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# Headlines

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# Liz Truss faces backlash over plan to lift cap on bankers' bonuses – as it happened

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[Kwasi Kwarteng](#)

## Kwasi Kwarteng planning to scrap caps on bankers' bonuses

Critics question chancellor's idea of abolishing rules imposed after 2008 financial crash during cost of living crisis

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Kwasi Kwarteng's plan to scrap caps on bankers' bonuses is part of what he calls 'Big Bang 2.0'. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

[Matthew Weaver](#) and [Aubrey Allegretti](#)

Thu 15 Sep 2022 07.38 EDTFirst published on Thu 15 Sep 2022 04.02 EDT

The UK chancellor, [Kwasi Kwarteng](#), is reportedly planning to scrap caps on bankers' bonuses in a controversially timed move to attract more talent to the City of London.

A source close to Kwarteng confirmed the chancellor was considering lifting the cap but emphasised that no decision had been taken.

Ministers are known to be concerned that the City could lose out to other financial centres. The source noted that Paris was offering 30% income tax rates to attract investment banking professionals. They said the chancellor believed that UK tax revenues could be boosted if the City could attract more banking talent.

[According to the Financial Times](#), Kwarteng wants to abolish rules imposed after the 2008 financial crash that capped bonuses at twice an employee's salary. It is part of what he calls "Big Bang 2.0", a post-Brexit deregulation drive to make the City more competitive.

But the idea is already being widely questioned amid predictions of a backlash at a time when many families are [struggling with the cost of living](#).

Andrew Sentance, a member of the Bank of England's monetary policy committee during and after the financial crisis, said it was a "very bad" time to consider increasing banker's bonuses.

Speaking on BBC Radio 4's Today programme on Thursday, Sentance said: "It sends a rather confused signal when people are being squeezed in terms of the cost of living and the government is trying to encourage pay restraint in the public sector.

"To appear to allow bankers to have bigger bonuses at the same time, doesn't look very well timed. There may be some longer-term arguments for pursuing this policy, but I think the timing would be very bad if they did it now."

The High Pay Centre thinktank dismissed the plan as a "pro-rich ideological measure". Luke Hildyard, its executive director, said: "The bonus cap has probably helped to contain bankers' pay awards but they've still reached record highs this year while the rest of the country has undergone an epic cost of living crisis and profound economic hardship.

“We know that bonuses in the financial services sector have helped the richest 1% of the population to capture an increasing share of total UK incomes. Removing the cap would be a pro-rich ideological measure that sends a depressing message about who policymakers listen to and think about when making economic policy.”

Prof Susan Michie, the director of the Centre for Behaviour Change and a scientific adviser to the government, [tweeted](#): “0.3% of the British electorate voted for Truss as PM. Worth remembering when evaluating her Cabinet’s policies eg the trailed scrapping of anti-obesity measures & lifting the cap on bankers’ bonuses (which is already 2x their salaries) whilst asking others for wage restraint.”

Lionel Barber, the former editor of the Financial Times, tweeted that the move would be [“politically toxic”](#).

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Kwarteng reportedly told a City executive last week that “we need to be decisive and do things differently”. He is said to be sympathetic to City complaints that EU-wide rules imposed after the crash to cap bonuses leads to higher basic salaries, which increases costs for banks.

Sources told the Financial Times that Kwarteng wants to boost the City’s competitiveness against New York, Frankfurt, Hong Kong and Paris, and their tax incentives to attract top bankers.

One financier told the paper said scrapping the bonuses cap was a “clear Brexit dividend. Something you can present as a win.”

The plan is expected to be opposed by Labour. When the idea was first suggested in June, Labour's leader, Keir Starmer, described it as "pay rises for bankers, pay cuts for district nurses".

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## [Ukraine war live](#)Ukraine

# Russia-Ukraine war: EU says supply of weapons to Ukraine ‘absolutely vital’; missile strikes Zelenskiy’s home town – as it happened

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## Smoking

# Children whose fathers breathed cigarette smoke more likely to get asthma – study

Research offers evidence that tobacco could damage health of people two generations later



The researchers found that the risk of non-allergic asthma in children increased by 59% if their fathers were exposed to secondhand smoke in childhood. Photograph: Jonathan Brady/PA

[\*Denis Campbell\*](#) *Health policy editor*

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Children are much more likely to develop asthma if their father was exposed to tobacco smoke when he was growing up, a study has found.

And they are at even greater risk of suffering from the common lung condition if their father was a smoker himself, according to the international team of researchers.

The findings, published in the European Respiratory Journal, provide further evidence for the possible existence of a “transgenerational effect” in which smoking can damage the health of people born two generations later.

“We found that the risk of non-allergic asthma in children increases by 59% if their fathers were exposed to secondhand smoke in childhood, compared to children whose fathers were not exposed.

“The risk was even higher, at 72%, if the fathers were exposed to secondhand smoke and went on to smoke themselves,” said Jiacheng Liu, from Melbourne University, one of the co-authors.

The study was undertaken by a team of Australian, British and Sri Lankan researchers.

Dr Dinh Bui, another co-author, said: “Our findings show how the damage caused by smoking can have an impact not only on smokers but also their children and grandchildren.”

Given their conclusions, men should try to avoid smoking if at all possible, to reduce the risk of affecting the health of their own sons or their offspring, Bui added.

Jon Foster, the health policy manager at [Asthma](#) + Lung UK, said: “This research is truly shocking, showing that the negative effects of smoking can last for generations. The fact that children born today have a 59% increased risk of developing asthma if their father was exposed to passive smoking as a child shows the huge impact smoking has on other people’s health.”

The findings are based on the researchers’ analysis of detailed data about the health of 1,689 pairs of fathers and their offspring collected as part of the long-running Tasmanian Longitudinal [Health](#) Study in Australia.

The paper says: “Our findings suggest that when boys are passively exposed to their parents’ tobacco smoke before the age of 15 years, their offspring have increased risk of non-allergic childhood asthma, but not allergic asthma.

“Paternal smoke exposure before the age of 15 years is a major risk factor for non-allergic asthma.”

Prof Jonathan Grigg, the chair of the European Respiratory Society’s tobacco control committee, who was not involved in the study, said it added to the evidence of smoking’s intergenerational risk.

Children needed to be protected from further damage by ministers taking further robust action to curb smoking, he said. He called for stop smoking services to be increased and for adults to be routinely asked at any NHS appointment if they smoked, and offered help to quit if they do.

Bui said epigenetic changes triggered by smoking – modifications to genes in which someone’s DNA sequence is not altered – were the likeliest reason for the significantly raised risk of asthma in children whose father inhaled secondhand smoke in their youth.

“Epigenetic changes can be caused by environmental exposures such as smoking, and they may be inheritable to next generations. Specifically, when a boy is exposed to tobacco smoke, it may cause epigenetic changes to his germ cells. These are the cells that go [on] to produce sperm.

“Later on, these changes will be inherited by his children, which in turn can damage their health, including a higher risk of developing asthma. In boys, germ cells continue to develop until puberty, and this is a vulnerable period when exposure to tobacco smoke can affect the cells and cause epigenetic changes,” Bui said.

This article was amended on 16 September 2022. The headline was changed from “parents” to “fathers” to reflect the piece more accurately.

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## 2022.09.15 - Spotlight

- 'It struck me like a thunderbolt' How to survive empty-nest syndrome – and come out smiling
- 'Game of Thrones set on a ranch' The wild popularity of Kevin Costner's violent, rubbish TV show
- 'Farmed' Why were so many Black children fostered by white families in the UK?
- New Prince of Wales? Ancient capital prefers to celebrate Owain Glyndŵr

## Parents and parenting

# **‘It struck me like a thunderbolt’: how to survive empty-nest syndrome – and come out smiling**

Many parents say they are left with overwhelming feelings of grief when their children leave home. As more teenagers head off to university, what can be done to cope and even thrive when you get the house back to yourself?



Emma Beddington with her son Louis, who is leaving home to study at university. Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian



[Emma Beddington](#)

Thu 15 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT

Signs of seasonal migration are everywhere in the university town where I live: double-parked cars, warning lights flashing, occupants emptying jam-packed boots; bright flocks of Ikea bags, plump with pillows, extension leads trailing. Later in the day there's another migratory wave: pink-eyed parents, heading back to empty homes with quiet kitchens and unmolested fridges.

This weekend I'll be joining the migration. My son just messaged me (yes, from a few feet away) to say he has booked a moving-in slot at his hall of residence on the other side of the country. It will be my second – and last – time dropping a kid at university; his brother started last year. It's an event both utterly ordinary and so emotionally freighted it has become a cultural moment, anxiously anticipated and amplified by celebrity interventions. Rob Lowe, Heidi Klum and Ulrika Jonsson have all described their pain. Ruth Langsford of *This Morning* [recently told Women & Home magazine](#) that after her son left, “for the next three days I felt like I'd had my womb ripped out ... I was sitting on his bed, sniffing his pillow”. (Being left alone with Eamonn Holmes might drive many of us to something similar.) Gordon



Ramsay confessed to being so bereft, [he wore his son's pants](#) – I'm truly sorry for sharing that.

I'm not dreading it: this move feels like a happy event. It's not that I'm desperate to get rid of my boy; he's a laconic, low-key presence, cat-like in his discretion around the house, with a sharp wit. It has been delightful to watch this person emerge from the intense toddler whose rages I shut myself in the bathroom to avoid. But as a relatively young mother, temperamentally unsuited to the slow hours and fast years of childrearing, I have always been impatient for the next milestone. I have a sense of celebration as both my boys progress towards adulthood: I want to see who they become. And after their Covid-stunted, Gavin Williamson-blighted late teens, I'm especially excited for them to escape the stultifying cocoon of home.

I'm also excited for me, and for us. I haven't spent more than a week alone with my husband for 20 years and I'm curious how we'll cope. Back then, we wore suits to work, rode a Vespa and had a fatal penchant for relationship drama, conjuring fights out of thin air. We've mainly bottled all that up for two decades. Will we fall back into old bad habits? (I hope not: my back can't cope with sulk-sleeping in the bath now.) What will we talk about? Will we ever eat at a table again? Who will we become?

Current indications suggest I'll become a sexless shut-in hobbit, shouting into hedges about biodiversity, pockets full of worms for an expanding menagerie of rescued birds. Bafflingly, my husband recently bid on a pottery kiln "in case I ever want to make an ashtray", despite never expressing an interest in ceramics, or smoking. I asked him how he was feeling about our emptying nest, in an attempt to forge some emotional glasnost. "Is this for work?" he said suspiciously, then claimed he didn't know yet, while continuing to barbecue ceaselessly, in anticipation of the other household carnivore leaving. He even asked me to "probe his meat", without the slightest erotic overtone. I feel we're both ready to sink into shambolic eccentricity.

But are we in for the shock of our lives? Dating coach and single parent Kate Mansfield's son left home in February. They had a loving but fraught relationship through years of home schooling and Covid lockdowns; her

sociable son filled the house with gangs of mates who emptied her fridge in the small hours. “I had slightly resigned myself to thinking he would be here until he was in his 40s, then he suddenly said: ‘I’ve found a flat and I’m moving out next week.’ I had had a sort of long-running fantasy at the back of my mind that one day this would end – then it happened and I was devastated.” Rae Radford, a social media influencer from Kent, had a similar experience. “I honestly thought I’d be thrilled to see the back of my ungrateful sons who treated my home like a hotel, but after dropping them off at university, the truth struck me like a thunderbolt.”



Emma with her two sons on the first day of school.

Fiona Esom felt prepared when her son and daughter left – she was busy with her Fairtrade cocoa business [Food Thoughts](#). “I thought all is as it should be; I was expecting this.” Then her dog died. “I can laugh at it now,” she says. “‘When did you go downhill?’ ‘When the dog died.’ But he had bridged the gap with my mother’s death, me leaving my marriage, bringing my children up. It was like everything was ending in one go. I wasn’t prepared for the grief I felt.”

It’s not just women (though interestingly, men are more anxious to be anonymous). It hit Ben (not his real name) as he drove his youngest son from Ireland to the UK to study. “The day before I was fine. But as I was

driving along, I realised I was driving my son away. I could barely speak to him; I was overcome.” His emotion is palpable over the phone as we speak. “I still think he’s in the house. I still think he’ll come out of his room, then it hits me: no, he’s gone.” The house is quiet and empty. “It’s like someone turned off the music,” he says, breaking my heart a bit.

Why does this “predictable event in the family life cycle”, as family therapist and [Association for Family Therapy](#) member Dr Ged Smith calls it, ambush us? There’s a good chance, Smith says, that a “perfect storm of crises” phenomenon is at play. “It will coincide with other things – you’ll probably be at an age when you’re also questioning your relationship, your job, your career – your life, really. Thinking: ‘What now? Is this it? Is this the job I want? Is this the person I want to stay with?’”

Certainly a profoundly shaken sense of identity comes back again and again as you speak to empty-nesters. “It was the end of what you’ve put all your energies into, and you know you’ve done a good job, but you have to face up to: ‘Well, who am I? What am I? What am I for?’” says Esom. “You were a parent your whole life, you had this job and this focus. It’s a huge part of your life, and personally I loved it – it wasn’t a burden,” says Ben. “What do I do now? What am I doing this for?”

“I couldn’t place myself any more,” says Michelle Lancaster, a graphic designer and illustrator whose two daughters left almost simultaneously. “I didn’t know who I was or who I should be.”



Michelle Lancaster.

Part of learning who we are now is recalibrating relationships with our absent kids after years of in-person parenting. That course correction can be painful. A friend whose daughter has struggled with an eating disorder is terrified how she'll cope with relapses. Another parent says: "This is a child who can't pick up his pants ... And of course, he's going to be stoned within the first week."

Ben fears his son will find his chosen career mercilessly competitive. "I think he's going to realise how hard it is." He also wishes he had taught his son how to wire a plug. "Why didn't I do that?" For me, the knowledge I hated university (I was lonely, sad, often desperate), but didn't breathe a word to my parents, hangs over me as I wonder if I should follow up an unanswered WhatsApp message.

It's important, Smith says, to "establish healthy contact with them". He suggests talking about it directly. "Perhaps like: 'I'm going to miss you when you go, but I'll be OK. How much contact would you like me to have with you?'" He's reluctant to give advice, but gets emphatic on this: "Don't make your child worry about you. Don't say to your child: 'You know, since you've left, I've been very depressed; me and your father fight all the time.' Don't do that – even if it's true!"

While he's on an advice roll, I slip in a question about my chief fear: that it's too late and our relationships are fixed now. Esom says she knew she had done a good job; I'm not so sure and the mistakes I made now feel irreparable. Did my concern to give my sons space and privacy feel like a lack of love? Will they only remember that time I smashed a bottle in a rage? You know, the usual 4am thoughts. Smith's own relationship with his four kids is, he reassures me, "constantly evolving"; he suggests solo breaks with my boys over the next few years might help. It won't stop the 4am self-flagellation, but it gives me something practical to plan.

What about your relationship with your partner, if you have one? "Check the statistics on divorces," someone advises me, darkly. "You'll look at the bloke you've made these kids with and go: 'You're just an arsehole – why have I stuck with you for so long?'" I do check the figures: "[silver splitters are a growing phenomenon, according to the Office for National Statistics](#)." And what if you react very differently to this new phase: one bereft, the other excited? "Pay attention to each other's difference," advises Smith. "Make an effort to understand; don't just argue with them or try to convert them to your way of thinking."

At the risk of tempting fate, I'm hopeful. My husband's cheery dynamism is a good foil to my solitary, joyless tendencies. His salad-making is an affront to God (cheese rind everywhere; tinned corn; aggressive quantities of vinegar) and he falls asleep on the sofa at 8pm like clockwork, but I can't imagine sharing a threadbare nest with anyone else. When our sons went away recently, he joined me in a nature reserve hide to look at some distant ducks, even suggesting we could "come back early one morning with a Thermos of coffee". I've rarely heard anything so romantic.



Did my concern to give my sons space and privacy feel like a lack of love?  
Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

For those struggling, it does get better. For Mansfield it was important to “allow myself to feel the feelings. I had a couple of weeks of crying and feeling sad and missing him.” Focusing on the positives helped (“I can have cheese and wine for my dinner every night”). After all, living with teenagers is famously not a “good vibes only” experience. “They just become arseholes, don’t they – there’s no way around it,” says Radford. But then the cooking, laundry, mess and drama all stop, which is the definition of a mixed blessing, I think. As Ben says: “Those things you hated about them, like being untidy, you realise all of that was kind of a privilege.”

“It’s a healthy thing, isn’t it?” muses Smith. “A healthy family is one that prepares the children to grow up, become self-sufficient and leave. You should spend the whole of your kids’ life preparing them for the very thing that’s going to do your head in.”

I’m reminded, too, that not every parent gets to experience an empty nest. Alice (not her real name) has a disabled son who will never be able to live independently. She grieved when her eldest daughter left home (“I cried at work; I kept putting out her place at dinner, then cried the day I didn’t put her place out”), but also feels deep sadness that her son will not get that



same experience. She and her husband didn't get the "empty-nest bonus other parents get – taking off for the weekend on a whim. That is a disappointment."

For us lucky ones, after the initial shock comes the great "What now?" That's where things get interesting. For Esom, it meant welcoming a Ukrainian single mother and daughter into her newly empty home for three months. "The children did point out the irony: 'Hey, Mum, you've just stopped having to care for us and now you're bringing in other people to care for!' It was a valid observation." But it was, she says, "fabulous for all of us – delightful and interesting". Mansfield let out her flat and took a solo road trip across the US, including a week of equine therapy and business meetings in Las Vegas. Radford moved to the coast, left her marriage and acquired four dogs ("one for each child"). Lancaster moved to the seaside, too, taking up surfing and dating. "I'm just taking myself for adventures, I'm putting a flask in my backpack, taking the dog and going off exploring. There are no compromises." Her girls are thrilled to see her happy. "They didn't want me to be sad and lonely. I'm actually having more of a high time than they are!"

Or how about this for an empty-nest curveball: one friend was "ready and excited" when her daughters left home, but soon afterwards got back together with a former partner who has a 13-year-old from another relationship. "Five more years of parenting before I can have that empty nest back!"

Learning to put yourself first again means working out who you are, and that throws up tough existential questions. The answers can be surprising, painful, exhilarating, even wonderful. "I've had an amazing life in comparison to what I had, because I was brave enough to put my big girl knickers on and think: 'I'm not putting up with this,'" says Radford. "Absolutely embrace it," urges Lancaster. "Because it does get better – I'm the happiest I've ever been." We're starting our empty-nest life by leaving it: we've booked a trip to Italy, and I'm not packing my sons' pants.

Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to [guardian.letters@theguardian.com](mailto:guardian.letters@theguardian.com)

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[Television](#)

## **‘Game of Thrones set on a ranch’: the wild popularity of Kevin Costner’s violent, rubbish TV show**



True west? ... Kevin Costner in Yellowstone. Photograph: AP

Yellowstone has been described as a rightwing Succession – except that it has 12 times more viewers. It’s visually stunning, morally complex and

really not very good



[Michael Hann](#)  
[@michaelahann](#)

Thu 15 Sep 2022 05.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 15 Sep 2022 06.09 EDT

The most visually extraordinary, morally ambivalent, gratuitously violent, sexually confused show on TV isn't one you hear spoken about a lot, in the UK at least. Perhaps that's because, despite being one of the most remarkable TV programmes of recent years, *Yellowstone* isn't actually very good.

Its huge success in the US has led, after a rash of terrible reviews on its launch in 2018 ("A soapy mess," [according to this paper](#)), to it being reconsidered in the light of viewing figures that were outstripping everything else on cable. The season four finale earlier this year was the [most-watched show on cable since The Walking Dead's season eight opener five years ago](#). If one compares its viewing figures with *Succession*, there's no contest: [Yellowstone has 12 times the viewers](#).

That contrast is instructive, because it is to *Succession* that *Yellowstone* has become a point of critical comparison. Both are about patriarchs ruthlessly protecting their empires (in *Yellowstone*, it is [Kevin Costner](#), as John Dutton, owner of the largest ranch in the US), while their adult children revel in mutual hatred. Both have a shockingly ruthless redheaded daughter among their offspring. Both have a hapless sidekick from outside the central family. Both posit their familial unit as the notional heroes of the show, if only by making the opponents of their empire just as revolting.

But *Yellowstone* is seen, somehow, as the idiot child next to *Succession*, perhaps because its characters are not media elites who drive commentary on culture. And also because of the suspicion that it is at heart a rightwing show (it's a common notion that it is *Succession* for Trump voters). But as the former Reagan and Bush Sr speechwriter John Podhoretz wrote in the *New York Post*: "While the stakes in *Succession* are the kind nobody outside the media could ever really care about – is there any reason to care which of the rotten people we watch will get to run the Roy empire? – the central conflict in *Yellowstone* is nothing less than who owns America."

I suspect Costner's presence is the reason for the moral ambiguity of *Yellowstone*. Whereas Brian Cox, *Succession*'s patriarch, has always been an actor, Costner has long been a leading man. And leading men are heroes, even when their characters are painted in shades of grey. There are notable contrasts between Costner's most recent movie lead, in *Let Him Go*, and *Yellowstone*. Both are neo-westerns, albeit *Let Him Go* was set 60 years ago. In both, Costner is a man who is stepping away from his life's work, and in both he is unafraid of violence in support of his beliefs. But in *Let Him Go* – rescuing his grandson from psychopaths – he is unequivocally good. Whereas in *Yellowstone*, it is only the fact that John Dutton is played by Costner that leads us to any assumption of goodness, for Dutton himself is psychopathic, no matter how undemonstrative he is (cowboys on the ranch are branded with hot irons, to show that they are owned).

If *Yellowstone* is holding a mirror up to red-state America, then red-state America must be spectacularly deluded. For *Yellowstone* goes far beyond libertarian ideals; if anything, it shows the chaos when institutions are subverted to individual needs (no branch of Montana's state government is above corruption) and the consequences for all lives – the family's included

– when violence in defence of property becomes the norm. The entire Dutton family lives in perpetual fear. They are not happy in their empire, ever, because terror begets more terror.

So violent is Yellowstone, in fact, that rather than this being Succession set on a ranch, a more apt comparison may be that it is Game of Thrones set on a ranch. As with Game of Thrones, land and its conquest is the overriding theme, and as with Game of Thrones, life is expendable and law matters less than might. Justice in Yellowstone is a medieval concept, meted out on the hoof (often literally, from horseback) without recourse to lawbooks. Miscreants are hanged summarily, and the Duttons dish out punishment as they see fit, sorting out any difficulties with the legal authorities later: it's a rite of passage for new ranch-hands to kill for the Duttons. And troubling sexuality is present in the relationship between John Dutton and his daughter, Beth (Kelly Reilly), in which [the electra complex](#) burns strong (not least because it is family lore that Beth was responsible for her own mother's death).

And still, for all its moral complexity and its visual beauty (and the best credits and opening theme on TV), Yellowstone is not good TV. Its showrunner, Taylor Sheridan, wrote the excellent border narcos movie Sicario, yet Yellowstone is filled with the kind of clunky writing you would recognise from the big 80s US soaps. Plenty of characters exist only as ciphers. Some of its complexity is unintentional, caused by its failure to develop themes it starts opening, only to leave them unexplored and unresolved.

Yellowstone is big and flawed and beautiful. It is silly and meretricious and stunning. It's not so-bad-it's-good, because it's not as bad as that. It's the only thing on TV that manages to be amazing and startling without actually being good. Watch it.

*Season four of Yellowstone is streaming on Paramount+ in the UK and Stan in Australia, with new episodes on Wednesdays.*

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# ‘Farmed’: why were so many Black children fostered by white families in the UK?

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## Wales

# New Prince of Wales? Ancient capital prefers to celebrate Owain Glyndŵr

Welsh nationalists ‘hurt and insulted’ by Charles’s quick announcement that William will get title



‘The English royal family was imposed on Wales’: Huw Morgan in front of a mural in the Machynlleth *senedd-dŷ* depicting Owain Glyndŵr’s final victory against the English in 1401. Photograph: Dmitris Legakis/The Guardian



[Steven Morris](#)

[@stevenmorris20](#)

Thu 15 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT

While [King Charles III](#) and Camilla, the Queen Consort, are being greeted with pomp and ceremony during their visit to Cardiff on Friday, preparations will be under way for a modest but defiant event to be staged 100 miles north in the market town of Machynlleth.

The town's people will gather to mark Owain Glyndŵr Day, a celebration of the life and legacy of the last Welshman to be known as Prince of Wales, [the title bestowed by Charles on William in his first speech as king](#).

“There will be some folk music, a few drinks, a bit of food,” said Huw Morgan, one of the organisers. “I reckon it will be packed.”

Certainly, the event is bound to be more pointed than usual, with Charles's announcement that William would become Prince of [Wales](#) – Tywysog Cymru – going down badly with many nationalists and republicans.

By Wednesday, almost 25,000 people had signed [a petition calling for the title to be abolished](#) and activists have vowed to protest at the ceremonies in



the Welsh capital.

Morgan, a professor of astronomy, said: “There are lots of people like me who don’t care to hear about the royal family. They are entitled, they are rich and assume they rule over Wales.” Morgan has nothing against the royals as individuals. “But they are symbols of oppression. The English royal family was imposed on Wales centuries ago.”



Elwyn Vaughan: ‘People do feel hurt and insulted by this sudden announcement.’ Photograph: Dmitris Legakis/The Guardian

Machynlleth, which bills itself as the ancient capital of Wales, is home to Glyndŵr’s *senedd-dŷ* (parliament building), where the 15th century Welsh leader reputedly held an assembly after being crowned prince as he fought the English for an independent Wales.

Gail Jenkins, who runs the Caffi Alys next to the parliament house, said many people were upset by the alacrity of Charles’s decision. “It didn’t give us a chance to have our say. This would have been a great time to show unity and not impose this on us again.”

A local [Plaid Cymru](#) councillor, Elwyn Vaughan, said there had been a backlash: “People think they have been taken for granted.”



The last Welsh Prince of Wales: an Owain Glyndŵr statuette inside the *Senedd Dy*. Photograph: Dmitris Legakis/The Guardian

Vaughan said [there was some warmth for Charles](#) and his thinking on the environment in Machynlleth, which for decades has been a haven for the eco-conscious, and for William, who worked as a search and rescue pilot in north Wales.

He said: “People have been restrained, have tried to show respect to those who do genuinely care about the royal family but they do feel hurt and insulted by this sudden announcement.

“If we are supposed to be an island of equals, then show respect. We need to respect our neighbours, England, and the establishment there but they must respect us as Wales, our historical differences, our culture, our language, our outlook on the world. Otherwise you create division, hate and negativity.”

Charles’s [investiture in 1969 at Caernarfon Castle in north Wales led to protests](#) and years of bitterness for many. The Welsh Labour first minister, Mark Drakeford, said this week [there was an “alive” debate surrounding the role and “no rush” for William’s investiture](#).

But the very idea of any sort of investiture angers many. Plaid Cymru’s Westminster leader, Liz Saville Roberts, said her party had not wanted this

conversation now out of respect for those grieving. “But a conversation about an investiture of the Prince of Wales has been started by the first minister and others.

“We should remind ourselves that, unlike the constitutional role of the monarch, the Prince of Wales is a purely ceremonial title. It is for the King to decide what he wishes to call his son. An investiture, however, funded by public money and attended by politicians and diplomats, would give the Prince of Wales a semi-official role as a representative of our nation.”



