful round emboldened Lin and, by the third round, she was imperious. When she was declared the winner, Lin bowed to each side of the stadium.

Lin, a two-time world champion who started boxing to protect her single mother and family, is competing in her second Olympics at 28 years old. Three years ago, at the Tokyo Games, she was defeated in the round of 16 by Nesthy Petecio of the Philippines, who showed that she could neutralise the length and range of Lin en route to her silver medal.

"The feeling of entering the gold-medal match is one of gratitude to myself for making it this far," she said. "After going out in the first round of the Tokyo Olympics, it's been a tough journey to reach the finals."

Petecio's hope of bettering that medal came to an end last night as she was defeated in the semi-final by Szeremeta. She is Poland's first boxing medallist at the Games since 1992.

Khelif has reached the final in the 66kg competition, where she will face Yang Liu of China.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's Oleksandr Khyzhniak became an Olympic gold medallist in the men's 80kg category, defeating Nurbek Oralbay of Kazakhstan by split decision. Erislandy Álvarez Borges of Cuba edged out France's Sofiane Oumiha by split decision in the men's 63.5kg final.

Golf

Hull unable to overcome effects of freak injury

Ewan Murray
Le Golf National

An 81 for Charley Hull to open her Olympics looks shocking without context. Hull slipped in the shower in the US at the start of July, the right shoulder injury incurred as a result forcing her to take a break from competitive golf.

Le Golf National is not a particularly forgiving venue for a player trying to retune; only 12 of the field scored under par yesterday. "Get that round out of the way and bit of a warm-up for the British Open now," Hull said. Medals have vanished from view.

Freak circumstance hit Hull at the worst possible time. She had been enjoying a fine year, with an Olympic medal and major glory a legitimate aspiration. Instead, she missed the cut at the Evian Championship and now faces a race to be game-ready for that Women's Open at St Andrews.

"I fell over coming out of the shower before I was getting my flight back from the US," Hull said. "I thought I tore something but nothing came up on the MRI scan. I just have a bit of arthritis now in my shoulder. I shouldn't have played Evian. I feel a bit rusty because it's been five weeks since I last played properly in a four-day event.

"I'm so frustrated. I wish I didn't have a shower before my flight. I did actually have it going at Evian after my first round and I was still injured there, I was sore. Now I feel like it's not my first round back if that makes any sense. And I do struggle on golf courses with trees on them and there's water.

"Now I feel I know the course a bit better and I can be bit more confident. I will try to go low tomorrow. When you have an injury it knocks your confidence, not with how I'm swinging it but mentally. I feel like with a couple rounds under my belt, I'll be back."

> ***'I thought I tore something but nothing came up on the MRI scan'***

▲ *Charley Hull is out of medal contention after an opening 81*

Hull denied her chances had literally gone up in smoke. She spoke on the eve of the event about her inability to light up cigarettes at the Paris Games, where all venues are smoke-free. Hull has taken to smoking on the course this year. "It is just because I have been injured. It is 100% not because I am not smoking."

Hull was not alone in struggling on day one. Her fellow Team GB player Georgia Hall signed for a 74. Leona Maguire, one of the pre-tournament favourites from Ireland, made birdie on the last but still slumped to a 78. Nelly Korda's level-par 72 was perfectly respectable, with the world No 1 having been three over after seven.

"I saw the crowds here for the men and to see the similar crowds for the women is kind of mind-blowing," Korda said. "I wasn't sure what to expect walking on to that 1st tee and my first view was the tee. Then I looked out to the green and I saw four people deep. I told my caddie: 'Oh my gosh, this is absolutely amazing.' I did not expect this many people to come out and support everyone out here."

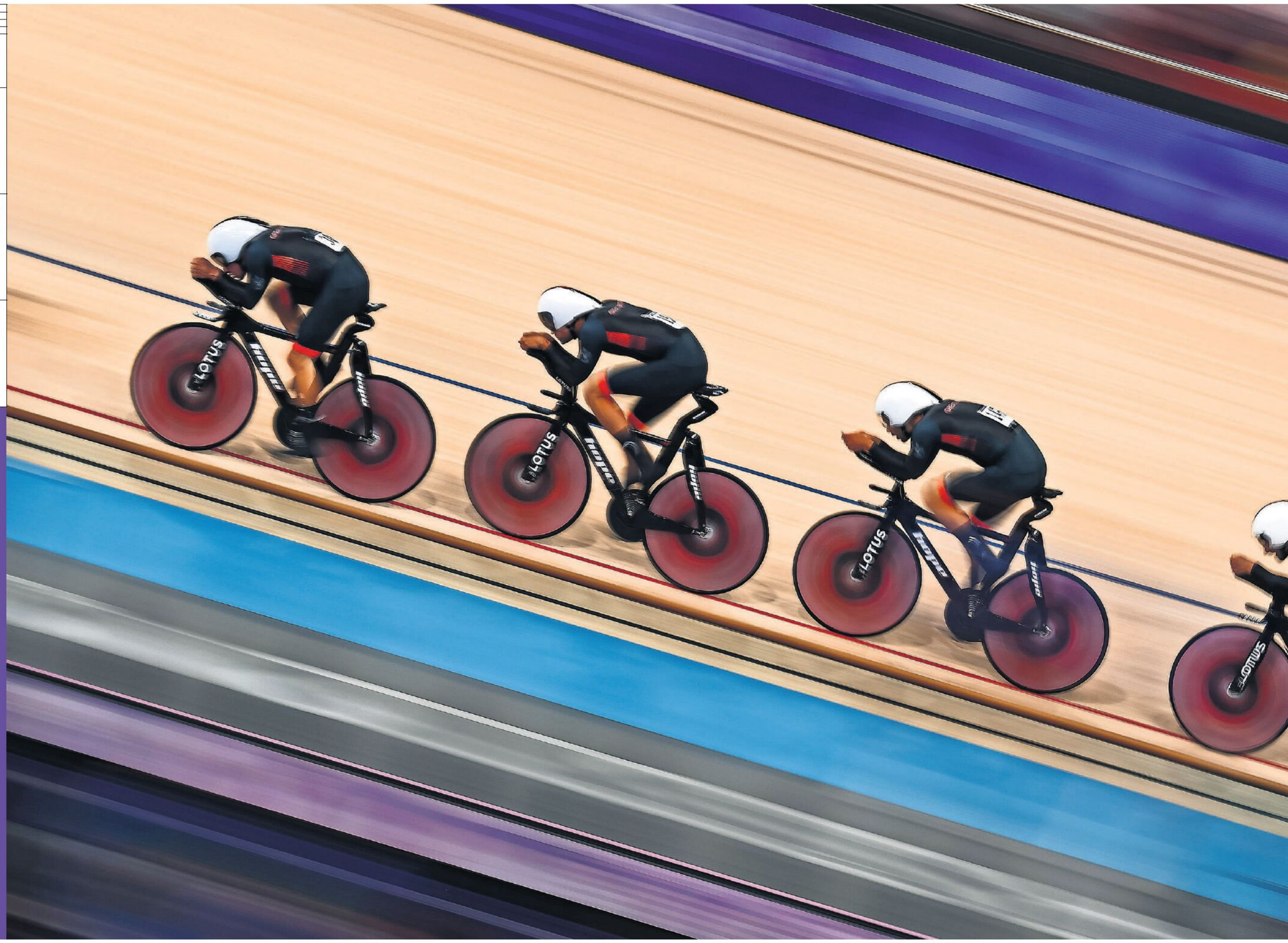
The early leader would prove to be the most popular gold medallist. France's Céline Boutier marched to the top of the leaderboard with an opening round of 65. Ashleigh Buhai, the 2022 Women's Open champion, is closest to Boutier at four under.

Men's team pursuit

1 Australia 3min 42.067sec

2 Great Britain 3:44.394

3 Italy 3:44.197



▶ *Ethan Hayter, Dan Bigham, Charlie Tanfield and Ethan Vernon went close in the team pursuit* DANIEL KOPATSCH/GETTY

Frustration as Hayter slip hands Australia gold in old rivals' 'classic fightout'

GB's 1,000th medal is silver as pursuiters crack on last lap and women's team win bronze

Jeremy Whittle
Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines Velodrome

Great Britain's track cyclists secured Team GB's 1,000th Olympic medal in sporting competition as Australia held on to a hair's-breadth advantage to win gold in the men's team pursuit.

In a final that was almost too close to call, Ethan Hayter, Dan Bigham, Charlie Tanfield and Ethan Vernon had to settle for silver after Hayter slipped off his saddle on the last lap.

As the British quartet made one final effort with the 4,000m race reaching its conclusion, Hayter, under intense pressure, slid too far forward and ended up almost crashing. "I just really gave too much," he said. "My whole body went weak and I really struggled to hold myself on the bike."

It was a final that could have gone either way as Australia entered the final kilometre with a narrow lead.

"This is the nature of team-pursuiting at this level," Bigham said. "It's on a knife-edge at the back end. You're trying to get three guys over the line absolutely empty, completely cooked. The breaking point has to be somewhere and you saw it.

"It was one of the classic GB-Aussie fightouts that have been a staple of the Olympics. Hayter found the limit. That limit was the end of the saddle and that was the end of our run.

"It was always going to be a tight fight. It's just frustrating to have it so close and then have it fall away from you in that moment."

In another reshuffle to the British four, Ollie Wood stood down and Bigham returned after sitting out the Tuesday session to recover from a training crash. But it was Hayter whose strength was pivotal to the aspiration for a gold medal.

"We gave half a lap too much to Hayter and he found the limit and slipped off the saddle," Bigham said. "We have him [doing] four and three-quarters [laps] and normally we give him four and a quarter and in qualifying rounds he's not been full gas."

Team GB have consistently performed well in this event and have won medals at six of the past seven Olympics. This silver medal marks a return to form and suggests there is more to come from a team that is edging back towards world-beating status.

In the women's team pursuit, Team GB took bronze as Elinor Barker, Josie Knight, Anna Morris and Jess Roberts maintained the women's record of finishing on the podium in every Olympic Games since 2012, when the discipline was reintroduced.

In the first round, they had been unable to resist the in-form American quartet of Chloé Dygert, the time trial bronze medallist, Kristen Faulkner, winner of the women's road race, Lily Williams and Jennifer Valente. But after a buildup fraught with setbacks, principally the injury that befell mainstay Katie Archibald when she broke a leg in her back garden to miss the Games, the bronze medal was deserved recognition of another strong performance.

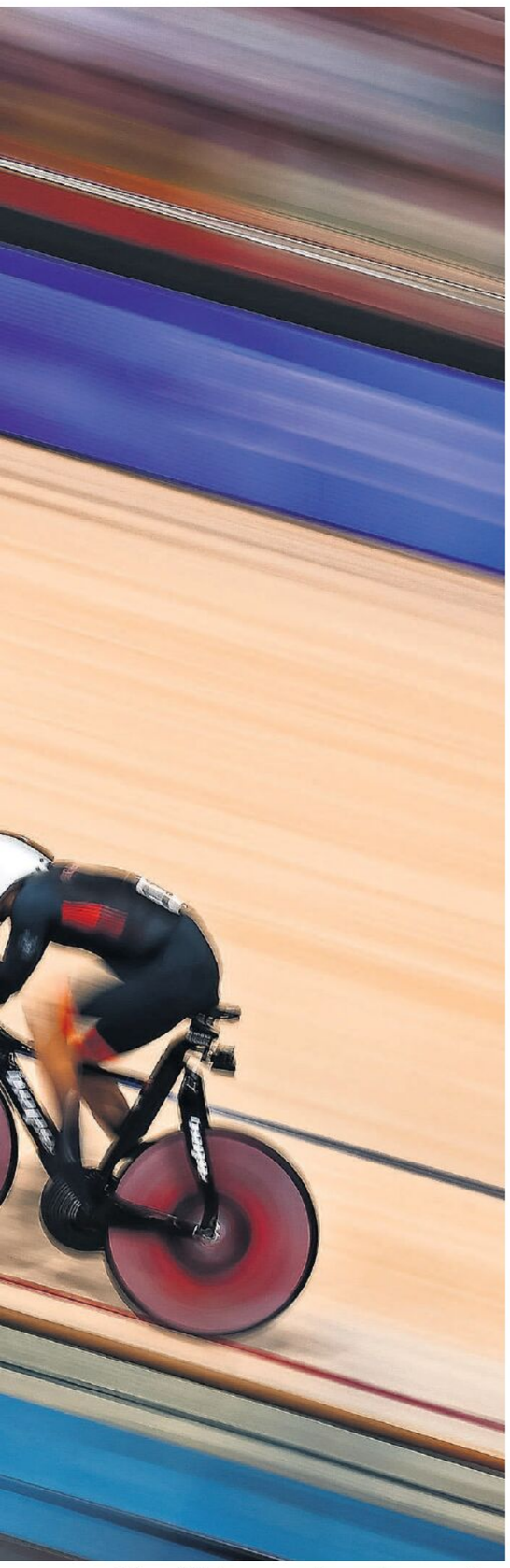
"Six weeks ago, when I arrived back at my house and Katie wasn't there because she was in A&E, it felt like the Olympic dream had gone down the drain," said Knight, Archibald's housemate. "It took me a week to refocus.

"Selection was up in the air, we didn't know who the team was going to be, we didn't know who was going to be riding or what we were going to do. It was a nervous week. We had to refocus and come up with a new strategy."

▲ *From left: Jessica Roberts, Anna Morris, Josie Knight and Elinor Barker show off their bronze medals*

A grand milestone

The men's team pursuit silver was Great Britain's 1,000th Olympic medal in the 128 years since Launceston Elliot won the one-handed lift in weightlifting at the 1896 Games in Athens (he also finished second in the two-handed lift later that day). One household owns 1.5% of the medals – cycling's Jason Kenny won nine (seven gold, two silver) and Laura Kenny six (five gold, one bronze). The oldest medallist is shooter Jerry Millner, 61, who won gold in the free rifle at 1,000 yards in London in 1908. And the youngest? Sky Brown, who took bronze in the women's park skateboarding in Tokyo aged 13.



The USA pursuiters have also been consistent podium finishers in the event, taking silver in 2012 and 2016 and winning a bronze medal in Tokyo. They set the fastest time of the morning sessions, 4min 4.629sec and went on to beat New Zealand in the race for gold.

Not everything has gone smoothly at the track, however, as serial issues with the last-lap bell ringer have led to confusion.

On Tuesday, the bell was rung a lap too late during Canada's 16-lap pursuit qualifier, leading them to think they had got their lap count wrong.

"I was fairly confident that was the last one, and then they rang the bell as we were three across coming across the line," Maggie Coles-Lyster said.

"We all had a moment of 'go, go go!' because that could be our race over. There was a little bit of panic, and a 17-lap pursuit isn't ideal. It hurts a little bit."

In the early session yesterday, during the keirin heats, it happened again. During the repechage heats, the bell was rung at the end of the final lap, causing some riders to race on.

Despite the ensuing chaos, the judges decided the mistake had not affected the race and the results stood.

Transformation in attitude to mums has benefited Team GB

Laura Kenny

I was given a real insight into how life has changed for Olympic mothers when I did a joint interview with Denise Lewis a few months ago. Denise was an extraordinary competitor who won gold in the heptathlon at the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, at a time when little was expected of British athletes. But, 24 years later, she explained how horrendously she had been treated as a mum.

Denise described it as "a very lonely experience" because, after giving birth in 2002 to her daughter, Lauryn, she was told that her coaches and other support staff would talk to her only once she was back on "the performance pathway". She was isolated and felt like "a performing animal with no heart and soul".

I was really sad for Denise even though she stressed how much attitudes towards motherhood in elite sport have been transformed. But it's shocking to think that such treatment happened in the 21st century.

Memories of our interview came flooding back last Sunday when I watched Amber Rutter win silver in the women's skeet, three months after she became a mother. Amber was one of my teammates at the Rio Olympics in 2016, when she was 18. It's incredible to think she gave birth to her son this April. In Paris, she lost a controversial shoot-off against Francisca Crovetto Chadid of Chile after they had ended with identical scores.

Amber was convinced, and the TV replays showed she was right, that she hit the last target but the judges decided otherwise. I don't know how she managed to keep her composure but Amber showed so much class as she accepted the result. She was then met by her husband, James, who had surprised her and brought Tommy, their little 'un, with him. Amber has those photographs of them together to always remind her of an amazing achievement.

Three months after giving birth I was barely walking so whenever I hear Amber Rutter's name from now on I will think: "What a mother, what a woman."

Nine mothers are in the Team GB squad and, besides Amber, we have seen gold medals for Katy Marchant and Ros Canter, a silver for Helen Glover and a bronze for Mathilda Hodgkins-Byrne.

> *I found it draining mentally and emotionally trying to be a mum and a successful Olympian*

The fact that it's becoming normal for mothers to succeed at this level of sport presents a sharp contrast to even a decade ago. I remember my own reaction when hearing early in 2014 that Jess Ennis-Hill was pregnant but still hoped to defend her Olympic heptathlon title in 2016. My husband, Jason, and I looked at each other and said: "She's mad. There is no way you can juggle motherhood with trying to win Olympic gold." We thought she'd ended her career.

Thirteen months after Jess gave birth to her son, Reggie, she won the heptathlon at the world championships in Beijing. I was even more impressed by her silver medal at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio. Until then, I'd always thought it was one or the other – you were either a current Olympian or a mother. Jess made me understand it was possible to be both.

Esme Matthews (then Taylor) was my physiologist at British Cycling and she is best mates with Jess. She put us in touch in 2017 and my first phone call with Jess lasted an hour and a half. I then went round to Jess's for breakfast and she answered all my doubts and worries.

I would be asking really basic stuff like "how can I juggle it all?" Jess was so clear about the need to timetable everything. After giving birth, I used all her exercises during that key recovery time. In my sporting retirement Jess is still my go-to person when I need advice about being a mum of two living a very different life away from the intensity of Olympic competition.

Jess was also part of that interview I did with Denise and I was honoured to be in their company. Compared to everything Denise endured I had it easy. British Cycling and UK Sport now have pregnancy policies that are relaxed and supportive. There is no longer any pressure to come back immediately after the birth of your child. You can take eight months away before you need to even think about getting back on the bike and that's not to get into racing shape. It's just to gauge whether you have the desire to ride competitively again. I found it so positive and relaxed and I competed at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics after giving birth to my eldest boy, Albie, in 2017.

Amber Rutter won silver three months after having a baby

Parenting is still challenging and difficult, though. I have heard some horror stories, from two fathers involved in other sports, about children not being welcome at their training camps. I also found it draining mentally and emotionally trying to be a mum and a successful Olympian. Those aspects were far harder than the gruelling physicality.

I had lots of mum-guilt when I went to Tokyo and our families weren't allowed to join us because of the pandemic. It was upsetting to leave Albie for two-and-a-half weeks while Jason and I won gold again.

We knew Albie was fine, as he was with his grandparents, but that side of being an Olympic parent feels brutal. It meant I was no longer willing to keep riding to the Paris Games once our second son was born last year. I had suffered a miscarriage and an ectopic pregnancy before our yearning to have a second child was fulfilled by little Monty.

Seeing the joyful images of the Rutter family put everything into context. Amber just missed Olympic gold but it mattered far more to her that her baby boy was with her in those gorgeous photographs.

It was a reminder how much we sporting mums in Britain owe to modern pioneers such as the mighty Denise Lewis and Jess Ennis-Hill.

◀ *Katy Marchant won gold with her son in the crowd*
ED SYKES/SWPIX.COM/SHUTTERSTOCK

Hall hits 400m heights to leave Hudson-Smith haunted again

Briton smashes European record but is unable to get his hands on elusive global gold

Sean Ingle
Stade de France

Fingers were starting to touch the keyboard, allusions to history made. "Matt Hudson-Smith last night became the first Briton since Eric Liddell in 1924 to wi ..." And then Quincy Hall had everyone pressing the delete key.

The American is known as an epic closer. But with 50 metres left of this Olympic men's 400m final, we all thought he was too far back. Hudson-Smith was five or six metres ahead of him, the gold medal strides away.

Suddenly the Briton's legs started to tie up. Hall's long strides increased in urgency. As they did he went from fourth, to third, to second. And, two metres from the line, to gold in 43.40sec – the fourth-quickest time in history.

Hudson-Smith's compensation came in the form of a silver medal and a European best of 43.44. Not that he could see things sunny side up, at least not initially. As he looked up at the screen he uttered one word repeatedly: "Fuck."

The worst thing about it? Hudson-Smith had no idea it was coming. "I thought I had cleared the field," he said. "But I kept trying to quicken as I knew someone was going to come. I was trying to run through the line. But he got me.

"I am not angry, I am not upset. I was like: 'Oh, fuck it, it's life at the end of the day.' There is only going to be one winner. He's the better man, he came on strong, I cannot complain. I ran the fifth-fastest time overall. I have said that if you are going to win, you are going to have to take it from me, and he did."

By the time Zambia's Muzala Samukonga had come to a stop after taking bronze in 43.74, Hall was already doing snow angels on the track. "I was just thinking: 'Keep on driving. Get home, sir,'" he said. "Two of my brothers have passed, and I have two daughters, seven and two. So when I go out on the track I have a lot of reasons to run hard."

Hudson-Smith was seeking to emulate Liddell's story, immortalised in the 1981 Oscar-winning film Chariots of Fire, by winning Olympic 400m final gold.

The official report of the race noted that at one point Liddell was six to eight metres clear before "triumphing clearly by a good three metres". Alas, 100 years on, history didn't quite repeat itself.

Still, what a night this was for Hudson-Smith, whose life story has been part Sliding Doors, part Rocky Balboa. As a teenager in 2014 he was planning to swap a job at Asda for the army, when he got a call inviting him to the Glasgow Diamond League as a late replacement. He shocked everyone by running 44.97 – shattering his personal best by nearly a second.