A small portrait in Judith Williams’ shop window was the only sign of the Queen’s death in Machynlleth high street. Photograph: Dmitris Legakis/The Guardian

Laura McAllister, professor of public policy and the governance of Wales at Cardiff University, said if there were to be an investiture it would be much more low key than in 1969. McAllister said there was “some ambivalence” around the title and role of Prince of Wales and that people were “taken aback slightly” by the swiftness of the announcement. “Given, I’m sure, that he is aware of the tension that exists over the title, it does seem odd that it was so rushed.”

On the main shopping street in Machynlleth the only sign of the Queen's death was one framed portrait next to a vase of roses in a shoe shop window.

“I wanted to pay my respects,” said Judith Williams, who created the display. “I know not many people here have done anything. We like the royal family and will be taking three of the grandchildren to London this weekend. Her passing in Scotland seemed to make Scottish people come together. We haven't had that in Wales as much. It's a shame.”

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## 2022.09.15 - Opinion

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- I had such bad car sickness as a kid that the mere smell of Dad's Volvo would set me off

## [Opinion](#)Monarchy

# It's one law for King Charles the billionaire and another for his struggling subjects

[Aditya Chakraborty](#)



It is only proper that the new King pays no inheritance tax – says the state that makes citizens choose between heating or eating





Illustration: Bill Bragg

Thu 15 Sep 2022 01.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 15 Sep 2022 02.47 EDT

During that soggy afternoon when the Queen was still said to be only ill, the BBC's Clive Myrie was filling time. Only hours before, he noted, Liz Truss had been making "a rather important statement" on just how families would pay their heating bills this winter. All was now "insignificant". It was, the usually excellent presenter later admitted, "a poor choice of word".

Except it wasn't. If anything, it was painfully on the nose. The man on the TV unwittingly but precisely anticipated how the financial crisis engulfing millions of Britons would be treated in the coming days: as a matter of no consequence. In Tuesday's Daily Mail, it took until page 28 to crop up. In that day's Sun, page 20. The Times and the Telegraph yawned it off altogether.

Our MPs have been worse. Last Thursday, the new prime minister set out a plan to cap energy costs. Tagged at [£150bn](#), it's easily the single biggest fiscal intervention by any government since the second world war – a vast sum that these Tory tailenders seem determined to spend as badly and unfairly as possible. To take one example: the [4.5 million people on pre-pay meters](#) will get zero extra help from Truss. And another: the churches and

community centres hosting the food banks that will be a lifeline to millions this winter will only get a few months' help.

Rather than scrutinise these measures, MPs spent two long days delivering tributes to the monarchy, such as this from the former minister [Tracey Crouch](#): “Our six-year-old took my hand in his and said, ‘Don’t worry, Mummy: the King will look after us now.’ He is right. God save the King.” Thus were you served by your representatives – and now parliament is shut for 10 days, and the next month will be dominated by party conferences.

As youngsters, both the [prime minister](#) and [Keir Starmer](#) were in favour of abolishing the monarchy. They have first-hand knowledge not only of republican feeling but also of the wider ambivalence that often greets the royal family. Yet they haven’t even tried to represent this pluralism of opinion, which is one of the defining features of any democracy. Instead what we get is a grand show of state power, complete with the army, the navy and the BBC’s Nick Witchell.

During this period of enforced mourning everyone is told what to think, even while millions of people worry over how to eat. The official mood is an ersatz mawkishness. Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone, instructed Auden. Today’s equivalent is Norwich City Council closing bike racks, and Morrisons turning down the beeping at its checkouts – while Center Parcs was all set to turf out holidaymakers for the day of the funeral. Would Her Majesty really have minded if kids went on a waterslide or, come to that, Poundland shut this Monday? I assume she wasn’t a regular.

Away from such performances, the isle is full of noises – a sense of chaos suspended. For an idea of the devastation to come, speak to Paul Morrison. A policy adviser at the Methodist church, he has been analysing the financial diaries recently filled in by visitors to food banks, debt clinics and other church-based projects.

Right now, he finds, a little over half of respondents – 56% – can carry on without falling into debt. It may mean walking an hour to the job centre, rather than taking a bus; it can be thrown off even by the smallest accident, but with luck it can be done.



Scroll forward two weeks, though, and add in higher energy prices, and everything changes. Even with Truss's new measures, just 2% of his group can survive financially. The other 98% are wiped out. Years of reporting have shown me that the very poor are the best budgeters in the country – better than any pinstriped auditor. They can account for every pound in and every pound out. Come 1 October, they will have no margin to cushion them.

And so they will sink into the depths beneath any safety net. Meanwhile, others will float above the law of the land. It has not been widely reported, but King Charles won't have to pay a penny of inheritance tax on the vast estate passed to him by one of the wealthiest women in the world. Nor is he under any legal obligation to pay [income tax](#); he does so voluntarily. This has been the arrangement only since 1993. For decades beforehand, the monarchy paid no tax at all.

When that came to light, the public outcry, coupled with the anger of ordinary taxpayers asked to stump up for repairs to Windsor Castle, forced the Queen and her eldest son to rethink their affairs. When John Major [announced this deal](#) in the Commons, he defended the lack of inheritance tax as being in the service of “the overwhelming wish of people in this country”. The people in this country were, of course, never asked.

When Dennis Skinner asked on which portion of her assets – which, in today's figures, include the £16bn crown estate, the £650m duchy of Lancaster, and the estates at Balmoral and Sandringham – would be taxed, Major saw red. Only the fact that it was Skinner's birthday, he replied, stopped him from responding “in the beastly way in which I would otherwise have responded to the ludicrous question that he asked me”. The self-styled boy from Brixton has, inevitably, placed himself at the very forefront of this week's National Grovel.

Yet the former MP for Bolsover asked exactly the right question, about how far the constitutional monarchy was answerable to her democracy – and the real answer is that, despite what the textbooks say, our parliamentary democracy remains accountable to the royal family. As my colleagues Rob Evans and David Pegg have revealed over the years, more than 1,000 laws

have been vetted by the Queen or Charles before they were even put in front of parliament.

Under the procedure of Queen's or King's consent, ministers alert the monarch to any draft bill that might affect their private wealth. Since their assets span everything from country estates to housing, much of which the public don't even know about, that grants them a huge amount of power over the very process of drafting the laws that govern the rest of us.

Prefer not to sell your houses, [Charles](#)? Then your tenants will just have to tolerate this 21st-century feudalism. Don't want those pipelines running through your land in Scotland, ma'am? Then you will be exempt from the law covering everyone else – and no one at Holyrood will be told, until they read it in [the Guardian](#).

“Do you know that there is a duke in Scotland who can ride ninety miles without leaving his own estate?” asks a character in Victor Hugo's 1869 novel [The Man Who Laughs](#). “Do you know that Her Majesty has £700,000 sterling from the civil list, besides castles, forests, domains, fiefs, tenancies, freeholds, prebendaries, tithes, rent, confiscations, and fines, which bring in over a million sterling?”

“Yes,” comes the reply. “The paradise of the rich is made out of the hell of the poor.”

One law for King Charles the billionaire, another for you. Bailiffs for the poorest in society, privileged exemption for the very richest. A society with all the latest technology and sophistication, yet still in the shadow of medieval feudalism. Except even John of Gaunt couldn't have counted on the unstinting support of the Daily Mail.

Aditya Chakraborty is a Guardian columnist

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[Opinion](#)[Jean-Luc Godard](#)

## Jean-Luc Godard's films teach us to demand more from the lives we're given

[Lynsey Hanley](#).



The work of the French-Swiss director, who died this week, is playful – but deadly serious about what life is for



‘Jean-Luc Godard understood better than most how to cut through confining narratives – sometimes literally, as when Anna Karina (above) studiously slices the air with a big pair of scissors in *Pierrot le Fou*.’ Photograph: Ronald Grant Archive

Thu 15 Sep 2022 03.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 15 Sep 2022 04.01 EDT

According to Jean-Luc Godard, movies give us “truth at 24 frames per second”. If you watch the films of the French-Swiss director, who [died this week](#) aged 91, you’ll understand what he means, though not in the most obvious ways. His work taught me as much about how truths are messed about, obfuscated and subverted in our age of mass media as any academic writing has done, not least because I was able to watch it at home on television.

I came to Godard’s films in my late teens, as a first-generation student raised on whatever was showing on The Four TV Channels. That very lack of choice made what was shown all the more significant. It helped that there was an evident attempt to avoid medium-brow sludge, and instead offer a little bit of everything.

From watching documentaries by [Roger Graef](#) and [Mike Dibb](#) you were able to develop a love for realism in TV and film without even realising it; Alan

Bleasdale's Boys from the Blackstuff, which made my dad cry, was as funny and wacky as it was utterly truthful. What this hodgepodge gave me, and many others around my age, was a healthy disrespect for cultural boundaries: so would you if you'd grown up watching Seaside Special – a hideous end-of-pier variety show – and the longform arts strand Arena on the same night.

When I left home to go to university, watching Godard's films late at night on Channel 4, with no video recorder and nothing else on worth watching, was my supplementary education.

Some of Godard's films are intensely watchable, others barely so, but it was his understanding of the collective compulsion to make sense of imagery that counted most. The seven-minute scene tracking a mile-long traffic jam in 1967's Week-end might drive you mad, but that's the whole point: the whole car system is mad, as is spending most of the time when you're not at work stuck in it. Why does [Jean-Paul Belmondo](#) paint his face blue in the intensely romantic Pierrot le Fou, from 1965? Because his dream has failed, so why not?

Godard knew exactly what he was doing: not just because of his training as a critic, for the film magazine Cahiers du Cinéma, but because of his pure love for, and absorption in, cinema. When he came to make A Bout de Souffle (Breathless) in 1959, Godard had already spent years poking a stick at the dullard French film establishment, which to him and other critics such as his mentor André Bazin, and writer-filmmakers François Truffaut and Éric Rohmer, sought to trap France in a ludicrously false – not to mention dangerous – nostalgia.

Godard understood better than most how to cut through comforting and confining narratives – sometimes literally, as when his great star and collaborator [Anna Karina](#) studiously slices the air with a big pair of scissors in Pierrot le Fou. That film's radiant repetition of the French tricolore – right down to Belmondo's red shirt and blue-painted face – remakes the flag at the same time as cutting it up. You don't have to do things the same way, over again, he suggested: what is youth for if not to inject life, culture, society, with new energy?

You wouldn't always want to follow him down every path he took – 1967's *La Chinoise* categorically didn't turn me into a Maoist – but what mattered is that by viewing his films you were made aware that such paths existed.

This matters now, at a time when we can have, in Bruce Springsteen's words, "57 channels and nothin' on", even though the world we live in requires arguably more scrutiny and sense-making than ever before. Godard enthusiastically took up the role of guide to the postwar landscape of leisure, youth culture and mass disaffection, and the continual struggle to get France and the US, in particular, to acknowledge their addiction to violent domination.

At their best, his films fizz with commitment to the idea of reaching beyond what's in front of you – beyond what you're presented with – towards what you hope for. They are playful in the very best sense: never frivolous or glib, but rather, deadly serious about what life is for and the forces designed to keep us from realising what it's really all about. You'd never guess it from the way Godard's detractors go at him, lazily, for his un-watchability and political missteps. The message of his work is that life has to be grabbed and made joyful with every new moment: *il faut*, as Sartre would say. You must.

- Lynsey Hanley is a freelance writer and the author of *Estates: an Intimate History* and *Respectable: Crossing the Class Divide*

[Nils Pratley on finance](#)**Business**

## The EU's energy windfall tax gives UK ministers a yardstick for their talks

[Nils Pratley](#).



The government has scope to craft a more finely tuned package by negotiating wholesale prices on a fuel-by-fuel basis





A construction site in Le Havre, France, for the Fecamp offshore windfarm.  
Photograph: Ludovic Marin/AFP/Getty Images

Wed 14 Sep 2022 14.30 EDTLast modified on Wed 14 Sep 2022 17.08 EDT

The European Union's big move on energy companies' excess profits arrived with a big number: [€140bn \(£121bn\) to be raised via a windfall tax](#), with the lion's share coming from generators who are the accidental beneficiaries of high gas prices. Does it put the UK's efforts to shame?

Well, up to a point. The EU has definitely been bolder in making its levy on generators upfront and compulsory: a revenue cap will be set at €180 a megawatt hour, with the excess going to member states. Assuming the proposal is adopted, there will be no wriggle room.

But the obvious drawback is that the EU hasn't designed its measures on a fuel-by-fuel basis. A cap at €180 squeezes coal plants whose input costs have also risen, but it is still extremely generous towards nuclear plants and windfarms, whose costs are fixed and substantially lower. Member states can set lower thresholds if they wish, but that's for the future.

The UK's non-windfall tax approach, remember, is to negotiate with nuclear, wind, solar and biomass generators to secure lower wholesale energy prices

quickly – albeit at the risk, as many have pointed out, of giving away too much future value via new contracts for difference.

“If I was sitting in Whitehall preparing to negotiate with the UK companies, I would be pleased that the EU has done it,” says independent energy analyst Peter Atherton. “But I would be worried that they have set the cap so high, and not designed it on a fuel-by-fuel basis.”

In other words, there is now a read-across figure for the UK to aim at. But there is still scope to craft a more finely tuned package that applies different prices to different forms of local generation. We’re not much further on: UK ministers still need to be aggressive – and transparent – in their deal-making.

## **Why Fundsmith’s emerging markets trust failed to find its feet**

Fund manager Terry Smith has a good line in cycling analogies for investors, one of which flows from the observation that the Tour de France has never been won, and never will be, by a rider who wins all 21 stages. Some stages suit sprinters; climbers dominate others, and there are usually a couple of individual time trials.

In the same way, it’s pointless to hunt for a fund manager capable of outperforming under all conditions. Best to look for qualities of endurance. In his £23.5bn Fundsmith Equity fund, that is exactly what Smith has displayed: an average annual return of 16% since launch in 2010, even if a few punctures have been suffered in the past year. (Disclosure: I am an investor.)

Investors in the separate Fundsmith Emerging Equities trust (Feet), on the other hand, have had a very different experience. This is the emerging markets investment trust launched in 2014. It has never produced the goods. An annualised increase in net asset value of 4.5% isn’t appalling, but it is definitely mediocre.

Indeed, it is so mediocre that, highly unusually in the fund management world, Smith is in effect sacking himself. Feet’s portfolio will be liquidated

and the cash returned to investors. The move is embarrassing for Smith, but one admires the willingness to concede the lack of an investment edge. With assets worth £340m, the trust is a tiddler versus the main fund, but Smith's management firm will still say goodbye to about £3m in annual fees.

Why did Feet fall flat? Smith answered the question himself a few years ago when he said every investment decision in an emerging market involves making a macro-judgment on factors such as currencies. Macro is not his specialism; picking winners from a tightly defined pool of large companies with high returns on capital is, as the main fund's performance shows. At Feet, he was a cyclist trying to play a different sport, as he should probably have realised at the outset.

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## Upfront communication required at Naked Wines

Naked Wines connects wine drinkers with winemakers, according to the blurb. What the e-commerce outfit doesn't do, it seems, is connect with its poor old shareholders, who were left to try to decipher two cryptic after-hours announcements on Tuesday.

The first hinted at a new strategy but added an alarming line about "active discussions to address our credit facility to reflect any revised plan". The second said a non-executive director, representing a 10% shareholder, had resigned with immediate effect after only three weeks in post; no reason was given.

Naked is listed on the Alternative Investment Market, where disclosure obligations sometimes feel like whatever the company chooses to say. Even so, this degree of confusing communication is absurd. The shares plunged by a third. Naked's chairman, Darryl Rawlings, needs to find his clothes and start explaining.

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## [OpinionTravel](#)

# I had such bad car sickness as a kid that the mere smell of Dad's Volvo would set me off

[Adrian Chiles](#)



As I stopped in a layby recently, the memories flooded back. No trip to Wales was complete without me throwing up



‘The A491 layby incident stuck in my mind because we were barely five minutes into the journey.’ Photograph: djedzura/Getty Images/iStockphoto/posed by model

Thu 15 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 15 Sep 2022 13.49 EDT

In order to free the dog from a tangle he had got himself into on the back seat, I stopped in a layby last weekend, on the A491 just off the M5. A strong memory stirred. Ah yes, I vomited here once. I was a kid, in the back of my dad’s car, on the regular drive from the West Midlands to our caravan in south Wales. I was always, but always, car sick. On a good day, I’d make it well into Wales, even surviving the then tortuous Heads of the Valleys road but, one way or another, before journey’s end, there would be an incident. A wail from me, a curse from Dad, a screech of brakes, a leap from Mum out of the front seat to open the back door for me to stagger out and heave. The whole operation was as slick as a Formula One pit stop. The A491 layby puke stuck in my mind because it was my quickest ever on that journey; we were barely five minutes into it. “Not already, surely,” moaned my dad. Oh yes. Curse, screech, door, heave and we were on the road again. It was good to get it out the way early doors, I suppose we thought.

Whatever happened to car sickness? Is it still a thing? A doctor tells me that the meds are a lot more effective now. Kids these days don’t know they’re born. The tablets I was given – Sea-Legs, I think they were called – weren’t

much help. All in all, the whole business blighted my childhood. It got to the stage where the mere smell of my dad's Volvo was enough to turn my stomach. My poor parents. One time we couldn't safely stop, and all my mum had to hand was a paper bag. She got it to me just in time. We had two seconds to breathe sighs of relief before the sodden bottom of the bag gave way, depositing its cargo all over my lap. Where were you when Elvis died? I know where I was. I was bent double on a grass verge in the car park at Strensham services with my mum holding my forehead. Oh, the memories.

- Adrian Chiles is a broadcaster, writer and Guardian columnist

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## 2022.09.15 - Around the world

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- [Ethereum Cryptocurrency completes move to cut CO2 output by 99%](#)



## [New Zealand](#)

# Woman arrested in South Korea over alleged murder of two children found in suitcases in New Zealand

Police in Auckland request extradition of 42-year-old woman to face two charges of murder



Police investigators work at a scene in New Zealand where two children's bodies were discovered in suitcases in August. A woman has been arrested in South Korea over the alleged murders. Photograph: Dean Purcell/AP

[Tess McClure](#)

[@tessairini](#)

Wed 14 Sep 2022 18.38 EDTFirst published on Wed 14 Sep 2022 18.28 EDT

A 42-year-old woman has been arrested in [South Korea](#) for the alleged murder of two children whose bodies were discovered in suitcases bought at

an auction in New Zealand.

South Korean authorities arrested the woman today on a Korean arrest warrant for two charges of murder.

The remains of the [two young children](#), who were aged about five and 10, were concealed in the suitcases for a number of years before an Auckland family unsuspectingly bought the luggage in a storage facility's online auction. They transported their purchases home before making the discovery and contacting police on 11 August.

New Zealand police requested the arrest warrant for the woman under the country's extradition treaty with South Korea, and have applied to have the woman extradited back to [New Zealand](#) to face charges.

The South Korean national police agency said a woman had been arrested at 1am in an apartment in Ulsan city.

The unidentified woman covered her face with the hood of her coat as officers escorted her outside an Ulsan police station and put her in a car headed for the capital, Seoul.

She will undergo a review at the Seoul high court over whether she should be extradited, said Park Seung-hoon, an official at the National Police Agency. Park said a date hadn't yet been set but the review must take place within two months.

The children cannot be named due to a suppression order. In late August, [police said they had identified a woman](#) who they believed to be a family member of the two children. The woman, a Korean-born New Zealander, had arrived in South Korea in 2018 and had no record of departure since then, a police officer told Reuters at the time.

Det Insp Tofilau Fa'amanuia Vaaelua said on Thursday that the woman's arrest was a result of international cooperation. "To have someone in custody overseas within such a short period of time has all been down to the

assistance of the Korean authorities and the coordination by our NZ Police Interpol staff,” Vaaelua said.

They acknowledged the “overwhelming support from the public since the commencement of a very challenging investigation”.

New Zealand authorities have requested that the woman remain in South Korean custody until the completion of the extradition process.

The distressing case has been high profile in New Zealand. Vaaelua said in August, when the age of the victims was revealed, that it was “extremely upsetting for the community”.

“No matter how long or how many years you serve and investigate horrific cases like this, it is never any easier to do.”

- *A previous version of this story said the woman had been arrested in Seoul. Korean police said on Thursday that she was arrested in the southern city of Ulsan.*

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## [France](#)

# Prosecutors urged to examine French role in Egyptian airstrikes on civilians

NGOs want investigation into border counter-terrorism operation that allegedly ended up bombing suspected smugglers



The French president, Emmanuel Macron, shaking hands with the Egyptian president, Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, in Paris this summer. Photograph: Antoine Gyori/Corbis/Getty Images

[Patrick Wintour](#) *Diplomatic editor*

Thu 15 Sep 2022 00.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Sep 2022 06.47 EDT

Two international NGOs have asked French prosecutors and the UN to investigate the French state's involvement in [Egypt](#) allegedly committing crimes against humanity in a secret military operation on the Egyptian-Libyan border.

A 2021 leak appeared to show how French officers complained they were being asked to facilitate Egyptian airstrikes, codenamed Operation Sirli, on the Egyptian-Libyan border, even though the original counter-terrorism purpose had been subverted by the Egyptian military into taking out vehicles containing nothing more than contraband. Dozens are estimated to have been killed or injured. The story was first revealed by the French investigative site Disclose.

The complaint was filed to the French national anti-terrorist prosecutor's office, on behalf of the US-based NGOs Egyptians Abroad for Democracy and Codepink, on Monday, the UK-based barrister Haydee Dijkstal told the Guardian.

The NGOs want the French judiciary to investigate French officials' complicity in committing crimes against civilians by providing assistance to the Egyptian authorities through information, aerial surveillance and intelligence, and then not ending the assistance once it became clear Egypt was not using the information for counter-terrorism purposes, but instead to bomb alleged traffickers in drugs and contraband.

The complaint claims "the targeted attacks that resulted in the systematic killing and wounding of civilians suspected of smuggling and unrelated to terrorism in (the Egyptian Western desert), constitute crimes against humanity".

The NGOs also referred the matter to three UN special rapporteurs to "take steps to obtain additional information on the targeted attacks, including through a visit to Egypt".

Operation Sirli was a now confirmed but then secret intelligence mission launched by [France](#) in February 2016 to secure Egypt's porous 745-mile (1,200km) border with Libya and prevent any eventual terrorist threat. The initial deal, which was important to French efforts to cement relations with its security partner Egypt, was signed by the then French defence minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, but was known to successive French presidents.

According to confidential defence documents the French military intelligence directorate (DRM) leaked in 2021, the Egyptian forces changed the original mission so that hundreds of vehicles were targeted by airstrikes causing countless deaths and injuries. The initial disclosure of the documents led to a French government inquiry, but the internal investigation turned into an examination of the source of the leak, and not what the leak disclosed. An attempt by leftwing deputies inside the national assembly to launch an inquiry by politicians foundered.

The documents show French soldiers sent to Egypt between 2016 and 2019 alerted their superiors on four different occasions in military intelligence to the concern about the airstrikes against civilians accused of drug smuggling. One of the leaked emails said the French unit “remains very vigilant but nevertheless worried about the use made of [information] for [targeting] purposes”. Another email said the vehicles were linked with “simple Bedouin smuggling”. The strikes on hundreds of vehicles were carried out by Egyptian F-16s.

The French defence ministry has defended the Sirli mission and clarified that it was “subject to a clear framework and strict preventive measures”.

Le Drian acknowledged the security cooperation with the Egyptian authorities, while affirming that “the data exchange process is constructed in such a way that it cannot be used to guide strikes”.

The complaint to the French prosecutor is intended to secure a reference for a magistrate to investigate the case, so ending what the NGOs describe as the impunity of those as yet unidentified but responsible in the French government over what amounts to a crime of torture.

The reference to the three special UN rapporteurs operating in this field claims Egypt mounted attacks on individuals unrelated to terrorism, so violating their human rights, and requiring an investigation by the UN human rights council.

Dijkstal said the location data collected by the French led to hundreds of people being killed and injured without any recourse to trial, and more

recently their families had been deprived of any justice. “In the name of terrorism, ordinary people ... were targeted.”

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## Indiana

# Democrats call Indiana's near-total abortion ban a 'death sentence'

Law, which takes effect today, contains narrow exceptions and effectively wipes out abortion access for 1.5m people in the state



Pro-choice protesters march between the Indiana statehouse and the Indiana state library on 25 July. Photograph: Michael Conroy/AP

[\*Poppy Noor\*](#)  
[@PoppyNoor](#)

Thu 15 Sep 2022 13.27 EDTFirst published on Thu 15 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT

As Indiana's near-total abortion ban went into effect on Thursday, Democratic lawmakers announced their dismay, referring to the ban as a "death sentence".

The bill, SB 1, contains only extremely narrow exceptions in which abortions may now be performed – with abortions for rape and incest capped



at 10 weeks; only to be delivered in hospitals; and limiting the procedure to medical emergencies.

“Hoosier women have lost a fundamental right to privacy in medical decisions with this near total ban, which is extremely cruel,” said Representative Sue Errington of the 34th district in Indiana. “I’m old enough to remember before Roe v Wade. And I know that laws like this only ban safe legal abortion. Women are going to suffer, and some will die from this,” she said.

Errington, who tried to bring a referendum on abortion in Indiana this year, said the bill was hugely out of step with what Hoosiers want. The Republican party’s own polling from late June, before they signed the bill into law, showed most people in [Indiana do not support a total ban](#) on abortion.

The ban is being challenged in court by the ACLU and several abortion care providers, with hearings set to start on 19 September.

“The basic right we all believe we possess is to be able to control our bodies and make decisions for ourselves surrounding reproductive issues, without interference from the state,” said Ken Falk, of the ACLU. “But what the state is saying here, is, ‘we don’t care that your pregnancy is going to cause you severe mental harms or physical problems, you just can’t have an abortion’.”

Indiana lawmakers passed the legislation during a special legislative session in early August, with a six-week pause before it came into effect.

Earlier this week [West Virginia followed](#) and also passed a sweeping ban.

The law effectively wipes out abortion access for 1.5 million Hoosiers of reproductive age, and will have far-reaching consequences as Indiana had become a safe haven for those seeking abortion in other nearby states.

Now, residents in places like Wisconsin and Kentucky, which have total or near-total abortion bans in place, will have to travel hundreds of miles for

the procedure. Meanwhile, other midwestern states, like Michigan, [will put abortion rights directly to the public in a ballot in November](#).

“The impact is going to be felt suddenly. But its true force is going to be felt over the years to come,” said the Indiana state senator Shelli Yoder. “We continue to hear from healthcare providers that they are second-guessing whether or not they should practice in Indiana because the way the law is written, it puts their profession and their license at severe risk.”

The Indiana law is an all-encompassing abortion ban with some extreme restrictions. It limits abortions to cases where there is serious risk to the health or life of the pregnant person, and in the case of a lethal fetal anomaly up to 20 weeks post-fertilization.

Similar abortion restrictions in other states have already [put lives at risk](#), which is of huge concern in Indiana, which has some of the [worst maternal and infant mortality rates in the US](#).

Because of those restrictions, Yoder said she believed the bill was anything but pro-life. “It’s totally hypocritical,” she said. “You would think that if a state is going to pronounce they are a pro-life, that we would have a support network in place to actually help those living there.”

Furthermore, she said exceptions allowing abortions in the case of rape or incest will cause more grief – because of a clause that caps them after 10 weeks of pregnancy.

“This bill says, we are only going to give full constitutional rights to women if their very life is threatened, or they are a victim of rape. Then those women and girls have just 10 weeks to come to terms with the assault, being pregnant by their assaulter, and sorting through that trauma,” Yoder said.

Other experts have said parts of that stipulate abortions must be performed in hospitals or surgical centers owned by hospitals are going to have huge knock on effects.

“Historically, in recent years, almost all abortions have taken place in clinics. It’s not clear how many hospitals in Indiana will even choose to

make abortions available,” says Mary Ziegler, a US abortion law expert from the University of California, Davis.

“Many hospitals have religious policies that are opposed to abortion. So requiring all abortions to be performed in this handful of facilities will make it more likely there’ll be fewer abortions altogether,” she said.

Ziegler says the law is just the latest in a set of attempts by lawmakers to change the national conversation around abortion.

“States that are criminalizing abortion are trying to create a new framework. It’s a conscious effort to say, ‘we shouldn’t be thinking of abortion as healthcare, we should be thinking of abortion as a crime,’ she said. “The more people in states hear that kind of argument and see things framed that way by people in power, the more some of them will come to believe it,” said Ziegler.

- This story was updated on 15 September 2022 to remove Ohio from the list of states with current near-total abortion bans, following a state court suspension of the measure.

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## [Shell](#)

# Shell appoints Wael Sawan to replace outgoing chief Ben van Beurden

Energy firm's head of integrated gas and renewables division will take overall control from 1 January



Shell's chief, Ben van Beurden, is preparing to step down next year after almost a decade in the role. Photograph: Benoît Tessier/Reuters

[Mark Sweney](#)

[@marksweney](#)

Thu 15 Sep 2022 07.51 EDTFirst published on Thu 15 Sep 2022 02.49 EDT

[Shell](#) has appointed Wael Sawan, a 25-year company veteran, as successor to Ben van Beurden, the company's longstanding chief executive.

Van Beurden, who has led the energy company for almost a decade, is stepping down at the end of the year. Reports of [his planned departure](#)

emerged earlier this month, and Sawan was considered then the frontrunner to take the top job.

As Shell's current head of integrated gas and renewables division, Sawan oversees its push into low-carbon energies as well as its giant gas business.

"It's been a privilege to work alongside Ben and I'm honoured to take over the leadership of this great company from him," Sawan said. "We will be disciplined and value-focused, as we work with our customers and partners to deliver the reliable, affordable and cleaner energy the world needs."

Sawan, born in Beirut with dual Lebanese and Canadian nationality, will officially take over as chief executive from 1 January, at which point he will also join Shell's board.

"The outcome of the board's managed succession process resulted both in the appointment of an outstanding chief executive and proved the strength and depth of Shell's leadership talent," said Sir Andrew Mackenzie, the chairman of Shell.

The appointment of Sawan, who was reportedly one of four internal candidates in the running for the top job, is being viewed as a signal that Shell intends to increase its focus on transitioning to a renewable energy business.

"For a group whose renewable strategy has been somewhat vague, though grand sounding, this is a clear marker that Shell intends to change this," said Sophie Lund-Yates, the lead equity analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown.

"Change won't happen overnight, but it's reasonable to think that at least tweaks to the existing renewable strategy could be on the cards."

The company's renewables and energy solutions division, which includes businesses such as renewable electricity generation and hydrogen, accounts for about 12% of Shell's \$23bn to \$27bn capital expenditure this year.

However, this division does not include other businesses such as electric vehicle charging and low carbon fuels such as biofuels and sustainable

aviation fuels.

Shell has said more than 35% of its operating and capital expenditure this year will be on producing low-carbon energy and non-energy products that reduce emissions – from EV charging and low carbon fuels to chemicals and lubricants – with a plan to increase that to 50% by 2025.

Van Beurden, 64, who has been at Shell for almost four decades, will continue to work in an advisory role to the board until the end of June.

“Ben can look back with great pride on an extraordinary 39-year Shell career, culminating in nine years as an exceptional chief executive,” Mackenzie said. “He leaves a financially strong and profitable company with a robust balance sheet, very strong cash generation capability and a compelling set of options for growth.”

During his time as chief executive he oversaw one of the company’s biggest acquisitions in decades, [buying BG Group for \\$53bn](#) (£46bn) in 2016, which gave Shell a much bigger position in gas that has paid off handsomely as prices have soared, and recently orchestrated the relocation of the company’s headquarters from the Netherlands to London.

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Van Beurden has presided over two plunges in Shell’s market value – in 2014 and 2020 – related to sharp falls in the oil market.

However, the energy crisis has proved a boon for oil and gas companies with Shell reporting [record adjusted profits of \\$11.5bn](#) in the three months to the

end of June.

Shell's profits, which has a market value of more than £170bn, beat its previous high – set between January and March – by 26% and were more than double the same period last year.

Van Beurden, who was [paid €7.4m \(£6.1m\) in 2021](#), warned in August that gas shortages in Europe would [probably last several years](#), raising the prospect of continued energy rationing.

Russ Mould, the investment director at AJ Bell, said: “Van Beurden has managed to navigate the company through some uncertain times as the world went ESG-crazy [environmental, social and governance] and businesses in the oil and gas industry were viewed as toxic entities not fit for the modern world.

“He has helped to steer Shell towards renewable energy while at the same time capitalising on the sudden surge in the oil price as the world emerged from the pandemic and the Ukraine crisis sent ripples through the energy sector.

“His resignation comes as Shell's share price returns to pre-pandemic levels, illustrating how he has steadied the ship and now seems as good a time as any to pass the baton to a new leader.”

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## [Cryptocurrencies](#)

# Ethereum cryptocurrency completes move to cut CO2 output by 99%

Software upgrade, known as ‘the merge’, will change how transactions are managed on its blockchain

[How does ethereum’s ‘merge’ make the cryptocurrency greener?](#)



Vitalik Buterin, the creator of ethereum, has steered the cryptocurrency’s method of validation from ‘proof of work’ to ‘proof of stake’. Photograph: Yonhap/EPA

[Dan Milmo](#) *Global technology editor*

Thu 15 Sep 2022 05.27 EDT Last modified on Thu 15 Sep 2022 14.48 EDT

Ethereum, the second largest cryptocurrency, has completed a plan to reduce its carbon emissions by more than 99%.



The software upgrade, known as “the merge”, will change how transactions are managed on the ethereum blockchain, a public and decentralised ledger that underpins the cryptocurrency and generates ether tokens, the world’s most popular cryptocurrency after bitcoin.

Vitalik Buterin, ethereum’s inventor, announced the completion of the plan on Twitter on Thursday morning, tweeting “Happy merge all”.

And we finalized!

Happy merge all. This is a big moment for the Ethereum ecosystem. Everyone who helped make the merge happen should feel very proud today.

— vitalik.eth (@VitalikButerin) [September 15, 2022](#)

The move means that ethereum will no longer be created by an energy intensive process known as “mining”, where banks of computers generate random numbers that validate transactions on the blockchain and generate new ether tokens as part of the process. The process, known as “proof of work” in the cryptocurrency world, will now move to a “proof of stake” system, where individuals and companies act as validators, pledging or “staking” their own ether as a form of guarantee, to win newly created tokens.

Ethereum mining used up as much electricity as Austria, according to the Digiconomist website, at 72 terawatt-hours a year. Alex de Vries, the economist behind the website, estimates that the merge will reduce the carbon emissions linked to ethereum by more than 99%.

De Vries added that the move could represent 0.2% of the world’s electricity consumption disappearing overnight. However, he said bitcoin remained the biggest single contributor to the crypto world’s carbon footprint.

“All eyes will be on bitcoin. It remains the largest polluter in the crypto space. Even today bitcoin is responsible for as much electricity consumption as Sweden. And we know that’s not going to change,” said De Vries.

Ethereum rose 2% to \$1,630 (£1,417) after the move, according to website coinmarketcap, valuing the currency at just under \$200bn. Bitcoin's market cap is worth \$387bn, having fallen sharply from its [peak of more than \\$1tn last year](#).

Carol Alexander, professor of finance at University of Sussex Business School, said the merge was a significant event for the crypto industry

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“The merge is the most important event in blockchain history,” she said. “In my opinion, today marks the beginning of the end of bitcoin's dominance over crypto assets. Ethereum is achieving something that bitcoin never could because bitcoin is a purely speculative asset and its mining network would never agree to drop that source of income.”

Alexander added that the ethereum blockchain is a key feature of the web3 world - a catch-all term for the latest iteration of the internet - including its role as a base for non-fungible tokens. “It powers the smart contract transactions on Ethereum that underpin web3 and therefore the digital economy today.”

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# Headlines

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## [Sweden](#)

# Swedish election: far right makes gains but overall result on knife-edge

Sweden Democrats become second biggest party after vote on Sunday

- [Who is Jimmie Åkesson, leader of the Sweden Democrats?](#)

Swedish right opposition inches ahead in election cliff-hanger – video

[David Crouch](#) in Gothenburg

Mon 12 Sep 2022 04.46 EDTFirst published on Sun 11 Sep 2022 15.27 EDT

The far-right [Sweden](#) Democrats party was the big winner in the country's election on Sunday, increasing its share of the vote by two to three percentage points and becoming the second largest party, but the overall result was too close to call as counting continued.

With 95% of votes counted, the rightwing bloc had 49.7% of the vote, which would give it a majority of one seat in parliament over the incumbent leftwing bloc.

Exit polls on Sunday night at first suggested a narrow victory for the Social Democrats and their centre-left allies. But as the votes were counted the tally swung towards the right.

A conclusive result may not be known until votes from Swedes living abroad are counted in the middle of the week, while the closeness of the race may yet complicate the formation of a working government.

The leader of the Sweden Democrats said early on Monday that the rightwing bloc was likely heading for victory. "Right now it looks like there

will be a change of power,” Jimmie Åkesson said in a speech to party members.

The incumbent Social Democrat prime minister, Magdalena Andersson, told cheering supporters on Sunday night: “We’re not going to have a final result tonight”, Andersson, 55, called on Swedes to “have patience” and “let democracy run its course”.

The prospect that the far-right Sweden Democrats, who appeared to take more than 20% of the poll, may for the first time achieve direct influence over government policy marks a seismic shift in a country far better known for its liberal traditions.

The SD emerged from Sweden’s neo-Nazi movement in the mid-1990s and still struggles to shake off accusations of extremism. It was treated as a pariah by other parties, but three years ago, the centre-right Moderate party embraced cooperation with the far right.

The SD has increased its vote at each of the past nine general elections. Its leaders are demanding ministerial office, but the other three parties in the bloc have said they will not invite the party into government itself. However, the SD’s position as the largest party on the right places them in a strong position.

“The SD is currently by far the biggest party in the world with Nazi roots,” said Tobias Hübinette, lecturer in intercultural studies at Karlstad University and a leading anti-racist.

“Even if the party officially condemns its own race ideological roots, this background is today still present in the sense that the SD is still ... seeing itself as the only political force that can save the native white Swedish majority population.”

Åkesson told a crowd of cheering supporters on Sunday evening: “Our goal is to sit in government. Our goal is a majority government. It’s looking pretty damn good now.”

The party secretary, Richard Jomshof, told public television SVT he “didn’t believe” other parties would be able to freeze out the Sweden Democrats again and expected to have a strong influence on the country’s politics. “We are so big now ... it is clear we should have a spot on parliamentary committees,” he said.

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He said the party had “a chance to be an active part of a government that would move politics in a completely different direction”.

At the height of the campaign, the SD billed a metro train decorated in its electoral colours as the “repatriation express”. “Welcome aboard with a one-way ticket. Next stop, Kabul,” [tweeted](#) the party’s legal spokesperson, highlighting the SD’s demand to remove non-European immigrants.

The election has revealed Sweden to be a nation deeply ill at ease with immigration, with the SD able to exploit fears over violent crime. Voter concerns such as energy price rises, failing schools and long queues for healthcare were drowned out by a relentless focus on immigration and crime.

The campaign was punctuated by further incidents of gang violence, the prevalence of which during the past five years – and the failure of government and the police to prevent them – has helped the SD to cement support for its central message that immigration is to blame.

Two weeks ago, a woman and her five-year-old child were injured after being caught in crossfire in Eskilstuna, west of Stockholm. In Malmö a week

earlier, a 15-year-old boy shot dead a gang leader in a shopping mall. The number of fatal shootings rose sharply to 34 in the first six months of this year, [up from 20 in the same period of 2021](#).

Party leaders on both left and right linked the rise in violent crime with large-scale immigration, which has led to high levels of segregation along ethnic lines in the housing and jobs markets. In the space of a few decades, Sweden has become one of the most multicultural societies in Europe, with [more than a third of the population](#) having been born abroad or having a parent who was born abroad. About 30% of children do not have Swedish as their mother tongue, rising to 45% in parts of the cities.

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## [Sweden](#)

# Jimmie Åkesson: who is the leader of the far-right Sweden Democrats?

The 43-year-old has overseen a makeover of his party, vowing to rid itself of its racist and violent roots



Jimmie Åkesson at the SD party's election celebrations in Nacka, near Stockholm, on Sunday evening. Photograph: Stefan Jerrevång/AP

[David Crouch](#) in Gothenburg

Mon 12 Sep 2022 04.30 EDTLast modified on Mon 12 Sep 2022 19.00 EDT

The leader of the far-right [Sweden](#) Democrats, 43-year-old Jimmie Åkesson, joined the party in 1990s, helping to form a youth group in his home town of Sölvesborg.

In 2002, he became the leader of Sweden Democrats' national youth organisation, then took over the SD party leadership in 2005, when voter support was steadily about 1%.



Åkesson was raised in a middle-class family with an entrepreneur father and a mother who worked as a nursing assistant in Sölvesborg, a town of 9,000 people in southern Sweden. It was there, in rural Scania's small towns and farmsteads, that SD built its stronghold, amid concerns about the heavily immigrant-populated city of Malmö nearby.

After leaving school, Åkesson studied political science in Lund, where he linked up with [what came to be known as the “Gang of Four”](#) with future party leaders Richard Jomshof, Mattias Karlsson and Björn Söder, who went on to build the party's electoral base around the message that Sweden's peaceful welfare state had been destroyed by Muslim immigration.

The party underwent a major makeover under Åkesson's leadership, replacing its blue-and-yellow torch logo with an anemone, and vowing to rid itself of its racist and violent roots.

The party won 5.7% of votes when it entered parliament in 2010, 12.9% in 2014, when it became Sweden's third-biggest party in parliament, and 17.5% in 2018. Its rise has come alongside heavy immigration in Sweden. The country of 10.3 million people has welcomed about half a million asylum seekers in the past decade.

Swedish right opposition inches ahead in election cliff-hanger – video

The party continued to be dogged by accusations of harbouring violent racists and swastika-wearing Nazi sympathisers. In October 2012, Åkesson introduced “zero tolerance against racism and extremism” in the party.

In 2015, he excluded the entire Sweden Democrat youth organisation because of its links with extremists. Critics say, however, that only low-level party members have since been purged, while those higher up the party hierarchy have escaped censure.

References to the importance of “inherited essence”, which smacked of 1930s race biology, were scrapped from the party's programme only in 2019.

In a [debate article in 2009](#), Åkesson claimed that Muslim immigration to Sweden was “our biggest foreign threat since the second world war”.

*Agence France-Presse contributed to this report*

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## [Islam](#)

# British Muslims' citizenship reduced to 'second-class' status, says thinktank

Recently extended powers to strip people of their nationality almost exclusively targets Muslims, report says



Muslim friends walking. The report cited the Prevent programme, which has been dogged by claims of being a cover to spy on Muslim communities. Photograph: MBI/Alamy

[Haroon Siddique](#) *Legal affairs correspondent*

Sun 11 Sep 2022 14.40 EDTLast modified on Sun 11 Sep 2022 17.01 EDT

British Muslims have had their citizenship reduced to “second-class” status as a result of recently extended powers to strip people of their nationality, a thinktank has claimed.

The Institute of [Race](#) Relations (IRR) says the targets of such powers are almost exclusively Muslims, mostly of south Asian heritage, embedding

discrimination and creating a lesser form of citizenship.

The IRR's report [was published](#) on Sunday amid renewed controversy over the case of [Shamima Begum](#), who was smuggled into the hands of [Islamic State](#) aged 15, and in the wake of the Nationality and Borders Act – that allowed [citizenship to be stripped without notifying the subject](#), coming on to the statute books.

Frances Webber, IRR vice-chair and report author, wrote: “The message sent by the legislation on deprivation of citizenship since 2002 and its implementation largely against British Muslims of south Asian heritage is that, despite their passports, these people are not and can never be ‘true’ citizens, in the same way that ‘natives’ are.

“While a ‘native’ British citizen, who has access to no other citizenship, can commit the most heinous crimes without jeopardising his right to remain British, none of the estimated 6 million British citizens with access to another citizenship can feel confident in the perpetual nature of their citizenship.”

Webber said before being used against the Muslim preacher [Abu Hamza](#) in 2003, no deprivation of citizenship had been authorised for 30 years. But since then there have been at least 217, with 104 removals in 2017 after the collapse of Islamic State in Syria.

Despite government claims that powers are only used against those who pose a grave threat to national security, or who have committed abhorrent crimes, the “Citizenship: from right to privilege” report argues the effect is that certain people have a “second-class, disposable, contingent citizenship”.

Webber said: “These classes of citizenship were brought in to target British Muslims of south Asian and Middle Eastern heritage. Such divisions act as a constant reminder to minority ethnic citizens that they must watch their step, and reinforce racist messages about ‘undeserving’ racialised groups unworthy of being British.”

The report describes the criteria for deprivation of citizenship as “nebulous and undefined” and warns of a risk of its use for political purposes, with Webber highlighting Begum’s case as an example. It was recently alleged Begum was [trafficked into Syria](#) by a spy working for Canadian intelligence.

“It raises the question: was Begum’s citizenship removed to divert attention from western agencies’ prioritisation of intelligence gathering over safeguarding vulnerable trafficked girls?” said Webber.

Citing the Prevent counter-terrorism programme, which has been dogged by claims of being a cover [to spy on Muslim communities](#), the report said citizenship-stripping is “just one aspect of measures targeting Muslim communities, in Britain and abroad, in the past two decades, which have helped to turn British Muslims in the UK into a ‘suspect community’”.

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The latest change to citizen-stripping powers in [the Nationality and Borders Act](#), heightened public awareness – and criticism – of the existing rules as well as the additions, provoking public protests, opposition from campaigners as well as some MPs and [Lords](#).

The Home Office said the legislation did not target ethnic minorities or people of particular faiths, and that the test for deprivation was clearly set out.

A spokesperson said: “Our priority is to ensure the safety and security of the UK. Deprivation of citizenship only happens after careful consideration of

the facts and in accordance with international law. It is used against those who have acquired citizenship by fraud and against the most dangerous people, such as terrorists, extremists and serious organised criminals.

“We make no apology for doing whatever is necessary to protect the UK from those who pose a threat to our security.”

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## [The Observer](#) **Social mobility**

# Income not enough to break British class barriers, research finds

People from a prosperous background are more likely to move, and end up in richer areas, than those with working-class parents



Moving to a richer area means better access to well-paid jobs and better schools. Photograph: numb/Alamy

[\*James Tapper\*](#)

Sun 11 Sep 2022 06.00 EDT Last modified on Sun 11 Sep 2022 06.01 EDT

Class background remains a barrier to accessing opportunities in later life, even among those who are successful, new research has found.

A study of 8,118 professionals and higher-level managers found that those who came from a prosperous background were much more likely to move around the UK, and ended up in richer areas when they did move, than those with working-class parents.



Moving to a richer area meant better access to well-paid jobs and better schools, which meant that people from poorer backgrounds were “unable to close the gap” on their peers.

In an article to be published this week in the [British Sociological Association](#)’s journal *Sociology*, Dr Katharina Hecht, of Northeastern University, in Boston, US, and Dr Daniel McArthur, of the University of York, said that it was likely that wealthy parents had more resources to help their children buy a house.

The two researchers carried out a longitudinal analysis of census data about people born between 1965 and 1981 who were working in higher managerial and professional occupations by the age of 30 to 36.

They examined whether people had moved home over a distance of at least 28km from when they were aged 10 to 16, and compared the occupations of their parents, how often they moved home and the level of affluence of the local authority district they moved to.

Of those with higher managerial and professional parents, around 60% made at least one long-distance move, while only 30% of those whose parents’ occupations were classed as “semi-routine” or “routine” had moved areas.

“Among higher managers and professionals, those with advantaged backgrounds lived in more affluent areas as children than those from disadvantaged backgrounds,” said McArthur and Hecht, who was formerly based at the Politics of [Inequality](#) research centre at the University of Konstanz in Germany.

“This area gap persists during adulthood: when the upwardly mobile move, they are unable to close the gap to their peers with privileged backgrounds in terms of the affluence of the areas they live in – they face a moving target.

“Therefore, even when the upwardly socially mobile – who grew up in less-advantaged places and are less likely to move long-distance – do move area, they are unable to close the gap to their intergenerationally stable peers who started out in more affluent areas.”



The researchers say that for women in higher professions, differences in family background correspond to the difference between “living in economically mixed areas on the south coast, such as Portsmouth, and living in affluent areas of the London commuter belt, such as Brentwood”. The difference was less dramatic for men.

“Geography shapes access to opportunities to accumulate wealth including the highest paying jobs, higher house prices, and opportunities for entrepreneurship,” they said.

“Affluent parents will be better able to facilitate ... moves to high cost but opportunity-rich areas such as London or the South-East.

“The children of higher managers and professionals are likely to have wealthier parents and hence receive larger transfers of wealth. They will be able to afford houses in more expensive areas, net of income, than their counterparts from less advantaged backgrounds. As a result, wealth is likely to play an important role in explaining why those from advantaged backgrounds move to more affluent areas than the upwardly mobile.”

The head of the Social Mobility Commission, Katharine Birbalsingh, has said there should be [less focus on getting poor pupils into Oxbridge](#) and more moves to improve people’s lives in smaller steps.

In her first report as commissioner, she said that occupational mobility had been fairly stable for decades and that it was not true that social mobility had been getting worse on all counts.

Research by the Sutton Trust earlier this year found that [social mobility had become much more limited](#), with those who lived in rented accommodation as children now far less likely to own their own homes in later life.

It found that many people now had a greater chance of falling down the class structure than moving up.

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## 2022.09.12 - Spotlight

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**‘We thought Bake Off was the most boring thing we’d ever done’: Mel Giedroyc on cake, comedy and Sue Perkins**

[Zoe Williams](#)



Mel Giedroyc ... 'Maybe Sue and I should swap faces, to confuse people?'  
Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

How did a struggling standup become one of the best-loved names on TV?  
The star of GBBO, Light Lunch and Unforgivable talks about the despair  
that almost broke her – and the big break she struggled to believe in



[@zoesqwilliams](#)

Mon 12 Sep 2022 01.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Sep 2022 05.58 EDT

Mel Giedroyc is just finishing a photoshoot in a studio in south-west London, and rushes up to greet me, apologising that she has to get changed before we talk, because she's in ridiculous clothes. So she goes off in an I [heart] New York T-shirt, and then comes back in her own clothes: dungarees.

She has always given an impression of a rare lack of vanity, a person who sees her appearance as just another tool in her clowning toolbox, like juggling balls. And that's partly true, she says, but only up to a point. "Sue [Perkins, her long-term comic partner] and I have always said, when it comes to it, we'll do what needs to be done." We're talking about Botox, fillers, that kind of stuff. "I'm 54, she's 52, she's weirdly perfect. I keep

saying: ‘Have you gone behind my back?’ We’ve always said to each other: if we do it, we’ll do it together. And we’ll go to Armenia slash Latvia.’”

I suggest that they could sell it as a format: Mel and Sue go to Latvia and come back with new teeth and different faces. “Maybe we should swap faces, to confuse people?” she suggests. But back to the point. “I keep thinking: ‘If she goes and does anything without telling me, I’m going to be so cross with her.’” It’s as if she’s sending a comedy-mafia signal through the pages of the Guardian: together, or not at all, at least in so far as minor aesthetic treatments are concerned.

We are not here to talk about the almost 35-year-old comedy dyad at all, but Unforgivable, the chaotic panel show on Dave which is just about to enter its third season. On it, Giedroyc is paired with Lou Sanders (“Twenty years younger. Actually I don’t know how old she is, she told me once but I’m a bit deaf”), and they invite a panel of three comedians to disclose the worst things they’ve ever done. Then some regular people come on and admit random bad acts.

It is heavily scatological, the links are clunky and the puns are laboured so hard they should unionise. The new season is so funny I was at one point shouting with laughter at a story told by the comedian Joel Dommett, which involved his mattress, his bed base and his penis, and which even he looked quite surprised to be telling.



‘Who wants to look at cakes?’ ... Giedroyc with Sue Perkins on The Great British Bake Off in 2013.

Photograph: Des Willie/BBC/Love Productions

“Often, somebody will spill something that we didn’t know they were going to spill,” she says. “But Joel ... he does The Masked Singer, he’s really Mr ITV, Saturday night. He’s not Mr One-in-the-Morning.” That’s sort of Unforgivable’s USP: it takes nice, mainstream, even daytime TV people and turns them into Mr or Mrs-One-in-the-Morning. “When you have three people, they start to get competitive with each other,” she says, “and that’s when it gets really fun. Especially with comics. They don’t want to be outdone.

“Unforgivable is a naughty show,” Giedroyc concludes. “It’s just a massive midlife crisis, basically me saying: ‘I want to go back to when I felt my naughtiest, which was in the 90s. I want to be 25 again, or 23.’”

In fact, I remember that. Although I didn’t know her in the naughty years, I did grunt work a few years in a row at the Edinburgh venue where she and Perkins perfected their standup routine. They had met in 1988, both at Cambridge, doing Footlights, but by this time they’d left “with really weak degrees. Really weak. Low 2:2. Sue as well; people assume she must have

got a first but she didn't. And we weren't trained to do anything. What do you do with a French and Italian degree?"

Mel "didn't have the nous to go to clown school" (although clowning about was her passion) and had tried and failed to get into drama school, a combination of not preparing properly for the audition and not being pretty enough. She says this quite obliquely, recalling a day at Bristol Old Vic, when "all the other girls had sort of long corkscrew curls, like Helena Bonham Carter. And that's something that's really changed."

I went round to Perks's gaff and said: I can't do this any more. We've borrowed from our siblings, our agent lent us a grand

Finally, high on failure and aimlessness, she wrote to Perkins, who she usually calls "Perks", a letter Perkins still has. "Basically saying: 'Dear Susan, would you like to form a double act?' So that's what we did for seven years." She describes their shtick as totally shambolic, on-the-hoof material that they were practically still writing as they performed it, often to an audience of one. It didn't look like that from the outside; they seemed almost unique for being able to pull in a crowd and had an air of seriousness about them, like they might actually make a living from this. They were the kind of people that other performers pointed out, like: "There's Mel and Sue – Mel smiled at me the other day."

She puts any success down to luck, chance and a journalist "who wanted to do a piece about a really, really struggling double act at the fringe. Then suddenly, we had sellout shows because all these Times readers showed up."





Mel and Sue, when presenters of the ITV series *Casting Couch* in 1999.  
Photograph: ITV/Shutterstock

Underneath this haze of self-deprecation, there is a through line of an absolutely solid determination to be up there on stage, showing off. When she was a kid, growing up in Leatherhead with a Polish father and English mother (her dad was an engineer and, for his second act, a Latvian medievalist), her pattern was that she'd try for the school play, not get a part, "and I'd say: 'Maybe I could write a little prologue?' And I'd write something really long, and end up with quite a big part. Such a showoff."

Such grit, which Perkins reputedly also has in spades, didn't exactly put them on a fast track. By 1997, after years of standup, making money by cleaning, working in the bar in Jongleurs (at the time, an incredibly original and vibey comedy club), Giedroyc was defeated. "I remember it so clearly, going round to Perks's gaff, sitting down on the bed and just saying: 'I can't do this any more. I've got no money. You're the same. We're in debt, we've borrowed from our siblings, our agent had to lend us a grand.' I was desperate."