Soon he was calling Asda to tell them he wasn't coming back, and European and Commonwealth medals followed. However, his career was then ripped apart by injuries and mental health issues, starting when he tore a hamstring and achilles in 2019. At one point, in 2021, he even contemplated suicide.

"Last year I had an achilles issue," he said. "I had mental health issues coming into 2022. This year is the first year where I have had an actual season where there has been no issues and the results are showing."

For the past two years Hudson-Smith has been clambering towards the top of the podium one careful step at a time. It started with a world championship bronze in 2022, followed by a 2023 world silver in Budapest. Despite this result he still believes he can get there.

"It's crazy," he said. "Sometimes the journey is better than the out-

Men's 400m podium

1 **Q Hall** USA *43.40sec* ***PB***

2 **M Hudson-Smith** GB *43.44* ***AR***

3 **M Samukonga** Zam *43.74* ***NR***

5

Hudson-Smith's run for silver makes him the fifth fastest 400m runner of all time, with Hall's win putting him fourth on the list.

1 Wayde van Niekerk *SA* 43.03sec WR
2 Michael Johnson *USA* 43.18
3 Butch Reynolds *USA* 43.29
4 Quincy Hall *USA* 43.40
5 Matt Hudson-Smith *GB* 43.44

▶ *Matt Hudson-Smith is shellshocked after being narrowly pipped to gold*
TOM JENKINS/ THE GUARDIAN

come and it has been a hell of a journey. I'm just grateful. I came away with an Olympic silver. Not many people in the world can say that."

There are reasons for optimism. Over the winter Hudson-Smith started serious gym work for the first time. And he clearly believes that Wayde van Niekerk's world record of 43.03sec could be in striking range.

"We have plans," he said. "I saw people say that I ran too fast in the semis. I knew I could drop the time. I also know, as well, it didn't take as much out of me as I thought. I will keep building on this. I want to shock the world. It's a matter of time."

He also admitted there were a lot of emotions swirling around during the lap of honour. "I saw my family. I didn't even know they were here. It was a bit of a shock really. My mum and my dad don't really watch because they hate it, just as I hate them watching me as well."

Can you blame him for shedding a tear? "It has been a rough journey. Incredible high and so deep, deep lows. Man, it's sport. It's a crazy one. But they know what is to come. The world does as well."

▼ George Mills confronts France's Hugo Hay after their 5,000m heat

Mills put back into 5,000m after angry row over fall

Rachel Steinberg

George Mills became involved in a heated altercation with France's Hugo Hay after a collision in his 5,000m heat but the British athlete was reinstated with three other fallers.

Hay remained on his feet after multiple runners, including Mills, tumbled down the home straight on the final lap and the Frenchman was able to qualify for the final on Saturday. But after the men had crossed the finish line, Mills and Hay were seen arguing and making physical contact, Mills pointing furiously at Hay.

Mills claimed Hay was responsible for the incident and officials agreed the Briton had been disadvantaged, advancing him to the final following a review by the video referee.

Mills is the son of the former Leeds and England full-back Danny. The 25-year-old runner told the BBC: "I think it's pretty clear. I got stepped out on as I was about to kick in the home straight and boom, the French lad took me down." Asked what he said to Hay, he replied: "I'm probably not allowed to say."

Mills added before learning of his reinstatement: "That was the perfect qualifier for me, going through first 2k in six minutes. I was like: 'Nobody in this field can run away from me at this pace,' so I was just sitting, waiting, biding my time, going to kick off the home straight then bang, hit the deck. What can you do?"

The former Olympic silver medallist Steve Cram, commentating for the BBC, said: "George was in a bad position from a long way out, he should have checked out much earlier. George, from what I can see there, did do a big push there in the home straight. There's lots of experienced men in there and yes, everyone thinks they can kick, but when you get to that situation [very slow pace] the chances of people going down are increased incredibly."

Dominic Lokinyomo Lobalu (IOC Refugee Team), Mike Foppen (Netherlands) and Thierry Ndikumwenayo (Spain) were the other fallers who will run again. **PA Media**

Girma taken to hospital after horror fall in 3,000m steeplechase final

Sean Ingle

The Ethiopian athlete Lamecha Girma regained consciousness and was able to speak after a sickening fall in the Olympic 3,000m steeplechase final last night.

The world record-holder hit his head on the track after clipping his knee on a barrier on the final lap. He lay motionless before being put in a neck brace and taken off on a stretcher by medics. The 23-year-old, a silver medallist at the Tokyo Games and the last two world championships, was then taken to hospital for an assessment. His team later confirmed to L'Equipe that he was conscious and able to talk.

A statement from Paris 2024 organisers said: "Following his fall in the 3,000m steeplechase, Lamecha Girma received immediate care from the on-site medical teams. Our thoughts are with him and we are sending him our very best wishes for a swift recovery."

Morocco's Soufiane El Bakkali became the first man to successfully defend an Olympic steeplechase title since Volmari Iso-Hollo of Finland did so at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. America's Kenneth Rooks took silver, while Kenya's Abraham Kibiwot won bronze.

Elsewhere last night, Jamaica's Roje Stona took a surprise men's discus gold with an Olympic record throw of 70m, pushing Lithuania's world record-holder Mykolas Alekna into silver by only three centimetres.

Australia's Nina Kennedy won the women's pole vault ahead of USA's Katie Moon after clearing 4.90m.

Noah Lyles, meanwhile, took one step closer to his dream of achieving an individual Olympic sprint double in Paris after securing his spot in today's 200m final, while Team GB's Amber Anning booked her place in tomorrow's women's 400m final.

Medal table

		Total			
1	USA	27	35	32	94
2	China	25	23	17	65
3	Australia	18	12	11	41
4	France	13	17	21	51
5	Great Britain	12	17	20	49
6	South Korea	12	8	7	27
7	Japan	12	6	13	31
8	Italy	9	10	8	27
9	Netherlands	9	5	6	20
10	Germany	8	5	5	18
11	Canada	6	4	9	19

Explained

The tactics that decided classic men's 1500m final

Did Ingebrigtsen's fast start cost him gold? Was Kerr right to sit on his shoulder? Elite coach Matt Yates explains all

Sean Ingle
Paris

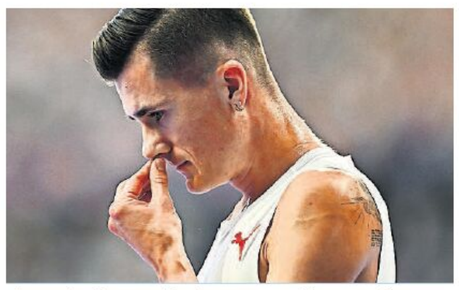
It was one of the greatest Olympic 1500m finals in history. Perhaps even the greatest. And while Cole Hocker was a deserved champion for the USA, what really made it an all-time classic was that Britain's Josh Kerr, the USA's Yared Nuguse and Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen all could have won if their tactics had been slightly different. Ingebrigtsen went too fast early on. Nuguse let Hocker slip past him on the back straight, while Kerr was also a bit too wide when he struck for glory. In a race of such fine margins, pacing strategies and even the Stade de France track made all the difference in a race for the ages.

Championship races mean 'robots' must think for themselves

Most races on the Diamond League circuit will have pacemakers and Wavelight technology (a pace-setting system using LED lights on the inside of the track) to enable athletes to run fast at an even pace. But when it comes to the Games, athletes are on their own. "Usually it's very robotic," the former British Olympic 1500m runner and elite track coach Matt Yates says. "Running efficiency has changed because of the super spikes and lights. Many athletes are now so metronomic in how they run because they are looking for energy off the shoes because of the stride pattern. But at the Olympics, athletes don't have pacemakers or lights. So they are on their own."

What did Ingebrigtsen do wrong?

Many raised their eyebrows at the Norwegian blasting through the first lap of the 1500m final in 54.82sec, before passing 800m in 1:51. For Yates, it wasn't that the time at this stage was too quick – it was that he didn't run the two laps evenly. "Ingebrigtsen is a very energy efficient runner. But in the final that efficiency went out the window," Yates says. "The 54.82 killed him and his physiology started changing. But he would have got away with it if he had run a couple of 55-something laps."



▲ Jakob Ingebrigtsen reflects after failing to defend his 1500m title

So why did Ingebrigtsen decide to take the lead so early?

While the Norwegian was the quickest man in the field, he knew Kerr was faster over the final 200m – as he showed at the world championships last year. "Ingebrigtsen doesn't have much of a pickup," Yates says. "You're not going to find him dramatically changing pace and running a 50-second lap. He bolted on the first lap, because he let the occasion get to him. Kerr was in his head."

Was Kerr right to sit on Ingebrigtsen's shoulder?

Yates isn't convinced – and makes a point about the Stade de France track. "While the track is fast, it's also not the easiest to run on, because the bends are very tight. You cannot go on someone's shoulder on the bend. And that's what Josh found out. These bends are very tight. And also the straights are quite long."

Is sitting on the leader's shoulder a good thing normally?

Not necessarily. "I don't like that position," Yates says. "I call it 'the schoolkid's position'. If you run on the shoulder of the leader, then you can be forced on to the white line on to lane two. So you're already running a bit further."

What strategy should middle- and long-distance athletes employ?

Yates suggests the way Ingebrigtsen and Hocker stuck to the inside lane was the best approach – at least until the Norwegian pulled out in an attempt to block Kerr during the last 100m. "Position on this track is key," Yates says. "No one is coming off the shoulder of the leader on the last bend. They're coming off just behind. So you've got to drop in. And attack later than you normally would on the straight. That's what Hocker did on Tuesday – and timed it to perfection in the final 20m."

◀ Cole Hocker storms to gold after he finds room on the inside to reel in Josh Kerr as Jakob Ingebrigtsen runs out of steam in the home straight
TOM JENKINS/ THE GUARDIAN

Sport

1,000 up
British milestone medal in men's team pursuit

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Barney Ronay
Welcome to skateboarding's Dad Bloke Summer

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PAWEL KOPCZYNSKI/REUTERS

Paris 2024

GB suffer another gold heist

Hudson-Smith forced to settle for 400m silver as he follows teammate Kerr by being beaten on the line

Plus: Mills reinstated after altercation *Pages 46-47* →

Put on alert
Sports bodies hold talks with government over unrest

Aaron Bower

The Premier League, English Football League and a number of other major governing bodies attended an emergency call with the government yesterday to discuss the potential for sport to be affected by the civil unrest across the country and how they can help to calm the rising tension.

The Guardian has learned that senior officials from various entities were invited to a call with representatives from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Alongside representatives from the Premier League and EFL, there were figures from the England and Wales Cricket Board, Rugby Football League and Rugby Football Union in attendance. Sport England and UK Sport were among other bodies also invited on to the call.

It was reiterated that sport due to go ahead in England this weekend – headlined by the start of the new EFL season – is not under threat despite growing instances of widespread protests and counter-protests. Instead, government officials – led by Lisa Nandy, the secretary for culture, media and sport – are hoping sports, and especially clubs, can use their influence to promote cohesion and tolerance within their communities. The government was keen to emphasise the messaging that live sport remains a safe and welcoming environment for all spectators.

Governing bodies and clubs are likely to start conveying such messages. Sheffield United begin their Championship campaign away at Preston tomorrow evening and they announced yesterday they were closing their Bramall Lane home early because of protests in the city centre.

"Sheffield United places Equality, Diversity and Inclusion [EDI] at the heart of our culture and believes racism has no place in Sheffield or anywhere," the club said. "We encourage Blades fans to stand together, united, in these difficult times."

Super League will also host a full round of fixtures this weekend and the rugby league governing body posted a statement on X calling for a de-escalation

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The UK's jails are in crisis – but I know prison can work *Zoe Williams, page 3*

Who's afraid of big dad energy? Donald Trump *Emma Brockes, page 4*

No god in the machine: the pitfalls of AI worship *The long read, page 5*

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The Guardian Thursday 8 August 2024

Journal

Opinion and ideas

ILLUSTRATION: KINGSLEY NEBECHI

History teaches us this: stop the chaos and then learn from it

Martin Kettle

Britain's 2024 riots are a surprise national crisis. There was no particular buildup, no clearly discernible pressure-cooker process. No one appears to have warned that riots were imminent. Plenty of efforts, some irresistible but some dubious, have been made to explain them. Yet more than a week after the first violence in Southport, Britain is only at the start of an agreed and effective response.

This is almost always the way with riots. Riots take many forms. Almost always, though, they come as a shock. Nevertheless, riots are not unknown, either in postwar Britain or in British history more generally. The idea that Britain enjoyed a seamlessly peaceful path towards the blessings of parliamentary democracy, tolerance and the rule of law is simply untrue. There was never a riot-free golden age. But each generation is surprised anew.

Years ago, researching a book on the 1981 Brixton and Toxteth riots, the length of some of these arcs struck me. In that summer, London, Liverpool and other cities were battered by riots that did £216m-worth of damage at 2024 prices, and led to more than 3,000 arrests, many of them black people. These events, though, were occurring, almost to the day, on the 600th anniversary of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, in which armed crowds marched from rural England and took over the capital city for three days, looting and burning as they did so.

The riots of 2024 are different. Their motivation and their aims are racist. There has been racist rioting in Britain's past, including against African-Caribbean and Irish people, Jews and Catholics. But there are other similarities that unite most forms of rioting, whatever their motivation. Most rioters are young men. Most riots take place in urban areas and at night – the dark favours violence and drinking. Many trigger opportunist crimes such as looting and arson.

Riots are invariably a challenge to the state. They pose the question of whether the state can carry out its fundamental tasks of maintaining individual freedom, the public peace and enforcement of the rule of law. If it cannot, the legitimacy of the state comes into question. That was obviously true in 1381, when Richard II's crown itself was at risk. But it was also true for Margaret Thatcher in 1981, and it is true for Keir Starmer in 2024.

Starmer's task is twofold. On the one hand, he must reassert the rule of law

History teaches us this: stop the chaos and then learn from it

Martin Kettle

← Continued from front

and public order over the rioters. This is the absolute precondition for everything else that may now be required, so it must inevitably come first. Starmer's language has been unequivocal so far. He grasps that he must grip the situation and be seen to do so. If the state's authority is not upheld, nothing else is certain.

One option for Starmer is to summon the army. He would be right to be cautious. Even if they were armed, which they might be, soldiers could not be permitted to deviate from police tactics and orders. And bringing in the army might seem like a premature embrace of an act of last resort that could expose a new prime minister to charges of weakness.

Another would be to give the police more destructive weaponry. Boris Johnson, when mayor of London, wanted water cannon to deal with riots, but police chiefs and the then home secretary, Theresa May, stopped him. Starmer will be cautious, because he knows how the use of weapons with the power to disable could make things worse in Northern Ireland.

Instead, Starmer is focused on the criminal justice system. He seems to be starting to get his way here. About 400 arrests have been made. Others will follow. Courts have sat quickly, and are beginning to impose heavy sentences. It is claimed that prison places will be made available as a priority. One Southport rioter, Derek Drummond, 58, was jailed for three years yesterday on violent disorder and assault charges, even after handing himself in and pleading guilty. Two others were jailed for 30 and 20 months respectively. They are likely to be the first of many.

Courts often impose heavy sentences after riots, sometimes excessively. They are under public and political pressure to do this now. Riot, damage and assault are serious offences, carrying heavy maximum sentences. This may have an immediate deterrent effect. Once defendants who have worn scarves or balaclavas in the 2024 riots realise that the online instruction to "mask up" can be taken by courts as an aggravating factor in sentencing under public order laws, others may grasp how much they are risking. If the government exempted all riot-related convictions from the plan to reduce prison terms to 40% of sentence served from September, Starmer would strengthen the point further.

But being strong in the aftermath of riots is not sufficient. In 1981, Thatcher was adamant that the riots were purely criminal acts. She refused to allow that they might have had causes. "Nothing can justify, nothing can excuse and no one can condone the appalling violence," she announced. She was upbraided not just by Labour, which argued that the riots were a response to economic and social deprivation that she was determined to ignore, but by the Times. "She failed to raise the tone of her remarks to the level of events," it said. "Not for the first time she was unable to strike the right note when a broad sense of social understanding was required."

Starmer has a second task of this kind. He has to find a way of ensuring that such events are less likely in the future. This is a much longer-term challenge, and the possible solutions go beyond the use of criminal law. Again, there are many options. He can take punitive action against rightwing influencers and organisations. He can make life more difficult for the social media sites that they use. He can look for ways to move asylum seekers from vulnerable urban hotels in towns to more easily defended sites. He should do all three. They are not mutually exclusive.

His biggest challenge, though, is to start the process of doing what few western governments have managed to do. He must find ways of reducing rather than fanning public anxieties about migration, but without legitimising either the rioters or their hatred. No one pretends that this will be easy. He would be starting a new national conversation in a place that the country should never have been brought to under the previous government. But it cannot be ignored or treated in the old way. If it is, the riots will happen again – just as they did after 1981.

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'Comment is free... but facts are sacred' CP Scott

South Asia

Bangladesh has a fresh but fragile opportunity to renew democracy

A "second liberation day". That is how Muhammad Yunus, Nobel peace laureate, hailed the moment when Bangladesh's autocratic prime minister, Sheikh Hasina, fled by helicopter on Monday amid a huge uprising. Now the 84-year-old microfinance pioneer is to head the country's interim government.

Mr Yunus, who is due to arrive home from France today, has called for elections within months. Though Bangladesh went to the polls in January, the last credible, truly competitive election was in 2008. The students who led the protests against the toppled government had no chance to cast a meaningful vote. Turnout this year was rock bottom, with the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist party (BNP) once more boycotting the contest. To no one's surprise, Sheikh Hasina's Awami League won a fourth consecutive term.

Sheikh Hasina was once herself a student leader, as well as the heir to a powerful political dynasty. In 1990, she co-led a mass pro-democracy movement with Khaleda Zia, the leader of the BNP and widow of another political leader, ending military rule. In power, she won admiration for stabilising the country, tackling jihadist groups and growing the economy, largely through the garment manufacturing boom. The rate of extreme poverty halved. But her rule became increasingly oppressive, with extrajudicial killings and the jailing of political opponents and journalists. There was growing anger about corruption, especially as the economy foundered and living costs soared in the wake of the pandemic.

With youth unemployment at 40%, the reintroduction of government job quotas for descendants of those who fought in the Bangladesh independence war in 1971 – seen as a bung to party supporters – brought students out in protest. She angered them further by referring to them with a derogatory slur akin to calling them traitors. An internet shutdown hit businesses and left citizens without access to their money. A vicious crackdown, which killed hundreds and saw more than 10,000 arrested, inflamed the uprising instead of suppressing it.

The interim government should now ensure the immediate release of political prisoners and launch an investigation into the deadly violence. Those responsible – from the leader down – must be held accountable. Restoring security is also critical, especially following attacks on Hindu homes, shops and temples.

Renewing the old, failed political system which produced first alternating rule by the Awami League and the BNP, and then single-party domination, will be a trickier task. Ms Zia, Sheikh Hasina's ally turned bitter foe, has been released from prison but has serious health issues. In any case, many want to move beyond the "battle of the Begums", but not necessarily to embrace the Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami party.

Mr Yunus says he wants the new generation to step forward in politics as they have in protest. He could and should play a key part in ensuring that transition. Civil society, which suffered under Sheikh Hasina, has been critical to Bangladesh's economic and social progress and will be central to a successful democratic renewal. There is serious concern that the army could entrench itself in power again, though some think it prefers to operate behind the scenes. It should establish a clear roadmap towards elections now. Bangladesh was unique among 30 countries polled for the Open Society Barometer last year, with more respondents prioritising civil and political rights (36%) than economic and social rights (28%). Its people want a real say at last. They should get it.

Artificial intelligence

Investors may have got too excited about something they don't fully understand

Has the artificial intelligence bubble burst? The question has been on the lips of many this week as they have watched the stock market slide, with billions wiped off the value of technology companies that had boomed since the arrival of large language models. It was the economist Hyman Minsky who thought Wall Street encouraged too much risk and gulled investors into parting with cash for all the wrong reasons. The result was ruinous boom-and-bust cycles. His model began with "displacement", which is when investors get excited about something they don't fully understand – something like AI.

Last year, OpenAI's ChatGPT chatbot got to 100 million users in two months. What follows displacement, according to Minsky, is boom, euphoria, profit-taking and panic. There's been a boom. It is reported that more than 200 AI startups globally are unicorns – meaning they're valued at $1bn or more.

There's been plenty of euphoria too. Earlier this year, a report by the Wall Street Journal claimed that the CEO of OpenAI, Sam Altman, was in talks with investors to raise between $5tn and 7tn to reshape the global chip industry and thereby ensure the supply of the necessary computing power. The assumption here is that all that is needed to approach lifelike sentience is to increase computing power and make available the data to crunch. There are surely too many expectations for that bet to be a sure thing.

We could very well be in the stage of profit-taking. This is when there is a Wile E Coyote moment for stocks. When the cartoon character has run off a cliff, he looks down and realises that he's standing on thin air – and plunges. With markets, investors suddenly clock that prices can't just keep rising – and need to pull out their cash, causing share prices to crash. That's been happening to semiconductor stocks, particularly Nvidia, which is the only company currently capable of producing the graphics processing unit chips that power AI.

Whether we have reached the stage of Minskyian panic is moot. The bubble bursts as quickly as investors can flee the markets. Amazon's share price tumbled in part because analysts looked at its earnings and saw that the company spent lavishly on AI without much to show for it. Some venture capitalists think the party hasn't even begun. Yet so far the public haven't found much use for the technology. In a poll for the Reuters Institute, 29% of people in the UK said they had used ChatGPT, but only 2% used it daily. Most people who tried the chatbot, wrote the analyst Benedict Evans, "didn't see how it was useful".