This was when the call came through for *Light Lunch*, a fizzingly daft Channel 4 daytime show, full of random interviews and sandwich reviews and, in a harbinger of things to come, cake, which they initially rejected out

of hand. “We were, like: ‘Sorry, excuse me, a daytime show? We are cutting-edge Edinburgh comedians.’” It is pretty extraordinary to think of it now, that a major broadcaster would give a daily hour of TV to two unknown comics, and Channel 4 thought so, too, initially putting them on a rolling two-week contract. But the show soon had a committed following, and not in that feckless, post-ironic stoner way that shows like *Neighbours* and *Teletubbies* did. “It was students, breastfeeding mums and prisoners. I was getting a lot of letters from Gwent remand centre.”

It is hard to get to the true centre of Mel and Sue, as a partnership. There’s definitely something about them, when they come together, that is more than the sum of their parts: energy, sure, but also notes of surrealism and unpredictability. But this career-long lockstep hasn’t had the effect of making them rivalrous or resentful, Giedroyc says. “You have to do things, especially as you get older, separately. Otherwise it gets, I imagine, incredibly claustrophobic. I don’t know how Ant and Dec do it. Full respect, they’re amazing.”

And again, things were different when they were starting out. If acting was sexist in the sense that only beautiful women could do it, comedy was worse: it was really not unusual to read 1,000 words of a man asking: “Why aren’t women funny?” When female comedians were invited on panel shows, they were treated with a kind of benign but quietly exasperated condescension, like your mate had had to bring his wife to a boys’ night in the pub, because there was a mouse in the house.

Perks and I always had that safe haven with each other, which I think got us through

“Perks and I always had that safe haven with each other, which I think got us through,” Giedroyc says, “and I think French and Saunders would say the same thing. It doesn’t matter what arseholes are saying outside your haven, because you’ve got each other. But I remember doing torturous things in the 90s like *Never Mind the Buzzcocks*, as it was then [now one of the captains is Daisy May Cooper], and coming away feeling shattered. Just thinking that was one of the worst things I’ve ever had to go through.” Giedroyc is particularly proud of one episode in this Unforgivable season in which all

five participants are women, “all of them hilarious, and I didn’t even plan it. It almost made me cry.” I wonder if that’s the first time that’s happened on TV?

One of the double act hiatuses was when Giedroyc had children – two daughters, born in 2002 and 2004, with the director Ben Morris. Apart from the joy of motherhood and all that, this was mainly impactful for almost bankrupting the family and they lost their house, a riches-to-rags experience she drew on for her first novel, *The Best Things*, published last year. When the chance to present *Bake Off* heaved into view in 2010, she was still skint and did it mainly for the money, and the chance to work with Perks again. They did not immediately fall in love with the idea. “Cake is so backward-looking, isn’t it?” she says, speculatively. I know what she means. *Bake Off* has always had a remain heart and a leave aesthetic.

Filming the first season didn’t exactly allay their reservations, although they did love Mary Berry from the start. “I remember phoning Perks saying: ‘Don’t worry, mate – no one’s ever going to see this.’ Because we were really scared. We were thinking: ‘Well, that’s the end of our careers. That was the flattest, tweest, most boring thing we’ve ever done. Who wants to look at cakes?’” If you’re thinking this sounds unusually frank for showbiz, it’s probably because the pair left the show a bit before they would have chosen, under not as great circumstances as they would have wished. Obviously, it went really well for a bit. “It was just mad. No one could have predicted that it would explode in that way – we certainly couldn’t have. What a joy to have that mad thing happen to you in your 40s. It just doesn’t happen to two old birds.”



‘I didn’t have the nous to go to clown school’ ... Giedroyc with a fake cigarette.

Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

After seven series, they got wind of something afoot but didn’t know until it was publicly announced that the production company, Love Productions, had sold the show to Channel 4. “I was getting messages from the head of C4 saying: ‘We hope that you’ll be on board.’ I think it took us under 20 seconds to work out that we weren’t going to go with it. We felt that the show had been nurtured by the BBC. And effectively, the makers of the show were just going ‘See ya’, and going for the money. And that didn’t sit well with us.” They never thought it was going to crash and burn without them, since they were only ever “bookends”. In the end, there would always be more bakers, other cakes.

Giedroyc would like one more throw of the dice doing a standup show with Perkins, but has questions over whether they’d ever sit down and write it. She is writing a novel, adjacent to her first, with a couple of recurring characters, which she hopes to eventually turn into a Leatherhead trilogy. She enjoys not being a “bright young thing” any more, saying “it’s actually quite a relief when people aren’t that interested”. She mildly fears getting cancelled, but not in a Laurence Fox/GB News “you can’t say anything any more” way, more by her children. “I’m walking on eggshells, honestly.”

(Hard relate. My kid called me racist the other day when I said I preferred boxers to spaniels.) She is as she started out, all drive and no plan, the way I think maybe comedians have to be, if they want to be funny.

*Mel Giedroyc: Unforgivable returns to Dave on 20 September*

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[Apple](#)

## iOS 16 release: everything you need to know about Apple's big update

Free software upgrades for iPhone and Watch that revamp the lockscreen, add new watchfaces, can unsend messages and more due for release



Apple's latest free software update for the iPhone and Watch adds new features for tracking running, fitness and notifications. Photograph: Apple

[Samuel Gibbs](#) *Consumer technology editor*

Mon 12 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 12 Sep 2022 02.01 EDT

Apple plans to release software updates for its [iPhone](#) and smartwatch on Monday, adding new features and designs for compatible devices.

Announced at the [firm's developer conference in June](#), iOS 16 and watchOS 9 totally change the lockscreen, attempt to destroy the much maligned password, revamp notifications, and add new watchfaces, new running statistics and more.

Here's what you need to know about the updates.

## **When can I get it?**

Downloads for iOS and watchOS updates usually start at about 6pm UK time (1pm in New York; 3am in Sydney). Unlike other manufacturers, all eligible [Apple](#) devices will be able to download and install the update the moment it is released rather than in a staggered fashion. Updates for Apple's iPad range will be available later in the year.

## **Which devices can get it?**

All Apple smartphones from [2017's iPhone 8](#) or newer can install iOS 16. All Apple Watches from the 2018's Series 4 or newer can install watchOS 9.

## **How do I get it?**

Open the Settings app on an iPhone then navigate to General > [Software Update](#). Tap install if available to download, verify and then reboot to install. You can also install the update via a Mac or iTunes on a Windows computer.

WatchOS 9 requires an [iPhone 8](#) or later to be running iOS 16 first. Then open the Watch app and navigate to General > Software Update to begin the installation. You will need to put the smartwatch on its charger to complete the update.

## **How much will it cost?**

The update is free from Apple. If you are being asked to pay for an update, it is likely to be a scam.

## **iOS 16**

### **New lockscreen design**



The redesigned lockscreen adds more information and better notification stacking for a more modern design. Photograph: Apple

The lockscreen has been revamped, with much greater personalisation and a change in the way notifications are displayed.

By default it now displays the date, time and a row of information widgets at the top with notifications filing in groups from the bottom of the screen. You can change the typeface and colour of the time, add other information alongside the date, and customise the wallpaper with a 3D effect for some images or a slideshow of photos.

Live activities, such as sports scores or music playing, sit above the notification stack at the bottom of the screen, making them easier to reach with one hand.

You can also have multiple lockscreens and tie them to focus modes so that you could, for instance, have one for work and one for personal time. New “focus filters” can hide distracting content from apps, such as blocking messages from work colleagues when off the clock.

## Passkeys



Digital keys authenticated by your face or fingerprint on an iPhone can be used to sign into websites, apps and services instead of using a password. It will work on non-Apple products, such as logging into a smart TV by scanning a QR code with the iPhone and then confirming with your face or finger.

Passkeys are synced using iCloud Keychain and can be recovered if you lose or break your iPhone.

## **Edit iMessages and unsend from Mail**

Sent messages can now be edited or removed, for example when you've sent something to the wrong group, within the first 15 minutes. You can also mark messages as unread for later, as you might an email.

Search in the Mail app has been improved and you can now cancel the sending of an email within 10 seconds. Mail will also pop up a warning if you forget to attach something to an email or fail to add a recipient using machine learning.

## **Automatically cut out objects from images**



Objects can be isolated from their backgrounds and copied from images in the photos, screenshots, previews, Safari and others. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

You can copy objects from the foreground of images, such as pets, plants, people and products and then paste or share them into other apps, documents or messages.

This is in addition to identifying, copying text and other elements, but requires an [iPhone XS](#) or newer.

You can also type and dictate at the same time on the keyboard, and insert emojis via voice. The translate app can also use the camera to live translate text or find text in photos.

## **Faster security updates**

Apple has decoupled security updates from full [iOS](#) updates, allowing it to release bug fixes faster and have them automatically install on user iPhones. Face ID will also now work when the phone is held in landscape orientation.

## **Watch OS 9**

### **New watch faces and revamped old ones**



Three new watch faces and revamps of old ones with new colours and rich complications are included. Photograph: Apple

Three new watch faces are available. Metropolitan is an analogue face with more customisation options, Playtime is a digital face from artist Joi Fulton, and Lunar includes the phases of the moon. Astronomy has been revamped, while you can now set coloured backgrounds on modular compact, modular and X-Large.

Notifications no longer take over the screen when you're actively using it, appearing as smaller banners that can be expanded as they do on an iPhone. Apps running in the background are more prominent in the dock, while the calendar app has been revamped for better week and day views.

## **More running metrics and better workouts**



More running metrics, including power, and better summaries add to the Apple Watch's fitness focus. Photograph: Apple

The workout app has several enhancements. The watch can record running power without an accessory, and can show more metrics such as stride length, ground contact time, vertical oscillation and heart rate zones.

Workouts can be customised too, for intervals and other bits with alerts for pace, heart rate, cadence and power. Automatic transitions between running, cycling and swimming are now supported for multisport, while enhanced workout summaries provide more detail at the end.

## Medication and sleep

The health app can now remind you to take medications and keep a log straight from the wrist. Sleep tracking is also improved, with stages and comparison charts in the app on the iPhone.

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## [Sara Cox](#)

# **‘I try to slip the Prodigy into all my radio shows’: Sara Cox’s honest playlist**

The Radio 2 presenter would lip-sync to I Will Survive in her nightie, and used Dolly Parton to get to know her horse, but which rock gods make her toes curl?



Sara Cox ... ‘Greggs was the height of sophistication’ Photograph: Guy Levy



*As told to [Rich Pelley](#)*

Mon 12 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT

### **The first song I remember hearing**

I shared a bedroom with my two big sisters, and remember being put in an oversize nightie that trailed behind me like a fabulous gown, and made to lip-sync to I Will Survive. This was before RuPaul's Drag Race, so I was way ahead of the curve.

### **The first single I bought**

I wish it was a cool one, but as I'm so giving and selfless, it was a charity single for Great Ormond Street hospital called The Wishing Well. By about 12, I was allowed to go into Bolton town centre by myself, and would head to the Body Shop, Our Price and Greggs – the height of sophistication.

### **The song I do at karaoke**

I've only done karaoke once, when my husband worked in advertising and we went back to one of the bosses from Sony's house after a few drinks – because Sony were one of his clients – and I sang Don't You Want Me by the Human League, hoping it would help him win the contract.

**The song I inexplicably know every lyric to**

When I was getting to know my horse – an Irish sports horse called Nelly – I would sing 9 to 5 by Dolly Parton. When you sing, you can't tense your buttocks, and a horse can sense when you're tense. I'd sing so we were both relaxed.

**The song I secretly like but tell everybody I hate**

I've got loads of guilty pleasures, although I'm quite honest about them. I'm out and proud about my love of All Rise by Blue.

**The song I can no longer listen to**

I just can't listen to any Red Hot Chili Peppers. That sort of funk rock really makes my toes curl. I love Dave Grohl and he brings great vibes, but the Foo Fighters leave me cold. I dread having to play either on the radio.

**The best song to have sex to**

Tubthumping by Chumbawamba.

**The song I wish I'd written**

Anything by Carly Simon. I'll go for Nobody Does It Better.

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**The song that changed my life**

There's a great song by the Beatles called For No One. Whenever I've got to the end of a relationship, it's given me huge strength. It's very much: she wakes up, she takes the time, need to worry. It's slightly passive aggressive:

I'm beyond this now, it's death by 1,000 cuts and you're at the 999th cut. It's really empowering, a bit of a fuck you, even though it was probably written with peace and love, knowing the Beatles. I still play it after an argument, but my husband doesn't need to worry. I still love him.

### **The song that gets me up in the morning**

Out of Space by the Prodigy has to be one of the best songs to ramp up your heartbeat and get you feeling bouncy. I try to slip it into the first half-hour of my shows as much as I legally can.

### **The song I want played at my funeral**

All Rise by Blue might give me some Jesus vibes, but there could be complaints. So I'll have Tubthumping by Chumbawamba.

*Sara Cox's show is Monday to Friday, 5pm to 7pm, BBC Radio 2 and BBC Sounds.*

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[A new start after 60](#)[Life and style](#)

## A new start after 60: I was angry about being left out of my father's will. Then I found peace in the woods



‘I wanted to make a paradise for my children’ ... Moniek Kramer.  
Photograph: Judith Jockel/The Guardian

Moniek Kramer always wanted a little house in the countryside. At the age of 65, struggling with the fallout from her father's death, she finally got it

[Paula Cocozza](#)  
[@CocozzaPaula](#)

Mon 12 Sep 2022 02.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 12 Sep 2022 03.02 EDT

In her rented home in central Amsterdam, where she lived for many years, [Moniek Kramer](#) dreamed of greenery. She grew up by the river Amstel on the outskirts of the city, until her parents separated when she was 10, and, maybe, “was longing to go back there”. In adulthood, she kept looking for a house, “a small house”. She had all but given up, when, at 65, she found it.

Kramer was reading an article in De Groene Amsterdammer newspaper about Henry David Thoreau, the 19th-century American philosopher whose book *Walden* is based on his experience of living in a woodland cabin. An advert caught her eye: “Are you looking for your own Walden hut?”

The next day she was on a train out of Amsterdam, and an hour later the sellers met her at the station. “The woods were growing into the house,” she says. There were trees, thorn bushes and rubbish. The cabin had a sinister vibe. “But I saw the possibilities.” She plundered her pension – and moved in. “I saw that I could make space here.”

Kramer has worked as an actor, film-maker, scriptwriter and teacher of creative writing. Her husband is a composer. “We don’t have loads of money. It was all I had.” Her mother had brought up Kramer and her three siblings alone, so she had always regarded money as her “safety belt”. “So I was scared. But I did it.”

Kramer, now 68, must have felt even more vulnerable when the pandemic hit, but somehow the “wood house” as she calls it, began to alter her perspective. Soon after buying it, she and three colleagues from the creative writing school at which she taught in Amsterdam decided to launch a [scriptwriting school](#). “I thought: ‘If I can do it from my wood house I won’t feel so hand-around-throat.’”

So, the house gave her the nerve to take things on, in a freer space? “I realise it was also to do with my father,” she says. Kramer stayed in touch with him after he had another family. Although she found him “difficult to cope with”, she says: “I always had this feeling that he loved me. I’m very old, but you stay a child with your parents.”

Her father died a year before she bought the house, but when his will was read, there was no mention of Kramer and her siblings from his first marriage. “I was so sad and angry,” she says. It was not because she hoped for financial benefit, but “I felt so not-seen, so disconnected.” The exclusion seemed “to symbolise a lack of love”.

So the wood house took on an added significance. “I wanted to make this paradise for my children [she has two sons] and grandchildren. When I die, there will be something that shows them love.”

The first year in the house was scary. “I had to prove to my family that it was the place I saw.” Or, she had to make it the place she saw.

“There was so much to do,” she says. She transported every tool by bicycle. “I was working far too hard because I wanted it for my children.” It took a triple hernia to slow her down, and then she came to a realisation: “I had to decide to do this for me and my husband,” Kramer says. It wasn’t fair to bring the children into her attempt to reconnect with what she had lost. “But I am very grateful that they like it here.”

For nearly 40 years, Kramer has done Zen retreats. “Zen is about ‘not knowing’, about penetrating the paradox in everything,” she says. Finally, in June, she completed the Jukai ceremony to become an official Zen Buddhist.

She had always had the sensation that “I ran behind myself. What is she doing? What’s happening”, but at the ceremony she felt a “flowing backwards of affection, and connection”, and realised that feeling connected “goes the other way around”. Even the disconnection from her father now changed. “I went through anger and pain, and at the end I realised he couldn’t help it.”

The wood house has answered much more than Kramer's dreams. "It all starts with a longing," she says. "But these longings have a life of their own, and they will find a way to materialise."

- [Tell us: has your life taken a new direction after the age of 60?](#)

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## 2022.09.12 - Opinion

- Scandal after scandal have eroded trust in the Met. Can the new commissioner restore it?
- I called King Charles an ally to black people. I hope he lives up to that title
- I spent my anniversary holding work calls in a restaurant toilet – something had to give
- When we asked the Queen to tea with Paddington, something magic happened – the most lovely goodbye

## [Opinion](#)[Metropolitan police](#)

# A note to the new Met police commissioner: protect the public, not just your officers

[Shabnam Chaudhri](#)

There is a toxic culture within the force and it needs ‘tough love’ from Mark Rowley. The scandals must stop

Shabnam Chaudhri is a former detective superintendent



‘So, what must change? It begins with dishing out some tough love.’ Mark Rowley as Met acting deputy commissioner in 2017. Photograph: Niklas Halle’n/AFP/Getty Images

Mon 12 Sep 2022 03.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Sep 2022 08.07 EDT

As a former senior police officer with more than 30 years’ service working on the frontline and ending my career at the rank of detective

superintendent, I know only too well how challenging policing can be – not least for a new commissioner of the Metropolitan police. On Monday, [Mark Rowley](#) takes over Britain's biggest force, and with it the toughest challenge of all: to restore trust and confidence in an organisation whose public standing is at rock bottom.

Rowley's predecessor, Cressida Dick, [resigned in February](#) after the mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, made clear he had lost confidence in her leadership. It's easy to see why: on her watch, the Met was plagued by a catalogue of scandals. The murder of Sarah Everard last March by serving Met officer Wayne Couzens – and the notorious [handling of a vigil](#) on Clapham Common – ignited intense feelings of anger and disgust. While an [independent review](#) found the Met acted appropriately at the vigil, it should have read the situation better. It missed a vital opportunity to protect and restore trust with the women and girls who felt betrayed that night.

Or consider the stop and search of the Team GB athlete Bianca Williams and her partner, Ricardo dos Santos. Regardless of whether the stop was justified or not, the young mother – with her child of three months – begged officers not to drag her out of the car, as seen in video footage shared by Williams on social media. And yet Dick openly [supported](#) the actions of her officers.

Or what about the initial [refusal](#) to investigate Partygate? Or when a review into the investigation of the murder of the private investigator Daniel Morgan, found dead in the pub car park, with an axe embedded in his head, concluded in March that the force's ability to tackle corruption was "[fundamentally flawed](#)"? The persistent defending of the indefensible at the highest level has had a ripple effect on policing, implying a blanket authority for rank-and-file officers to behave as they please, knowing they have the backing of leaders. All this does is cement the toxic culture that all officers know exists across policing.

The strip-search in 2020 of Child Q, and the discovery that officers in a WhatsApp group with Couzens were sharing [racist and sexist messages](#), were perhaps the last straw. In June the Metropolitan police was, for the first time in its history, tipped into an enhanced stage of monitoring by the state, known as "special measures" or the "engage" stage. That formally

acknowledged what so many who were entitled to better support and to justice have long known, the Met has fallen below acceptable standards and requires increased scrutiny to provide support and improvements.

In my own policing career, I have seen how easily a toxic culture can embed itself into an organisation, how racist, sexist and misogynistic behaviours at all ranks can be disguised and downplayed as “banter”. Yet even I could not have prepared myself for the shocking actions of the two Met police officers [who took images at the murder scene](#) of victims Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry, so arrogant that they felt comfortable in their own skin to do this.

Rowley steps into the job this week with all this and more in front of him. His first day on the job will involve the preparation and planning of the state funeral for Queen Elizabeth II, expected to take place at Westminster Abbey. There can be no greater honour on a commissioner’s first day. But then it will be to business. He must now climb a mountain to get back to the basics of policing – effectively investigating crimes and bringing offenders to justice – let alone rebuild the trust of the public.

We know Rowley must have *a* plan: in the dying days of her stewardship of the home office, [Priti Patel](#), demanded the incoming commissioner immediately deliver his first 100-day plan to “renew policing by consent – more trust, less crime, high standards”, adding: “It is absolutely vital that trust and confidence is restored.” The development of a detailed plan may well have formed part of the process for appointing a new commissioner, and secured his appointment.

So, what must change? It begins with dishing out some tough love. This means no longer defending the indefensible, policing on behalf of the public, not the so-called police family. I know many officers will not welcome this, but he must accept the labels that, years after the Macpherson inquiry first judged the Met police “institutionally racist”, still haunt Scotland Yard. If his fellow leaders cannot accept a new reality, he must find a new set of fellow leaders. After Chris Kaba was shot dead by officers in Streatham, south London, [a search of the scene had found no gun](#) linked to the 24-year-old. His family has accused the Met of being institutionally racist and is seeking accountability from the Independent Office for Police Conduct.



This is a case that matters. It resonates. And it must be tackled before the Met can truly press ahead with the important job of protecting the public. If Rowley doesn't get his house in order, he will never win the public's hearts and minds, and isn't that what policing by consent means?

- Shabnam Chaudhri is a former detective superintendent
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at [guardian.letters@theguardian.com](mailto:guardian.letters@theguardian.com)***

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## Opinion King Charles III

# I called King Charles an ally to black people. I hope he lives up to that title

Lester Holloway

Britain's first post-colonial monarch championed diversity as Prince of Wales, but he must go much further



‘King Charles accedes to the throne in an altogether different time in history from his mother.’ Photograph: Emilio Morenatti/AP

Mon 12 Sep 2022 01.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 12 Sep 2022 02.11 EDT

The sea of white faces outside Buckingham Palace singing God Save the King this weekend was revealing. During her reign, the Queen enjoyed mass appeal at home across communities with roots in the former empire and commanded respect, especially among those of a certain age. The the calypso-loving Elizabeth, who defied conventions and racist attitudes in 1961 to [share a dance](#) with Ghana's pan-Africanist ruler Kwame Nkrumah, will continue to be held in affection.

However, [King Charles III](#) accedes to the throne in an altogether different time in history. He begins his reign with the record of more than 40 years' worth of charitable work through the Prince's Trust, helping young black people turn their lives around. Famous alumni such as the actor Idris Elba and theatre boss Kwame Kwei-Armah are enthusiastic advocates for the King's commitment to diversity from personal experience.

Less than a fortnight ago, King Charles – then Prince of Wales – [guest edited](#) Britain's only African and Caribbean newspaper, the Voice. It was a bold move, and one that attracted criticism from some in the community, but there was no doubt that he wanted to send a strong signal to black Britain that he was proud of his work and wanted it to be known.

The paper, of which I'm the editor, called him "an ally", a phrase that also attracted some heat. I stand by that for this reason: it isn't a laurel to sit on, but an incentive to keep acting in the interests of a community that has always faced significant barriers of deeply embedded racism. The condition of a community disproportionately battered by years of austerity, the pandemic and now the cost of living crisis is one reason for lack of visible mourning.

Another, certainly among younger generations, is the growing debate around enslavement, colonialism and institutional racism. Black Lives Matter was rooted in a critique of "racialised capital" that underpinned demands to defund the police or decolonise the curriculum. The treatment of the Duchess of Sussex by sections of the press and reportedly within the royal family itself did not show the British establishment to have taken heed of the conversations sparked by these events.

Gen Z, paying half their wages to the rentier class and the other half to energy companies, have no time for a hereditary anything. Add in that black youth are up to [19 times](#) more likely to be stopped and searched by police, black children are [twice as likely](#) to grow up in poverty and black graduates are [twice as likely](#) to be unemployed, and you can see why many people of colour have other priorities.

The former monarch has been called a “coloniser Queen” by some, but that’s unfair. She was born into the empire, which decolonised itself. History will judge what role she played, but the smart money would be on her being seen as largely a bystander to history who, wisely, didn’t get in the way.

As a republican, I hold no candle for royalty, but royals are undeniably influencers. King Charles is our first post-colonial monarch and while his [deep “personal sorrow” over the slave trade](#), partially carried out in the name of his family, stops well short of the apology many continue to demand, it was hopefully an incremental move in the right direction.

Ultimately, if there is to be a serious conversation about reparations – as the Barbados prime minister, Mia Amor Mottley, called for in the Voice – it needs to start with a genuine apology from the UK government. Maybe the interventionist King can broker a joint apology from the royals and government? Now that would be living up to his status as an ally. I suspect the rump of countries still with the monarch as head of state will take the corrective action that Barbados did recently, but the Commonwealth will survive only because a club still has its uses.

The new King should embrace a national conversation to reset the relationship between royalty and “subjects” – issue a joint apology from government and royal family for slavery and colonialism, and champion, as he has previously done, more equitable black representation. His reign should bring reform so that the monarchy changes to reflect the ways in which his country already has.

- Lester Holloway is editor of the Voice
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at [guardian.letters@theguardian.com](mailto:guardian.letters@theguardian.com)***



## Why I quit Work-life balance

# I spent my anniversary holding work calls in a restaurant toilet – something had to give

[Jennifer Hodgson](#)

I thought my availability would set me apart from competitors, but it nearly broke me apart



‘I stopped answering work calls after hours unless it was an emergency. I learned that most calls can wait until the next day.’ Jennifer Hodgson, founder of MODA PR. Photograph: Jennifer Hodgson

Mon 12 Sep 2022 05.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 12 Sep 2022 12.31 EDT

When I started my new business, I set my WhatsApp status to “Available” – and I really meant it.

One Saturday evening, my partner and I went out for dinner to celebrate our two-year anniversary. I spent most of the night in the toilet, answering phone calls and messages that, looking back, could have waited until Monday.

At the time, I was caught up in the excitement of running my own business. I was elated by the fact I had managed to become my own boss. Even though I was exhausted, I thought I could get ahead of my competitors and set myself apart through determination and hard work.

I would cater to my clients' schedules – holding Zoom calls at 9pm – but my lack of boundaries set an unhealthy precedent. There was no clear line between my personal and professional time, and I began to lose sleep and become agitated and angry with those around me. My partner would gently joke about me being unable to put my phone away and I would snap at him, as if it was his fault I was still working at 10pm.

I kept up this gruelling routine for 18 months until I was confronted by my working style. One of my clients bought me tickets to see Diary of a CEO by Steven Bartlett, and I listened to him speak about his early days in business when he hardly saw friends and slept in his office. It was like looking in a mirror, and I realised there and then that I didn't want to do it any more. Tears began to run down my cheeks and I couldn't stop crying.

I felt I was losing control by trying to do everything and be everything to everyone. I knew I needed to change by giving myself more time to rest and sleep. I had to start setting boundaries for myself, otherwise how would anyone else respect them?

I began by ignoring the voice that made me feel guilty if I didn't answer an email within five minutes. I turned off email notifications on my phone. If I couldn't see the message or email, I wouldn't answer it.

I stopped answering work calls after hours unless it was an emergency. I learned that most calls can wait until the next day. Leaving my phone in a different room when going to bed changed my sleeping pattern – I no longer had the urge to check my phone at 3am, something I would previously do

every night. I started to read a chapter of a book before bed and began sleeping through the night.

I took stock of the clients who respected my boundaries and those who did not, and honestly appraised who I wanted to work with in the future. My team and I started to spot red flags and began to be mindful about the type of relationships we wanted to foster.

I don't by any means profess to know how to tackle the work-life balance fully, and I don't think I ever will, but by setting some boundaries I'm able to rest properly and look after myself. Despite my initial fears that I would lose clients, I began to gain new ones who respected my limits and appreciated the importance of a work-life balance.

Many of us have become accustomed to making ourselves available all the time and when we dissolve our own boundaries, there is nothing left of us to give. Without the time to rest and recuperate, we aren't the best versions of ourselves.

Take some time this week to make yourself unavailable – you may be surprised how positively people respond.

- Jennifer Hodgson is the founder of MODA PR

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## [The Observer](#)[Queen Elizabeth II](#)

# When we asked the Queen to tea with Paddington, something magic happened – the most lovely goodbye

[Frank Cottrell-Boyce](#)

The writer behind HM's encounter with the bear explains the sketch's tender power

Paddington Bear joins the Queen for afternoon tea at Buckingham Palace – video

Sun 11 Sep 2022 04.00 EDTLast modified on Sun 11 Sep 2022 07.40 EDT

In 1972, Rick Sylvester skied off the edge of Mount Asgard in Canada in one of cinema's most electrifying stunts. It's the bit in *The Spy Who Loved Me* where Bond is chased over the edge of a cliff to his certain death. Except it turns out that Bond takes a parachute with him when he goes skiing just in case – a union jack parachute. In his brilliant book about Bond and the Beatles, [Love and Let Die](#), John Higgs quotes the film's writer Christopher Wood: "All over the world, instead of howling and throwing stones at the union jack, they were bursting into spontaneous applause."

When we were working on the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games, the designer Mark Tildesley came up with the notion of having Bond help the Queen use another union jack parachute to sky dive into the Olympic stadium.

Apparently, all you need to do to get people to love our flag is attach it to a national icon and drop them from a great height.

We're going to be seeing a lot of that flag in the next few days. I don't know how I'm going to feel about this. A flag carefully placed in the background of a cabinet minister's Zoom room makes me think of AA Milne's definition of a patriot as "someone who hates everything about the country apart from

its flag”. (A couple of years ago, I got a letter from a senior royal, took it round to my mum so she could show off a bit to the carers who were helping her with Dad. When I asked for it back she said: “Oh, I put it in the recycling. I thought you’d already read it.” “Yeah, Mum, but...”)

However, by a twist of fortune, I’ve been involved in the creation of two of the most replayed images of the Queen. She acted in comedy sketches twice in her life. Once with James Bond and once with Michael Bond’s creation, Paddington. Both times, I was part of the writing team. I should have been by royal appointment gag writer to HM.

There was no intention for her to appear in the first one. The producer Tracey Seaward went to what she thought would be a routine meeting at the palace to ask what the Queen would be wearing so that our actress could dress like her. It was the Queen’s dresser, Angela Kelly, who said: “Oh, she wants to be in it.”

She put herself up for that moment. It’s a moment that was meant to amuse people for one night only. If she hadn’t been in it herself that is all it would have been. But the way director Danny Boyle timed that turn of the head – that great reveal, “my God, it’s really her” – means that 10 years on, it’s one of her defining moments.

Moments like this happen incrementally. Part of their power is surprise. When we are surprised, our prejudices and opinions evaporate for a moment and we’re briefly open hearted. Surprise is the nemesis of cynicism. One of the most common reactions to that moment was “I never felt patriotic before”. Maybe. Maybe you felt something like patriotism – some love for the best of this place, but didn’t know how to articulate it without condoning the worst. Maybe.

It used to be said that millions of people had dreams in which they had tea with the Queen. Even our dream life is going to have to change. Watching her have tea with Paddington will have to do instead. It’s easy to see why that was so powerful. In retrospect, it was valedictory. A woman waving a happy goodbye to her grandchildren and great grandchildren, an image of love and a happy death.

She was a living connection with that postwar consensus, that attempt to build a better nation and a rules-based world

But Paddington is an evacuee, a refugee, one-time prisoner, pretty much every category of need that is mentioned in Matthew 25. Here, he is being welcomed with tea and good manners. This is a strong statement of a set of values that are not uncontested in the corridors of power. To have them exemplified so joyfully at such a moment meant something.

One of the reasons the Queen's death feels so huge is that she was a living connection with that postwar consensus, that attempt to build a better nation and a rules-based world. A vision that is being demolished even as we plan her funeral. Ten years ago, we lived in a world of divided opinion. Now, we live in a world of divided reality.

A conspiracy theory went round that the establishment had employed *Paddington's* producers Framestore and Heyday (and me and the other writers James Lamont and Jon Foster, plus Ben "Paddington" Wishaw) to create a deep fake queen. No one seemed to question the reality of the bear.

I'm writing on Friday night. It won't be long before the mourning gives way to the furious name-calling that characterises our current political discourse. The sides in these culture wars are like custard. The harder you jump on them the more solid they become. No one changes their mind. I don't know much but I do know that the fury is in someone's interest and it's not ours.

People often quote GK Chesterton's line: "Men did not love Rome because she was great. She was great because they had loved her." But I love these (edited) sentences that precede it: "It is not enough for a man to disapprove of Pimlico; in that case he will merely move to Chelsea. Nor is it enough for a man to approve of Pimlico; for then he will remain Pimlico, which would be awful. The only way out of it seems to be for somebody to love Pimlico... If men loved Pimlico as mothers love children, arbitrarily, because it is theirs, Pimlico might be fairer than Florence."

The most emotional moment in that encounter with Paddington is when the bear says: "Thank you, Ma'am. For everything." People will ask: "What

everything?” Well, make your own list. But I’m thankful for the way she used the peculiar power of her archaic role to allow us to glimpse, however fleetingly, that we share something good and that we need to defend that.

Frank Cottrell-Boyce is a screenwriter and novelist

***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 250 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at [observer.letters@observer.co.uk](mailto:observer.letters@observer.co.uk)***

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## 2022.09.12 - Around the world

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[Fight to vote](#)[US voting rights](#)

## Kamala Harris says ‘everything on the line’ in midterm elections

Vice-president warns that the elections will determine whether ‘age-old sanctity’ of right to vote would be protected



Vice-President Kamala Harris looks on during a commemoration ceremony at the National September 11th Memorial in New York City. Photograph: Bonnie Cash/EPA

[Ed Pilkington](#) in New York

[@edpilkington](#)

Sun 11 Sep 2022 16.57 EDTFirst published on Sun 11 Sep 2022 16.42 EDT

Kamala Harris warned on Sunday that the midterm elections in November would determine whether the “age-old sanctity” of the right to vote would be protected in the US or whether “so-called extremist leaders around the country” would continue to restrict access to the ballot box.

With just 56 days to go until the elections, and with the paper-thin Democratic majority in both chambers of Congress, the vice-president said that “everything is on the line in these elections”.

In an interview with NBC News’ Meet the Press, she said that the country was facing a rising domestic extremism threat.

“I think it is very dangerous and I think it is very harmful, and it makes us weaker,” she said.

Harris pointed to the plethora of extreme election deniers, many endorsed by Donald Trump, who have embraced Trump’s lie that the 2020 election, won by Joe Biden, was “stolen” from him.

Many of them, whom Biden has [lately slammed](#) as “Maga Republicans”, after the Trump campaign slogan Make America great again, have won Republican nomination for statewide positions that control election administration.

Were they to win in November, they could command considerable power over both state elections and the 2024 presidential contest.

“There are 11 people right now running for secretary of state, the keepers of the integrity of the voting system of their state, who are election deniers,” Harris said. “Couple that with people who hold some of the highest elected office in our country who refuse to condemn [an insurrection](#) on [January 6](#).”

She said that an “age-old sanctity” – the right to vote – had been violated as a response to Biden’s victory which saw Americans turn out to vote in unprecedented numbers, often via mail or drop-boxes, which helped increase access. “I think that scared some people, that the American people were voting in such large numbers,” she said.

Congressional attempts to shore up voting rights have so far been stymied by the Senate filibuster, which requires 60 votes to pass most legislation.

Harris said that should Democrats increase their Senate majority in the midterms, Biden would abolish the filibuster specifically for voting rights

legislation. He could then pass stalled voting rights legislation that increases democratic safeguards.

“We need to have protections to make sure that every American, whoever they vote for, has the unobstructed ability to do that when it is otherwise their right,” she said.

On Sunday morning, Harris and the second gentleman, her husband, Doug Emhoff, joined the remembrance event at the National September 11 Memorial in New York to [mark the anniversary](#) of the al-Qaida terrorist attacks on the US, which killed 2,977 people.

The vice-president did not speak, as per tradition, but in the NBC interview that aired she also spoke of America’s reputation as a world role model for democracy being under threat.

She cited the right-wing challenges to election integrity, including the attack on the US Capitol on 6 January 2021, in a bid to overturn Donald Trump’s defeat, and extremist Republicans’ unwillingness to condemn it, while also fielding many candidates in current elections who still refuse to accept the true result.

And she added that when meeting foreign leaders, the US “had the honor and privilege historically of holding our head up as a defender and an example of a great democracy. And that then gives us the legitimacy and the standing to talk about the importance of democratic principles, rule of law, human rights ... through the process of what we’ve been through, we’re starting to allow people to call into question our commitment to those principles. And that’s a shame.”

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## [China](#)

# Xinjiang lockdown: Chinese censors drown out posts about food and medicine shortages

‘Internet commentary personnel’ told to deluge social media with thoughts on anything from cooking to their personal mood

- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



The Ili Kazakh autonomous prefecture, also known as Yili, is home to about 4.5 million people, and is believed to have been first put into Covid lockdown in early August Photograph: Sipa Asia/REX/Shutterstock

[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei

[@heldavidson](#)

Mon 12 Sep 2022 00.55 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Sep 2022 00.10 EDT

Chinese censors have reportedly been ordered to flood social media with innocuous posts about [Xinjiang](#) to drown out mounting complaints of food and medication shortages in a region under lockdown for more than a month.

The Ili Kazakh autonomous prefecture, also known as Yili, is home to about 4.5 million people, and is believed to have been first put into lockdown [in early August](#), without official public announcement, after an outbreak of Covid-19. In recent days social media has hosted reams of post about food shortages, delays or refusals of medical care.

But according to a leaked directive [published](#) by the China Digital Times, censors were told to “open a campaign of comment flooding” to drown them out.

“There are no subject matter restrictions,” it said, according to CDT’s translation. “Content may include domestic life, daily parenting, cooking, or personal moods. All internet commentary personnel should post once an hour (twice in total), but not in rapid succession! Repeat: not in rapid succession!”

In a sample of posts archived by the CDT as possible examples of the “comment flooding” campaign, users shared photos of Xinjiang cuisine and idyllic environments, but were quickly attacked as suspected attempts to “dilute” conversation about the lockdown.

“All these posts about Yili scenery and food are coming from alternate accounts. Nice job, g\*v\*rm\*nt. Have you ever heard of maintaining a shred of dignity?” said one comment.

Xinjiang, the site of a years-long government campaign of oppression against the Muslim population, is under a higher degree of political control and sensitivity than most of [China](#). About 40% of Xinjiang’s residential population is Han Chinese, and the rest mostly Uyghur and other ethnic minorities. However it has also become a domestic tourism drawcard, particularly Yili, which borders Kazakhstan.

“This is really happening during the Yili epidemic, the locals have tried many things to let the outside world know about our circumstances here,” said one commenter according to monitor site, [What’s On Weibo](#).

“We’re locked inside and don’t have enough supplies, yet they opened the tourist scenic areas, help us, help us here, help the Yili common people!”

Complaints from people struggling during the more than 40-day lockdown had prompted hundreds of thousands of comments and posts. Reports have included pregnant women sent home from a hospital that was closing, another woman and her newborn baby denied re-entry to their residence after giving birth at a hospital, and an elderly man denied entry after arriving at the emergency department vomiting blood.

“Children who have a 40 degree fever can’t even see a doctor, pregnant women can’t even get into the hospital, we really can’t take this any more,” said one reported comment.

Authorities have denied some of the hardship claims, including of deaths and suicides. But last week they conceded there had been issues with food and medical supplies, and apologised in a press conference, blaming local officials.

“First they say it’s fake news, then they apologise,” one reportedly commenter said. “What is real, is that the entire city has been silent for 41 days,” said another.

On Saturday, a Yili health official said remaining lockdowns would be lifted after two to three more rounds of testing, the South China Morning Post [reported](#).

On Sunday China’s national health commission reported 1,138 local cases, including 28 in Xinjiang. About 200 local cases have been reported from Xinjiang in the last week, according to daily briefings from the national health commission.

On a global scale the numbers are very small, but less than two months out from a hugely significant political meeting, Chinese government officials are

under pressure to contain and eliminate outbreaks. China's "dynamic zero" strategy has seen continued widespread lockdowns and other restrictions implemented suddenly and without warning on cities, neighbourhoods, and individual residences, prompting [growing complaints from citizens](#).

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## [Czech Republic](#)

# Former Czech PM Andrej Babiš goes on trial in \$2m EU subsidy fraud case

Case involves farm that allegedly received funds after ownership was transferred to Babiš family members



The former Czech PM Andrej Babiš arrives for his trial in Prague on Monday. Photograph: David W Černý/Reuters

[Robert Tait](#) in Prague

Mon 12 Sep 2022 08.10 EDTFirst published on Mon 12 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT

The trial has opened of the Czech Republic's former prime minister Andrej Babiš on charges of subsidy fraud, in a case that could profoundly affect the politics of the central European country.

Babiš, a billionaire tycoon, is accused of illicitly obtaining €2m (£1.7m) in EU small business funds for the development of Stork's Nest, a hotel and

conference centre in the Bohemian countryside, when it was ineligible for such financial aid because it was part of his multi-industry Agrofert business empire, which controls vast tracts of the Czech economy.

Wearing a dark blue suit and white shirt, Babiš, 68, looked solemn as he entered the largest courtroom in Prague's Habsburg-era municipal court building at 8.52am on Monday, his arrival recorded by a massed bank of press photographers and television camera operators, reflecting intense public interest in hearings that have been delayed for years, partly because of his political standing.

Spectators packed into the public benches, with entry being granted on a tickets-only basis, while the ex-premier's opponents set up a mock jail cell across the street from the courthouse, in one of the Czech capital's busiest thoroughfares.

Babiš is on trial alongside a former aid, Jana Nagyová, who is standing in the forthcoming Czech senate election as a candidate for the Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO) party, which Babiš founded in 2011 on an anti-corruption platform.

The trial is the denouement of a seven-year police investigation into events dating back to 2007 that have been the subject of a report by the EU's anti-fraud unit, Olaf, which [concluded in 2018](#) that numerous laws were broken to obtain the funds.

Babiš, who denies the charges and says they are politically motivated, dismissed the matter as "a 15-year-old case" and called the indictment, filed by the prosecutor Jaroslav Šaroch, "a lie", in remarks to Czech television moments before the proceedings began. "I am glad that people will hear how it is," he added.

Thirteen days have been set aside for the trial, with testimony expected from at least a dozen witnesses, including Babiš's son, Andrej Babiš Jnr.

After years of postponements and judicial delays, Babiš was finally indicted in March when MPs lifted his parliamentary immunity to prosecution, five

months after he lost power in a general election. Babiš had previously been able to ward off trial by maintaining immunity thanks to parliamentary support for his coalition government.

The indictment alleges that Babiš used his power and influence to create conditions for Stork's Nest to appear as if it met the requirements for a European regional development fund grant. Sitting next to his lawyer Eduard Bruna, Babiš put on glasses and alternately took notes and checked his phone as Šaroš read the indictment after the presiding judge, Jan Šott, got proceedings under way.

Šott heads a five-judge panel that will ultimately decide the case. Conviction carries a possible jail sentence, but the prosecution is calling for lesser penalties, including fines.

More significant for Babiš could be the impact on his political career. A guilty verdict could scupper his hopes of winning the Czech presidency, with elections due in January.

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Although he has not declared his candidacy, Babiš has left the door open by touring the country in a camper van, making what analysts see as de facto campaign speeches staking out populist positions, including criticism of the Czech Republic's military support for Ukraine and the acceptance of an estimated 400,000 refugees.

Million Moments for Democracy, a campaign group that organised mass rallies demanding Babiš's resignation when he was prime minister, ridiculed

his presidential ambitions by installing the mock cell on a trailer outside the court, with a gold-plated toilet and golden duvet on a prison bed meant to signify the spectre of a sitting president who had been convicted and jailed.

“It’s a hyperbolic vision of the future,” said Kristina Jochmannová, the group’s public relations manager. “We’re not trying to influence the verdict of the court. It’s a message to the people to think twice about who they want as candidate for president.”

The trailer was due to visit Lány, location of the Czech presidential countryside retreat, before continuing to the Slovak capital, Bratislava, the traditional first port of call for Czech presidents after election.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/12/former-czech-pm-andrej-babis-goes-on-trial-in-2m-eu-subsidy-case>



## India

# India is quietly laying claim to economic superpower status

India recently overtook UK as the world's fifth biggest economy – and it could be third by 2030



Indian billionaire Gautam Adani, Asia's richest person, addresses delegates during the Bengal Global Business Summit in Kolkata, India. Photograph: Rupak de Chowdhuri/Reuters



[Martin Farrer](#)

Mon 12 Sep 2022 03.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Sep 2022 02.24 EDT

The rise of [China](#) has been the biggest story in the global economy in recent decades. But amid concern about its stumbling property market and global fears about inflation, the emergence of its neighbour, India, as a potential new economic superpower may be going under the radar.

You won't find mention of it in Liz Truss's blueprint for a "modern brilliant Britain", but the UK has just been overtaken by [India](#) as the world's fifth biggest economy. The nation of 1.4 billion people is on track to move into third place behind the US and China by 2030, according to economists.

And while the world became familiar with Chinese business titans such as Alibaba founder [Jack Ma](#), the staggering wealth accumulated in recent years by Indian billionaires Gautam Adani and Mukesh Ambani has been less well publicised.

Adani, in particular, has come to represent India's growing economic strength thanks to the rapid expansion of his Adani Group conglomerate, which covers everything from ports to airports, and solar power to television. Having entered the global Top 10 when he became [Asia's richest](#)

[person in February](#), he is now ranked third with a fortune of \$143bn (£123bn) [and is closing fast on second-placed Amazon boss Jeff Bezos](#).

India was for many years seen as the poor relation to China, held back by a sclerotic, sprawling state sector and labyrinthine bureaucracy. It still has enormous problems of poverty and poor infrastructure, but it is beginning to emerge as a rival to its large neighbour with the kind of economic growth figures that were once the pride of Beijing.

Gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 13.8% in the second quarter of this year as pandemic controls were lifted and manufacturing and services boomed. Although double-digit growth is unlikely to be repeated in subsequent quarters, India is still on track to expand by 7% this year as it benefits from economic liberalisation in the private sector, a rapidly growing working population, and the realignment of global supply chains away from China.

“India has overtaken the UK to become the world’s fifth-largest economy,” says Shilan Shah, senior India economist at the consultancy Capital [Economics](#), citing recent updated figures from the International Monetary Fund. “Looking ahead, India looks set to continue its march up the global rankings. In all, we think India will overtake Germany and Japan to become the third-largest economy in the world within the next decade.”

A key part of India’s continued rise will be its ability to grow its manufacturing sector and challenge China as the world’s No 1 exporter. India has already benefited from a large, well-educated, often English-speaking middle-class, helping the country to develop world-class IT and pharmaceutical sectors. It also has strong consumer demand, which accounts for about 55% of the economy compared with less than 40% in China.

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Now the trick will be to benefit from its youthful working population to position itself as a manufacturing power to rival China, where an ageing labour force and rising pay levels are reducing its competitive edge. With a geopolitical wedge opening up between China and the west, India also has the opportunity to grow in reshaped international supply chains.

Nguyen Trinh, emerging markets economist at Natixis bank in Hong Kong, says the outlook is promising for India if it can keep investing.

“Indian demand is expected to be strong due to its demographics,” she says, “which is rather favourable with rising working-age population that will push for demand for essentials such as food and energy as well as infrastructure investment. The normalisation of activities post-Covid as well as an increase in government spending, particularly in infrastructure investment, is helping growth. Consumption rose in double digits and investment is accelerating.”

As with many aspects of India’s economic rise, Adani’s story is instructive. Now 60, the billionaire dropped out of Gujarat University, moved to Mumbai, and began trading diamonds before expanding into ports, construction and – latterly, but very profitably – renewable energy.

These widespread industrial interests have dovetailed perfectly with the country’s thirst for growth and seen his [Adani Group](#) holdings on the Indian stock market rocket in value. His main listed company, Adani Enterprises, has grown 50-fold in value in the past five years, while Adani Green Energy, which looks after its push into solar power, has doubled in value in the past year. The group is ploughing \$70bn into green energy projects by 2030 with the aim of becoming the world’s largest renewable-energy producer – ironic given the controversy over its plans to expand coal mining in Australia.

Another important symmetry comes from Adani’s origins in the western state of Gujarat, which is also the power base of the Indian prime minister,

[Narendra Modi](#). Modi's market reforms, which have included cutting corporation tax from 35% to 25% and opening up India to more foreign investment, have freed up entrepreneurs such as Adani and the man he overtook as the country's richest person, Mukesh Ambani, head of Reliance Industries, and another Gujarati. Adani is close to Modi who has been known to use the tycoon's private jet for campaign trips.

Nowhere is the local and global ambition of Adani more clearly illustrated than in Mundra, the Arabian Sea port which he wants to become the world's largest by the end of the decade. With Modi's government rolling out a 100tn rupees (\$1.35tn, £1.1tn) infrastructure programme – it aims to build 25,000km of new roads in the current financial year alone – Adani is well placed to profit at every stage as the necessary raw materials are shipped in, turned into goods and services, and then sent back out around the world through Mundra.

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## Denmark

# Margrethe II of Denmark marks jubilee as Europe's only reigning queen

Monarch marks 50th anniversary of accession with muted celebrations out of respect for Elizabeth II

- [Mourning for Queen Elizabeth II – latest updates](#)



Queen Margrethe II of Denmark's celebrations were toned down after the death of Queen Elizabeth II on Thursday. Photograph: Ida Marie Odgaard/EPA

[Kate Connolly](#) in Berlin

Sun 11 Sep 2022 09.23 EDT Last modified on Sun 11 Sep 2022 17.01 EDT

Queen Margrethe II of Denmark, Europe's longest serving monarch and only reigning queen after the death of [Queen Elizabeth II](#), has marked her jubilee

with a series of low-key celebrations in a show of respect for her third cousin.

Margrethe, 82, an immensely popular monarch known for her artistic streak as well as her chain-smoking, is said to have made the decision herself. She had originally been due to mark the 50th anniversary of her accession to the Danish throne in January, but festivities were considerably scaled back because of the pandemic.

Full-blown celebrations had been expected to take place across the country this weekend instead, but were then toned down again after the death of Queen Elizabeth on Thursday.

The palace said that the decision was taken “at the Queen’s own request”, Danish media reported.

In a letter of condolence to King Charles III, Margrethe called Queen Elizabeth “a towering figure among the European monarchs and a great inspiration to us all. We shall miss her terribly.”

A carriage procession through the streets of Copenhagen, as well as a balcony appearance were cancelled.





Margrethe greets staff on the Royal Yacht Dannebrog in Copenhagen.  
Photograph: Mads Claus Rasmussen/AP

“After 50 years on the throne, Queen Margrethe is now the longest-serving living monarch in the world after Queen Elizabeth’s death,” [the Danish newspaper Berlingske declared](#) on Friday.

Margrethe was crowned queen at the age of 31 on 14 January 1972.

At the time of her accession, only 45% of Danes were in favour of the royal family, objecting to the place it held in a modern democracy. Today it enjoys the support of more than 80% of the population.

Margrethe, who was widowed in 2018, is credited with modernising the institution and encouraged the marriage of two of her sons to non-nobility. She is praised for having remained scandal-free and non-political.

Margrethe has repeatedly said she will remain on the throne until she dies. In 2019 she told the Swedish daily Expressen: “I intend to remain in place as long as I live. My mission is lifelong.” She said abdication would only come into question if she became seriously ill.

Her son, Crown Prince Frederik, 54, is due to succeed her.



Her fun-loving reputation was reinforced in May this year, when she rode on a rollercoaster at Copenhagen's Tivoli amusement park, managing to keep her hat on.

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She is considered a skilled visual artist, having illustrated several books and had her works exhibited in museums at home and abroad. She has also worked as a costume and set designer with the Royal Danish Ballet and Royal Danish Theatre. Margrethe, a linguist, has also participated in translation projects, including a 1981 translation of Simone de Beauvoir's *All Men are Mortal*, under a pseudonym.

The decision to cancel street parties and a folk festival due to take place on Saturday was made by the royal family. The Queen had been due to appear on the balcony at Amalienborg Palace with members of her family, before taking a ceremonial carriage ride down Strøget Street in the centre of Copenhagen to City Hall.

A gala performance at the Royal Theatre went ahead "in an adjusted form", according to the palace.

Members of the Swedish and Norwegian royal families were participating in the events at the weekend, including a church service on Sunday in Our Lady's church in Copenhagen followed by a lunch on the Royal Yacht Dannebrog and a dinner at Christiansborg Palace.

The historian Lars Hovbakke Sørensen told Berlingske even though the ties between the families "had not been so close", the cancellation followed

protocol.

“It would send the wrong signal out to the world if you were to hold street festivals,” he said. “It’s necessary to show your sympathy not least because there are both personal and familial ties between the two royal families.”

The second-longest-serving monarch is King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden, who has been on the throne for 49 years.

The Sultan of Brunei has been on the throne for 54 years, but opinions are divided as to whether he should be considered the world’s longest serving monarch, due to the fact that the country only became independent from Britain in 1984.

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## Headlines friday 16 september 2022

- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: reports of mass burial site outside recently liberated Iziun](#)
- [Ukraine Mass burial site with 440 bodies discovered in recaptured Iziun, says police chief](#)
- [London Two police officers stabbed near Leicester Square](#)
- [Live Queen lying in state: entry to queue paused as waiting time passes 14 hours](#)
- [Wales First minister says people have right to protest during King Charles visit](#)

## [Ukraine war live](#)Ukraine

# Russia-Ukraine war: senior pro-Russian officials reported killed; Ukraine says mass grave found at Izium – as it happened

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2022/sep/16/russia-ukraine-war-zelenskiy-compares-scenes-in-izium-to-bucha-massacre-live-updates>

## [Ukraine](#)

# Ukraine says victims from Iziun mass grave show signs of torture

Official says some of the more than 440 bodies found buried in forest had their hands tied behind their backs

- [Russia-Ukraine war – latest updates](#)

Ukraine says it has discovered mass burial site with 400 bodies in recaptured city – video

*[Luke Harding](#) in Kyiv and agencies*

Fri 16 Sep 2022 10.51 EDTFirst published on Thu 15 Sep 2022 19.40 EDT

Ukrainian officials have said some of the bodies pulled from a mass grave outside the recently recaptured city of Iziun showed signs of torture.

Oleg Synegubov, the regional governor, said some of the more than 440 bodies buried in a forest near the north-eastern city also had their hands tied behind their backs.

“We are at the site of the mass burial of people, civilians who were buried here, and now, according to our information, they all have the signs of violent death,” Synegubov said at the site.

“There are bodies with hands tied behind [their backs]. Each fact will be investigated and will be properly and legally evaluated.”