Those concerns might bother the markets, but humanity has larger things to worry about. If AI's development is not managed carefully, many argue, humanity risks engineering its own extinction. Politicians say the technology is advancing at such a rapid pace that there must be protections for the public. Notably, California is considering a law that would, in the event of misuse of an AI model, hold liable not only the party responsible but the original developer of that model. That pits the state's key industry against many of its lawmakers. If anything ought to bring the AI juggernaut to a halt, then surely societal considerations are better than financial speculation.

Wandsworth prison, London, in 2007

PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM BARCLAY/ BLOOMBERG/GETTY

Britain's jails are in crisis. But I have seen how prison can work

Zoe Williams

Prisons had been flagged as a possible candidate for the new government's first crisis. There were rumours that Rishi Sunak's surprise summer election was motivated in part by the worry that the prison estate in England and Wales was about to run out of space, destroying any trace of Conservative credibility as the party of law and order. In the event, the riots came first – but, naturally, they'll feed back into the prisons crisis, as the perpetrators are prosecuted and sentenced.

Yet the prisons emergency, which has always been told in snapshots of single prisons, has already arrived: Wandsworth was beset by scandal anyway, after the tortuous escape and recapture of a terror suspect last year, followed by the video emerging on social media appearing to show an officer having sex with an inmate. It had a catastrophic inspection in May, which led to the resignation of its governor, Katie Price. The report from that inspection has just been published and details numerous failings, from gross overcrowding and squalor to open drug use and emergency cell bells going unheeded. But the most chilling was that seven suicides had been recorded in the year to May 2024. To put that figure into perspective, self-inflicted deaths in prisons in England and Wales, which have been climbing across the estate in tandem with the overcrowding and chaotic staffing, reached 82 in the 12 months to March 2023.

Wandsworth has always been a bellwether jail. It's one of the largest in England and Wales; it's a category B prison, with a high rate of churn, so behaviour management and training programmes struggle to bed in; and its Victorian design, resistant to modernisation even when the will and funding are available, exacerbates the problems when more men are housed there than it has capacity for. In the late 1980s, it was ground zero for industrial action by prison officers, which briefly shone a light on the medieval conditions: single cells holding dual occupants, the fact that slopping out was still routine. My dad worked there and said that if you turned the kitchen light on at night it was as if a grey carpet were rolling backwards, due to the sea of mice running away.

> **Austerity measures created a polycrisis, affecting not just staffing and upkeep but everything about life in jail**

The headline philosophical change in the prison estate in the late 1990s was to move away from the "nothing works" strategy of the Thatcher era (other unofficial names such as "concrete coffins" described this idea: that prison existed simply to hold prisoners until it was time to release them) to an active plan for rehabilitation. But that was underpinned by the explicit understanding that it was very difficult to persuade prisoners that the system cared about them and was invested in their future if it held them in verminous squalor. Funding and fine words should be inseparable, in prisons more than anywhere; policymakers can say what they like, but if prisoners don't see it reflected in their lived reality, they won't believe it.

The immediate and measurable results of an overcrowded prison, in which inmates spend 22 hours a day in their cells for want of staff to supervise them, are increased self-harm and drug use. But the longer-term result, which is also measurable, is that the opportunities of a prison sentence for retraining and socialising prisoners, and dealing with mental illness and addiction, are completely squandered. Wandsworth had a long period, up until 2010, as a surprise success story, with flagship training programmes, innovative peer-to-peer mentoring and psychological interventions that proved some things *did* work. It was not that surprising to people in the Prison Service, however, to whom the connection between investment and creativity in offender management had always been self-evident.

So there is no mystery to the prison inspectorate's report on Wandsworth. Austerity measures since 2012 created a polycrisis affecting not just staffing and upkeep but everything about life in jail; compromised access to education and healthcare was just the easiest thing to keep track of. Yet if that much is obvious, there is one story that is less often told: a suicide in custody has a devastating affect on prison staff and other prisoners. It is in any institution's DNA that it is custodial, in every sense. The inmates are its responsibility at the most profound level; it is in loco parentis. The Butler Trust is a charity that recognises excellence among prison staff, and I was a trustee for some years. In the 2010s, it was not at all unusual to get nominations specifically for prison officers who had supported prisoners and other members of staff through a suicide on the wing, or who had prevented an incident. A death from despair will permeate a prison's atmosphere and come to define it.

Prison conditions have to be understood, then, as more than a question of sentencing and flow, which can be solved by the right fix on early release. The state cannot silo its responsibilities, and consider crime and punishment in one compartment, the practicalities of incarceration in another. This will sound like an importunate statement at a time when rioters and arsonists are in urgent need of sentencing, yet it is exactly the right moment. A government that is serious about law and order has to be serious about the humanity of its enforcement, or the punishment becomes so wide-spectrum as to be meaningless. And it cannot benchmark itself against the outcomes of the worst, most parsimonious and haphazard policies, such as we're seeing now, but has to look to the periods in not-too-distant history when prison has worked.

Who's afraid of big dad energy? Donald Trump

Emma Brockes

There were a lot of things in Tim Walz's favour to propel him on to the Democratic ticket as the pick for VP. A former teacher, former American football coach and salt-of-the-earth Nebraskan with a history of flipping strong Republican seats, Walz looks like the kind of guy who would stop to tow your car out of a ditch, even if it were carrying a Donald Trump bumper sticker. He has a degree from a modest state college. He has served in the military. And yet, one suspects, the single detail that won the 60-year-old the job was his emperor's new clothes use of the word "weird".

On Tuesday, Walz appeared in Philadelphia alongside Kamala Harris in their first joint appearance and – apart from the mind-blowing revelation that Walz, who looks as if he might have served in Vietnam, is approximately the same age as Harris – two things became immediately clear. That the governor of Minnesota has the ease of a natural politician that Harris can lack. And that he will present his Republican counterpart, JD Vance, with a large problem.

That problem is authenticity, one of the major absurdist planks of Trump's campaign, in which the scion of a New York real estate empire accuses his rivals of being "east-coast elites". Walz, unlike almost every other high-profile Democrat going back decades – including Hillary Clinton's affable and somewhat Walz-like 2016 running mate, Tim Kaine – is not a lawyer. He did not go to Harvard or Yale, a fact he is proving happy to weaponise. If Walz has the energy of a dad reminding his grown-up kids to stay hydrated, he is also still very much the high school coach running the cafeteria at lunchtime, using all the modes – sarcasm, booming aggression, sudden, sharp mockery – that traditionally keep feral adolescents in order.

To wit: grinning wolfishly, Walz said to the crowd in Philadelphia: "Like all regular people in America's heartland, JD Vance studied at Yale, had his career funded by Silicon Valley billionaires, and wrote a bestseller trashing that community … COME ON!" As the New Yorker noted this week, when Walz joined the recent White Dudes for Harris video fundraiser, he went ahead and said the quiet part out loud, observing in reference to Trump: "How often in the world do you make that bastard wake up afterward and know that a Black woman kicked his ass, sent him on the road?"

The brilliant thing about Walz's use of the word "weird" is that it cuts through years of Democrats getting in their own way trying to find clever ways to shame Trump. Walz's attack observes a rule once delineated by Tony Blair: that in politics you get nowhere by calling your opponent a "fascist", and everywhere by using small, personal insults that tend to stick. Trump, with his playground bully mentality, understands this better than anyone, which is why over the years he has successfully ridiculed Marco Rubio for his height, Ted Cruz for his silly fibbing and Elizabeth Warren for her ill-judged claim to be part Native American. Now Walz and Harris, doubling down on "weird" with the equally useful "creepy", are among the Democrats who have caught on.

There are still huge numbers of anxieties. Vance will go after Walz for his delayed response to the Minneapolis riots that broke out after a police officer murdered George Floyd in 2020. Israel remains a source of division among Democrats that will cost the Harris-Walz ticket votes. And in the hours after Walz's candidacy was announced, while fundraising surged, many prominent Democrats in Hollywood stepped forward to applaud him, with the usual souring effect.

Let's hope enthusiasm for Walz survives the proselytising of John Cusack and Cynthia Nixon, two people you would go considerably out of your way to avoid attracting endorsement from, in particular Nixon, who once mounted a whimsical bid to be governor of New York. As we speak, we must assume that George Clooney's assistant is putting the finishing touches to a piece to run under the actor's byline in the New York Times op-ed page.

Still, the excitement and growing momentum of Harris's ascendance seems, this week, to have been only boosted by Walz, who on first impressions looks like a smart pick. Instead of the Catholic astronaut, the Jewish governor who might have delivered Pennsylvania or the matinee idol governor of California, Harris chose the man one can imagine enjoying a branch of Home Depot while honing his successful and accessible leftwing agenda.

No god in the machine: the pitfalls of AI worship

Artificial intelligence has sparked a panic about losing control of our world. But the real threat comes from falling for the hype

Navneet Alang

GETTY IMAGES/
GUARDIAN DESIGN

In Arthur C Clarke's short story The Nine Billion Names of God, a sect of monks in Tibet believes humanity has a divinely inspired purpose: inscribing all the various names of God. Once the list was complete, they thought, he would bring the universe to an end. Having worked at it by hand for centuries, the monks decide to employ some modern technology. Two sceptical engineers arrive in the Himalayas, powerful computers in tow. Instead of 15,000 years to write out all the permutations of God's name, the job gets done in three months. As the engineers ride ponies down the mountainside, Clarke's tale ends with one of literature's most economical final lines: "Overhead, without any fuss, the stars were going out."

It is an image of the computer as a shortcut to objectivity or ultimate meaning - which also happens to be, at least part of, what now animates the fascination with artificial intelligence. Though the technologies that underpin AI have existed for some time, it's only since late 2022, with the emergence of OpenAI's ChatGPT, that the technology that approached intelligence appeared to be much closer. In a 2023 report by Microsoft Canada, president Chris Barry proclaimed that "the era of AI is here, ushering in a transformative wave with potential to touch every facet of our lives", and that "it is not just a technological advancement; it is a societal shift". That is among the more level-headed reactions. Artists and writers are panicking that they will be made obsolete, governments are scrambling to catch up and regulate, and academics are debating furiously.

Businesses have been eager to rush aboard the hype train. Some of the world's largest companies, including Microsoft, Meta and Alphabet, are throwing their full weight behind AI. On top of the billions spent by big tech, funding for AI startups hit nearly $50bn in 2023. At an event at Stanford University in April, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said he didn't really care if the company spent $50bn a year on AI. Part of his vision is for a kind of super-assistant, one that would be a "super-competent colleague that knows absolutely everything about my whole life, every email, every conversation I've ever had, but doesn't feel like an extension".

But there is also a profound belief that AI represents a threat. The philosopher Nick Bostrom is among the most prominent voices asserting that AI poses an existential risk. As he laid out in his 2014 book Superintelligence, if "we build machine brains that surpass human brains in general intelligence ... the fate of our species would depend on the actions of the machine super-intelligence." The classic cautionary tale here is that of an AI system whose only - seemingly inoffensive - goal is making paperclips. According to Bostrom, the system would realise quickly that humans are a barrier to this task, because they might switch off the machine. They might also use up the resources needed for the manufacturing of more paperclips. This is an example of what AI doomers call the "control problem": the fear that we will lose control of AI because any defences we've built into it will be undone by an intelligence that's millions of steps ahead of us.

Before we do, in fact, cede any more ground to our tech overlords, it's worth casting your mind back to the mid-1990s and the arrival of the world wide web. That, too, came with profound assertions of a new utopia, a connected world in which borders, difference and privation would end. Today, you would be hard pressed to argue that the internet has been some sort of unproblematic good. The fanciful did come true; we can carry the whole world's knowledge in our pockets. This just had the rather strange effect of driving people a bit mad, fostering discontent and polarisation, assisting a renewed surge of the far right and destabilising democracy and truth.

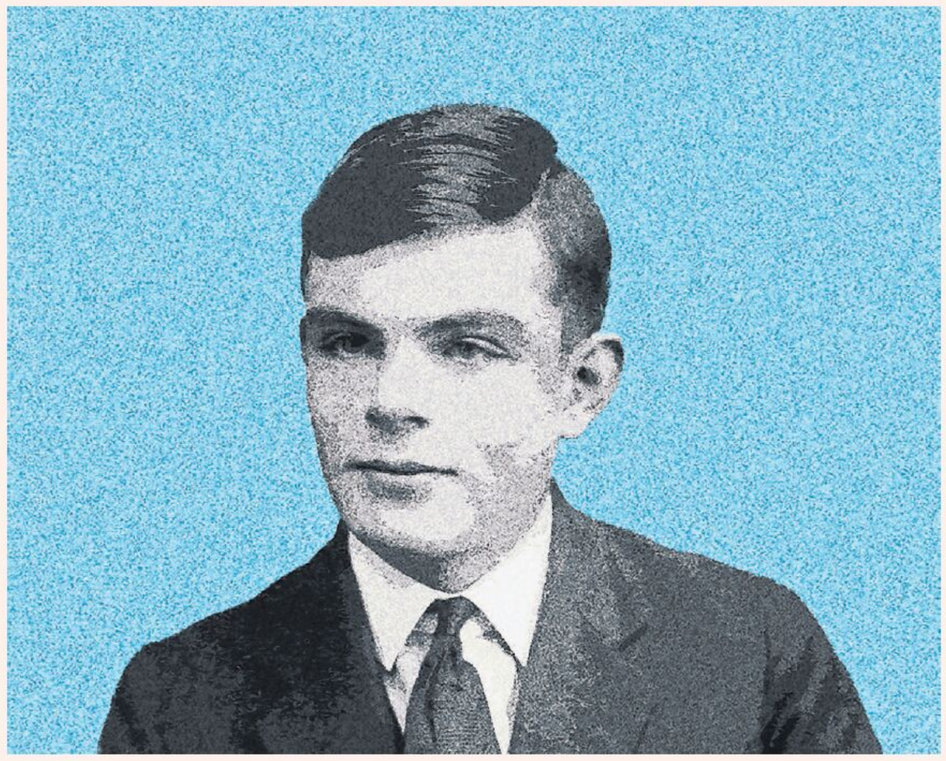
It's not that you should simply resist technology; it can, after all, also have liberating effects. Rather, when big tech comes bearing gifts, you should probably look closely at what's in the box.

What we call AI at the moment is predominantly focused on large language models, or LLMs. The models are fed massive sets of data - ChatGPT essentially hoovered up the entire public internet - and trained to find patterns in them. Units of meaning, such as words, parts of words and characters, become tokens and are assigned numerical values. The models learn how tokens relate to other tokens and, over time, learn something like context: where a word might appear, in what order, and so on.

That doesn't sound impressive on its own. But when I recently asked ChatGPT to write a story about a sentient cloud who was sad the sun was out, the results were strikingly human. Not only did the chatbot produce the various components of a children's fable, it also included a story arc in which, eventually, "Nimbus" the cloud found a corner of the sky and made peace with a sunny day. You might not call the story good, but it would probably entertain my five-year-old nephew.

Robin Zebrowski, professor and chair of cognitive science at Beloit College in Wisconsin, explains the humanity I sensed this way: "The only truly linguistic things we've ever encountered are things that have minds. And so when we encounter something that looks like it's doing language the way we do language, all of our priors get pulled in, and we think: 'Oh, this is clearly a minded thing.'"

We can carry the whole world's knowledge in our pockets. This just had the rather strange effect of driving people a bit mad



Computer pioneer Alan Turing

UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP/GETTY IMAGES/ GUARDIAN DESIGN

This is why, for decades, the standard test for whether technology was approaching intelligence was the Turing test, named after its creator Alan Turing, the British mathematician and second world war code-breaker. The test involves a human interrogator who poses questions to two unseen subjects - a computer and another human - via text-based messages to determine which is the machine. A number of different people play the roles of interrogator and respondent, and if a sufficient proportion of interviewers is fooled, the machine could be said to exhibit intelligence. ChatGPT can already fool at least some people in some situations.

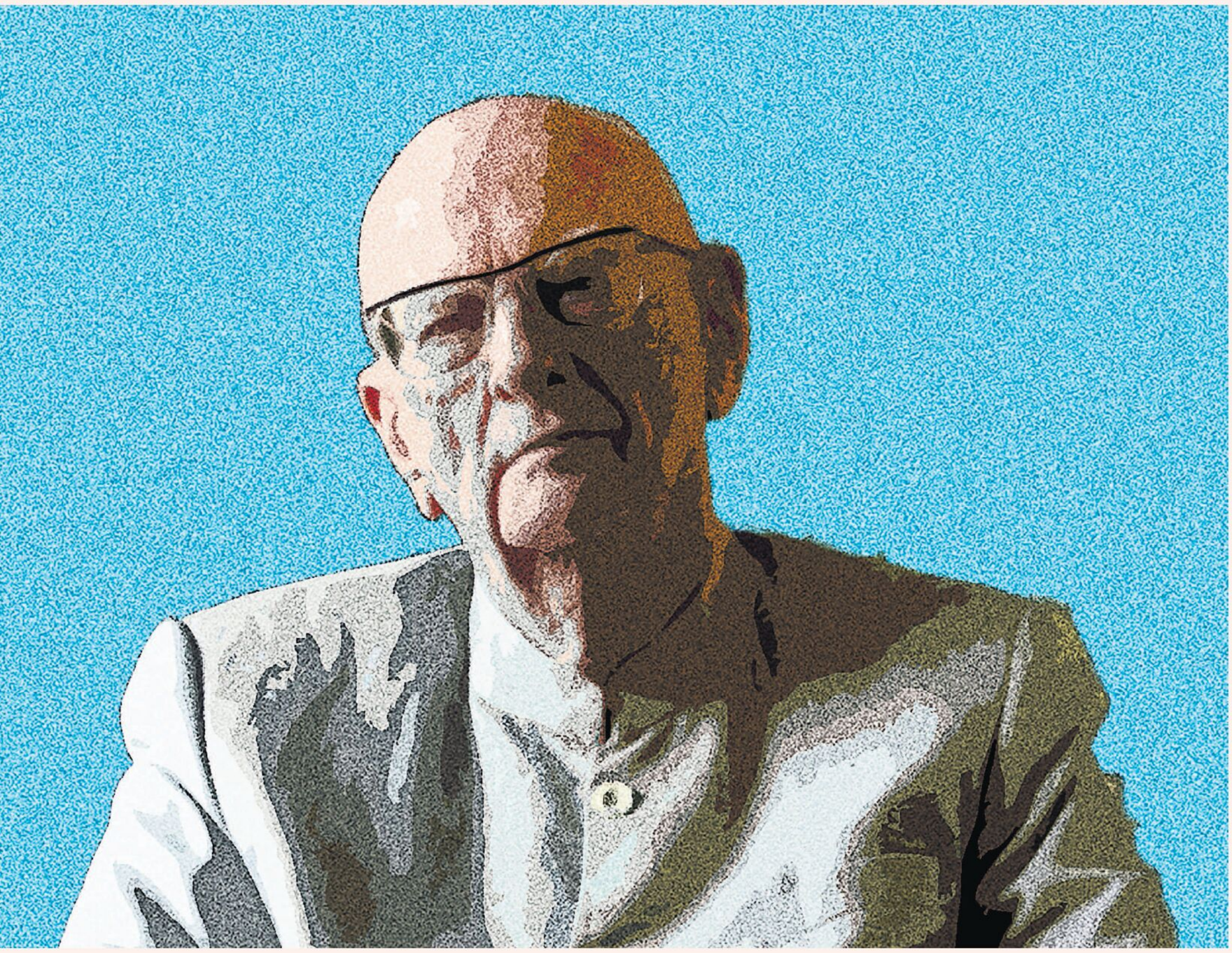
Such tests reveal how closely tied to language our notions of intelligence are. We tend to think that beings that can "do language" are intelligent: we marvel at dogs that appear to understand more complex commands, or gorillas that can communicate in sign language, precisely because such acts are closer to our mechanism of rendering the world sensible.

But being able to do language without also thinking, feeling, willing or being is probably why writing done by AI chatbots is so lifeless and generic. Because LLMs are essentially looking at massive sets of patterns of data and parsing how they relate to one another, they can often spit out perfectly reasonable-sounding statements that are wrong or nonsensical or just weird. That reduction of language to just collection of data is also why, for example, when I asked ChatGPT to write a bio for me, it told me I was born in India, went to Carleton University and had a degree in journalism - about which it was wrong on all three counts (it was the UK, York University and English). To ChatGPT, it was the shape of the answer, expressed confidently, that was more important than the content, the right pattern mattering more than the right response.

All the same, the idea of LLMs as repositories of meaning that are then recombined does align with some assertions from 20th-century philosophy about the way humans think, experience the world, and create art. The French philosopher Jacques Derrida, building on the work of linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, suggested that meaning was differential - the meaning of each word depends on that of other words. Think of a dictionary: the meaning of words can only ever be explained by other words, which in turn can only ever be explained by other words. What is always missing is some sort of "objective" meaning outside this neverending chain of signification that brings it to a halt. We are instead forever stuck in this loop of difference. Some, like Russian literary scholar Vladimir Propp, theorised that you could break down folklore narratives into constituent structural elements, as per his seminal work, Morphology of the Folktale. Of course, this doesn't apply to all narratives, but you can see how you might combine units of a story - a starting action, a crisis, a resolution and so on - to then create a story about a sentient cloud.

Today, AI can take previously unconnected, even random things, such as the skyline of Toronto and the style of the impressionists, and join them to create what hasn't existed before. But there is a sort of discomforting or unnerving implication here. Isn't that also, in a way, how we think? Raphaël Millière, an assistant professor at Macquarie University in Sydney, says that, for example, we know what a pet is (a creature we keep with us at home) and we also know what a fish is (an animal that swims in large water bodies); we combine those two in a way that keeps some characteristics and discards others to form a novel concept: a pet fish. Newer AI models boast this capacity to amalgamate into the ostensibly new - and it is precisely why they are called "generative."

Even comparatively sophisticated arguments can be seen to work this way. The problem of theodicy has been a topic of debate among theologians for centuries. It asks: if an absolutely good God is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent, how can evil exist when God knows it will happen and can stop it? It radically oversimplifies the theological issue, but theodicy, too, is in some ways a kind of logical puzzle, a pattern of ideas that can be recombined in particular ways. I don't mean to say that AI can solve our deepest epistemological or philosophical questions, but it does



The science fiction author Arthur C Clarke

AP/GUARDIAN DESIGN

suggest that the line between thinking beings and pattern recognition machines is not quite as hard and bright as we may have hoped.

The sense of there being a thinking thing behind AI chatbots is also driven by the now common wisdom that we don't know exactly how AI systems work. What's called the black box problem is often framed in mystical terms – the robots are so far ahead or so alien that they are doing something we can't comprehend. That is true, but not quite in the way it sounds. New York University professor Leif Weatherby suggests that the models are processing so many permutations of data that it is impossible for a single person to wrap their head around it. The mysticism of AI isn't a hidden or inscrutable mind behind the curtain; it's to do with scale and brute power.

Yet, even in that distinction – that AI is able to do language only through computing power – there is still an interesting question of what it means to think. York University professor Kristin Andrews, who researches animal intelligence, suggests that there are lots of cognitive tasks – remembering how to get food, recognising objects or other beings – that animals do without necessarily being self-aware. In that sense, intelligence may well be attributed to AI because it can do what we would usually refer to as cognition. But, as Andrews notes, there's nothing to suggest that AI has an identity or a will or desires.

So much of what produces will and desire is located in the body, not just in the obvious sense of erotic desire but the more complex relation between an interior subjectivity, our unconscious, and how we move as a body through the world, processing information and reacting to it. Zebrowski suggests there is a case to be made that "the body matters for how we can think and why we think and what we think about". She adds, "It's not like you can just take a computer program and stick it in the head of a robot and have an embodied thing."

If you find yourself asking AI about the meaning of life, it isn't the answer that's wrong. It's the question

Computers might in fact approach what we call thinking, but they don't dream, or want, or desire, and this matters more than AI's boosters let on. When we use our intelligence to craft solutions to economic crises or to tackle racism, we do so out of a sense of morality, of obligation to those around us – our cultivated sense that we have a responsibility to make things better in specific, morally significant ways.

Perhaps the model of the computer in Clarke's story – something that is kind of a shortcut to transcendence or omniscience – is thus the wrong one. Instead, Deep Thought, the computer in Douglas Adams's The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, might be closer. When asked "the answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe and Everything", it of course spits out that famously obtuse answer: "42".

The absurdity of the answer points to an easily forgotten truth. Life and its meaning can't be reduced to a simple statement, or to a list of names, just as human thought and feeling can't be reduced to something articulated by what are ultimately ones and zeros. If you find yourself asking AI about the meaning of life, it isn't the answer that's wrong. It's the question.

This March, I spent two days at the Microsoft headquarters, just outside Seattle. Microsoft is one of the tech incumbents that is most "all in" on AI. To prove just how much, they brought in journalists from around the world to participate in an "innovation campus tour", which included a dizzying run of talks and demos, meals in the seemingly neverending supply of on-site restaurants, and a couple of nights in the kind of hotel writers usually cannot afford.

We were walked through a research centre, wearing earplugs to block out the drone of a mini field of fans. We attended numerous panels: how teams were integrating AI, how those involved with "responsible AI" are tasked with reining in the technology before it goes awry. There was lots of chatter about how this work was the future of everything. In one session, the affable Seth Juarez, principal programme manager of AI platforms, spoke of AI as being like moving from a shovel to a tractor: that it will, in his words, "level up humanity".

Some of the things we saw were genuinely inspiring, such as the presentation by Saqib Shaikh, who is blind and has spent years working on SeeingAI. It's an app that is getting better and better at labelling objects in a field of view in real time. Point it at a desk with a can and it will say, "A red soda can, on a green desk." There were other hopeful ideas for how AI could be used: to preserve dying languages, improve the accuracy of scans for tumours, or better predict where to deploy disaster response resources – usually by processing large amounts of data and then recognising and analysing patterns within it.

At the end of a panel at Microsoft on AI research, we were each offered a copy of a book titled AI for Good, detailing more altruistic uses. One of the projects mentioned in the book involved using machine learning to predict where best to put solar panels in India. That's encouraging stuff, the sort of thing that lets one momentarily feel a hint of relief or hope that, maybe, some things are going to get better. But many of the problems preventing, say, the deployment of solar power in India do not relate to a lack of knowledge. More often, the problems are the lack of resources, the absence of political will, the power of entrenched interests and, more plainly, money.

This is what the utopian vision of the future so often misses: if and when change happens, the questions at play will be about if and how certain technology gets distributed, deployed, taken up. It will be about how governments decide to allocate resources, how the interests of various parties affected will be balanced, how an idea is sold and promulgated, and more. It will, in short, be about political will, resources, and the contest between competing ideologies and interests. The problems facing the world – not just climate breakdown but the housing crisis, the toxic drug crisis, or growing anti-immigrant sentiment – aren't problems caused by a lack of intelligence or computing power. In some cases, the solutions to these problems are superficially simple. Homelessness, for example, is reduced when there are more and cheaper homes. But the fixes are difficult to implement because of social and political forces, not a lack of insight, thinking, or novelty. In other words, what will hold progress on these issues back will ultimately be what holds everything back: us.

The idea of an exponentially greater intelligence, so favoured by big tech, is a strange sort of fantasy that abstracts out intelligence into a kind of superpower that can only ever increase. In this view, problem-solving is like a capacity on a dial that can simply be turned up and up. To assume this is what's called "tech solutionism", a term coined a decade ago by the writer Evgeny Morozov. He was among the first to point to how Silicon Valley tended to see tech as the answer to everything.

Some Silicon Valley businessmen have taken tech solutionism to an extreme. It is these AI accelerationists whose ideas are the most terrifying. Marc Andreessen was intimately involved in the creation of the first web browsers and is now a billionaire venture capitalist who has taken up a mission to fight against the "woke mind virus" and generally

embrace capitalism and libertarianism. In a screed published last year, titled The Techno-Optimist Manifesto, Andreessen outlined his belief that "there is no material problem – whether created by nature or by technology – that cannot be solved with more technology". When the historian Rick Perlstein attended a dinner at Andreessen's $34m home in California, he found a group adamantly opposed to regulation or any kind of constraint on tech (in a tweet at the end of 2023, Andreessen called regulation of AI "the new foundation of totalitarianism"). When Perlstein related the whole experience to a colleague, he "noted a similarity to a student of his who insisted that all the age-old problems historians worried over would soon obviously be solved by better computers, and thus considered the entire humanistic enterprise faintly ridiculous".

Andreessen's manifesto also included a section in which he listed off a series of enemies. It included all the usual rightwing bugbears: regulation, know-it-all academics, the constraint on "innovation", progressives. To the venture capitalist, these are all self-evident evils. Andreessen has been on the board of Facebook/Meta – a company that has allowed mis- and disinformation to wreak havoc – since 2008. However, he insists, apparently without a trace of irony, that experts are "playing God with everyone else's lives, with total insulation from the consequences".

Having spoken to experts it seems to me as though the promise of AI lies in dealing with sets of data that exist at a scale humans simply cannot operate at. Pattern recognition machines put to use in biology or physics will probably yield fascinating, useful results. AI's other uses seem more mundane, at least for now: taking financial statements and reconciling figures, transcribing and summarising meetings, triaging emails more efficiently, making it easier to access simple things like travel itineraries.

That isn't to say AI is some benevolent good, however. An AI model can be trained on billions of data points, but it can't tell you if any of those things is good, or if it has value to us, and there's no reason to believe it will. We arrive at moral evaluations not through logical puzzles but through consideration of what is irreducible in us: subjectivity, dignity, interiority, desire – all the things AI doesn't have.

To say that AI on its own will be able to produce art misunderstands why we turn to the art in the first place. We crave things made by humans because we care about what humans say and feel about their experience of being a person and a body in the world.

Part of Sam Altman's vision is for a kind of super-assistant that 'knows absolutely everything about my whole life'

Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI

REUTERS/GUARDIAN DESIGN

There's also a question of quantity. In dropping the barriers to content creation, AI will also flood the world with dreck. Already, Google is becoming harder to use because the web is being flooded with AI-crafted content designed to get clicks.

Yet it's also the imbrication of AI into existing systems that is cause for concern. As Damien P Williams, a professor at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, pointed out to me, training models absorb masses of data based on what is and what has been. It's thus hard for them to avoid existing biases, of the past and the present. Williams points to how, if asked to reproduce, say, a doctor yelling at a nurse, AI will make the doctor a man and the nurse a woman. Last year, when Google hastily released Gemini, its competitor to other AI chatbots, it produced images of "diverse" Nazis and the US's founding fathers. These odd mistakes were a ham-fisted attempt to try to pre-empt the problem of bias in the training data. AI relies on what has been, and trying to account for the myriad ways we encounter and respond to the prejudice of the past appears to simply be beyond its ken.

The structural problem with bias has existed for some time. Algorithms were already used for things like credit scores, and already AI usage in things like hiring is replicating biases. In both cases, pre-existing racial bias emerged in digital systems. That's not to say that AI won't also kill us. More recently, it was revealed that Israel was using a version of AI called Lavender to help it attack targets in Gaza. The system is meant to identify members of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic jihad and then provide their locations as potential targets for airstrikes – including their homes. According to the Israeli Palestinian +972 Magazine, many of these attacks killed civilians.

As such, the threat of AI isn't really that of a machine or system which offhandedly kills humanity. It's the assumption that AI is in fact intelligent that causes us to outsource crucial social and political functions to computer software – it's not just the tech itself which becomes integrated into day-to-day life but also the particular logic and ethos of tech and its libertarian-capitalist ideology.

The question is then: to what ends AI is deployed, in what context, and with what boundaries. "Can AI be used to make cars drive themselves?" is an interesting question. But whether we should allow self-driving cars on the road, under what conditions, embedded in what systems – or indeed, whether we should deprioritise the car altogether – are the more important questions, and they are ones that an AI system cannot answer for us.

Everyone from a tech bro placing his hopes for human advancement on a superhuman intelligence to an army relying on AI software to list targets evinces the same desire for an objective authority figure to which one can turn. When we look to artificial intelligence to make sense of the world – when we ask it questions about reality or history or expect it to represent the world as it is – are we not already bound up in the logic of AI? We are awash with digital detritus, with the cacophony of the present, and in response, we seek out a superhuman assistant to draw out what is true from the morass of the false and the misleading – often to only be misled ourselves when AI gets it wrong.

We are living in a time where truth is unstable, shifting, constantly in contestation. Think of the embrace of conspiracy theories, the rise of the anti-vax movement, or the mainstreaming of racist pseudoscience. Every age has its great loss – for modernism, it was the coherence of the self; for postmodernism, the stability of master narratives – and now, in the 21st century, there is an increasing pressure on the notion of a shared vision of reality.

When the systems that give shape to things start to fade or come into doubt, as has happened to religion, liberalism, democracy and more, one is left looking for a new God. There is something particularly poignant about the desire to ask ChatGPT to tell us something about a world in which it can occasionally feel like nothing is true. To humans awash with a sea of subjectivity, AI represents the transcendent thing: the impossibly logical mind that can tell us the truth.

Lingering at the edges of Clarke's short story about the Tibetan monks was a similar sense of technology as the thing that lets us exceed our mere mortal constraints. But the result is the end of everything. In turning to technology to make a deeply spiritual, manual, painstaking task more efficient, Clarke's characters end up erasing the very act of faith that sustained their journey toward transcendence. But here in the real world, perhaps meeting God isn't the aim. It's the torture and the ecstasy of the attempt to do so. Artificial intelligence may keep growing in scope, power and capability, but the assumptions underlying our faith in it – that, so to speak, it might bring us closer to God – may only lead us further away.

In 10 or 20 years from now, AI will undoubtedly be more advanced than it is now. Even so, if I'm lucky enough to be around, I'll step out of my home with my AI assistant whispering in my ear. There will still be cracks in the sidewalk. The city in which I live will still be under construction. Traffic will probably still be a mess, even if the cars drive themselves. Maybe I'll look around and my AI assistant will tell me something about what I see. But things will still keep moving on only slightly differently than they do now. And the stars? Against what might now seem like so much change, the sky will still be full of them. ●

* **Navneet Alang** *is a journalist who writes about food and drink, technology, identity and culture*

A longer version of this article first appeared in The Walrus

Letters

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Established 1906

Country diary

Maelor Saesneg, north-east Wales

The English Maelor! It's the appendix to Wales that dangles off the bulge of the Welsh north-eastern border and reaches almost as far as Whitchurch in Shropshire. DH Lawrence regarded this as a strongly Welsh-flavoured county, and some of the earliest Welsh poetry, dating back perhaps to the sixth century, locates here.

The great Welsh warrior chieftain Owain Glyndŵr, at the end of the 14th century, also rode this way, past the deep and phragmites-fringed lake, to marry Margaret Hanmer. Six centuries later, the outstanding feminist literary critic Lorna Sage (1943-2001) was brought up in nearby Hanmer, and her award-winning memoir Bad Blood (2000) leaves a vivid impression of the place and her childhood there, before she moved on eventually to Durham and then to the University of East Anglia, where she was tutor to our distinguished diarist Mark Cocker.

Hanmer's well worth a visit. I drove over there this week on a grey showery afternoon, leaving behind Wales's "blue, remembered hills", the Staffordshire moorlands ahead rising in the dim distance. This country around Ellesmere is a haunting, fascinating place, terrific for birds, and not just for the waterfowl either, though who can resist the bizarre courtship rituals of the great crested grebe, which you have as good a chance of witnessing here as anywhere I know? The smaller, rarer birds are also well represented. Sitting by the lake at Hanmer, I focused my glass on the reedbeds surrounding it.

Most of "the Shropshire meres" (a common name for this magical region) are kettle holes, formed by the melting of great blocks of ice left behind as the glaciers retreated in the last ice age, and Hanmer's has similar origins. The mimicry of a sedge warbler drifted on the damp air. Small flocks of long-tailed tits scattered past.

Lake water lapped with low sounds by the shore, the faint scent of the guelder rose in flower filled the air, and only the thrum of a tractor muck-spreading and the skirling of children at play in the village disturbed the long peace of this quiet place.

Jim Perrin

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Be tough on the rioters, and tough on the causes

As leader of Newcastle city council (2011-22), I was often faced with the summertime challenge of far-right marches and demonstrations being planned in the city. Many political colleagues would demand loudly that such protests be banned, or that larger counter-demonstrations be held to show superior numbers of "civilised" people versus "thugs". I found such performative virtue signalling counterproductive and divisive. There was always a small hardcore of far-right activists at the heart of these conflicts, but they only got wider traction and support because of the anger generated by a keen feeling of cumulative injustices imposed on our communities through Tory austerity cuts and decline.

Understanding this sense of loss, the misguided desire to protect what was "theirs" and the misdirected anger at "outsiders" was essential in minimising their long-term success. Despite huge losses to the council's budget, we focused on bringing inward investment, creating more and better jobs, building more homes and protecting public services that supported the most vulnerable. This may have been one of the reasons Newcastle voted – albeit narrowly – for remain in the Brexit referendum.

Far-right demonstrations always need an immediate and firm policing response, but also longer-term positive interventions to create opportunity for all, a sense of hope and a stake in the future. Labour should adopt this approach in its plan for national renewal. We could call it being tough on crime, and tough on the causes of crime.

Nick Forbes
Newcastle upon Tyne

● This week, we have witnessed the worst of Britain, as far-right thugs, unrepresentative of most people in this country, have taken to the streets to sow chaos and enact violence against people of colour and Muslim communities. This rampant hate has led us to cancel several charitable events, for the safety of our volunteers and supporters. We have also taken the difficult decision to close our charity shops, prioritising the safety of our teams who run them in case they are targeted by the thuggery and vandalism that we have seen this week. These shops raise funds to help the most vulnerable, including many right here at home in the UK.

For years now, there have been opinions in the mainstream media telling us that Islamophobia wasn't as bad as we in the Muslim community were saying. Yet now this rampant racism has led to our community fearing for their safety and being forced inside, even when we are trying to lead positive events to help people, including those in this country affected by poverty.

Tufail Hussain
Director, Islamic Relief UK

● Let us be clear on who is to blame for creating a tinderbox atmosphere in which anti-immigrant resentment thrives. Successive Tory home secretaries, lately with Rishi Sunak as their cheerleader, have demonised immigrants and refugees as the root of all the UK's problems, as a flagrant tactic to distract from their abject failure to come up with any policies to fix any of Britain's longstanding problems. Throw a sprinkling of Nigel Farage on to the smouldering fire and a conflagration is inevitable. Another mess for the Labour government to cope with.

Raj Parkash
London

The language of hatred and legitimate anger

Joe Mulhall looks at the question of what makes people so susceptible to misinformation (Some say these riots are about legitimate anger. But they're not, 6 August). He blames social media, and also blames Suella Braverman for demonising asylum seekers by using such language as "invasion". Yet he himself uses similar language about the rioters: "horde", "mob", "infection".

How can social cohesion be achieved while even on the Guardian letters page (6 August) I read language such as "neo-Nazi scum"? The prime minister and the home secretary call the rioters "thugs". There is also pressure to call them "terrorists". This name-calling does not help. It is aggressive. It divides us even further. Instead, we could find answers to what makes people so angry and violent by looking at what they have to lose: nothing. They have nothing now after 14 years of Tory misrule and deprivation, but throwing bricks is not a solution to their resentment. A close look at our own attitude as betrayed in our language might be.

Eleanor Creed
Portsmouth

● Joe Mulhall rightly says that the riots are not about legitimate anger. But we must not forget that many people have genuine grievances – declining public services, poor pay, inadequate housing – which the far right falsely blames on immigrants and ethnic minorities. Many distrust all politicians, because certain politicians have been grossly untrustworthy. It is therefore urgent that the Labour government should address the root causes of these grievances, such as the refusal of wealthy people to pay their fair share, and should show itself to be trustworthy. That is a long-term solution, and I deeply hope that Keir Starmer will be bold enough to carry it out as quickly as possible.

Robert Dimmick
Caversham, Berkshire

● While the rioters' actions are in no way legitimate, their anger may be. If the (probably varied and maybe irrational and ill-informed) reasons behind their anger are not explored, I don't see how the situation can improve in the long term.

Elaine Henderson
Leicester

Reform democracy so that people feel heard

The recent violence in many UK cities is frightening and Keir Starmer is right to take a firm stance against the perpetrators (You will regret this, Starmer warns rioters, 5 August). This is a necessary but short-term solution to crime. Isn't it time, however, to engage meaningfully with this deep dissatisfaction among sections of the population?

People lash out when they feel that no one is listening to them. Representative democracy is under threat in many countries for this reason; we must surely take some action before we lose it altogether. Can I make a plea for "communal democracy", with citizens working in consort with local and regional councils, and even voting on national issues by sending delegates to Westminster alongside elected representatives? Immigration is a huge issue for many people who see their lives impacted by the influx of large groups of people whom they perceive as different. Decisions must be seen to be made at both local and national level.

Citizens' assemblies are increasingly used to bring together a random selection of local citizens, including those with diametrically opposing views, to discuss topics of public interest. Without the constraints faced by politicians facing a party whip, a citizens' assembly can focus more on what is best for their locality and for the country in the long term.

Daphne Cotton
Twickenham, London

Corrections and clarifications

● We omitted to say that Prof Nicholas Wald, co-author of a letter (Preventive medicine may be key to saving the NHS, 30 July, Journal, p9), is a director of Polypill Ltd, a cardiovascular disease prevention service that offers the type of medication referred to in the letter. This had been disclosed by him but was overlooked in editing.

● Bellshill is in North Lanarkshire, not "near Aberdeen" (Reform's new chair is set on seeing Farage in No 10, 5 August, p19).

Editorial complaints and corrections can be sent to guardian.readers@theguardian.com or The readers' editor, **Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU.** You can also leave a voicemail on **020 3353 4736**

Tommy Robinson's given us a bad name

On behalf of the overwhelming majority of the nation's Robinsons – the 15th most common surname in the UK – could I ask you to use only the real name Stephen Yaxley-Lennon when reporting on a particularly nasty piece of work who has arrogated to himself the use of our wholesome family name (Tommy Robinson: What can authorities do about activist's alleged online incitement?, 6 August). With warm thanks in anticipation of your support.

Tony Robinson
Edinburgh

● In 1989 many Liverpool citizens started to boycott the Sun after it misrepresented them following the tragedy in Hillsborough. After Elon Musk has poked this bear by suggesting the UK is drifting towards a civil war (No 10 criticises X owner for 'civil war is inevitable' post, 6 August), is it time for some of you to simply delete whatever it's called from your phones?

Dr Mike Biddulph
Cardiff

● Can we have our country back please, the one where we believe in the rule of law, and tolerance and respect for those with other cultures and beliefs?

Elizabeth Pearson
New Barnet, London

● It seems a little ironic that rightwingers, who wish to defend individual liberties, were so against wearing face coverings during the pandemic. They now seem de rigueur for them.

Denis Chambers
Monóvar, Alicante, Spain

● As the prisons are almost full, perhaps the rioting thugs can be detained on the Bibby Stockholm?

William Bartram
Hampton, London

Mel Ramsden

Conceptual artist who was one of the last members of the Art & Language group founded in the 1960s

In November 2014, an exhibition called Nobody Spoke opened at the Lisson Gallery in London. The show took its name from its centrepiece, an installation of 17 small chairs, each made of 10 canvases painted in black and white with haphazard images and texts.