The Ukrainian president, [Volodymyr Zelenskiy](#), on Thursday evening accused Russia of “leaving death everywhere” after the discovery of the site. He likened the find, in an area recaptured this week from Russian forces, to the previous mass killings of civilians in the cities of Bucha, outside Kyiv, and Mariupol.

Men in white overalls began digging out bodies on Friday as part of a mass exhumation at the site, reporters with the Reuters news agency said, and 20 white bodybags could be seen. Reuters reported that several bodies had rope tied around their necks and hands.

The Ukrainian police chief Ihor Klymenko told a news conference that all of the bodies recovered so far appeared to be of civilians, although there was information that some soldiers may have been buried there too.

### [Izium graphic](#)

Video from Izium showed a [sandy pine forest dotted with graves](#). Wooden crosses marked the locations. One handwritten sign read: “Ukraine armed forces, 17 people, Izium city, [taken] from morgue.” A few listed numbers – 345, 347, 444. Others had no inscriptions.

Speaking in a video address on Thursday night, Zelenskiy called on the world to “hold [Russia](#) to real account for this war”. He said: “Russia leaves death everywhere and it must be held responsible for that.”

Serhiy Bolvinov, the chief police investigator for Kharkiv region, told Sky News that some of the people had died as a result of shelling and airstrikes. He said forensic investigations would be carried out on every grave. “I can say it is one of the largest burial sites in a big town in liberated [areas] ... 440 bodies were buried in one place,” he said.

Oleh Kotenko, Ukraine’s missing persons ombudsman, who visited the forest on Thursday, said some graves contained names and dates. Corpses of Ukrainian soldiers were taken in a van from the local morgue and tossed into a mass grave in black sacks, he said.

Citing video posted by Russian soldiers on social media, he said there were probably more than 17 bodies in one location. “We haven’t counted them yet, but I think there are more than 25 or even 30,” he said. Investigators with metal detectors were scanning the site for hidden explosives.

Sergei Gorodko, an Izium resident, said that among the hundreds buried in individual graves were dozens of adults and children killed in a Russian

airstrike on an apartment building. He said he pulled some of them out of the rubble “with my own hands”.

Thousands of Russian troops fled Izium at the weekend after a stunning Ukrainian counteroffensive. The Russians abandoned almost all of Kharkiv province and retreated to new defensive positions east of the Oskil River, about 10 miles from Izium. There was no immediate public comment from Moscow.

The Ukrainian defence ministry tweeted: “Mass graves are being discovered in Izium after liberation from the [Russians],” and it added: “The current largest burial [site] has 440 unmarked graves.”

The exact circumstances of how residents died have yet to be determined. In February and March, Russian troops killed more than 1,400 people in the Kyiv region, including in the suburb of Bucha, during their failed attempt to seize the Ukrainian capital.

They rounded up, interrogated and executed hundreds of civilians. Most of the victims were men. They also included the female heads of villages, who were shot and buried with their families, and parents and children gunned down as they tried to drive to safety.

Dozens of bombed-out apartment buildings in Izium’s city centre lie derelict along roads covered with the debris of what has been [one of this war’s most fierce battles](#), resulting in the deaths of at least 1,000 people, according to Ukrainian officials.

On Wednesday, the city – described as a second Mariupol because of the heavy bombardments it has suffered – was visited by the outside world for the first time after its recapture.

### [Graphic](#)

The Russian army killed more than 20,000 people in Mariupol, a south-eastern city on the Sea of Azov, according to Kyiv. Russian troops encircled the port in early March and systematically bombed it until mid-May, attacking from land, sea and air.

Survivors buried loved ones in makeshift graves next to their apartment blocks and in children's playgrounds. Others were left entombed in the basements and cellars of high-rise apartment blocks pulverised by Russian strikes. Bodies remained there for weeks.

Russia has repeatedly denied it targets civilians or has committed war crimes.

*With Reuters and Associated Press*

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## UK news

# Two police officers stabbed near Leicester Square in central London

Man arrested on suspicion of causing grievous bodily harm and assaulting emergency worker



Police cordon off an area of Leicester Square in London where two officers were stabbed. Photograph: Tom Nicholson/Reuters

[\*Vikram Dodd\*](#) and [\*Geneva Abdul\*](#)

Fri 16 Sep 2022 13.06 EDTFirst published on Fri 16 Sep 2022 03.34 EDT

A police officer was stabbed repeatedly in the neck and another constable stabbed through the arm after a man with a knife was challenged in central London.

People watched in horror after the officers were attacked near Leicester Square at about 6am on Friday. A man in his 20s was arrested and in custody and police said a knife was recovered from the scene.

The Metropolitan police commissioner, Sir Mark Rowley, said a female officer had challenged the suspect over suspicions he had a knife. The officer was stabbed through a vein in her arm, leading to huge blood loss. The suspect then ran away followed by police.

“We remain concerned that the injuries to the young woman officer’s arm may still be quite serious and may potentially be life-changing, but that’s yet to be worked through,” Rowley said.

A male officer was stabbed in the neck three times, and in the chest. Rowley said: “Her colleague chases down the offender, catches him, a tussle ensues, that officer is stabbed three times in the neck and once in the chest. He’s very seriously injured, other colleagues join the scene. There’s a violent struggle with a fairly frenzied individual – Tasers deployed, Pava spray is deployed and then an officer uses his baton – eventually the offender is subdued and arrested. The two officers were rushed to hospital.”

The Metropolitan police said both officers were based locally. A Taser stun gun was fired to subdue the suspect, and a man, believed to be in his 20s, was arrested on suspicion of causing grievous bodily harm and assaulting an emergency worker. He was taken to hospital and has since been discharged into police custody.

Rowley, who took up his role on Monday with a mission to reform the Met, said: “It’s a reminder to me that with all the calls for reform in the Metropolitan police, which are absolutely necessary, we should never forget that we’ve got thousands of dedicated men and women going out every day who are prepared to be brave for Londoners.”

The deputy assistant commissioner Stuart Cundy said the attack was not believed to be terrorist in nature or linked to events relating to the death of the Queen.

The incident came as the UK prepared for a huge security challenge in the lead-up to the Queen’s funeral on Monday.

The London mayor, Sadiq Khan, called the attack “utterly appalling” and “disgraceful”. He said he had spoken to Rowley about the incident and

remained in close contact, and he urged anyone with information to come forward.

“These brave officers were doing their duty and assisting the public at this momentous time for our country,” he said. “Attacks against the police will not be tolerated and any perpetrators will be caught and prosecuted.”

The home secretary, Suella Braverman, said she had discussed the situation with Rowley. “Every day, we are safer thanks to the bravery of our policemen & women,” she wrote on Twitter. “I wish the police officers a swift recovery and my thoughts are with their family, friends and colleagues.”

Supt Justin Browne, of the Met, said: “The actions of these two officers, and their colleagues, exemplifies the key value of courage that runs through the core of the Metropolitan police and they will be offered all the support they need as they begin their recovery from this terrifying incident.”

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## [Queen Elizabeth II](#)

# Queen lying in state: wait time to see coffin now 19 hours as King and siblings end vigil – as it happened

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/live/2022/sep/16/queen-elizabeth-ii-lying-in-state-westminster-hall-king-charles-iii-mourners-queue-london-live-news-latest-updates>

## Wales

# Welsh first minister says people have right to protest during King Charles visit

Mark Drakeford calls for policing to be proportionate, as silent demonstration planned in Cardiff

- [Death of the Queen and King Charles's accession - latest updates](#)



Placards and wellwishers outside Llandaff Cathedral. Drakeford said he expected protests to 'be a footnote to the dominant feelings of the day'. Photograph: Carl Recine/Reuters

[Steven Morris](#)

[@stevenmorris20](#)

Fri 16 Sep 2022 04.35 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Sep 2022 04.46 EDT

The Welsh first minister has said that anti-monarchists have a right to protest in Cardiff when King Charles visits the Welsh capital on Friday on the last leg of his tour of the four nations, but called for them to be restrained.

Mark Drakeford also made it clear that he did not expect there to be an extravagant investiture for William, the new Prince of Wales, but said he thought he could play an important role in Welsh life.

The Labour first minister said that while nobody would expect William to suddenly become fluent in Welsh, he believed he would “want to recognise” its importance in shaping modern life in [Wales](#).

A silent anti-monarchist demonstration is due to begin from 1pm at Cardiff Castle, organised under the banner “Real Democracy Now”.

Speaking on BBC Radio 4’s Today programme, Drakeford said: “People have a legitimate right to protest and there are a variety of views. Myself, I don’t think this is the week in which that debate needs to surface. But people have that right and I think it will be exercised with restraint and it will be a footnote to the dominant feelings of the day.”

He called for the policing of the protest to be proportionate. “It should recognise the rights that people have. I’ve every confidence in the South Wales police, who have dealt with this sort of event many times. They will deal proportionately with protest, making sure those rights are respected but that those rights don’t interfere with what most people will have come to Cardiff today to exercise.”

The King’s visit is taking place on Owain Glyndŵr Day, a celebration of the life and legacy of the [last Welshman to be known as Prince of Wales](#). Many nationalists and republicans see the title as a symbol of English oppression and more than 27,000 people [have signed a petition](#) calling for it to be abolished.

Charles’s investiture in 1969 as Prince of Wales led to protests.

Asked if there would be a grand ceremony for William, Drakeford said: “The Wales of 2022 is very different to the Wales of 1969.” He said he did

not expect the pattern of the 1969 ceremony to be used.

“I don’t think that would be the right way to go about things. I think the new Prince of Wales will want to take time to establish himself in that role, to work out where he can make the most contribution to creating the successful Wales of the future and there will be plenty of time to think about when and how a more formal marking of that new role could be undertaken.”

He continued: “I have had one conversation with the new Prince of Wales. We didn’t directly talk about the investiture but he did say to me he wanted to take on his new responsibilities slowly, that he wanted to give time for his own knowledge of Wales and the things that matter in the Wales of today to be fully established, for him to think about where his own contribution could most powerfully be made and I thought that was very sensible.”

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Drakeford said the new prince’s interest in the environment could dovetail with Wales’ aspirations. “Wales’ future lies in the contribution we can make in the renewable energy revolution the globe needs,” he said.

The first minister said nobody expected William to suddenly be fluent in Welsh. “Nobody is expecting miracles,” he said. But he added: “The Welsh language is a very important part of Wales spoken by thousands of people every day. It’s not necessarily the easiest language to acquire later on. I’m quite sure the incoming Prince of Wales will want to recognise the importance of the Welsh language and the part it plays in shaping contemporary Wales.”

Crowds gathered outside Llandaff Cathedral ahead of the King's visit. King Charles and Camilla, the Queen Consort, will travel to Wales by helicopter where they will attend a service of prayer and reflection at the cathedral.

The couple will then go to the Senedd, where they will receive condolences and meet members of the Welsh parliament. From there they will travel to Cardiff castle where Charles will hold a private audience with Drakeford.

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## 2022.09.16 - Spotlight

- ['I want my work to be invisible' Hollywood's prosthetics maestros share their secrets](#)
- [Marcus Mumford 'I didn't just want to hang traumatic stuff out there and trigger people'](#)
- [You be the judge Should my influencer flatmate stop filling our flat with freebies?](#)
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### [Film industry](#)

## ‘I want my work to be invisible’: Hollywood’s prosthetics maestros share their secrets



Embalmed in silicone ... Bradley Cooper as the title character in the upcoming biopic *Bernstein*, with Carey Mulligan as his wife, Felicia. Photograph: Jason Howard/Bauer-Griffin/GC Images

How makeup masters lay the foundation for award-worthy performances, from transforming Bradley Cooper into Bernstein to helping Brendan Fraser play a very obese man in [The Whale](#)

[Phil Hoad](#)

[@phlode](#)

Fri 16 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT

At the start of last year's biopic [The Eyes of Tammy Faye](#), a makeup artist is shocked to learn that the televangelist has her lipliner and eyeliner permanently tattooed on. She offers to soften them, but Faye demurs: "That's my trademark. If I take that away, then it's not me. This is who I am."

It's the film's frontispiece, about appearance, truth and the nature of performance to mediate between them. One that's especially relevant given the actor playing Faye, [Jessica Chastain](#), is herself covered in layers of silicone prosthetics to portray the preacher.

Prosthetics are all the rage for the A-list. On-set images recently emerged of Bradley Cooper [embalmed in silicone to become a Leonard Bernstein doppelganger](#) for his forthcoming biopic. Brendan Fraser received a standing ovation at this month's Venice film festival for making the fatsuit more than a one-note joke in obesity drama [The Whale](#).



Brendan Fraser in *The Whale*. Photograph: Courtesy of A24

Colin Farrell similarly [swaddled his gorgeousness to play the Penguin in \*The Batman\*](#). Modern-day Dorian Gray Jared Leto finally got acquainted with middle age by [transforming into the paunchy, balding Paolo Gucci](#) in Ridley Scott's *House of Gucci*. And Gary Oldman won the best actor Oscar, despite his mouth being the only recognisable Oldman feature, complete with cigar, for his Winston Churchill incarnation in 2017's [Darkest Hour](#).

Amid the inevitable my-unbelievable-transformation articles, there has been a certain amount of scepticism about this excess of prosthetics. Was it so hard to find actual doughy middle-aged actors to play doughy middle-aged characters? There is something undoubtedly showy about stars' desire for self-effacement – you might call it the Mrs Doubtfire paradox. Makeup artist [Göran Lundström](#) was surprised when Leto approached him and asked to be unrecognisable as Paolo Gucci: “I’d never had anyone ask for this before – usually, you always wanted to see the actor in there. The new thing is that people are impressed by the fact you can’t recognise them.”



Swaddling his gorgeousness ... Colin Farrell as Oswald Cobblepot/the Penguin in The Batman (2022). Photograph: Entertainment Pictures/Alamy

But [Kazuhiro Tsuji](#), the prosthetics specialist responsible for the Cooper and Oldman makeovers, believes focusing simply on the act of transformation is a mistake. “I hate to see that article: ‘This actor is unrecognisable.’ Because it’s so easy to make someone unrecognisable. The point is how the makeup represents this character or story. What we are doing is part of the storytelling.”

Like Tammy Faye’s slap, the externals express internal truths: who that person is. Actors are increasingly realising how today’s prosthetics technology can be a gateway to authenticity – and they are often the ones driving these transformations, according to Lundström. He says he saw Leto and Farrell change visibly in the makeup chair, as the silicone pieces were applied. “Once the makeup starts looking like a face, their voice, their whole behavioural pattern changes,” says Lundström. “It’s really fascinating, because that’s what you want as a makeup artist – you want the actor to identify with their new look.”

After Leto’s approach, Lundström had just three weeks, working seven days a week, to craft the pieces required to change his face into Gucci’s; getting the right level of makeup was a trial and error process. Lundström was

almost scared by the totality of Leto's request: "There's always that fear of covering up too much. It can feel masky and [create] a distance between the audience and the actor." One concern is prosthetics becoming so physically constraining that actors can no longer act. In particular, Leto drove Lundström to transform his nose.

There's always that fear of covering up too much. It can create a distance between the audience and the actor

### *Göran Lundström*

Lundström says what they achieved is not a Paolo Gucci facsimile, but rather a Leto/Gucci hybrid that conveys what needs to be dramatically conveyed: the dynastic fashionista buffoon. And it pays off: unlike a number of recent performances that have been wildly out of kilter with the surrounding movie, Leto in his get-up has a kind of lightly accentuated camp that fits perfectly, perfumed with that outrageous Florentine accent.



Makeup artist Göran Lundström, who transformed Colin Farrell into the Penguin and Jared Leto into Paolo Gucci. Photograph: Tibrina Hobson/Getty Images for SBIFF

Silicone – more durable than latex prosthetics – has been in use for about 20 years now. But Lundström believes there is a prosthetics arms race taking

place, driven by ever-more-spectacular applications of the craft.

Tsuji coming out of retirement to help Oldman go full Winston seems to have upped the ante. Known to all in the profession as Kazu, he is a silicone pioneer who in the mid-2000s solved a key technical problem with the material: how to apply paint to it. He had been originally inspired to become a prosthetics makeup artist by Dick Smith's transformation of [Hal Holbrook into Abraham Lincoln](#) for the 1985 mini-series *North and South*. But he became disillusioned by the way his prosthetics work was increasingly shunted into sci-fi and horror, rather than the mimetic realism that fascinated him, and he quit to focus on fine art.



Jessica Chastain in *The Eyes of Tammy Faye* (2021). Photograph: Searchlight Pictures/Allstar

For Tsuji, truth really is written on our faces: “It’s a person’s diary or history of their life. They are born with a face, but at the same time life leaves a record there. Sometimes in photographs, you see a particular wrinkle. When I study a character, I try to understand why they look like that: what kind of mentality they have and what they went through.”

The process is not dissimilar to the internal excavation actors undertake – and Tsuji says he sometimes shares his insights with them in the makeup



chair. Recently, he morphed [Charlize Theron into journalist Megyn Kelly](#) for the sex-harassment exposé Bombshell. He says he is a kind of counsellor, helping actors achieve confidence in their performance's authenticity, but stresses that a perfect likeness is not the end goal – rather, a functional dramatic construct. For example, Churchill had a prominent scar on his forehead because of a collision with a New York taxi; Tsuji omitted it because the incident didn't feature in Darkest Hour's script, and didn't have any bearing on the events depicted.



Gary Oldman as Churchill in Darkest Hour (2017). Photograph: Working Title Films/Allstar

In ideal circumstances, with astute technicians such as Tsuji and Lundström working with conscientious actors, prosthetics are a shortcut to method acting, allowing performers to inhabit a character's physical form without some of the traditional obligations, such as excessive weight gain, and so have speedier access to their characters. [Marlon Brando, using a mouthpiece in The Godfather](#) to pull his Don Corleone timbre into that world-encumbered register, was doing a rudimentary version of the same thing.

In method parlance, it is about passing from the “art of representation” to the “art of experiencing”. Of course it's debatable whether what actors then experience is the reality of the character, or just some inner emotion of their



own they use to animate them. But it didn't really matter in the past; in fact, this personality fusion was precisely what big stars relied on, especially if they bore little resemblance to the real-life figures they played. It was the lightning convergence of inner essences, star persona aligning with the subject's personality traits, that counted. Henry Fonda was not exactly a dead ringer for Abraham Lincoln, but the air of clean-cut idealism synced up in [Young Mr Lincoln](#).



Makeup artist Kazuhiro Tsuji, who turned Charlize Theron into Megyn Kelly and Gary Oldman into Churchill. Photograph: Matt Winkelmeyer/Getty Images

Unlocking the inner chamber of the psyche is where the action is; something Todd Haynes' 2007 Bob Dylan biopic [I'm Not There](#) knew well when it cast six different actors, not necessarily the same gender or race, to play the musician. As the singer once put it: "I contain multitudes." If you had to point to any performer who is a particularly adept essence-bottler, it would be [Andy Serkis](#). In his remarkable blue-screen tours de force as Gollum in The Lord of the Rings films and the chimpanzee Caesar in the rebooted Planet of the Apes franchise, he had to capture the animus first, before the CGI – perhaps the ultimate form of prosthetics – were applied afterwards in post-production. But his work goes to show how prosthetics, whether physical or digital, can be far more than a hollow carapace.

With Fraser squarely in next year's Oscars race, and Cooper presumably hoping for the same in 2024, a layer of silicone could settle the next couple of best actor awards. In this prosthetics push, performers and makeup artists, whether they're working on the inside or the outside, are always chasing a will o' the wisp: closing the gap with reality. Maybe Tsuji, the master craftsman, feels the burden the most: "I always feel defeated, because I try to mimic nature but I can never be as perfect as that. I want my work to be invisible."

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# Marcus Mumford: ‘I didn’t just want to hang traumatic stuff out there and trigger people’

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## You be the judge: should my influencer flatmate stop filling our flat with freebies?



Illustration: Ilse Weisfelt/the Guardian

Becky says the flat has become a dumping ground; Nazneen thinks Becky should appreciate the spoils of her career. You decide who needs to put the

house in order

- [Find out how to get a disagreement settled or be a You be the judge juror](#)



Interviews by [Georgina Lawton](#)  
[@georginalawton](#)

Fri 16 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 17 Sep 2022 00.36 EDT

## The prosecution Becky

*At first I loved all the free stuff, but the novelty has worn off and now our flat is like a junkyard*

I live in a flat with two friends, Nazneen and Polly. We've been quite content for four years but Nazneen's career as an [influencer](#) has recently taken off and the flat has become super messy.

Nazneen works as a stylist but is an influencer on the side. Living with her definitely has its perks. There's never any shortage of things to do, as she always gets a plus-one to product launches, music events and fashion

parties. I also benefit from some of the free stuff she is sent. She gets clothes, makeup, trainers and random food packages all the time.

Our open plan kitchen and living room now functions as a dumping ground

At first I loved the freebies, but the novelty is now wearing off. Nazneen is really bad at throwing things out and our tiny flat is cluttered with random stuff.

We have an open-plan kitchen/living room that now functions as a dumping ground. Nazneen leaves a lot of her rejected items there. It's a tip, with bits of plastic and wrapping all over the countertop and things no one wants just sitting there. Nazneen's room is a bomb-site: she has clothes racks buckling with unworn items, and shoes and packages that have never been unboxed poking out from under the bed. You can't see the floor.

Nazneen says, "Oh I'll go through the old packages later", but things pile up. She does donate things to charity shops but she needs to do it more often.

Sometimes Polly and I are told to go and help ourselves to things, which is nice, but on occasion Nazneen will take items back as she forgets what she's told us. One time she invited both Polly and me to a film premiere but she only had one extra ticket. It was awkward but I let Polly go.

Another time I took a jewellery set she hadn't wanted, only for her to reclaim it when she realised she needed to produce content of her wearing it. I thought: keep track of your things and don't say I can have something if I can't.

Nazneen needs to tidy up the clutter. She doesn't mean it, but her disorganisation is impacting the rest of us in the flatshare.

## **The defence Nazneen**

*When you have so much stuff coming in, it's really hard to keep track of everything*

I'm really lucky to work as an influencer as a side gig. I make videos on YouTube and TikTok about finding your unique fashion style and being a young creative.

I like living with my friends and I think they appreciate the upsides of my job. I've even tried to get some of them into it, as the money is good, but they've admitted that influencing is more difficult than it looks. People think influencers don't work hard, but you need to be really assertive when it comes to dealing with businesses.

I get sent a lot of stuff now and it's great, but I do accept that the flat can be a bit of a tip as a result. I try to keep track of everything, but it's hard due to my unpredictable work hours. In my day job as a stylist I could be on a shoot for five days then have nothing for the rest of the month. And for my influencer work I get sent everything from trainers to designer bags to posh candles. I probably get three packages a week, sometimes more. The more I put myself out there, the more stuff arrives.

I don't want brands to stop sending me things – that would be pointless and harmful for my career

I film content with some of it, or give shoutouts to brands. I also give stuff to the girls whenever I can. After I've decided what I need, Polly and Becky get first dibs on everything else – I'll leave that in the kitchen. Then I keep stuff for other friends and family – or I intend to, at least. I think, "Oh, so-and-so will love this" and plan on regifting it, but often I don't get around to it and that point never comes.

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I've turned to the girls for help sorting things out before and they didn't mind, but I know it's a big ask. Right now there are clothes and accessories sitting half-opened on our countertop and chairs. I know Becky gets annoyed when I've forgotten what goes where. Once, I took back a set of bracelets I'd given her as I needed to film them, but it wasn't deliberate. I just forgot. When you have so much stuff coming in, it's really hard to keep on top of it all.

I hate chucking things out. I always think I can find a home for everything I get. And I obviously don't ever want brands to stop sending me things – that would be harmful for my career.

## **The jury of Guardian readers**

### **Should Nazneen tidy up the flat and find a home for all her freebies?**

Nazneen needs to take responsibility and be better organised. It's not fair on Becky and Polly to live in a house full of clutter, regardless of the occasional gift or outing they might get from it.

**Matthew, 25**

Nazneen is guilty. I'm sure her career as an influencer is hard work but, as she says herself, her job as a stylist leaves her with plenty time off, which she could use to clear up the flat.

**Ella, 22**

Even Nazneen seems to agree that she should be tidier, and her unpredictable hours aren't really an excuse. If her flatmates want to help her sort things in return for first pick of the goodies that's up to them, but unless they've agreed on that, it's her responsibility.

**John, 38**

Nazneen should sell some of the unwanted freebies online and use the money to hire a professional wardrobe organiser and buy some space-saving



storage units to put stuff into.

**Naomi, 29**

Respecting communal spaces is crucial for shared living. Giving Becky and Polly a few freebies is one way to reduce clutter and waste; but it is Nazneen's responsibility to find an appropriate home for everything else she receives. If she can't do that, she should find a more manageable job.

**Nick, 38**

## **You be the judge**

So now you can be the judge. In our online poll below, tell us: should Nazneen tidy up her freebies?

**The poll will close on Thursday 22 September at 9am BST**

## **Last week's result**

We asked if Luke should have to tell his girlfriend Raye [every detail about his friend's stag do](#).

**51% of you said yes – Raye is innocent**

**49% of you said no – Raye is guilty**

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## Genius to heartbreak: The 10 most memorable points of Federer's career



Roger Federer's grace and skill were compelling parts of his game.  
Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

To celebrate the Swiss star's brilliant career, we select some of the most noteworthy moments from his time on tour

[Tim Joyce](#)

Fri 16 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Sun 18 Sep 2022 00.31 EDT

## **1) 2003 Wimbledon final v Mark Philippoussis**

The 2003 Wimbledon final marked [Federer's first grand slam victory](#), and the first time he had such a huge audience watching on TV. In the first-set tiebreaker, with the score knotted at two apiece, Federer displayed all his brilliance in one point: a half-volley from the baseline, wide-angled groundstrokes and a finish with a brilliant forehand down the line.

## **2) 2005 US Open final v Andre Agassi**

Playing somewhat against the crowd – perhaps for the only time in his career - who were behind the sentimental favorite Agassi, Federer unleashed a ridiculously powerful forehand from well behind the baseline in the early going (around the 28 second mark in the video above). The veteran American looked stunned. Agassi would later say [of the match](#): “When I faced Roger Federer in the 2005 US Open final, there was no safe place to put a ball on the court. Roger’s serve, return, movements and net game were incredible; his versatility was so strong that he might have had five things individually better than everybody else on the Tour.”

## **3) 2009 French Open semi-final v Juan Martin del Potro**

Federer, just months after [a heart-wrenching defeat at the hands of Rafael Nadal](#) in the 2009 Australian Open final, was desperate to claim a French title to complete the career grand slam. When Nadal was shocked by Robin Söderling in the fourth round, Federer knew this could well be his best chance to win in Paris. But he faced a huge – literally – hurdle in the 6ft7in Del Potro and his relentless ground game. But Federer utilized his varied arsenal to sneak by with a five-set triumph. In the second game of the match, Federer somehow tracked down a forehand and curved the ball down the

line for a winner. The Swiss maestro then went on to [demolish surprise finalist Söderling](#) in the final to win his only French Open title.

#### **4) 2009 Wimbledon final v Andy Roddick**

A year after participating in what many believe to be the greatest match ever played at SW19, [losing to Nadal in five thrilling sets](#), Federer was back in the Wimbledon final and, again, [competing in another epic](#). Roddick took the first set and then held a commanding 6-2 lead in the tiebreaker. Serving for a seemingly insurmountable two-set lead, Roddick looked to be in relative control of the point when he smacked a forehand at Federer's feet. But Federer casually hit a half-volley backhand winner (around the 4min 45sec mark in the video above) and ended up winning the tiebreak. [He would win an extraordinary fifth set 16-14](#).