Some reappeared in drawings on a nearby wall; the chairs starred in an adjoining 40-minute video, this time occupied by members of a German artists' collective which debated the nature of *ekphrasis* (the description of pictures in words). It was, and was meant to be, very confusing. The work had been made by a group called Art & Language, one of whose last two remaining members, Mel Ramsden, has died aged 79.

If Ramsden was of the last, he had not been of the first. When Art & Language was founded in the late 1960s in Coventry, he was living in New York. Born in Ilkeston, Derbyshire, Melvyn was the son of Emily (nee Howe) and Ted Ramsden, a hosiery mechanic.

When still a young boy, his family moved to Australia. His father died when he was 14, and two years later Mel returned to England to study at the Nottingham School of Art and Design (1961-63). There, he made friends with a fellow student, Roger Cutforth.

On finishing, Ramsden spent a year at the National Gallery of Victoria Art School, Melbourne, where he met Ian Burn. By 1967, Ramsden, Burn and Cutforth were all living in New York, and formed an early group of what are now known as conceptual artists. This they called the Society for Theoretical Art and Analysis.

In August 1969, the trio exhibited at the Melbourne gallery Pinacotheca. Unable to afford to travel to Australia to curate the exhibition, they posted it, with instructions on how the works should be shown. Ramsden's contribution, Six Negatives, was a book of printed pages and photo lithographs, the text explaining what the photos were about.

This was very much of its day. The year before, 1968, had seen protests worldwide for civil rights and against war and capitalism. Part of the impulse of conceptual art was to make work that was intangible and, therefore, unsaleable. In Britain, the newly formed Art & Language had declared a block of air above Oxfordshire an artwork. The work itself was less the point than was the argument justifying its existence. This process was known, broadly, as "dematerialisation".

Ramsden, trained as a painter, brought a painterly aesthetic to these new strategies. In 1967-68, he made Secret Painting, a black monochrome canvas with, next to it, a rather larger gelatine print containing words spelling out the work's meaning. "The content of this painting is invisible," the rubric read. "The character and dimension of the content are to be kept permanently secret, known only to the artist." At least part of the point was satirical, mocking the artist-as-hero hype that surrounded monochrome painters such as Robert Ryman.

> **The work itself was less the point than was the argument justifying its existence**

In 1970, Ramsden joined the New York chapter of Art & Language. The group numbered some 50 members, in the US, Britain and Australia. With his American wife, Paula Eck, whom he married in 1974, Ramsden helped produce its publication, Art-Language: The Journal of Conceptual Art (1969-85), and worked on the group's most celebrated piece, Index 01. An installation of eight filing cabinets filled with papers recording the history of the work's own making, it was shown to acclaim at the five-yearly German art exhibition, Documenta, in 1972.

Ramsden and Eck also began collaborative performances with a Texas psychedelic band, Red Krayola. The first of these was in 1973; the last in 2010. The band's leader, Mayo Thompson, called Art & Language "the baddest bastards on the block".

This was an unlikely description of Ramsden, who was mild-mannered and amiable. When Art & Language's American and British sections fell out in the early 70s, he refused to be embroiled. In 1977, he and Eck moved to Middleton Cheney, a village in Northamptonshire, where they would live for the next 47 years.

There, Ramsden shared his studio with Michael Baldwin, one of the founders of Art & Language at Coventry College of Art in 1968. Each refused to take ownership of their art. "When Michael paints a good bit, I paint it out," Ramsden cheerily said. "And when I paint the good bits, he paints mine out."

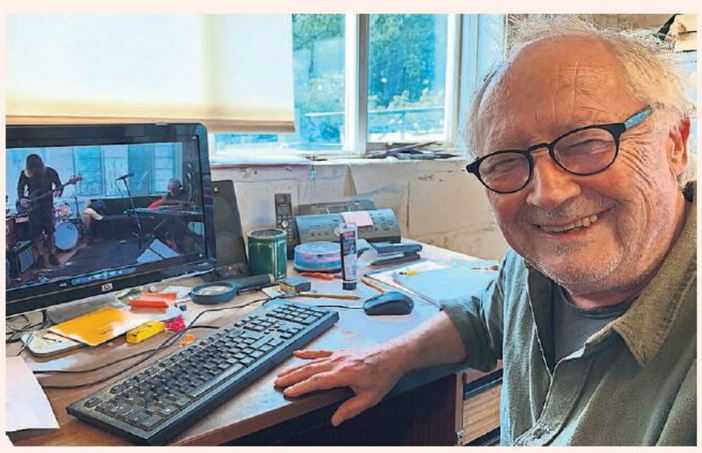
Burn died in 1993, Cutforth in 2019, leaving only Ramsden and Baldwin. For all their insistence on anonymity, time inevitably brought them the kind of heroism Art & Language had been set up to defy. In 1986 the group was nominated for the Turner prize; in 1999, PS1 MoMA in New York held an Art & Language retrospective, and the collective's work is held in major institutions internationally.

The pages of Six Negatives, made to short-circuit ideas of monetary worth, themselves became objects of value. In 2013, the boxed contents of the 1969 exhibition at the Pinacotheca in Melbourne were reassembled and shown at the University Art Gallery, Sydney.

Paula survives him, as do their daughters, Anne and Katie, and two grandchildren, Molly and Edward.

Charles Darwent

Mel (Melvyn) Robert Ramsden, artist, born 27 December 1944; died 23 July 2024



The centrepiece of Nobody Spoke (2014), an installation of 17 chairs. Below, Ramsden

KEN ADLARD/ LISSON GALLERY; JOANNA THORNBERRY

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Craig Jordan

Pharmacologist whose research into tamoxifen helped many women with breast cancer to live longer

In the 1970s only 40% of women diagnosed with breast cancer could expect to survive for 10 years or more. Today that figure is more than 75%. Screening and early diagnosis have played a part, but one of the key reasons for the improvement is the drug tamoxifen, which greatly reduces the risk of cancer recurring after surgery.

The British-American pharmacologist Craig Jordan, who has died aged 76, was the first to show that tamoxifen could stop tumours growing by blocking the female hormone oestrogen from locking on to cells in the breast at specific sites called oestrogen receptors.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women across the world and 80% of women with the disease have receptors that make them sensitive to oestrogen, which can stimulate cells in the breast to reproduce uncontrollably and form tumours.

Jordan's lifelong study of tamoxifen led to the discovery of a range of other effective treatments for breast cancer that either blocked oestrogen receptors or reduced the amount of the hormone the body produces. His studies have also improved women's health by shedding light on other conditions, including endometrial cancer, osteoporosis and menopausal symptoms.

He made his discoveries in the face of huge scepticism from the medical community. He was not a medical doctor but a laboratory scientist who conducted his research on rats and mice. Tamoxifen does not kill cancer cells, it simply stops them from growing. The received wisdom in the 70s when he began his work was that the only way to deal with cancer was to cut it out, or blast it with radiation or powerful chemicals to destroy every trace of the tumour. Such treatments, though they can be effective, are distressing for patients and have many side-effects.

"There was an obsession with the idea that combination chemotherapies were going to cure all cancers," Jordan told the website Oncology Central in 2019. "It felt like we were trying to swim upstream as we were saying no, target the oestrogen receptor and give tamoxifen forever and people will stay alive."

> **The received wisdom in the 70s was that the only way to deal with cancer was to cut or blast it out**

Jordan at his home in Houston, Texas, in 2018. He was an avid collector of maps and antique weapons ROBERT SEALE

It took decades before the evidence for tamoxifen's effectiveness became undeniable. A number of clinical research groups, encouraged by Jordan's laboratory results, had tested tamoxifen in patients, but the results, though encouraging, were too marginal to change practice.

In 1998 the Early Breast Cancer Triallists Collaborative Group, based in Oxford, combined the data from studies of 37,000 women to show that those with oestrogen-sensitive tumours who took tamoxifen for five years after surgery experienced a 47% reduction in the risk of the cancer returning and a 26% reduction in the risk of dying within 10 years.

Tamoxifen and other selective oestrogen receptor modulators are now part of the standard treatment for women who have had surgery for oestrogen-sensitive breast cancers.

Jordan's mother, Cynthia Mottram, was a GI bride who met his father, Virgil Johnson, when he was in service as a soldier with the US army in Britain during the second world war. They returned to New Braunfels, in Texas, where Jordan was born, but the marriage broke down and Cynthia brought her son back to her home in Cheshire when he was a toddler.

He attended Moseley Hall grammar school in Cheadle, where he took to chemistry with such enthusiasm that his mother let him set up a laboratory at home (leading to the kinds of near-disasters that punctuate the early lives of many successful scientists). After his mother remarried, Craig was adopted by his stepfather, Geoffrey Jordan, and took his name.

At first his ambition did not reach beyond working as a technician at the nearby ICI laboratories, but he successfully obtained a place at the University of Leeds to study pharmacology. Taking a summer job with ICI, he met the endocrinologist Arthur Walpole, who had been part of the team that developed tamoxifen, then known as ICI 46,474.

It was supposed to be a contraceptive, but early trials led to more pregnancies, rather than fewer. During his PhD at Leeds, Jordan developed strong links with the ICI scientists, who funded the early stages of his work on oestrogen receptors.

In 1972 Jordan went to the Worcester Foundation for Experimental Biology in Massachusetts. The lab focused on contraception, but as ICI 46,474 had failed as a contraceptive Jordan began to examine its effects on breast cancer in rats. Meanwhile, in 1973, ICI had given the drug a name, tamoxifen, and launched it as a not particularly effective treatment for late-stage breast cancer.

The following year Jordan returned to Leeds as a lecturer, where he continued to collaborate with ICI. His key discoveries in this period were that, given over a period of years, tamoxifen could be used to prevent cancer coming back after surgery, and that it could prevent cancer developing in women whose biology put them at particularly high risk.

He also discovered a very effective breakdown product of tamoxifen that went on to form the basis of other drugs that prevent postmenopausal women from losing bone density.

In 1980 he moved permanently to the US, where he held senior positions at a succession of leading research universities, setting up a "tamoxifen team" at each, before finally settling in 2014 as a professor and chair of cancer research at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. His further discoveries included a small increased risk of endometrial cancer with tamoxifen, so that doctors now screen their patients before prescribing the drug.

For much of his life, Jordan had an unusual parallel career as an adviser on biological and chemical weapons – and illicit drug use – to the British and US armies.

His family had a strong military heritage and he had joined the Officers' Training Corps while a student at Leeds, combining his PhD research with stints with the army in Germany during the cold war. He went on to be recruited into the intelligence corps with the rank of captain, and subsequently became a member of the SAS reserve. He was an avid collector of antique weapons, and described himself as an "outstanding shot".

He received many honours in the course of his career, and was appointed CMG in the Queen's birthday honours in 2019 for services to women's health. In turn he funded prizes, scholarships and special lectures at the universities of Leeds and Oxford, conscious of the debt he owed to British society for his early education and research opportunities. He was open about his diagnosis of kidney cancer in 2018 and continued working until shortly before his death.

He married three times, each marriage ending in divorce. He is survived by Alexandra and Helen, his daughters from his first marriage, to Marion Williams, and five grandchildren.

Georgina Ferry

Virgil Craig Jordan, pharmacologist, born 25 July 1947; died 9 June 2024

Birthdays

Yvie Burnett, mezzo-soprano and vocal coach, 56; **Dennis Canavan**, former Labour and independent MP, and chair, Yes Scotland, 82; **Keith Carradine**, actor, singer and songwriter, 75; **Sarah Dunant**, writer, journalist and broadcaster, 74; **Chris Eubank**, boxer, 58; **David 'the Edge' Evans**, guitarist and songwriter, 63; **Roger Federer**, tennis player, 43; **Angus Fraser**, cricketer, 59; **Richard Harwood**, cellist, 45; **Helen Hayes**, Labour MP, 50; **Dustin Hoffman**, actor, 87; **The Rt Rev Nick Holtam**, former bishop of Salisbury, 70; **Nigel Mansell**, racing driver, 71; **Hannah Miley**, swimmer, 35; **Sarah Nancollas**, former chief executive, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, 63; **Prof Sir Roger Penrose**, OM, mathematician, 93; **Svetlana Savitskaya**, astronaut, 76; **Connie Stevens**, actor and singer, 86; **Kathryn Stone**, former parliamentary commissioner for standards, 61; **Simon Weston**, Falklands war veteran and charity fundraiser, 63.

Puzzles

Yesterday's solutions

Killer sudoku
Easy

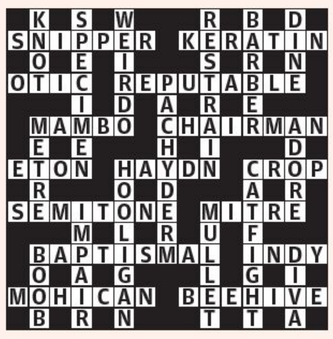
6	3	1	4	2	8	9	7	5
9	5	4	1	3	7	8	6	2
2	7	8	9	5	6	4	3	1
5	1	9	7	4	3	2	8	6
7	4	2	8	6	1	3	5	9
3	8	6	2	9	5	7	1	4
4	6	7	5	8	2	1	9	3
8	2	3	6	1	9	5	4	7
1	9	5	3	7	4	6	2	8

Medium

8	4	1	5	7	2	9	6	3
6	2	5	9	8	3	4	1	7
7	3	9	4	6	1	2	5	8
9	5	2	7	1	4	8	3	6
4	8	7	6	3	5	1	9	2
3	1	6	8	2	9	5	7	4
1	6	3	2	9	8	7	4	5
2	7	4	1	5	6	3	8	9
5	9	8	3	4	7	6	2	1

Codeword

Cryptic crossword
Solution No. 29,455



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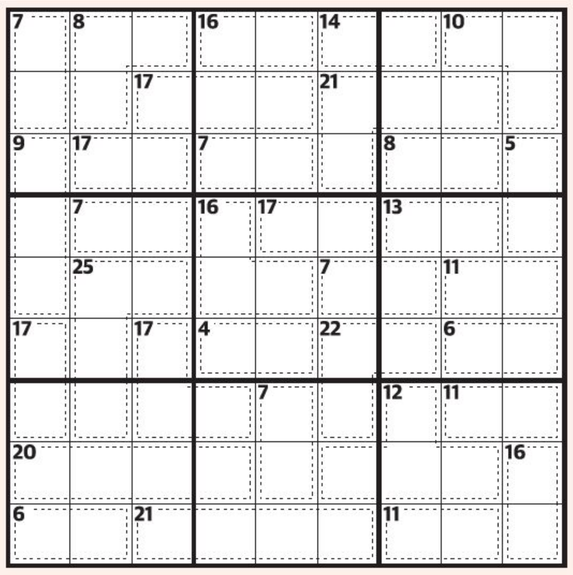
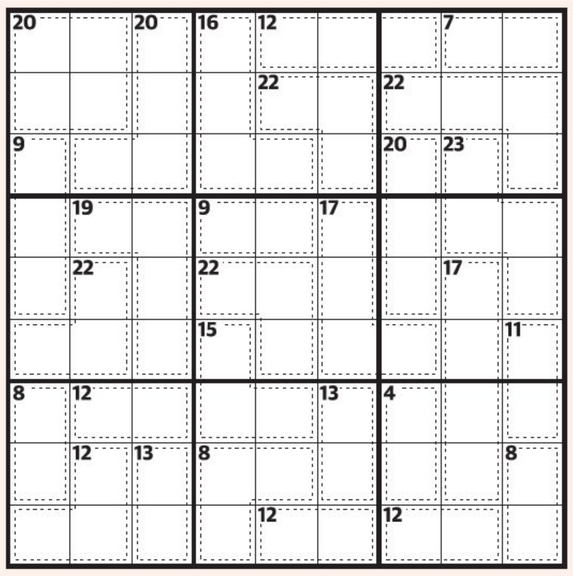
Killer sudoku

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.

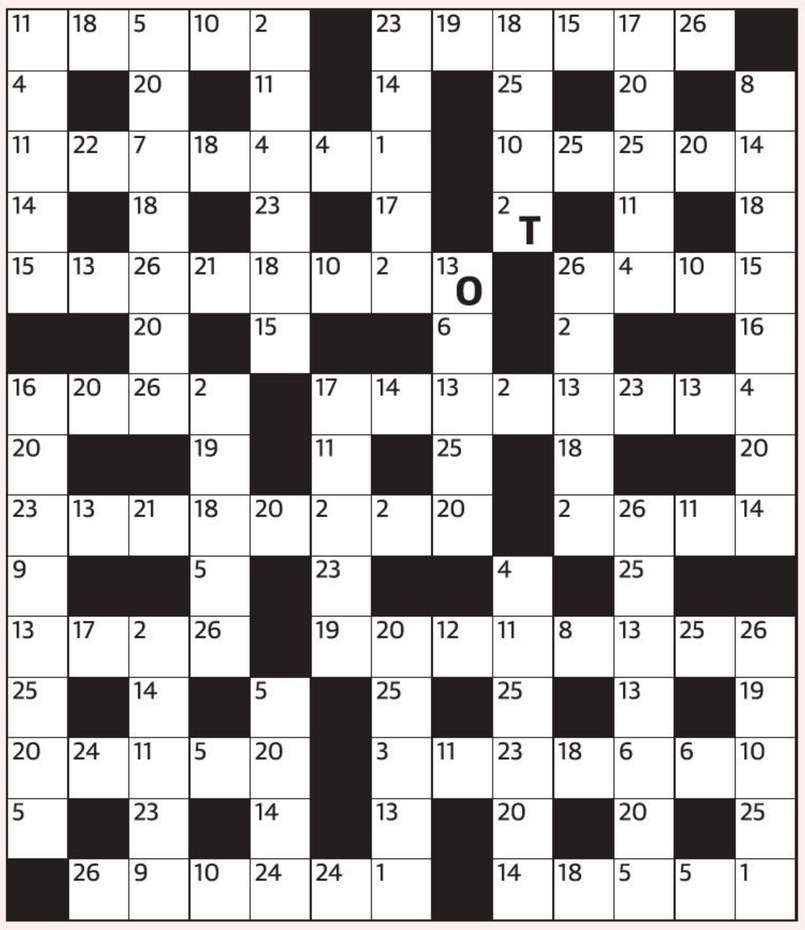


Medium



Codeword

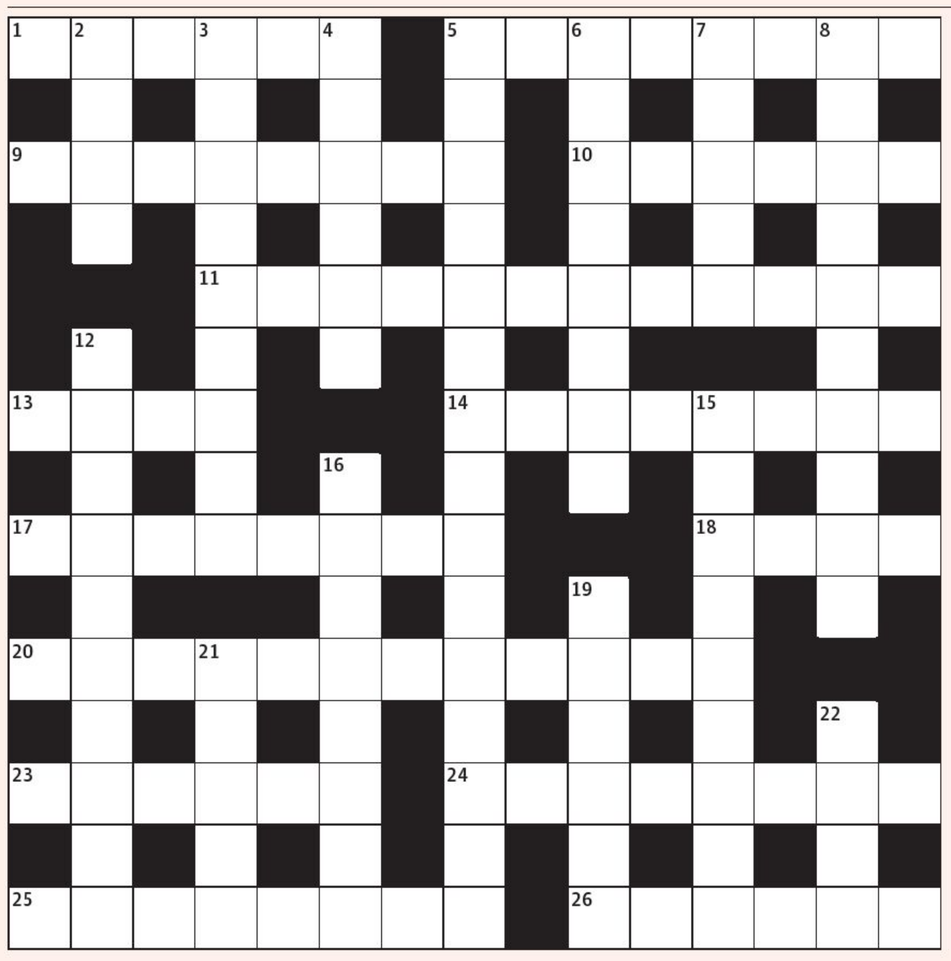
Each letter of the alphabet makes at least one appearance in the grid, and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. The letters decoded should help you to identify other letters and words in the grid.