#### **5) 2010 US Open semi-final v Novak Djokovic**

This list includes a few points that got away from Federer but merit inclusion due to their significance. In 2010, with New York fans salivating at the chance of a Federer-Nadal final (sadly Gotham never got to witness the two facing off), it seemed like it would indeed come to pass. Djokovic, serving down 15-40, missed two first serves. But Federer got tight on both points and he let Djokovic attack (disclaimer: these two points are included as one).

#### **6) 2011 French Open semi-final v Djokovic**

Coming into the French Open in 2011, Federer was in the first “slump” of his career, as he had gone four straight grand slams without claiming a title. All the talk coming into the tournament was about Nadal, who was coming off a three grand slam year in 2010, and Djokovic who was finally coming into his own after a brilliant start to the year, winning 41 consecutive matches, including at the Australian Open a few months prior. In a significant upset, a visibly motivated Federer beat Djokovic in four sets. In

the final set of his victory, after both greats traded stellar shots from all over the court, Federer somehow came up with a flicked backhand down-the-line passing shot that stunned Djokovic (around the two-minute mark in the clip above) and helped seal the victory. Waving his finger in the air after the match was done, it was obvious to all how much this victory meant to him. Though Nadal thrashed Federer in the final, it didn't take away from how important a victory this was.

## **7) 2011 US Open semi-final v Djokovic**

Remarkably, just a year after losing two match points in the semi-final to his rival, Federer again found himself up two match points in the same round in New York. This time it was on his serve. And this time, Djokovic came up with a ridiculous return to save the first match point. Then on the second match point, and visibly shaken by what Djokovic had just pulled off on the first match point, Federer bungled a simple forehand into the bottom of the net. After the match, Federer, in a rare moment of outward irritation, commented that Djokovic didn't appear like someone "who believes much anymore in winning. To lose against someone like that, it's very disappointing, because you feel like he was mentally out of it already. Just gets the lucky shot at the end, and off you go."

## **8) 2017 Australian Open final v Nadal**

His career having been declared unofficially over, after struggling with physical ailments and lackluster performances in the slams, Federer came into the Australian Open with little fanfare. And the same can be said of Nadal who was also coming off arguably the worst period of his career. But the two put on a show in Melbourne. Nadal had figured out the formula for beating Federer (high balls to the backhand side) and came into the event with a dominant record against his arch rival. On this day, Federer's backhand didn't buckle. But it was his all-powerful forehand that won him the match, as exemplified by this point in the third set that gave Federer a break point. Federer somehow struck a half-volley with frightening power

down the line that gave him added momentum (45 second mark above). [Federer would go on to win the title](#), coming back from a break down in the fifth to do so, and thus starting the third act of his brilliant career.

## **9) 2017 Miami Open quarter-final v Tomas Berdych**

OK, so this wasn't a truly important match or tournament for Federer (although he did win it). But it has to be included because the shot is so extraordinary: a mid-court, high-in-the-air drop shot that completely fooled Berdych.

## **10) 2019 Wimbledon final v Djokovic**

It seems wrong to end on another negative moment for Federer but the loss obscured this stunning fact: that Federer, weeks from turning 38, an ancient age in the sport, was one point from winning one more grand slam title. That it all unfolded against Djokovic must have stung. Yet again, Federer had the match on his own serve (around the 40 second mark above) but he went for conservative serves that Djokovic brushed off with seeming ease. After it was over, a disconsolate Federer said, "I don't know what I feel right now. I just feel like it's such an incredible opportunity missed, I can't believe it."

That may be true, but missteps like this stand out in Federer's career because he was so often close to perfect.

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## 2022.09.16 - Opinion

- It's foolish to expect King Charles to save us from a government gone rogue
- Farewell to Roger Federer, the greatest player in an era of greats
- Liz Truss is turbocharging bankers' bonuses. What a gift for Labour
- Pageantry and queueing collide right on Britain's sweet spot

## OpinionKing Charles III

# It's foolish to expect King Charles to save us from a government gone rogue

Gaby Hinsliff



The King is no woolly liberal. He's the head of a hereditary monarchy that is ultimately focused on its own survival





Illustration: Matt Kenyon/The Guardian

Fri 16 Sep 2022 01.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Sep 2022 03.49 EDT

The tone was sombre, emotional even. Prince Charles could not, he said, describe the “depths of his [personal sorrow](#)”.

But he wasn’t speaking of his recent bereavement. This was a speech back in June to [Commonwealth heads of government](#) in Rwanda, expressing regret for the suffering wrought by slavery. The Commonwealth could not move forward without acknowledging the “wrongs of the past”, he said.

Coming months after a disastrously clumsy [Caribbean tour](#) by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, it sounded like a belated recognition that for younger generations the monarchy has increasingly become identified with colonial suffering, and republicanism with a means of laying those ghosts to rest. Before flying to Rwanda, the prince was reported to have privately called Boris Johnson’s plan to export asylum seekers to Rwanda “[appalling](#)”.

Those words will sound to some like platitudes, changing nothing much in practice. But in a world where the National Trust gets [death threats](#) for acknowledging its grand estates’ links to slavery, they were striking nonetheless. Here was a future King seeking to move the dial of public

debate, while simultaneously shoring up the monarchy's interests. Neither wholly liberal nor wholly conservative, it was a brief but revealing insight into how he may operate as King.

His good friend (and former Conservative MP) Sir Nicholas Soames swears that this most political of princes, author of untold lobbying letters to ministers on everything from homeopathy to organic farming, [won't meddle](#) now he is King; that he "knows very well what the constitutional obligations are" and will model himself on his inscrutable mother. But that isn't as incompatible as it sounds with previous reports that he wanted to carry on making "[heartfelt interventions](#)" in national life as King.

Soames will know well enough that the Queen was perfectly capable of pushing the boundaries in a pinch, [cautioning Scots](#) to think carefully before voting for independence and [siding with African leaders](#) against Margaret Thatcher when a row over apartheid sanctions threatened to split the Commonwealth. (Then, as now, nothing galvanises a monarch like a threat to break up the realm.)

The new King isn't about to start shouting from the rooftops any differences he might have with Liz Truss over fracking or farming, and he acknowledged as much in his first [address to the nation](#) by promising to leave his cherished causes in "other trusted hands". But he has had enough time over the last half a century to develop a network of allies throughout civil society who can be relied on to make his points for him. [Prince William](#) has become notably more outspoken lately on environmental issues, too. What the old Prince of Wales can no longer say, the new Prince of Wales still might.

If the strategy is clear, however, sticking to it may not be wholly straightforward. This King's emotions are much closer to the surface than his mother's, and even after a lifetime of training that may make it harder for him to conceal what he really thinks. Grief stretches everyone to snapping point, and a newly bereaved man can be forgiven the odd tetchy moment. But this week's glimpses of him gesturing irritably for aides to remove an inkwell, or complaining that his [pen leaked](#) "every stinking time", hint at a prickly quality familiar to those who know him well. He hates to be

inconvenienced, can be demanding to the point of petulance, and isn't used to being argued with. The King's constitutional role is to advise and warn. There is the potential for trouble with any prime minister who doesn't treat that advice with respect.

There is clearly warmth between him and [Liz Truss](#), evident when she defied protocol at their first audience by putting a consoling hand on his arm. As a former environment secretary, responsible for his two passions of climate policy and farming, it would be unusual if she hadn't got to know him reasonably well. But they are still chalk and cheese. Charles has a small-c conservative's distrust of change, love of beauty, and patrician instincts towards those who are vulnerable; he appears to see his role much like that of a benevolent vicar ministering to his flock. Truss is an unsentimental insurgent, itching to rip everything up and start again.

While he is drawn to ideas of sustainability and progress that doesn't cost the earth either socially or environmentally, her government's mission is [economic growth](#) at all costs – even if that means slowing progress towards [net zero](#) (a review is under way) or risking social unrest by letting the [rich get much richer](#). The new King is romantically attached to the countryside and to traditional farming methods. His prime minister needs new trade deals to show Brexit has been a success, and will be offered terms that could devastate [small family farms](#). Perhaps the biggest difference between them, however, won't be one of policy but of timing.

Politicians think in election cycles, which for Liz Truss means barely two years. But unelected monarchies survive only by ensuring the smooth succession of their children, and that means thinking in terms of generations. When Truss dismisses [Nicola Sturgeon](#) as an “attention seeker”, or threatens to rip up the Northern Ireland protocol, it plays well with her base today at the expense of potentially destabilising the union in the longer term.

But Charles won't want to go down in history as the monarch who lost the union. When Truss faces demands to apologise or make reparations for slavery, she will consider the backlash from older Tory voters still nostalgic for empire. The King must think of the risk of the Commonwealth imploding, but also of alienating younger Britons who already suspect the royal family of [racist behaviour](#) towards the Duchess of Sussex. Her

government won't be around to be held accountable in 2050 if the planet is frying by then, but the monarchy – if not this monarch – plans to be.

It may be tempting for liberals to see King Charles as some kind of benevolent father figure, ready to step up if the government goes truly rogue. But reassuring as it is to think that at least someone still cares about the climate or the treatment of asylum seekers, there's something deeply queasy about pinning your hopes on a hereditary monarchy focused ultimately on its own survival.

Let's hope his advice is sound, and his warnings prescient and taken seriously. But it is on the power of an opposition and the checks and balances of parliament, not the luck of the royal draw, that democracies should rely. Forget that, and God save us all.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at [guardian.letters@theguardian.com](mailto:guardian.letters@theguardian.com)***

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## Farewell to Roger Federer, the greatest player in an era of greats



‘Roger Federer was that rare thing: not just the best player in he world, but also the most beautiful, the most pleasing to watch, the grace note as well as the triumphant ending.’ Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

Swiss, who won 20 grand slam titles, combined balletic grace with accuracy, power, shot selection and competitive will



[Barney Ronay](#)

[@barneyronay](#)

Thu 15 Sep 2022 16.30 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Sep 2022 00.32 EDT

Time and simple human wear-and-tear told us [Roger Federer](#) had to stop playing professional tennis at some point. Here is a man who was winning grand slam tournaments before the iPhone was invented, while Tony Blair was still a very popular prime minister, and who first won Wimbledon two months after Carlos Alcaraz was born.

And yet the news that Federer intends to retire now at the ludicrously advanced age of 41 still feels like a shock, an oversight, a rumour that got out of hand. Is everyone really sure about this?

It is always tempting when a champion leaves the stage to announce that we will not see their like again, that the book is now closed. It is also tempting to overdo the mawkish viking funeral stuff, to drown in sickly-sweetness, to transform every departure into a tug on the sleeve from Paddington Bear, to conclude that the sporting life really will never be the same again.



On this occasion both of these responses seem appropriate. Federer's retirement certainly brings the end of one shared span a little closer. There has never been a period of dominance in any global sport quite like the Federer-Nadal-Djokovic tripod of power.

At the same time his departure also puts an end note on a more personal era, because even in this grand company Federer was the outstanding presence, the greatest player in the greatest time in men's tennis. And by extension, and without any reasonable cause for argument – the word reasonable must cover a lot of ground here – the greatest tennis player ever.

How a ballboy became a legend: Roger Federer's career highlights – video

It is a measure of the brilliance of Nadal and Djokovic that both now shade Federer on the basic tally of grand slam wins. Nadal's invincibility at Roland Garros is the backbone of his 22 titles. Djokovic is a fellow all-court master and one ahead on 21. As a triple-godhead they have been the most irresistible source of entertainment, income and basic relentlessness, circling the sporting globe like mobile one-man city states. What is it with these guys? Do they ever weary of seeing their own reflection in that pewter surface?

Apparently not. Juan Carlos Ferrero won the French Open in May 2003, the last grand slam tournament of the old world. Federer, a year younger, won his own first at Wimbledon a month later and within five years would win 12 out of 18 from a standing start. Before long Nadal had joined him. Across the intervening years up to Wimbledon this summer Federer, Nadal and Djokovic have dominated the sport in an astonishing pitch of shared annihilation.



Roger Federer cries tears of joy after winning the 2018 Australian Open. It proved to be his final grand slam triumph. Photograph: Lukas Coch/EPA

Djokovic is 35 now, still in peak condition but a little distracted by Covid stuff, culture war noise and generally being a kind of magic energy truther. Nadal is 36 and held together with twine, staples and glue. With the [retirement also of Serena Williams](#) there is undeniably a sense that something is ending, the time of giants passing.

And yes, Federer really was the best of them. We know this because Nadal and Djokovic were great enough to make this such a point of fevered discussion, and to elevate every contest along the way, producing such a wonderfully more-ish contrast of style, manner and execution, the same greats playing the same game in the same space, but in a way that somehow never really felt the same.

And with Federer greatness was as much about style and form and texture. There was a sense in his talent of something that never quite reached its end point. Even at its most concentrated pitch one never felt one got to the limits of what Federer might do. There is probably still a bit in there, Rog, if you ever feel like giving it another go.

'Bittersweet decision': Roger Federer announces tennis retirement – video



Even in defeat this was like watching some perfectly geared high-spec machine purring through its paces. Federer does not lose. He regroups. At his best there was a sense of genuine ultimacy, of sport as good as sport gets.

His backhand was frankly ridiculous, overblown, hilariously good. This, one thought, watching that thing – the flex of the knee, the flourish of the wrist – is a kind of artefact, a European cultural treasure, like a Bach cantata or a complete acorn-fed Iberian ham, the kind of backhand a power-crazed Bond super villain might try to steal from its laser-guarded case and transport to the moon.

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In many ways tennis is the most difficult of all sports. Firstly because of its technical and physical demands. But also because it is just always you, every point; and every point comes right after the last, a constant pressure with no shadow, no margin, nowhere to hide.

Why was Federer the best at this? Because he had that all-surface game. Because he felt like the default in every tournament, the one player for whom defeat was of significance to everyone else in the draw; and because his game was so complete he would have been a champion in any era, plus all the eras to come.

There was something more, of course. For all the titles and the great matches – the 2008 Wimbledon final against Nadal, in the gloom, both men reaching close to the end of something, is surely the finest tennis match ever played – the lasting memory will be the way Federer made one feel.

He was that rare thing: not just the best player in the world but also the most beautiful, the most pleasing to watch, the grace note as well as the triumphant ending. This was not just a function of that strangely sensual presence, the way just walking out on to centre court could draw a kind of hormonal groan, a Federmones rush, a man who seemed to move more easily through the air.



Dark clouds drift over Wimbledon's Centre Court during the epic 2008 final. Photograph: Kevin Lamarque/Reuters

It was not the styling, the deep, piercing (woof) eyes, the balletic grace in his movements. The real Federer hit was the way these things were combined with accuracy, power, shot selection, competitive will. Federer was never just getting the ball back or staying in the rally but challenging to live at this pitch, to exist in his sporting world. There was a fascination in his early years with seeing him apply this Total Game to the power-hitters of the day. As Nadal and Djokovic joined him at the top, this was often a game played in the clouds.

It feels fitting that a player as talented as Alcaraz should win his first major in the same week Federer announces his departure. There is always more talent, other champions. From here Federer seems unlikely to hang on as a coach, or a track-suited figure in the fringes. He has his millions and his

legacy. Another remarkable Federer thing is just how unremarkable he is, a normal guy from a normal village who just happens to have this talent and this extraordinary sporting charisma; qualities that have existed only within those white lines and which will remain just as vivid.

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## [OpinionBanking](#)

# Liz Truss is turbocharging bankers' bonuses. What a gift for Labour

[Larry Elliott](#)



Champagne will be uncorked in Canary Wharf – and along with it, a clear them-and-us narrative



The proposed lifting of the ban on bankers' bonuses is good news for the City. Photograph: Jonathan Brady/PA

Fri 16 Sep 2022 03.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Sep 2022 10.00 EDT

The timing is, to say the least, curious. Britain is facing its biggest cost of living crisis in decades. Workers are angry about crashing living standards. And yet one of the first things on the new government's agenda is to [scrap the cap on bankers' bonuses](#). Kwasi Kwarteng may announce the decision as part of his [mini-budget](#) next Friday.

Make no mistake, there is an argument for what the chancellor is planning, namely that the cap hasn't worked. Critics said when the EU brought in its legislation in 2014 that banks would find a way round the cap by simply paying higher salaries, and they have been proved right. Placing limits on one part of a package (the bonus) but imposing no constraints on the other part (basic pay) never made any sense. If the idea was that bankers needed to be paid less, it would have been more logical to go the whole hog and impose a cap on total remuneration.

That said, the decision to remove the cap now is a political gift to Labour and to unions, since it feeds into a clear them-and-us narrative. Bankers will

be whooping it up in the champagne bars of Canary Wharf, but as a vote-winning strategy it may have its limitations.

According to the Office for National Statistics pay growth in the private sector is [running at 6%](#) as opposed to 2% in the public sector. Those working in the well-paid financial and business sector have been shielded from the worst of the cost of living crisis by generous bonus payments. Abolishing the bonus cap reinforces the already strong belief that there is one rule for bankers and another for everybody else. Inevitably, it is going to harden attitudes on picket lines. Sharon Graham, the general secretary of Unite, says that while the Bank of England lecture workers to show pay restraint, the chancellor's signal to the City is "let it rip".

Kwarteng and [Liz Truss](#) think they can defuse any political fallout by pointing out that the government will be spending £150bn to protect households from rising energy bills. There will be much said about how this is the single biggest economic intervention by the state on record. Privately, though, the prime minister and the chancellor know the political optics of seeming to put the interests of a banker earning £3m a year over those of a nurse earning £30,000 a year are not great.

The fact that Truss and Kwarteng are prepared to risk the political blowback says much about the new government's ideology, which is unashamedly pro-market and pro-competition. Scrapping the bankers' bonus cap is part of a package of planned deregulation for the City and the wider financial sector that will be gradually announced in the coming weeks and months.

This should set off alarm bells. The government's plan is not just to make London more attractive for a global pool of footloose bankers by making it possible to earn sky-high bonuses. It is to make a bonfire of regulations so that bankers in hot pursuit of a big bonus pay-out can take more risks.

In the 1990s and 2000s, the City made itself globally attractive by becoming the light-touch, anything-goes financial centre. Bankers cut corners and ignored the warning signs. The upshot was a financial crisis from which the economy has never recovered.

Lessons were supposed to have been learned from a period in which the UK's then biggest bank – Royal Bank of Scotland – came within hours of running out of money. These included the need for tougher supervision, more stringent capital requirements and a more balanced economy less dominated by the financial sector. Levelling up had its origins in the belief that Britain was far too dependent on the success of the City of London.

Truss's government seems determined to follow a different approach. The dominance of the City over the economy grew after the big bang reforms of the 1980s, and now Kwarteng is talking about a big bang 2. When she was foreign secretary, the prime minister described the financial sector as the “[jewel in the crown](#)” and has made it plain subsequently that she thinks it is being held back by regulatory overkill.

Although it is less than two weeks old, the Truss government has already made clear exactly where it is coming from. The economy, starting with the City, will be deregulated. Wealth will somehow ripple out from London and the south-east to the rest of the country. Tax cuts favouring the better off will pay for themselves. Abolishing the cap on bankers' bonuses means a booming financial sector and that will be good for all of us.

This is a classic example of the triumph of hope over experience. We have been here before – and we know it doesn't end well.

- Larry Elliott is the Guardian's economics editor

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[The politics sketch](#) [Queen Elizabeth II](#)

# Pageantry and queueing collide right on Britain's sweet spot

[John Crace](#)



The UK has briefly become a gentler, better-tempered place as people observe Queen's death





People queuing near Tower Bridge to see the Queen lying in state. ‘If we have a tradition it’s in our ability to talk about queueing and claiming it for ourselves’. Photograph: Martin Meissner/AP

Thu 15 Sep 2022 11.46 EDT Last modified on Fri 16 Sep 2022 03.35 EDT

When two worlds collide. Pageantry and queueing are two of the country’s favourite rituals. Traditions, almost. Though like many traditions they are not always entirely as they seem. No monarch had lain in state at Westminster Hall before King Edward VII in 1910. Yet to see the Queen there now, you could be forgiven for thinking it was a medieval ceremony. One dating back many centuries.

Same for waiting. Other countries have been doing it for as long as we have with no mass riots. During the cold war, eastern bloc countries often did little else. The UK has no monopoly, no sense of primacy, in making a virtue of standing in lines and – preferably – getting wet. Yet our psyche would have it otherwise. If we have a tradition it’s in our ability to talk about queueing and claiming it for ourselves.

No matter. These are the truths that we tell ourselves. Especially at moments of national significance. Though there is no denying we do pageantry and queueing as well as anyone else. And when these two worlds collide, Britain

hits its sweet spot. It becomes, for a few days at least, a gentler, better-tempered place. Where differences can peacefully coexist. Though not for long. It turns out that just as many people were pissed off with the BBC's wall-to-wall hagiographic coverage of King George VI's funeral as they are with its programming of the Queen's.

Come Thursday morning – or D+7, as Buckingham Palace calls it – the royal family had taken a back seat. King Charles had retreated to Highgrove for some me time. Time for personal reflection after a week of activities to honour his mother and cement his accession. William and Kate were off to Sandringham to thank staff. Harry was no doubt just wondering why he was given the same treatment as Prince Andrew and made to wear civvies during the procession to Westminster Hall the day before. It wasn't as if he was an alleged sex offender. His only crime was to be a bit messed up and fall in love with a B-list American TV star who craved attention. Even Prince Edward was allowed to cosplay a soldier. And he only lasted a few days at marine boot camp in Lympstone. The only theatre of operations he had to endure was Cats.

This was the public's day. A time for ordinary men and women to come and pay their respects and say their own goodbyes to the Queen. Those who had been prepared to queue for up to seven hours to spend a few moments near her coffin. They must have been up half the night, wrapped up in rugs and sleeping bags. But by the time they made it into the hall they were carrying only the odd totebag and knapsack. Their possessions had somehow dematerialised.



People came prepared with chairs, books and Beanos to queue for the lying in state of the Queen. Photograph: Jill Mead/The Guardian

The visitors arrived via the south entrance and almost to a person paused at the top of the steps to take in the grandeur of the 11<sup>th</sup>-century hall. Not just the Queen's coffin, draped in the royal standard and with the crown and mace on top, perched on the purple catafalque, but the washed stone walls and hammer-beamed wooden roof. Westminster Hall is by a long way the most awe-inspiring building in Westminster. There was no better place to feel part of history.

From the stairs, people slowly walked down until they were level with the coffin itself. Then they stopped, lost in thought. For both the Queen and what she represented. Not just her qualities of duty and service, but also as the nation's matriarch. The ultimate mother figure. Someone who had been an unconscious psychological support for so many people. A tabula rasa on whom they could pin their own hopes and fears. And on whom they could project their grief for other losses: family and friends.

Someone whose longevity had suggested a permanence that could never be fulfilled. The Queen's death was the unwelcome reminder of what was coming to us all sooner or later. Perhaps some people even needed to be

there as a reality test. To see with their own eyes that the Queen actually was dead. Because only by acknowledging that could they move on.



Mourners pass by the the Queen's coffin under the hammer-beamed roof of Westminster Hall. Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

Some bowed or curtsied to the coffin. Others merely nodded. A couple of men in uniforms saluted. A few people were in tears. One couple had brought their three children, all of whom looked under five. How they had survived the queue was anyone's guess. Interspersed were various MPs – Andrea Jenkyns, George Eustice and Alun Cairns – and other workers on the parliamentary estate who had been allowed to jump the queue. They were easy to tell apart, even without their passes. They were the ones who didn't look knackered from having been queueing for seven hours.

Every 20 minutes the 10-man guard of Beefeaters, Grenadiers and Gentlemen at Arms in ostrich-plume floppy hats would change. From the side of the hall, an officer banged his metal pike twice on the floor and from the north end a new squad emerged to take their place. They would then lower their heads and swords and stand motionless around the catafalque. Like so much of the pageantry on display this last week, it was simultaneously absurd and magnificent. And surprisingly moving. Even to a diehard republican.

Most impressive of all was the stillness. The silence. The only noise in the hall came from the spurs of the Gentlemen of Arms on the stone floors during the changing of the guard. The visitors' feet were muffled by carpets. Finally, we had a chance to turn inward. To think what we wanted to think without being judged or told how to feel.

After a week of nonsense, I've finally had enough of Huw Edwards' commentary. I think it was "The lights on the Yellow Box Storage Company here on the A40 that the Queen loved and knew so well have been dimmed as a mark of respect" that finally did it for me. Though I could have just made that up. I've had enough of being played. Of being manipulated. And it took half an hour in Westminster Hall to feel some kind of peace. But then, I didn't have to queue for seven hours in search of nirvana.

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## [Hungary](#)

# Hungary is no longer a full democracy, says European parliament

MEPs back resolution stating country led by Viktor Orbán has become ‘hybrid regime of electoral autocracy’



The move was a powerful symbolic vote against Viktor Orbán's government. Photograph: Bernadett Szabó/Reuters

[Jennifer Rankin](#) in Brussels

Thu 15 Sep 2022 10.19 EDT Last modified on Thu 15 Sep 2022 13.38 EDT

Hungary can no longer be considered a full democracy, the European parliament has said in a powerful symbolic vote against Viktor Orbán's government.

In a resolution backed by 81% of MEPs present to vote, the parliament stated that [Hungary](#) had become a “hybrid regime of electoral autocracy”, citing a breakdown in democracy, fundamental rights and the rule of law.

While the vote has no practical effect, it heightens pressure on EU authorities in Brussels not to disburse billions in EU cash to Hungary that is being withheld over concerns about corruption.

Hungary is [battling to persuade the European Commission to release €4.64bn](#) in Covid recovery funds, frozen for more than a year. Budapest is also trying to stave off a separate legal procedure that could lead to deductions from €24.3bn of cohesion funds, money for infrastructure and economic development.

The European Commission is expected to propose cutting 70% of Hungary's cohesion funds on Sunday, but will also open the door to a compromise, according to two MEPs familiar with discussions. "More or less what we hear is that the commission will propose ... these sanctions or financial measures," said Moritz Körner, a German MEP, who has been briefed by the commission.

In a recent internal paper, commission officials suggested there was a "very significant" risk over Hungary's management of EU funds, citing breaches in public interest rules and an unusually high number of contracts awarded to a single bidder – a red flag for transparency watchers. The paper, which has been removed from the commission's website, suggests a 70% cut in funds as "proportionate" to the risk.

Hungary will be given until mid-November to get its house in order. After a charm offensive in Brussels, Hungary's government is expected next week to propose a raft of laws to combat corruption. Critics fear the commission is ready to accept cosmetic changes to defuse the conflicts over EU funds.

"The commission has made a half-hearted deal with the Hungarian government on the kind of change they want to see," said Daniel Freund, a German Green MEP, also briefed on the commission's plans. "There is a very short timeframe and ... to expect that the damage that Orbán has done with [his] constitutional majority over 12 years, can now be repaired in a matter of weeks, or a couple of months, I think is optimistic to put it mildly."



Orbán has been in office since 2010 and held a two-thirds parliamentary majority for much of this time.

A European Commission spokesperson declined to comment, but said it was analysing “the remedial measures” submitted by Hungary and had until 21 September to determine the next step.

The European parliament’s resolution, which points to “the risks of clientelism, favouritism and nepotism in high-level public administration”, however, will make any climbdown on the protection of EU funds more difficult.

Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield, the French MEP who drafted the resolution, described the conclusions as clear and irrevocable. “Hungary is not a democracy. It was more urgent than ever for the parliament to take this stance, considering the alarming rate at which the rule of law is backsliding in Hungary.”

She added that “the large majority of MEPs supporting this position in the European parliament is unprecedented”. Of the 534 MEPs present for the vote in Strasbourg, 433 voted in favour, 123 against and 28 abstained.