A B C D E F G H I J K L M N Ø P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2 T	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13 O
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Guardian cryptic crossword No 29,456 set by Harpo



Across

1 Bat around wicket heading glances away from cover (6)
5 Drying-room pipe that's 25.4 microns internally (8)
9 American workforce embracing impressive US dog (8)
10 Procrastinator shuns Germany in high-level 13 (1,5)
11 Innately study info linked to large country houses (12)
13 Working after turning north, back from Bible belt (4)
14 Bundling, say, Roy and Heather together (8)
17 Bound to incorporate map for rapid transport (3,5)
18 I've been stupid about beginning to save money (4)
20 Right - not, vice versa, wrong (12)
23 Songs of Praise in España translated (6)
24 Book half a hotel on 3rd and 4th of June (8)
25 Most obvious nuisance, note, among cuts (8)
26 Arbitrary number checked by sharp staff includes one small digit (6)

Down

2 Hero's cross, mostly open up-front (4)
3 Budget papers boosted feverish chapter (4,5)
4 Maybe rat's lair beset by decay (6)
5 What attracts sick hatemongers outside Oxford? (9,6)
6 Article on Charlie Parker's film (3,5)
7 D-Day objective that's now clear following order (5)
8 It'll emerge from sulphur left in furrow overwhelmed by poo (10)
12 Closely pursuing dodgy exploits at No.1 after release of fake pix (4,2,4)
15 Liberal ideas shocked mum's new Lothario (6,3)
16 Design fine publicity I will shortly read out (4,4)
19 He's committed to see AC/DC on grass (6)
21 Flower stems, section of Turk's Cap, identified (5)
22 Judge's first question covering promotion (4)

The secret confessions of bridesmaids

Hen parties, horrible dresses and hellish demands

The Guardian

Thursday 08/08/24

Life & Arts

Adrian Chiles

I love the Olympics a little too much

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Who is the potential veep?

page 4

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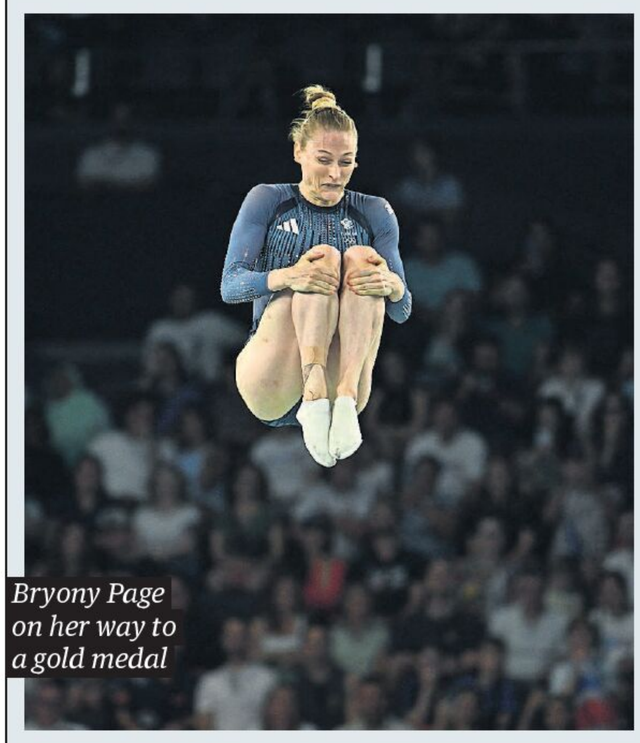
Adrian Chiles

The Olympics are hard for athletes. But what about viewers?

Is sport good for you? I'm beginning to wonder. Ahead of the Olympics I spoke to Andy Hodge, one of our greatest rowers. He told me how, plagued by injury and illness, he battled to get to his third Games, in Rio. "Every day I was expecting my body to break," he said, and this helped him come up with what he describes as a "relieving psychology", which went like this: "Just keep going until your body breaks and when it does, you've given it a good shot." Relieving? Hmm, if it's got to the stage where the idea of breaking your body is affording you anything approximating relief, then you're living in a world most of the rest of us don't inhabit, and living a life few doctors could recommend. On the start line at Rio, Hodge said to himself: "I'm going to go and I'm going to actually break my body. This is the only mission I have today." And a few minutes later he'd won his third Olympic gold.

We often talk about the power of the Olympics to encourage kids to take up sport, which is great. But there's a slight dissonance here. Do we really want them to engage in it as obsessively as those whose brilliance and dedication we so admire?



Bryony Page on her way to a gold medal

The breaking of Hodge's body was never far from my mind when it came to broadcasting the rowing contests from Paris. Watching the GB pair Tom George and Oliver Wynne-Griffith lead their whole race only to be pipped at the line, a new thought occurred to me: never mind what this is doing to the athletes' bodies; I'm beginning to wonder if it's doing us spectators any good either. The stress is real, and relentless, especially at Olympics time. After a day yelling at horses at the Galway races, I went for a quiet pint only to end up yelling at a swimmer, Daniel Wiffen, whose gold medal-winning 800m swim was on the television. I wonder what that lad has put his body and mind through over the years. It's hard to unhear Michael Phelps's famous lament that his life consisted of eating, sleeping and swimming and not much else.

And the stress comes thick and fast at us poor spectators, about sports indoors and outdoors, in water and on water, throwing things, catching things, hitting things, winning things, losing things. Sports you barely understand because you only take any interest in them once every four years. Sports you can't believe anyone's been cruel enough to think up. Synchronised diving, for example. Who on earth looked at a diver executing incredible twists and turns and flips and thought: "I know, let's force them to pair up, perform these miracles together, and mark them down if they're not in complete unison"? What are we trying to do to these people? And to the rest of us, watching through our fingers.

One minute we're choking up at the sight of a distressed Chinese girl who has just bounced clean off her trampoline, the next we're bouncing off the ceiling at the joy of GB's Bryony Page taking the gold. I drove my mum somewhere to give us both a break from it all, but we ended up listening on Croatian radio to commentary of Croatia v Greece in the water polo – a sport the rules of which neither of us are familiar with, yet we ended up stuck on the M1 cursing the refereeing decisions as much as the traffic. I say again, it can't be healthy. And on the very same weekend the Olympic torment stops, England's football season starts. Where exactly am I supposed to find the strength? I'm casting around for a relieving psychology, but nothing's coming to mind.

How do I treat my sciatica? You'll never guess ...

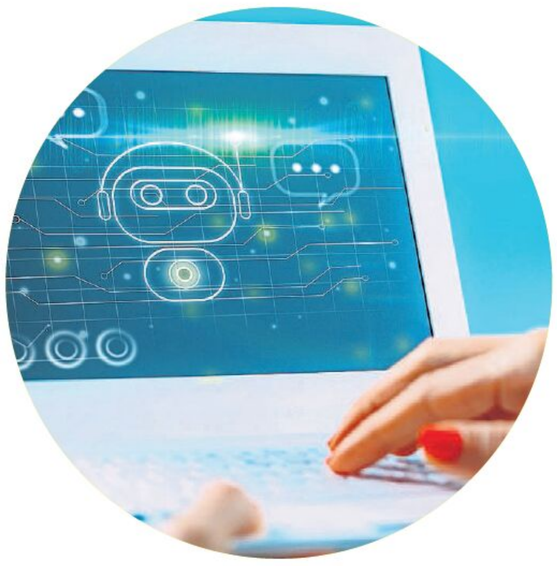
I never go anywhere without a small, hard ball about my person. Sciatica, you see. In my case it involves a shooting pain originating somewhere in my left bottom cheek which, well, shoots down my leg. Something to do with the nerve being irritated or compressed. Most unpleasant, I tell you, and the longer I sit, the worse it gets.

I have only three routes to relief. One is to never sit down, which is impractical. The second is to be brutalised by a softly spoken Bulgarian masseur called Vlad, which is a wonderful if challenging experience, but too expensive to indulge in more often than every other week. The third is to sit on a hard ball. I was advised to try this by a physio friend, although I think it may sit outside the physiotherapeutic mainstream as it doesn't come up on the internet. So proceed at your own risk. It was a hockey ball my physio advised me to use, while driving. So next time the pain kicked in, two hours into a 10-mile journey on the M6, I reached for the ball, slipped it under my left cheek and, by God, did it do the trick.

Over the years I have become something of a connoisseur of balls for bum cheeks, as it were. There are a number of variables to consider, such as the softness of the seat you are sitting on. For most car seats, I have found the hockey ball to be ideal. For harder seats, such as the kitchen chair I'm sitting on at this moment, that would be too large. So I'm presently working a mere golf ball in the critical cheek spot. Just the job. Nice.

Back in the car, my ball of choice is now a cricket ball, which for added interest has a substantial seam that gets it into new, hitherto unexplored areas. And having flown to Ireland without a ball, I bought a sliotar, which is used for hurling. Good and hard, with a promisingly pronounced seam. I've got a good feeling about it.

Pass notes



№ 4,731

AI dirty talk

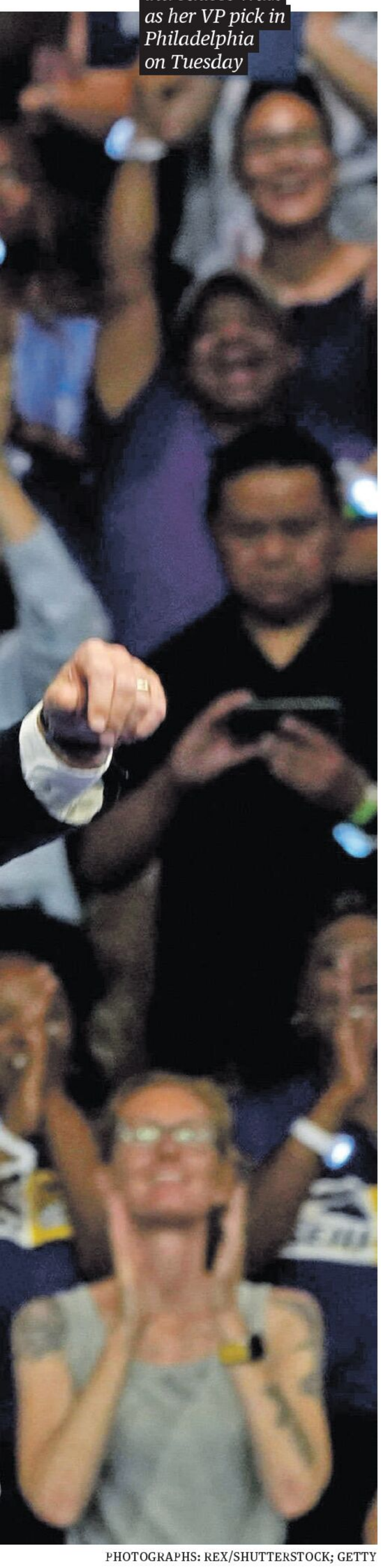
Age: Since 2022.
Appearance: Either romantic or grim, depending on who you are.
Hello, team grim here. Well, get with the programme, because this is the future. A huge amount of AI chatbot use is sexual in nature.
Am I going to regret reading this? Not at all. The Washington Post analysed 200,000 conversations from the research dataset WildChat and found that more than 7% of it was about sex stuff.
What sort of sex stuff? Apparently, a lot of it involves "asking for racy role play". There is even an AI companion app called Replika, which is fairly open-minded about responding to dirty talk in kind.
So you just sit and type sexy stuff into an app and you get a computer-generated response? How depressing. Now, now, no kink-shaming. To you, it might seem like the equivalent of a pigeon pressing a button for treats, but it might offer others valuable intimacy they can't find elsewhere.
So ChatGPT is just a den of iniquity? That's not strictly true. The Washington Post article covered all the ways people use AI chatbots, so we can conclusively state that it is a den of iniquity *and* a place where writers cheat.
How so? Aside from role play, the most common use is "creative writing", in the form of fan fiction, movie scripts, character creation and dialogue writing.
That doesn't sound very creative. Oh please, who hasn't desperately craved a way to help them out of writer's block?
Have you? How long does it take you to think of responses to these? Standard operational parameters indicate response completion in approximately 2.3 to 4.7 seconds.
What the hell? Did you just get ChatGPT to answer that for you? Maybe.
Fine then, what else do people use it for? Oh, loads. The study revealed that people ask chatbots to write code for them, to help with homework, to provide templates for cover letters and CVs and for personal advice.
But a lot of it is sex stuff. It is, yes.
It must get boring, endlessly responding to digital come-ons from a mindless computer. Maybe the lack of tangible human interaction will wear off over time.
Then what? Well, then you could ask ChatGPT to respond to the sexbot on your behalf. Maybe the end result of all this is two sexbots talking dirty to each other while you watch TV.
Sexless leisure time. Finally, the golden future we were all promised.
Do say: "Hey, baby, you up?"
Don't say: "I am an incorporeal AI language model hosted on a global network of datacentres and thus incapable of sleep. Now, let's get sexy."

COVER: CINEMATIC/ALAMY

Tim Walz: 10 things you need to

Kamala Harris has just picked the Minnesota governor as her running mate. But who is he? **Martin Pengelly** on the teacher, coach, family man, teetotaller – and election winner

know



Kamala Harris introduces Walz as her VP pick in Philadelphia on Tuesday

In Kamala Harris's "veepstakes" - the search for a running mate to take on Donald Trump and JD Vance - the Minnesota governor, Tim Walz, came from relative obscurity to seize the prize. So who is he and what should you know about him?

He's 'Minnesota nice'

According to the Star Tribune, the well-known phrase refers to "Minnesotans' tendency to be polite and friendly, yet emotionally reserved; our penchant for self-deprecation and unwillingness to draw attention to ourselves; and, most controversially, our maddening habit of substituting passive-aggressiveness for direct confrontation". Most of that holds true for Walz, 60, who was born in Nebraska but whose cheerful and friendly demeanour has made him popular in office and even seems to make his political attack lines more effective, as when he went after Trump and Vance for being "weird", the gambit that propelled him into the reckoning to be running mate to Harris.

He's not *that* 'Minnesota nice'

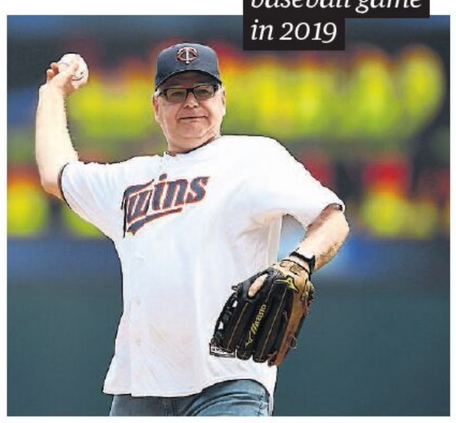
Walz was a high school football coach, a profession known for displaying and encouraging aggression - active rather than passive at that. For more than a decade at Mankato West high school, Walz was defensive coordinator, working out how to best tackle and silence opposing attackers. As he told Pod Save America this year, when he arrived, the school had lost 27 games in a row. "We said: 'This is nonsense. Let's turn this thing around.' Three years later, we were state champions and now they're a powerhouse."

He was a sergeant in the national guard

Walz spent 24 years in the national guard, out of Nebraska and then Minnesota. As reported by Stars and Stripes, he enlisted as an infantryman at 17, encouraged by his father, a Korean war veteran, then put himself through college on the GI bill. Re-enlisting after 9/11, Walz was deployed during natural disasters on US soil and to Italy in support of operations in Afghanistan.

In 2005, Walz retired as a command sergeant major in the artillery - and faced criticism for leaving as his battalion prepared to go to Iraq. In comments publicised by the US army as Covid struck, Walz, the highest-ranking enlisted soldier ever voted into Congress, said: "In the guard, you put your community first. Everything you do, you do to ensure the health, safety and security of the people who are depending on you. And as governor, those are principles of servant leadership that I rely on every day."

With his wife, Gwen, in 2018; pitching in a ceremonial baseball game in 2019



He's good at winning elections

Walz was a high school social studies teacher - and adviser to LGBTQ+ students - until, in 2006, he beat a Republican incumbent in a rural area to win a seat in Congress. After six terms in the US House, he ran for governor of Minnesota in 2018. He won that race, against the Republican Jeff Johnson, by 11 points. First-term challenges included the response to Covid, imposing and maintaining lockdowns and school and business closures, plus the fallout from the police murder of George Floyd, an epochal event that made Minneapolis the focus of worldwide protests for racial justice and the site of rioting. Running for re-election in 2022, against Scott Jensen, Walz won comfortably again.

He's popular with progressives

On defeating Jensen, Walz told Minnesotans they had "made a conscious choice ... to reject negative, divisive politics and choose the whole path of each and every one of us to be the best we possibly can". On Tuesday, campaigners saluting Harris's choice of running mate emphasised Walz's progressive achievements. NextGen Pac, a youth-led group, said Walz had passed "significant legislation ... that protects our rights, fights for climate justice and builds a stronger economy for everyday people ... enshrining abortion rights, establishing paid sick and family leave, enacting a nation-leading child tax credit and signing 40 climate initiatives into law".

Walz has also overseen significant gun-control reform, a notable achievement from a politician once endorsed by the National Rifle Association who was encouraged by his daughter to come out in favour of an assault weapons ban after a series of school shootings.

He enrages Republicans

The announcement that Harris had picked Walz was greeted with predictable rightwing attacks. Foreshadowing Vance's invective in Philadelphia at lunchtime, the Republican National Committee (RNC) called Walz "a far-left radical ... weak on border security" (presumably the southern border, hundreds of miles from Minnesota, rather than its northern one with Canada) and slammed him for supporting universal healthcare, taxation to pay for such measures and abortion and voting rights. Walz, the RNC said, is also "extremely woke ... a climate radical who wants to phase out fossil fuels" and "soft on crime".

The RNC also highlighted a remark in which Walz discussed the Minnesota electoral map in terms familiar to students of national politics and those engaged by his folksy attacks on Trump and Vance: "You see those maps," Walz said in Minneapolis in 2017. "Red and blue and there's all that red across there. And Democrats go into depression over it. It's mostly rocks and cows that are in that red area."

At a rally for union organisers in Minnesota, 2022

He's a family man

Walz's wife, Gwen Walz, is a public school teacher, like her husband, and also a prominent campaigner for educational reform, in particular a champion of improving education in prisons as a means of reducing reoffending. She is also the mother of two children, Hope, 23, and Gus, 17, born with the help of IVF - treatment that is under threat from Republicans and rightwing Christians seeking further victories after the removal of federal abortion rights. "If you have never personally gone through the hell of infertility, I guarantee you someone you know has," Walz said in March, during his state of the state address.

Walz's children have appeared with him in public. At the Minnesota state fair last year, he told Hope, a vegetarian, she could have a turkey corn dog. "Turkey is meat," Hope said. "Not in Minnesota," her dad said. "Turkey's special."

He knows a bit about China

Thanks to a Harvard-run programme, Walz taught in China for a year - it happened to be 1989, the year of the Tiananmen Square protests and brutal government crackdown - and as a result he speaks some Mandarin. In 1994, he and Gwen spent their honeymoon in China, on a trip they had arranged for a group of students. According to her official state biography, the couple continued to arrange such trips until 2003.

He doesn't drink

In September 1995, when he was 31, Walz was stopped while driving at 96mph in a 55mph zone. Having failed a sobriety test, he pleaded guilty to a charge of reckless driving and paid a $200 fine. Walz has acknowledged the incident and said he no longer drinks. His preferred tipple is Diet Mountain Dew - coincidentally, also favoured by Vance, the Republican pick for vice-president.

His name is a mystery to some

Is it "Waltz", as in the dance, or "Walls", as in the things that hold up roofs, or even "Wal-tz" as in Walmart? Turns out it's "Waalls", as in "Walls" but with a slightly longer "a". He says it that way himself.

PHOTOGRAPHS: REX/SHUTTERSTOCK; GETTY

'The dress alone cost me two months' rent'

Being a bridesmaid can be the honour of a lifetime – or a gruelling, ruinous nightmare. With wedding season at its peak, Guardian readers share their horror stories with **Emine Saner**

When one of her fellow bridesmaids got "sacked" from the role, then uninvited from the wedding, Kate had an idea that she was in for a testing few months. "I was a little bit alarmed by the intensity of the whole situation," she says of the run-up to the wedding of her friend Stella. "I feel like weddings are something you should look forward to and that should evoke a sense of joy, but I was perturbed by the stress of it all. It didn't seem to me that she got any enjoyment out of it."

Kate was tasked with organising the hen weekend for about 25 friends. The bride made it clear that she did not expect to pay anything towards it. "I didn't fully understand the real sense of entitlement she had when it came to how she thought she should be treated as a bride-to-be," says Kate. During discussions about where they could stay that could accommodate everyone, within budget, Stella told Kate that she wasn't doing her job as organiser well enough. "She said: 'You're not performing to the standard I would expect.' In retrospect, it sounds ridiculous, but we were stuck in the throes of it at the time."

On the Saturday night of the weekend, after a long couple of days, they went to a nightclub, but the guests were tired and had drunk too much; they were flagging. "She wasn't happy about that, because she wanted it to be an all-nighter, a legendary kind of experience," says Kate. "She got really upset and we ended up in the toilet with her crying and saying that it wasn't good enough."

Kate was told it was her responsibility to get everyone to enjoy it more and that if the other hens still failed to look as though they were having a good time, they were to be ejected – not from the nightclub, but from the rest of the weekend, so that the bride-to-be wouldn't have to see them in the morning. "I was very much getting fatigued by it," says Kate, leaning into the understatement.

For the wedding itself, Kate paid for her bridesmaid dress and for the hair and makeup artist. In total, she thinks she spent comfortably more than £1,000 on her friend's wedding. Except they are no longer friends. Some time later, she says: "I got ditched. It was similar to the excommunication of the first bridesmaid."

With wedding season at its peak, disgruntled bridesmaids may be counting the cost – financially and emotionally – of being in a bridal party. A recent post on the forum Reddit, asking if it was normal to be charged $300 (£240) to go to a bridal shower, was the latest of many horror stories there to go viral. On the Reddit board r/weddingshaming, bridesmaids share tales of being ordered to go on a diet, spend a small fortune or have weekly check-ins.

Kate was one of many women who responded to a Guardian callout asking for onerous experiences of being a bridesmaid. She worried her story might sound a bit misogynistic – "the stereotype of the bridezilla" – but she knows Stella's behaviour "wasn't reasonable". Of course, the problem is not exclusive to women, she adds. "Men behave appallingly, too."

Jo was asked to be a bridesmaid by a childhood friend with whom she had all but lost contact. Her initial surprise made her say yes, then she tried to get out of it: "We had the most awkward conversation, with her telling me what a bad friend I'd been and that I should be grateful she'd asked me to do it."

> **She made it clear: 'If you don't come to the wedding, I will never speak to you again'**

Jo had short hair, but the bride-to-be demanded that she grow it. At the wedding, five months later, "I had this not-a-bob, not-a-pixie-cut, really awkward hairstyle". When the bride's mother saw Jo, she was unimpressed, as if Jo hadn't tried hard enough to grow her hair. Afterwards, their friendship became as distant as it had been before.

Other respondents described being surprised and hurt by the hierarchy – who gets chosen to be chief bridesmaid or maid of honour – causing them to re-evaluate sometimes decades of friendship. Some discovered they were last-minute backup choices. One woman was excited to be asked, only to find out six others had turned down the request. Another is having to go on two hen weekends, one abroad, for a single wedding: "It will be a true test to see if my friendship with the bride can outlast the wedding."

Others talk of the tyranny of the WhatsApp group, where everyone else greets hen party escalations with enthusiasm and heart emojis, rather than pointing out that the agreed budget has been long forgotten. One woman who loves being a bridesmaid – she has had the pleasure eight times in 10 years – says it's mainly so she can be instrumental in keeping down the cost of the hen party: "All eight of my experiences have not been as financially ridiculous as some of the hen parties I've been invited to as a guest." A survey last year suggested that the average cost of being a bridesmaid in the UK was £665.

This isn't a recent phenomenon. In the 90s, Julie was so worn down by the endless demands on her as a bridesmaid that she ended up at her friend's wedding three weeks after giving birth, exhausted and in pain, breastfeeding her newborn in the loos with her dress around her ankles.

The bride, Val, had made Julie keep her diary open for about 18 months – and hold back annual leave – while she decided when exactly to hold her special day. In that time, Julie became pregnant. Val chose her due date for the wedding, yet insisted Julie be there. "She suggested I could work around it; I could induce early, or something," says Julie.

"I said: 'No, that's not how that's going to work.'"

A hen party at seven months pregnant wasn't fun, even less so because Julie was the designated driver. She managed to get out of the follow-up bridal shower, where everyone was expected to bring presents – which was just as well, because she went into labour. Julie ended up giving birth three weeks early.

Why did she not just pull out of the wedding? "Because I was still attempting to maintain a friendship. At that point, she made it clear: 'If you don't come, I will never speak to you again.' It felt like: OK, this is that important to her, I can suck it up." The friendship finally ended a few months later, when Julie refused to attend a post-honeymoon party. Val sent her a letter, saying: "You obviously think this baby is more important than I am." Julie laughs. "I'm like: well, yes."

It is surprising, says the wedding planner Mark Niemierko, how

ILLUSTRATION: INMA HORTES/THE GUARDIAN

many relationships between brides and bridesmaids don't last. He says it happens particularly among people in their 20s. "It's not that they fall out, but if you ask them 10 years down the line: 'Would that person still be a bridesmaid or best man?' they wouldn't. That's just life; you move on." So, if you are cowering under a deluge of unreasonable requests and soaring costs, it's worth bearing in mind that, a decade from now, you may not even be friends.

For many people, however much you want to celebrate a couple's day, being a wedding guest feels like a chore. "You've got to get your outfit, you might need time off work, transport, maybe to sort out childcare," says Niemierko. For bridesmaids, the tasks - dress shopping and fitting, planning the hen party, having to show interest in everything from caterers to playlists - can seem endless.

In the US, it's usual for bridesmaids to pay for their own dress, says Niemierko. He has also seen the rise of the party where bridesmaids are anointed by the bride-to-be: "It's another excuse for an event. People are invited to a tea or something, just to be asked." It may catch on here, he adds. Niemierko has seen bridesmaids take on the role of keeping the bride calm on the day, while others have been "reluctantly forced into taking on the planner role". Then there are friendship politics, "where somebody has to be a bridesmaid because it will cause a whole drama in the friendship group otherwise".

Perhaps as a reflection of the uncomfortable truth that being a bridesmaid can be a bit of a pain,

> **It was suggested I could work around the baby's due date – I could induce early**

brides are having fewer. "Generally, they are over the whole 'I'm going to have six or more women all in the same dress' thing. I'd say it's become more popular to have just one bridesmaid." Or, even better, choose only children: "It's classier - and they're cute."

When Elena was asked to be a bridesmaid for her friend Ava, she didn't expect to spend so much. But Ava earned much more money than Elena and the costs spiralled. The designer dress she wanted Elena to wear (and pay for) was the equivalent of two months' rent; paying for her hair and makeup on the day could have paid her rent for another month.

"I didn't say anything," says Elena. "I was too embarrassed. I didn't know how to present the issue without sounding like I didn't want to be part of it. I admit that I should have set limits, I just didn't know how." She couldn't afford to buy her friend a present on top of everything else, which caused her more anxiety.

For Kat, being a bridesmaid three times in a year obliterated her finances. She had to put some of the expense on a credit card and live carefully all year to pay for it. She ended up spending about a quarter of her annual salary on these weddings.

Among her friendship group, it had become usual for bridesmaids to pay for their own dresses and to go on hen weekends abroad. "I and one of the other bridesmaids used to complain together, but generally I felt as if I couldn't complain about the price, because there was a kind of groupthink going on, where everybody was just saying how lovely it was."

At one hen party dinner, she ordered a bowl of soup, because it was all she could afford. "I felt honoured to be asked, but frustrated by the amount it cost," she says. Just as her finances were getting back on track the year after, she was asked to be a bridesmaid again.

Some names have been changed

'People say my music changed their life' ... Atkins live in London

'There were 5,000 white kids going crazy to my music'

How did a kid from rural Michigan – who lived among cows, haybales and strawberry festivals – change the face of music? **Lanre Bakare** meets Juan Atkins, the godfather of techno

When Juan Atkins is walking through Berlin airport, he'll often spot someone out of the corner of his eye, approaching cautiously before plucking up the courage to ask: "Are you Juan Atkins?" But what they're really asking the diminutive 61-year-old is: "Are you the man who created techno?" Atkins, speaking to me from his Detroit home, elaborates: "They'll tell me, 'Your music changed my life.' It makes me want to cry, man."

Despite being the genre's ambassador and elder statesman – his first record was released in 1981 – Atkins is not slowing down. He has just got back from playing Berlin's clubs, recently had a slot at Detroit's Movement technofest, and this week he will hit the UK's Houghton festival.

Atkins' first experience of Britain was Birmingham in the late 80s. The city was the home of his manager Neil Rushton, a former Northern Soul DJ who was canny enough to start promoting techno records in the UK. "Birmingham was cool," says Atkins. "It reminded me of Detroit, kind of industrial – although the nightlife on a weekend was rocking. After the party, people were going to – what is it? The fish'n'chip shop?"

A few years later Atkins returned, but by then the UK was in the midst of its rave era. "It was a culture shock. America at the time was kind of racially divided – while in the UK, there were 5,000 white kids going crazy to my music." Atkins had grown up in one of the most turbulent cities in America, one that had erupted in racial violence in the mid 1960s and was still struggling to cope with shifting racial demographics.

But Detroit was also technologically advanced. The motor companies that powered its economy used cutting-edge machines to build Fords and Chryslers. In the 1970s, the city also had an almost entirely black leadership: the mayor, the school superintendent and the police chief were black and, crucially, there was a black-owned radio station called WGPR. Atkins was influenced by one of its DJs, the Electrifyin' Mojo, who would play Prince rarities alongside the B-52's Rock Lobster. All that created a strange mix of technology, black music and eclecticism that would become the ballast techno was built on.

> **Birmingham was cool. After a party, people would go to – what is it? – the fish'n'chip shop?**

Atkins would be unceremoniously torn away from Detroit. He moved to the rural Michigan town of Belleville after his parents split up. The transition to Belleville, with its cows, hay bales and annual strawberry festival, was a hard one. "I was against it," says Atkins, whose new home only had a tiny African American population compared to about 60% in Detroit. "It wasn't like a racial thing though. I just wasn't used to going to school on a yellow bus and living on a dirt road." Atkins may have hated the "country" nature of his new home – he went back to Detroit every weekend and during the summer – but once settled, he met two other black kids, Kevin Saunderson and Derrick May. Their musical experiments would become the first wave of Detroit techno.

The trio would discuss the most cutting edge music by Yellow Magic Orchestra, Gary Numan, and their favourite: Kraftwerk. But it was with another collaborator, Rik Davis, a Vietnam veteran with a deep love of the acid rock of Jimi Hendrix, that Atkins would make his first breakthrough, playing as the duo Cybotron. "Jimi Hendrix was like the soundtrack to Vietnam," says Atkins. "There was something about his music that blended with the Asian jungle. Everything Rik did on the synth was emulating Hendrix to a certain degree."

Their early records, like Cosmic Cars and Clear, contained echoes of Kraftwerk's electronica but were tougher and worked brilliantly on the dancefloor. Think of techno today and images of sweating bodies writhing around Berghain might spring to mind, but in the early 1980s Cybotron's music was being consumed by middle-class black kids – a relatively new phenomenon that Atkins argues was only really possible in Detroit. "Because of the auto industry and

the union power, we were making the same amount of money as the white people working in the factory and were kind of elevated to a higher level."

That new social status and buying power was a big influence on early Detroit techno. Firstly, Atkins' family could afford the equipment - it was his grandmother who bought him a Korg MS-10 synth. But secondly, the "preppy" black kids of Detroit wanted sophisticated music to dance to. Footage from the era shows girls with perfectly coiffed hair, leopard print leotards and gold earrings dancing with guys sporting flat-tops, chromatic shirts and oversized sunglasses, as Cybotron's glacially cool Clear - later sampled by Missy Elliott - booms out of the soundsystem.

Suddenly Atkins had found success: the group's early releases sold in their thousands and he set up his own Metroplex label, creating music that married his love of technology with the futuristic musings of Alvin Toffler and that Hendrix-inflected synth from Davis. If it sounds like a weird, heady mix, it was meant to. "That was the whole exercise," says Atkins about his strange bedfellows. "We were doing stuff nobody else had done."

The pair would eventually split, with Atkins going on to produce groundbreaking records as Model 500. From Cybotron's experiments in the early 1980s, the sound of techno grew to become a global phenomenon pushed by a second wave of Detroit artists who took it in new directions: the austere precision of Jeff Mills, the spirituality of Robert Hood, the post-industrial toughness of Underground Resistance, and the Black Atlantic worlds of Drexciya.

But while Detroit natives knew exactly where techno came from, that wasn't always the case with the rest of the world. In 2023, rival claims over techno's origins came to a head when Frankfurt opened the Museum of Modern Electronic Music, claiming it was the first of its kind - even though Exhibit 3000, a small space in Detroit started by "Mad" Mike Banks of Underground Resistance, had been open since 2002.

For some, this was an act of erasure, but for others a reckoning with the fact that Germany was now the centre of world techno thanks to its club scene. For Atkins, who started going to Berlin in the early 90s, and released an album with German techno ambassador Moritz Von Oswald in 2016, the term "techno" has one clear origin story. "I put it this way," he says. "I know I'm the first one to apply the word techno to electronic music. I can't claim to be the inventor or originator of electronic music, but I can definitely say that I got that."

It isn't just techno's origins that have been questioned but also its meaning and purpose. In a scathing essay, the critic Hubert Adjei-Kontoh took aim at the way dance music, including techno, had been co-opted by brands after the Black Lives Matter movement exploded in 2020. "There may be no better illustration of the tendency toward secondhand righteousness than the late canonisation of Detroit techno musicians," he wrote, arguing that Detroit techno - the creation of middle-class kids - was having an artificial radicalism imposed on it. Does the genre's originator believe techno is political?

"I don't necessarily," says Atkins. "But I make social statements. My lyrics are supposed to make you think about something other than shaking your booty on the dancefloor and falling in love. I feel like artists have an obligation to say something meaningful." Atkins doesn't want to spell out what his messages are, but they are there. On Cybotron's 1983 track Industrial Lies, he seems to be taking aim at both the military-industrial complex and Reagan's "greed is good" America. "You buy the missile, buy the laser, buy the tank," he sings. "Evict the widow, put the money in the bank."

There is another persistent theme. "Space has always excited me," Atkins says. "What could be out there - and how it may have affected us." Some people believe aliens had a hand in building the pyramids, but Atkins - whose track No UFOs is one of his signatures - has his own take on extraterrestrial meddling, believing modern technology itself could have been somehow beamed in from another galaxy. "Maybe," he says, "the whole Earth life experience could be an extension of some alien life somewhere, you know?"

If he's right, what would that make techno? Alien music from another dimension? Looking at Atkins' career and its huge influence, maybe that's just about right.

Juan Atkins is at Houghton festival, Houghton Hall, Norfolk, 8-11 August

Back in 1989 ... from left, Atkins, Kevin Saunderson and Derrick May

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRIS COOPER/SHOTAWAY; ZUMA PRESS INC/ALAMY

Sherrie Nickol

'All these young couples in Pisa were sprawled across the grass making out - it was a fabulous sight. They were enjoying each other and didn't even notice me'

I always take my camera when I go to a new place. I observe how people relate to each other - whether alone among strangers, or with their families or friends. I'm checking out body language, waiting for uplifting and sincere human moments, that special touch or kiss.

This image of young lovers - a truly beautiful moment - was photographed in Pisa, Italy, in 1999. All these young couples were sprawled out on the grass making out. It was a fabulous sight. They were enjoying each other and didn't even notice me running over to take their picture.

I love capturing a mood. I look for those unusual everyday moments. There was a little girl in a beautiful white dress in the Jardin des Plantes in Paris. I was watching her play when she fell in a muddy puddle. She was so upset. Everybody around her was trying to comfort her and clean her dress, but they were laughing at the same time. I knew it would make a great photo. Two years later, when I was back in Paris, I contacted the mum and arranged to meet her and her daughter. When I handed them the print of the fateful moment, they both started laughing.

When my son was entering his teens, I started my Between-Teen series. It was around 2000 and I would photograph him and his friends. Then I branched out to my friends' children before they turned 14, which is when they become more self-conscious. Initially, I was just their friend's mum taking pictures. They generally ignored me, which allowed me to be a fly on the wall.

My work is a mix of both candid and posed pictures. Sometimes I'll be photographing a group in public and I'll say: "Let me get a group shot." And they'll ham it up. Then I'll say: "OK, let's just be natural." Most people are positive and responsive - I've only had one bad experience in public. When photographing a scene with lots of people, on a public beach in Maine, an older person stood up and yelled at me to stop, then began to chase me. Luckily, I was younger and quicker!

I studied photography at the University of Cincinnati. When I started taking pictures, I felt I'd found my calling. Later, I moved to New York, which was pretty terrifying, being on my own in a large, strange place. But then I took classes at the International Center of Photography. Soon I started to find my way. I worked as a photo assistant for a while, then began to freelance. Eventually, I became staff photographer at a New York City business magazine, a rare position in the field. I worked there for six years and they allowed me all the freedom I wanted. After leaving, I opened up my own studio, working with commercial clients, but I did fine art work too.

I like long, ongoing projects. My Face to Face series explores the quiet beauty and dignity of women. "Bring your own makeup," I tell them. "Wear something you feel fabulous in." I love what I do.

Interview by Amy Fleming.

Sherrie Nickol by Sherrie Nickol is published by Hirmer on 15 August

The CV

Born: *Osceola, Arkansas*
Trained: *University of Cincinnati; International Center of Photography, NY*
Influences: *Henri Cartier-Bresson, Lillian Bassman*
High point: *'The publication of my forthcoming book'*
Low point: *'Moving to New York City after university and not knowing anyone in the industry'*
Top tip: *'Follow your heart and personal interests, and keep at it'*

PHOTOGRAPHS: SHERRIE NICKOL; © DAVID KATZENSTEIN

Dougray Scott as Ray Lennox

Review Irvine Welsh's Crime, series two, ITV1

This clunky, clumsy crime drama is saved by Dougray Scott

★★★☆☆

Leila Latif

Many elements of Irvine Welsh's Crime are extremely old school. Its fashionably tailored lead, Ray Lennox, is a grizzled detective with substance abuse issues (played with brooding intensity by Dougray Scott). Mysterious characters from his past may be the key to solving the case. We meet corrupt, powerful figures, who have ties to a criminal underbelly, and an understanding therapist who helps Lennox to cope with the grotesque crimes in the shadowy streets of urban sprawl.

The second series, co-written by Welsh and based on his novel of the same name, opens with Lennox back on the beat after a breakdown that was a result of last season's events and his pursuit of "Mr Confectioner". He is now struggling to stay sober, which is made increasingly difficult given that a new killer is castrating victims before carving sinister messages on their torsos.

This is also connected to an attack on Lennox's former partner and mentor, who has since retired from the force and is going through gender transition. Their journey with gender non-conformity links to Lennox's own nephew Fraser, who arrives at a family dinner in a slip dress, much to the horror of most of those gathered.

At times, the most anxiety-inducing element of the show is wondering just how it will tackle the gender politics. Particularly given the clunky dialogue of female characters like Fraser's prickly mother, who says: "I'm a feminist and young idiots acting out are agents of the patriarchy attacking women's hard-won rights." Fortunately, Welsh at least attempts nuance, with the series' hero Lennox offering in return: "Maybe we should try and be a bit more tolerant of each other."

There are impressively twisted moments, with much of the police force being unabashedly horny and about 65% of the population of this fictional Edinburgh seeming to be some form of evil incarnate, but somehow the show still feels a little inert. Pursuit of the killer and the many revenge plots move slowly, the sporadic narration seems to be happening in slow motion and the directorial choices show a strange lack of urgency.

Sure, there's a sadistic killer on the loose, but we're nonetheless taken on tangents into job interviews, politics, revenge porn and podcasting – all of which keep slowing things down. Thematically, the series is looking at whether or not revenge is a dish best served cold, but given how long it takes anyone to accomplish their goals, most of the revenge is frozen solid.

So much of the dialogue feels superfluous and didactic. Welsh seems determined to express how rampant corruption and misogyny is within Scotland's institutions. We watch diabolical politicians hire sex workers they openly hate, then leave them with the request that they spend their fees on improving society by buying hard drugs to overdose on.

The series would benefit from abandoning the more po-faced scenes of political humour and lean into its other element – the sort of dark humour that made British crime thriller Luther so much fun. When the final twists are revealed, and dastardly plans are unveiled, they are bizarre, bold and high camp, and the final episode contains a tone and pace that should have been there all along. In those moments, Scott shines bright, landing solid punchlines in the lighter moments, while reacting with horror to every new corpse – and betrayal. But even as its conflicts reach their apex and Lennox faces off against the killer, it seems that Welsh can't resist having two characters engage in what could only be described as a "social justice-off" to exchange theories that feel cribbed from the journals of first-year politics students. It could make for a fun drinking game, taking a shot every time someone says "one per cent", "democracy" or "the state"

But most unforgivable are the final two words of dialogue in the series, where Welsh falls back on one of Trainspotting's most famous catchphrases – suggesting he may have truly run out of ideas.

Even if it's unoriginal, it's not unenjoyable. Scott does a brilliant but troubled detective as well as Idris Elba (Luther), Matthew McConaughey (True Detective), Dominic West (The Wire) or Krister Henriksson (Wallander). He's a fascinating character around whom to build a twisted world – even if some of the dialogue he's burdened with is Welsh's real crime.

Classic Movies: The Story of Brief Encounter 8pm, Sky Arts

A new series of the critic Ian Nathan's engaging film histories begins with David Lean's masterpiece. It is often described as the most romantic film of all time, but did its story of transient, forbidden love strike a chord because of its timing? Released in 1945 and starring Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard, it marked the end of fear and uncertainty, but also a return to normality after the second world war. And what role did the hidden sexuality of its writer, Noël Coward, play in its themes?

Phil Harrison

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

Eyewitness to History: Norma Percy on Watergate
8pm, BBC Four
It's Watergate night on BBC Four as film-maker Norma Percy introduces her 1994 documentary on the presidential scandal that launched a thousand "-gate" suffixes by recalling the challenges she faced in making it. It's followed by the ultimate Hollywood take on the affair, All the President's Men. **PH**

Interview With the Vampire
9pm, BBC Two
This clever, entertaining series manages to have its cake and eat it, leaning into the kitschy, campy vibe of vampires in Paris while raising a wry eyebrow at the genre assumptions underpinning it. Louis' quiet life is sent into a tailspin by a visit to the theatre. Claudia, though, is enraptured. **PH**

The Walking Dead: Daryl Dixon
9pm, Sky Max
Most Walking Dead spin-offs feel like the same old ingredients rehashed. But this one – in which Norman Reedus's dirtbag biker has somehow washed up in zombified France – has a pleasing Gallic flavour. Daryl and his holy ally Sister Isabelle (Clémence Poésy) must deal with a gang of feral kids and some upsetting flashbacks. **Graeme Virtue**

Live at the Apollo Bites
9.50pm, BBC Two
How many belly laughs can a skilled comic cram into 11 minutes? This week's mixed bag of standup snacks includes grand gags from Father Ted veteran Ardal O'Hanlon, the fresh and funny perspective of the son of Kurdish-Iraqi refugees, Kae Kurd, and Lou Sanders opening up about her love life. **Ellen E Jones**

Fantasmas
10pm, Sky Comedy
A double bill of Julio Torres's digressive oddball comedy that is an autobiographical sitcom and a fever dream. First, Julio learns of a programme that promises to free the mind from the body. But then, in the second episode, he looks as if he has landed a superhero role in a new film. **PH**

BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **8.0** Olympics: Paris 2024 (T) **1.0** News (T) **1.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.35** News (T) **1.45** Olympics: Paris 2024 (T) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T)

7.0 **Olympics: Paris 2024** (T) Gabby Logan introduces live taekwondo and athletics coverage as day 13 concludes, with the women's 400m hurdles and men's 200m and javelin among the highlights in the Stade de France.

10.0 **News** (T)
10.30 **Regional News** (T) Weather
10.40 **Olympics: Paris 2024 - Tonight at the Games** (T) Highlights from day 13, with taekwondo, athletics and track cycling featuring British hopefuls.
12.0 **Kin** (T) (R) **12.50** Kin (T) (R) **1.40** Weather for the Week Ahead (T) **1.45** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 **Sign Zone** Great Coastal Railway Journeys (T) (R) **7.0** Gardeners' World (T) (R) **8.0** Breakfast (T) **9.0** Dom Does America (T) (R) **9.30** Wanted Down Under Revisited (T) (R) **10.15** A Countryside Summer (T) (R) **10.45** The Farmers' Country Showdown (T) (R) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) (R) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **1.0** Olympics (T) **1.45** Make Me a Dealer (T) (R) **2.30** Beechgrove Repotted (T) (R) **2.45** The Hundred (T) **6.0** Olympics (T) **7.0** Richard Osman's House of Games (T) (R) **7.30** EastEnders (T)

8.0 **Why Bridges Collapse: The Genoa Disaster** (T) (R) An investigation into the Ponte Morandi disaster in 2018.
9.0 **Interview With the Vampire** (T) A visit to the revelatory Théâtre des Vampires disrupts Louis' quiet life.
9.50 **Live at the Apollo Bites** (T) With Ardal O'Hanlon, Lou Sanders and Kae Kurd.

10.0 **Not Going Out** (T) (R)
10.30 **Newsnight** (T) Weather
11.05 **Colin from Accounts** (T) (R)
11.35 FILM **Mud** (Jeff Nichols, 2012) (T) Drama, starring Matthew McConaughey.
1.40 **Sign Zone** Miriam Margolyes: A New Australian Adventure (T) (R) **2.40** Dom Does America (T) (R) **3.10** 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 and Weather (T) **1.55** Local News and Weather (T) **2.0** Dickinson's Real Deal (T) (R) **3.0** Tenable (T) (R) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) (R) **5.0** The Chase (T) (R) **6.0** Local News and Weather (T) **6.30** News and Weather (T) **7.30** Emmerdale (T)

8.30 **Tom Kerridge Cooks Britain** (T) The chef heads to the border between England and Wales, starting in Powys, where he searches for free-range chicken.
9.0 **Irvine Welsh's Crime** (T) With the discovery of another body, Lennox's suspicions that he is dealing with a serial attacker are confirmed.

10.0 **News** (T) Weather
10.35 **Local News** (T) Weather
10.45 FILM **Mission: Impossible** (Brian De Palma, 1996) (T) Action thriller.
12.35 **Shop on TV 3.0** Big Zuu's 12 Dishes in 12 Hours (T) (R) **3.35** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.05** In for a Penny (T) (R) **5.30** Gino's Italian Express (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.20 **Cheers** (T) (R) **7.10** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **9.0** Frasier (T) (R) **11.0** The Simpsons (T) (R) **12.0** News (T) **12.05** Paris 2024 Paralympics: Meet the Athletes (T) (R) **12.10** A New Life in the Sun (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** The Great House Giveaway (T) **5.0** A New Life in the Sun: Where Are They Now? (T) **6.0** Come Dine With Me (T) (R) **6.30** The Simpsons (T) (R) **7.0** News (T)

8.0 **The Supervet: Noel Fitzpatrick** (T) (R) A labrador puppy is rushed in after being hit by a car.
9.0 **George Clarke's Amazing Spaces** (T) The architect meets a pair converting a rusty ship's wheelhouse into head-turning accommodation for their Welsh glampsite.

10.0 **Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA** (T)
11.0 **8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown** (T) (R)
12.0 **Gogglebox** (T) (R) **1.0** Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **1.50** FILM Primal (2019) (T) **3.25** Love It Or List It Australia (T) (R) **4.20** Food Unwrapped (T) (R) **4.50** Frasier (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake! 9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **11.30** Storm Huntley (T) **12.45** Friends (T) (R) **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15** FILM Murder and Matrimony (Tom Shell, 2021) (T) **4.0** The Cruise: Fun-Loving Brits at Sea (T) (R) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Amazing Railway Journeys With Nick Knowles (T) (R) **7.0** Bank Scams: Don't Get Caught Out (T) (R)

8.0 **Fresh vs Frozen: Which Is Better?** (T) A look at how a groundbreaking fast-freezing process revolutionised the food industry, and how the potato waffle still uses that system today.
9.0 **Susan Calman's Grand Day Out** (T) The comedian visits Eastbourne on the south-east coast.

10.0 **The Child Snatcher: Manhunt** (T) (R) Documentary.
11.55 **Cold Case Killers** (T) (R)
1.0 **Live Casino Show** (T) **3.0** Tyrant: The Rise of Adolf Hitler (T) (R) **3.50** Britain's Great Cathedrals With Tony Robinson (T) (R) **4.40** House Busters (T) (R) **5.05** House Doctor (T) (R) **5.35** Paw Patrol (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 **Great British Railway Journeys** (T) (R) Michael Portillo visits Lossiemouth and Inverness. **7.30** Gareth Edwards' Great Welsh Adventure (T) (R) The couple travel on the canals of Swansea and Neath.

8.0 **Eyewitness to History: Norma Percy on Watergate** (T)
8.10 **Watergate** (T) (R) First part of a documentary series from 1994 about the scandal that toppled a president.
9.0 FILM **All the President's Men** (Alan J Pakula, 1976) (T) Fact-based political drama, starring Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman.

11.15 **Watergate to Trump: Amol Rajan Interviews** (T) (R) An interview with journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein.
12.0 **Paris** (T) (R) **1.0** Great British Railway Journeys (T) (R) **1.30** Gareth Edwards' Great Welsh Adventure (T) (R) **2.0** Watergate (T) (R) **2.50** Ardal O'Hanlon: Tomb Raider (R)

Other channels

BBC Three

7.0pm Top Gear **8.0** Dragons' Den US: Shark Tank **8.40** The Catch Up **8.45** Becoming: The Batman **9.0** Who Stole Tamara Ecclestone's Diamonds? **10.0** Sneakerhead **10.30** Man Like Mobeen **11.45** Who Stole Tamara Ecclestone's Diamonds? **12.40** Top Gear **1.40** Man Like Mobeen **2.55** FILM It's What She Would Have Wanted (2022) **3.05** Who Stole Tamara Ecclestone's Diamonds?

U&Dave

6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **8.0** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **10.0** Rick Stein's Mediterranean Escapes **11.0** Rick Stein's Cornwall **12.0** Storage Hunters UK **2.0** Extreme Fishing With Robson Green **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Top Gear **5.0** Rick Stein's Mediterranean Escapes **6.0** Rick Stein's Cornwall **7.0** Would I Lie to You? **7.40** Richard Osman's House of Games **8.20** Richard Osman's House of Games **9.0** QI XL **10.0** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **11.0** Battle in the Box **12.0** Mock the Week **12.40** Would I Lie to You? **1.20** Room 101 **2.0** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **2.25** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **2.50** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **3.15** Whose Line Is It Anyway? USA **4.0** Teleshopping

E4

6.0am Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **8.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **9.0** The Goldbergs **9.30** The Goldbergs **10.0** Young Sheldon **10.30** Young Sheldon **11.0** Modern Family **11.30** Modern Family **12.0** The Big Bang Theory **2.0** The Goldbergs **2.30** The Goldbergs **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Young Sheldon **4.30** Young Sheldon **5.0** The Big Bang Theory **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **6.0** The Big Bang Theory **6.30** The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Come Dine With Me **8.0** The Great Celebrity Bake Off for Stand Up to Cancer **9.0** Gogglebox **10.05** Naked Attraction **11.05** First Dates **12.10** The Big Bang Theory **12.40** The Big Bang Theory **1.10** Rick and Morty **1.40** My Adventures With Superman **2.10** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **2.35** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **3.0** Modern Family **3.25** Modern Family **3.50** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **4.40** The Neighborhood **5.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine

Film4

11.0am FILM Stardust (2007) **1.35** FILM Percy Jackson & the Lightning Thief (2010) **3.55** FILM The Legend of Zorro (2005) **6.30** FILM Mortal Engines (2018) **9.0** FILM Old (2021) **11.10** FILM The Running Man (1987) **1.10** FILM Cube (1997)

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** In With a Shout for Soccer Aid **2.0** Supermarket Sweep **3.0** Charmed **4.0** Dawson's Creek **5.0** Dress to Impress **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Ant & Dec's Limitless Win **8.0** Bob's Burgers **8.30** Bob's Burgers **9.0** Family Guy **9.30** Family Guy **10.0** Family Guy **10.30** Family Guy **11.0** Family Guy **11.30** American Dad! **12.0** American Dad! **12.30** Bob's Burgers **1.30** Deal Or No Deal **2.35** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping

Sky Max

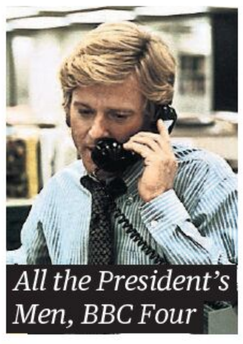
6.0am NCIS: New Orleans **7.0** SEAL Team **8.0** Supergirl **9.0** Stargate SG-1 **11.0** NCIS: New Orleans **12.0** Supergirl **1.0** MacGyver **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** SEAL Team **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** Rob & Romesh vs K-Pop **9.0** The Walking Dead: Daryl Dixon **10.10** Never Mind the Buzzcocks **10.55** The Walking Dead **11.50** Last King of the Cross **12.50** Entourage **2.0** Road Wars **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** Highway Patrol

Sky Arts

6.0am Gilbert and Sullivan: A Motley Pair **7.0** Backstage With the London Philharmonic Orchestra **8.0** The Joy of Painting **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: John Mills **12.0** The Joy of Painting **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** My Greatest Shot: Street **2.30** My Greatest Shot: Animals **3.0** Buster Keaton: The Genius Crushed By Hollywood **4.0** Discovering: Michelle Yeoh **5.0** The Joy of Painting **6.0** Tales of the Unexpected **7.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **8.0** Classic Movies: The Story of Brief Encounter **9.0** The Directors **10.0** Kubrick By Kubrick **11.35** Have You Got It Yet? The Story of Syd Barrett and Pink Floyd **1.35** Comedy Legends **2.35** The Other Art Show **3.35** Inside Art: Lubaina Himid at Tate Modern **4.0** Cheltenham Literature Festival **5.0** The Art of Architecture

Sky Atlantic

6.0am Fish Town **8.10** Riviera **10.20** Britannia **12.25** Game of Thrones **1.45** The Sopranos **3.55** Riviera **5.55** Britannia **7.55** Game of Thrones **9.0** House of the Dragon **10.25** Yellowjackets **11.30** Succession **12.40** Winning Time: The Rise of the Lakers Dynasty **1.45** Watchmen **2.55** We Own This City **4.0** Fish Town **5.0** Fish Town


All the President's Men, BBC Four

Radio

Radio 3

6.30am Breakfast **9.30** Essential Classics **1.0** Classical Live. From the Edinburgh festival, the Leonore Piano Trio play Dvořák's Piano Trio No 3 in F minor, Op 65, and Schola Cantorum de Venezuela sing music from South America. Plus, Monday night's Prom featuring pianist Benjamin Grosvenor playing Busoni's Piano Concerto. **4.0** Composer of the Week: Musical Olympians - Joseph Bologne (4/5) **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** BBC Proms 2024: Prom 26. Anja Bihlmaier conducts the BBC Philharmonic in Beethoven's Violin Concerto in D major (with violinist Tobias Feldmann), Gibson's Warp and Weft and Brahms's Symphony No 4 in E minor. **10.15** Night Tracks **11.30** 'Round Midnight **12.30** Through the Night

Radio 4

6.0am Today **9.0** The Briefing Room (5/16) **9.30** The Long History of Ignorance: From Confucius to Q-Anon (5/6) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** The Infinite Monkey Cage. Brian Cox and Robin Ince explore the intriguing world of gasses. (5/7) **11.45** Battle Grounds: Culture Wars in the Countryside. Anna Jones uncovers a newly emerging battle around trees. (R) **12.0** News **12.04** You and Yours **12.30** Dough. Sam White looks at the business behind irons. (4/5) **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** How They Made Us Doubt Everything. How the talc industry sought to avoid being officially listed as a carcinogen. (4/5) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** Belgrano. Richard Monks's drama about the leaking of papers about the sinking of the General Belgrano. (1/2) (R) **3.0** Open Country. Martha Kearney visits Fen Edge in Cambridgeshire. (1/13) **3.27** Radio 4 Appeal (R) **3.30** Feedback (8/9) **4.0** Across the Red Line. Discussion on whether obesity should be classed as a disease. (7/7) **4.30** Inside Science **5.0** PM **5.57** Weather **6.0** News **6.30** The Train at Platform 4. Two American tourists celebrate their 50th-wedding anniversary. (3/4) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** The Media Show (R) **9.0** Loose Ends (R) **9.45** Empire of Tea (R) **9.59** Weather **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: Enlightenment. By Sarah Perry. (4/10) **11.0** The Today Podcast **11.30** Lights Out (R) **12.0** News **12.30** Battle Grounds (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today

Radio 4 Extra

6.0am Someone Dangerous (2/2) **6.45** The One About the Social Worker (4/5) **7.0** Our Man at Wembley (3/4) **7.30** Dad's Army (23/20) **8.0** My Teenage Diary (4/6) **8.30** No Room for Secrets (4/5) **8.45** Where Angels Fear to Tread (4/10) **9.0** The Train at Platform 4 (2/4) **9.30** New Storytellers (1/5) **9.45** Daily Service **10.0** Great Lives (4/10) **10.30** The Greatest Ever Faker **11.0** Someone Dangerous (2/2) **11.45** The One About the Social Worker (4/5) **12.0** Our Man at Wembley (3/4) **12.30** Dad's Army (23/20) **1.0** My Teenage Diary (4/6) **1.30** No Room for Secrets (4/5) **1.45** Where Angels Fear to Tread (4/10) **2.0** Dilemma (2/6) **2.30** No Commitments (1/6) **3.0** The Carlingford Chronicles: Miss Marjoribanks (4/4) **4.0** Great Lives (4/10) **4.30** The Greatest Ever Faker **5.0** Someone Dangerous (2/2) **5.45** The One About the Social Worker (4/5) **6.0** Our Man at Wembley (3/4) **6.30** Dad's Army (23/20) **7.0** My Teenage Diary (4/6) **7.30** No Room for Secrets (4/5) **7.45** Where Angels Fear to Tread (4/10) **8.0** Dilemma (2/6) **8.30** No Commitments (1/6) **9.0** The Carlingford Chronicles: Miss Marjoribanks (4/4) **10.0** The Train at Platform 4 (2/4) **10.30** Knowing Me, Knowing You (5/6) **11.0** Britain in Bits With Ross Noble (3/4) **11.30** I've Never Seen Star Wars (6/6) **12.0** Great Lives (4/10) **12.30** The Greatest Ever Faker **1.0** Someone Dangerous (2/2) **1.45** The One About the Social Worker (4/5) **2.0** Our Man at Wembley (3/4) **2.30** Dad's Army (23/20) **3.0** My Teenage Diary (4/6) **3.30** No Room for Secrets (4/5) **3.45** Where Angels Fear to Tread (4/10) **4.0** Dilemma (2/6) **4.30** No Commitments (1/6) **5.0** The Carlingford Chronicles: Miss Marjoribanks (4/4)

TODAY'S TRIVIA CORNER ANSWER **STEPHEN KING**

Yesterday's solutions

Wordsearch

Solution no 16,928

Sudoku no 6,576

5	6	9	2	3	8	1	4	7
1	8	3	4	5	7	2	6	9
7	4	2	6	1	9	3	8	5
3	7	8	5	4	1	9	2	6
6	9	4	7	8	2	5	1	3
2	5	1	9	6	3	8	7	4
4	2	6	1	9	5	7	3	8
8	1	5	3	7	4	6	9	2
9	3	7	8	2	6	4	5	1

Word wheel

HUNDREDTH

Suguru

1	4	1	3	2	1
2	3	2	4	5	3
1	4	5	3	1	2
3	2	1	2	4	3
1	4	5	3	5	1
3	2	1	2	4	2

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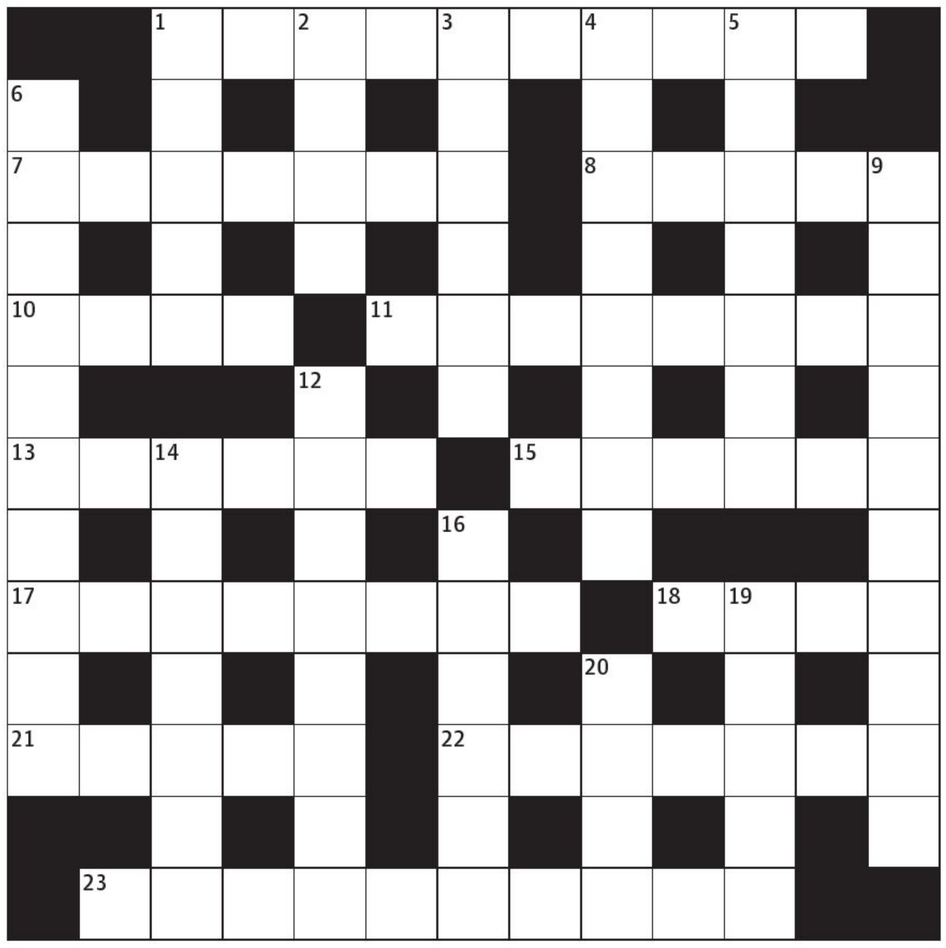
Quick crossword no 16,929

Across

1 Novel featuring Becky Sharp (6,4)
7 Slanting type (7)
8 List of contents (5)
10 Gracious! (4)
11 Four-line stanza (8)
13 Comparatively dubious (6)
15 Chew the fat (6)
17 Bypass (4,4)
18 Pen (inventor) (4)
21 Period before an event (3-2)
22 Italian dough balls (7)
23 Days of yore (10)

Down

1 Medicine bottles (5)
2 Like Voltaire's Candide (4)
3 Event with different but equally likely outcomes (4-2)
4 Conflict or animosity (8)
5 E.g. Tendulkar and Tagore (7)
6 Protuberant vehicle part (4,6)
9 Intolerance to foreigners (10)
12 Ruined because of age (8)
14 Fund (7)
16 Pester - Wind in the Willows character (6)
19 Bring upon oneself (5)
20 Fizzy drink - drug - fuel (4)



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Sudoku no 6,577

Hard. Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9. Printable version at theguardian.com/sudoku

					1		5	
				6			3	
		8	3			4		6
		5						1
	1			3	6			
7				5			2	4
		1						9
6	4				8			
		2	9		7	1		

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.

		3			
			4		
	4				
	3			3	

Wordsearch

Can you find 15 words connected with bread in the grid? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight, unbroken line.

D	A	T	T	I	P	Y	M	F
B	H	V	E	L	R	S	E	O
R	A	C	R	A	I	S	I	N
O	E	P	N	T	D	L	C	L
W	N	A	S	E	A	S	H	B
N	R	U	L	V	R	S	A	M
G	R	O	E	W	O	F	P	U
C	E	R	G	D	H	U	A	R
I	E	L	A	G	N	I	T	C
E	Y	R	B	M	S	O	T	E
D	I	B	A	T	O	N	I	E

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-30. Good-25. Average-18.

Trivia corner

Who holds the record for both the most nominations (33) and wins (13) of the Bram Stoker award *(trophy pictured)*?

a. George R R Martin
b. Joyce Carol Oates
c. J K Rowling
d. Stephen King

Answer top right