Responding to the vote, Hungary’s chief spokesman Zoltán Kovács said the European Parliament “would do better do focus on energy prices that have tripled and quadrupled due to the failed sanctions,” reprising his government’s critique of the EU’s restrictive measures against Russia.

The large majority was aided by Orbán’s decision in 2021 to quit the political family of Europe’s centre-right, the European People’s party (EPP). The EPP had previously offered Hungary’s Fidesz party some protection from critical votes, but Orbán withdrew his party before it was pushed out by centre-right MEPs.

The vote comes almost [exactly four years after MEPs voted to trigger disciplinary action against Hungary](#), a decision that ultimately lies in the hands of the 26 other EU member states, who have mostly shown little appetite for conflict with Budapest.

MEPs, who have no power to deny funds to Hungary, have blamed the EU council of ministers and the European Commission for alleged inaction, a point made clear in the resolution. The MEPs expressed “deep regret that the lack of decisive EU action has contributed to a breakdown in democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights in Hungary, turning the country into a hybrid regime of electoral autocracy”.

The parliament’s damning conclusion was based on reports from bodies belonging to the Council of Europe, as well as case law from the EU’s court of justice and the separate European court of human rights.

MEPs also cited the verdict of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which reported in April that [Hungary’s election that returned Orbán to power for a fourth straight term](#) was “marred by the absence of a level playing field”. The OSCE sent a fully fledged mission to Hungary, an almost unprecedented step for an EU member state.

The report also noted the concerns of Hungarian judges over judicial independence in their country, after numerous changes by the Orbán government, including the appointment of supreme court judges outside normal procedures.

The measure was opposed by MEPs from Eurosceptic and far-right parties. In a statement included in the draft resolution, they argued the conclusions were “based on subjective opinions and politically biased statements” that reflected “vague concerns, value judgments and double standards”.

These MEPs also claimed that the report was based on “cases that were settled a long time ago by the responsible bodies, or which concern issues that form part of public debate and belong to the sole competence of member states”.

## Mexico

# Retired Mexican general arrested over disappearance of 43 students in 2014

Ex-officer was head of army base in Iguala when students were abducted in what a report called a ‘state crime’



People protest in Mexico City in June over students’ disappearance. The banner reads ‘They took them away alive. We want them alive.’ Photograph: Isaac Esquivel/EPA

*Associated Press in Mexico City*

Fri 16 Sep 2022 04.13 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Sep 2022 10.36 EDT

Mexican authorities have arrested a retired general and two other members of the army for alleged links to the disappearance of 43 students in the south of the country in 2014.

The assistant public safety secretary, Ricardo Mejia, said that among those arrested was the former officer who commanded the army base in the

Guerrero state city of Iguala in September 2014, when the students from a radical teachers' college were abducted.

Mejía said a fourth arrest was expected soon. A government official with knowledge of the case who spoke on condition of anonymity confirmed that another member of the army had been arrested.

Mejía did not give names of those under arrest, but the commander of the Iguala base at that time was José Rodríguez Pérez, then a colonel. Barely a year after the students' disappearances – and after the families had already raised [suspicions about military involvement](#) and demanded access to the base – Rodríguez was promoted to brigadier-general.

The government official confirmed that Rodríguez Pérez had been arrested and said he was being held at a military base. The source said two of the others arrested were officers and the third was an enlisted soldier.

Last month, a government truth commission re-investigating the case issued a report that named Rodríguez Pérez as being allegedly responsible for the disappearance of six of the students.

The interior undersecretary Alejandro Encinas Rodríguez, who led the commission, said last month that six of the missing students were allegedly kept alive in a warehouse for days before being turned over to Rodríguez Pérez, who ordered them killed.

The report had called the disappearances a [“state crime”](#), emphasising that authorities had been closely monitoring the students from the teachers' college at Ayotzinapa from the time they left their campus through their abduction by Iguala police that night. A soldier who had infiltrated the school was among the abducted students, and Encinas said the army did not follow its own protocols to try to rescue him.

“There is also information corroborated with emergency ... telephone calls where allegedly six of the 43 disappeared students were held during several days and alive in what they call the old warehouse and from there were turned over to the colonel,” Encinas said. “Allegedly, the six students [were](#)

[alive for as many as four days](#) after the events and were killed and disappeared on orders of the colonel, allegedly the then Col José Rodríguez Pérez.”

Numerous government and independent investigations have failed to reach a single conclusive narrative about what happened to the 43 students, but it appears that local police pulled them off buses in Iguala and turned them over to a drug gang. The motive behind the abduction remains unclear. Their bodies have never been found, though fragments of burned bone have been matched to three of the students.

The role of the army in the students’ disappearance has long been a source of tension between the families and the government. From the beginning, there were questions about the military’s knowledge of what happened and its possible involvement. The students’ parents demanded for years that they be allowed to search the army base in Iguala. It was not until 2019 that they were given access along with Encinas and the truth commission.

Shortly after the commission’s report, the attorney general’s office announced 83 arrest orders, of which 20 were for members of the military. Federal agents then arrested Jesús Murillo Karam, who was attorney general at the time.

Doubts grew in the following weeks because no arrests were announced.

The administration of President [Andrés Manuel López Obrador](#) has formed a close public bond with the military. López Obrador pushed to shift the newly created national guard under full military authority and his allies in congress are trying to extend the time for the military to continue a policing role in the streets to 2028.

On Thursday, Mejía also dismissed any suggestion that José Luis Abarca, who was mayor of Iguala at the time, would be released from prison after a judge absolved him of responsibility for the student’s abduction based on lack of evidence. Even without the aggravated kidnapping charge, Abarca still faces other charges for organised crime and money laundering, and Mejía said the judge’s latest decision would be challenged. The judge

similarly absolved 19 others, including the man who was Iguala's police chief at the time.

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## US universities

# Columbia whistleblower on exposing college rankings: ‘They are worthless’

US News relegated Columbia to 18th from second place after it was revealed the college had misrepresented key statistics



A Columbia University commencement ceremony in Manhattan, New York City. Photograph: Andrew Kelly/Reuters

[\*Chris McGreal\*](#) in New York

Fri 16 Sep 2022 04.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Sep 2022 04.02 EDT

The Columbia University academic whose exposure of false data caused the prestigious institution [to plunge](#) in US college rankings has accused its administration of deception and a whitewash over the affair.

Michael Thaddeus, a mathematics professor, said that by submitting rigged numbers to drive the university up the influential US News & World Report

rankings, Columbia put its financial priorities ahead of students education in order to fund a ballooning and secretive bureaucracy.

On Monday, US News relegated Columbia from second to 18th in the latest rankings after the college [admitted](#) to “outdated and/or incorrect methodologies” in some of its previous claims about the quality of the education the university provides.

“I find it very difficult to believe the errors were honest and inadvertent at this point,” Thaddeus told the Guardian.

He added: “The response that the university made was not the forthright, direct, complete response of a university that really wanted to clear the air and really wanted to inform the public. They address certain issues but then they completely ignored or whitewashed other ones.”

Thaddeus embarrassed Columbia and shocked the academic world in February when he [published a lengthy analysis](#) accusing the university of submitting “inaccurate, dubious or highly misleading” statistics for the US News rankings. Among other things, he took issue with claims about class sizes, which the mathematics professor said he knew from experience were not accurate, and the assertion that all of the university’s faculty held the highest degrees in their fields.

Thaddeus also said the university hugely overstated spending on instruction, claiming it far exceeded other Ivy League universities, by adding in the cost of patient care in the medical school.

Columbia initially defended its numbers before admitting on Friday that Thaddeus was right about class sizes and the qualifications of its teaching staff. “We deeply regret the deficiencies in our prior reporting and are committed to doing better,” Columbia’s provost, Mary Boyce, [said in the statement](#).

In July, the university said it was pulling out of this year’s rankings. US News made its own calculations, based in part on federal data, and this week moved the university down a humiliating 16 places.



Thaddeus began digging into the numbers as Columbia celebrated its stunning rise in the rankings from 18th in 1988. It broke into the top five in 2011 and eventually made second place last year.

“A few other top-tier universities have also improved their standings, but none has matched Columbia’s extraordinary rise. It is natural to wonder what the reason might be,” he wrote in his analysis.

When Thaddeus began to suspect that Columbia’s numbers didn’t add up, he saw the opportunity to discredit a system he regards as a con perpetrated on prospective students desperate to ensure that the tens of thousands of dollars a year many will spend on gigantic tuition fees are worth it.

The US News rankings, alongside less influential ones by the Wall Street Journal, Forbes and other publications, have a significant impact on which universities prospective students favor. Thaddeus said Columbia’s fall exposes the shoddiness of a system that relies on an institution’s own numbers without checking.

“I’ve long believed that all university rankings are essentially worthless. They’re based on data that have very little to do with the academic merit of an institution and that the data might not be accurate in the first place,” he said.

“It was never my objective to knock Columbia down the rankings. A better outcome would be if the rankings themselves are knocked down and people just stop reading them, stop taking them as seriously as they have.”

It’s not the first scandal involving the US News rankings. Last year, a former dean of Temple University’s business school in Philadelphia [was sent to prison](#) for fraud after rigging data to move the college’s MBA sharply up the rankings.

But Thaddeus, who has taught at Columbia for 24 years, also had another target in his sights – his own university’s administration.

The former head of Columbia’s mathematics department described an expanding and self-replicating bureaucracy that is growing ever more

expensive to maintain. He said that Columbia's endowment is not large enough to cover the cost of the growing administration and so it is paid for by increasing tuition costs.

"It means that our educational programmes have to be run to some degree as money-making ventures. That is the secret that can't be openly acknowledged," he said.

Thaddeus suspects administrators rigged the data to move the university up the rankings in order to justify [rising tuition fees](#) which, at about \$65,000 a year, are more than five times the amount paid by the parents of today's students in the 1980s.

"It's clear that the growth of university bureaucracies and administration has been a major driver of the cost of higher education growing much, much faster than inflation. We now have about 4,500 administrators on the main campus, about three times the number of faculty, and that's a new development over the past 20 years," he said.

"What is less clear is what all these administrators are actually doing. They say that more administrators are needed to comply with government regulations. There may be a little truth to that, but not much, because these regulations in question were enacted decades ago. There hasn't been a lot of new university regulation that I know of."

Thaddeus acknowledged that there was a need for more staff to provide services that were not previously available such as much more extensive career placement, counseling and psychiatric care. But he does not believe that accounts for the growth of a bureaucracy he describes as self-serving and unaccountable.

"I was kind of radicalised by the experience of being department chair in mathematics from 2017 to 2020. That's when I saw how secretive, how autocratic, Columbia's administration is. How they never share relevant information with faculty or students or the public. This episode has just seriously damaged the credibility of the administration. That saddens me, but it's also important that these issues get out in the open," he said.

Thaddeus said that initially he was not willing to accuse the university of deliberately manipulating the rankings system.

“When I first wrote my article, I expressed greater agnosticism on this point,” he said.

But he said the university’s response, including its failure to be transparent about how the false data came to be reported, caused him to believe Columbia deliberately gamed the system.

“Also, there’s been no move by the university to commission an external investigation, an investigation at arm’s length by a third party such as a law firm, which is standard practice when ranking scandals erupt. If I had seen some move like that by the university, I would be more inclined to think that the errors were honest and inadvertent,” he said.

Approached for comment, Columbia said it had nothing to add to the statements it has already made.

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## Zambia

# Lenders urged to cancel Zambia debt as country faces economic collapse

Economists accuse bondholders of standing to make huge profits at the expense of the crisis-hit country



The high cost of borrowing, local corruption and the pandemic have crippled Zambia's finances. Photograph: Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi/AP

[Phillip Inman](#)

[@phillipinman](#)

Fri 16 Sep 2022 01.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Sep 2022 14.05 EDT

More than 100 economists and academics have urged international lenders to [crisis-stricken Zambia](#) to write off a significant slice of their loans during financial restructuring talks this month.

Zambia is seeking up to \$8.4bn (£7.3bn) in debt relief from major lenders, [including private funds run by the world's largest investment manager](#),

[BlackRock](#), to help put its public finances back in order.

In the run-up to what are understood to be tense negotiations involving the Chinese, French and British governments, the anti-poverty charity Debt Justice said that only a major debt write-off could save the Zambian economy from complete collapse.

Led by the Columbia University economist, Jeffrey Sachs, and [Jayati Ghosh](#), the chair of the Centre for Economic Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, the 100-plus global group of economists and experts said in a letter to the creditors' negotiating committee that Zambia should be given a waiver from debt interest payments due until 2023.

Earlier this month, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) [approved a \\$1.3bn loan to the country](#), which defaulted on its \$17.3bn of external debt after a collapse in its public finances during the pandemic.

Funds run by BlackRock are among the largest private owners of Zambia's bonds, holding \$220m. Some are worth almost half the value they were sold at. Eurobonds worth \$1bn that mature in 2024 plunged 6.3% in the last week to less than 56% of their face value.

Debt Justice, formerly known as the Jubilee Debt Campaign, has estimated that BlackRock could make 110% profit for itself and its clients from Zambia if debt interest payments are paid in full. The country has three main private sector bonds that pay an average 8.1% in interest.

The letter said: "Because of the high interest rates and the fact Zambia's bonds have been trading at well below face value since 2018, many bondholders stand to make huge profits at the expense of both Zambian citizens and creditor countries if paid at face value.

"It is therefore imperative that BlackRock and other bondholders agree to fully engage in a large-scale debt restructuring, including significant haircuts, in order to make Zambia's debt sustainable."

Tim Jones, the charity's policy head, said the IMF loan gave the country some breathing space, but the \$8.4bn of interest payments due over the next

couple of years should be “cancelled permanently, not rolled over to the 2030s to fuel another debt crisis next decade”.

Chad and Ethiopia applied last year for debt relief under the G20’s common framework, but Jones said negotiations have yet to get off the starting blocks. [Sri Lanka](#) and [Bangladesh](#) have also asked for bailouts under IMF schemes to support countries devastated by the climate crisis.

Zambia, which has cut health and social care spending by a fifth in the past two years to balance its budget, has seen its [debts soar in recent years](#) to fund infrastructure projects, many to help the country supplement drought-affected hydropower plants.

Solar energy projects have made the country almost self-sufficient in electricity, but the high cost of borrowing, local corruption and the coronavirus crisis have crippled the country’s finances.

Further loans from the IMF have been tied to commitments to end fuel subsidies to households and businesses, pushing the inflation rate above 20% last year before it eased to 9.8% in August.

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Of Zambia’s external debt, 46% is owed to private lenders, 22% to China, 8% to other governments and 18% to multilateral institutions. China is among the government lenders to agree a longer debt repayment schedule that private lenders, including banks, have so far resisted, Debt Justice said.

A BlackRock spokesperson said it wanted “a sustainable long-term outcome for Zambia” but disputed the charity’s claim it would profit from a rescheduling of debt interest payments, saying it was likely to make losses when the bondholdings mature.

It said: “We regard it as our obligation to play our part responsibly, alongside all other creditors, in ensuring there is a path towards a sustainable outcome for sovereign debt issuers in distress.

“As an asset manager, we are a fiduciary to our clients, people from all walks of life. The money we invest on their behalf is not our own and we are obligated to act in our clients’ best financial interests at all times.”

Jones said BlackRock had likely bought Zambian bonds at rock-bottom prices when it was clear the country was already in trouble.

BlackRock added that with Zambian bonds trading below their sale value and interest payments suspended since September 2020, “our clients have already experienced losses with respect to their holdings of private sector sovereign debt of Zambia”.

The Zambian Civil Society Debt Alliance, Global Justice Now, Action for Southern [Africa](#) (ACTSA), Christian Aid, Cafod and Jubilee Scotland are also campaigning for BlackRock and other private lenders to cancel the debt.



## Climate crisis

# Pakistan floods ‘made up to 50% worse by global heating’

Study says climate crisis likely to have significantly increased rainfall and made future floods more likely



People make their way through a flooded area after heavy rains in Karachi, Sindh province, Pakistan. Photograph: Shahzaib Akber/EPA

[Fiona Harvey](#) *Environment correspondent*

Thu 15 Sep 2022 17.00 EDT

The intense rainfall that has caused [devastating floods across Pakistan](#) was made worse by global heating, which has also made future floods more likely, scientists have found.

Climate change could have increased the most intense rainfall over a short period in the worst affected areas by about 50%, according to [a study by an](#)



[international team of climate scientists.](#)

The floods were a one in 100-year event, but similar events are likely to become more frequent in future as global temperatures continue to rise, the scientists said.

The scientists were not able to quantify exactly how much more likely the flooding was made by the climate crisis, because of the high degree of natural variability in the monsoon in the region. However, they said there was a 1% chance of such heavy rainfall happening each year, and an event such as this summer's flooding would probably have been much less likely in a world without human-induced greenhouse gas emissions.

Friederike Otto, senior lecturer at the Grantham Institute for climate change and the environment at Imperial College London, said that the “fingerprints” of global heating could be clearly seen in the [Pakistan](#) floods, which were in line with what climate scientists had predicted for extreme weather.

“We can say with high confidence that [the rainfall] would have been less likely to occur without climate change,” she said. “The intensity of the rainfall has increased quite a bit.” Historical records had shown heavy rainfall increasing dramatically in the region since humanity had started pouring greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, the scientists found.

Otto added: “Our evidence suggests that climate change played an important role in the event, although our analysis doesn’t allow us to quantify how big the role was. This is because it is a region with very different weather from one year to another, which makes it hard to see long-term changes in observed data and climate models.”

[About a third of Pakistan has been affected by the flooding](#), with water covering more than a tenth of the country after more than three times the average rain fell in August. Nearly 1,500 people have died and [33 million people have been affected](#), with [1.7m homes destroyed](#).

For the country as a whole it was the wettest August since 1961, and for the two southern provinces of Sindh and Balochistan the wettest on record, with

about seven to eight times as much rain as usual.

While the increased rainfall was influenced by the changes to the climate, local factors also played a role in the flooding and its impacts. For instance, [forests in the region have been cut down over many decades](#), and mangrove swamps removed, while human-made dams, irrigation and other changes to the watercourses have also had an impact on natural flood patterns. Poor infrastructure, such as homes flimsily built in places prone to flooding, has also meant more people suffering as a result of the floods.

Ayesha Siddiqi, assistant professor at the department of geography at Cambridge University, said: “[Flooding] has hit places where local socio-ecological systems were already pretty compromised. This disaster was the result of vulnerability constructed over a number of years, and should not be seen as an outcome of one single event.”

Pakistan faces a cost of at least \$30bn in damages, with the loss of food crops alone coming to about \$2.3bn, a particularly heavy burden at a time of rising food prices around the world. About 18,000 sq km of cropland have been ruined, including about 45% of the cotton crop, one of Pakistan’s key exports, and about 750,000 livestock have been killed.

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The report on the Pakistan floods came from World Weather Attribution, a grouping of scientists from around the world who try to discern the influence of human-caused climate change on extreme weather events. They analyse

such events in real time to produce quick responses on whether climate change has influenced extreme weather, a process that used to take years.

Previous studies have found that climate change exacerbated the [heatwaves in India](#), Pakistan and [the UK earlier this year](#), and floods in Brazil. WWA found last year that the heatwave in the Pacific north-west region of the US would have been “virtually impossible” without climate change.

[A recent analysis by the Guardian revealed](#) the extent to which the climate crisis is “supercharging” weather events, with devastating consequences.

Otto said that countries meeting this [November for the Cop27 UN climate conference](#) in Egypt should take note of the extreme weather the world has seen this year and in recent years. “The lesson is that this will become more likely, probably a lot more likely. Becoming more resilient is very important.”

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## Headlines saturday 17 september 2022

- [Live Queen lying in state: public warned of long wait as queue to see coffin stretches across London](#)
- [Policing 10,000 officers will be on duty on the day of the funeral](#)
- ['Be solemn, quick and shut up' How TV is preparing for the funeral](#)
- [Disturbance Man who touched Queen's coffin detained](#)

## [Queen Elizabeth II](#)

# Queen lying in state: William and Harry stand vigil over coffin as Biden arrives for funeral – as it happened

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## [Queen Elizabeth II](#)

# Queen's funeral will be biggest ever event for police, with 10,000 on duty

Hundreds of thousands of mourners are expected to line streets from London to Windsor and 500 foreign dignitaries will visit

- [Death of the Queen and King Charles's accession - latest updates](#)



Mourners line up outside Windsor Castle on Friday. Photograph: Kin Cheung/AP

[Vikram Dodd](#) and [Rowena Mason](#)

Fri 16 Sep 2022 17.04 EDTFirst published on Fri 16 Sep 2022 14.01 EDT

Queen Elizabeth II's funeral will be the biggest ever event for the police and Whitehall, with hundreds of thousands of mourners lining the streets and 500 visiting foreign dignitaries.

Police chiefs say their presence on the streets on Monday will be their largest on record, with more than 10,000 officers on duty determined to thwart any attempt to disrupt or exploit the event.

Hundreds of thousands of people are expected to line the funeral route from central [London](#) to Windsor, Berkshire, where the late Queen will be buried.

About 500 foreign dignitaries are expected for the state funeral in Westminster Abbey, triggering the biggest ever personal protection operation undertaken by the [Metropolitan police](#).

Liz Truss, the prime minister, is expected to meet six world leaders, including the US president, Joe Biden, and the Irish taoiseach, Micheál Martin, over the weekend with private talks taking place at No 10 and Chevening – the country estate designated to the foreign secretary.

However, many foreign royals and heads of state are expected to take shuttle buses rather than private cars to the Westminster Abbey service on Monday.

More than 100,000 people are already believed to have joined the five-mile queue to see the Queen lying in state in Westminster Hall, with the line suspended part way through Friday when the wait time reached more than 14 hours. It reopened later as many defied the order to stop queueing, with a warning from the government that the waiting time was as long as 24 hours and that it would be cold overnight.

The NHS said ambulances had come to help more than 400 people who collapsed, fainted or fell ill while waiting. The [London](#) ambulance service is deploying 300 extra staff on the day of the state funeral and asked people to “use the service wisely” on Monday.

Thousands of civil servants – a core team of more than 100 as well as volunteers – have mobilised to deliver the planning for the funeral, led by Sarah Healey, the permanent secretary of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Daily meetings have been chaired by Nadhim Zahawi, the chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, with the first chaired by Truss.

Government sources said the Queen's funeral was the biggest public service event since the Olympics and one of the largest ever, as well as being the biggest international event for foreign dignitaries coordinated by the Foreign Office.

The government is refusing to put a price tag on the event, which has been decades in the planning and involved looking at archive information on the funerals of former monarchs.

With huge crowds expected in London over the weekend and into the bank holiday, Network Rail urged the public to allow extra time for their journeys, particularly late on Monday.

The Queen's state funeral is taking place at 11am on Monday at Westminster Abbey, before a hearse carrying her coffin makes its way to St George's chapel at Windsor for a smaller committal ceremony before her private family burial.

#### [Route from Westminster Abbey to Windsor Castle](#)

The Met's deputy assistant commissioner Stuart Cundy said commanders had plans in place to thwart or deal with any attempted attack or disruption.

He said the "scale and complexity" of policing the funeral was immense, with officers being drafted in from forces around the country so the Met could manage the event and other demands across the capital. Cundy said: "This will be on Monday the biggest single deployment of police officers in an operation that the Met police has ever undertaken.

"As a single event, this is larger than the 2012 Olympics, it is larger than the platinum jubilee weekend."

He declined to give a figure but in a separate interview the Met commissioner, Sir Mark Rowley, said more officers would be involved in policing the day of the funeral than make up England's second-largest force, West Midlands police, which has 7,579 officers.

In the London 2012 Olympics, figures from police chiefs show about 9,500 officers were deployed in the capital alone. For the Queen's funeral, the Met



and the Thames Valley force are making their biggest ever deployment on a single day, knowing any errors would lead to damaging criticism at a time of national mourning.

Cundy said plans for such big events were always evolving, and the stabbing attack on two officers on Friday morning would be taken into account, although he stressed officers “do not believe [the stabbings] to be terror-related or related to events surrounding the death of Her Majesty the Queen”.

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He added: “It brings into sharp focus the need for all officers who are on duty, the members of the public ... to keep that vigilance.”

Cundy said there would not be a ban on protest, and said every officer policing in the London area had been reminded of the right to do so: “We have ensured that all of our officers ... all those colleagues that are deployed here in London, understand that people have a right to protest. Our response will be proportionate, it will be balanced, and our officers will only be taking action where it is absolutely necessary.”

Protests have already been planned over the visit of the Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa of Bahrain and leaders from the UAE who are expected to attend.

Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, of the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, said: “The UK simply should not be welcoming dictators from states renowned for their atrocious human rights records.

“Although the leaders of Russia and Syria have rightly not received invitations to attend the Queen’s funeral, it sends a clear double standard to then welcome notorious Gulf despots such as King Hamad and Mohammed bin Salman who continue to preside over appalling violations against those who dare to speak out in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.”

Tim De Meyer, an assistant chief constable of Thames Valley police, which covers Windsor, said officers would use their judgment: “We know that we have to balance the right to freedom of expression with public safety ... We will be eager to ensure that we balance those two things and that we preserve the dignity of the event.”

De Meyer said people in Windsor would need to go through airport-style security measures and 2,000 officers would be in the Berkshire town alone.

Cundy said flying drones would be banned in London and already 11 people had been spoken to for operating them. In all, 34 arrests had so far been made, but none by the Met for protest.

Commanders had planned how to stop and respond to any attempt to attack the funeral, Cundy said, or what to do if the large number of people present led to a dangerous crush.

In charge as gold commander is the deputy assistant commissioner Jane Connors, a Met high-flyer and public order specialist. Earlier this year, she oversaw the Met investigation into Partygate.

Police added that in central London alone, 22 miles of barriers would be used to help marshal the crowds, with officers on the ground supported by helicopters and commanders monitoring and directing the security operation from a hi-tech control room.

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## [Queen Elizabeth II](#)

# ‘Do it solemnly, quickly, and shut up’: how TV is preparing for the royal funeral

Broadcasters have been rehearsing their plans for this event for 30 years and all the major UK channels bar one will be showing it live

- [Death of the Queen and King Charles’s accession - latest updates](#)



Sky news journalist Dermot Murnaghan prepares to broadcast in front of Buckingham Palace. Photograph: Daniel Leal/AFP/Getty Images

[Jim Waterson](#) *Media editor*

[@jimwaterson](#)

Sat 17 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 17 Sep 2022 05.49 EDT

Miles of television broadcast cabling has been laid, almost every satellite truck in the UK has been hired out and international broadcasters are offering wads of money to anyone who can secure them a broadcast location overlooking the ceremony.

Monday's funeral of [Queen Elizabeth II](#) is a global TV event that has been planned for decades – yet at the same time pulled together in just 10 days.

“I’ve been in the business so long I first started rehearsing the Bridges Events 30 years ago,” said the presenter Dermot Murnaghan, 64, referring to an internal codename for deaths of major royals.

The presenter, who will be co-hosting Sky News's coverage of the funeral with Anna Botting, said preparations had been quietly stepped up since the summer. “I’ve been travelling around with a black tie in my back pocket for the last few weeks. We saw the pictures of her with Boris, we knew she had mobility issues, and she was 96.”

Yet even the best-rehearsed plans can fall apart, as Murnaghan found out last Thursday when telling viewers that the Queen had died. “It ended up with me making the announcement in the pouring rain holding an umbrella, my phone, and with water peeing down my neck.”

Almost every major British TV channel – with the exception of Channel 5, which is showing the Emoji Movie – has cleared its schedule for royal coverage on Monday. For the most part, viewers will see the same raw images of the main events on the BBC, ITV and Sky News. All three outlets have coordinated on a plan to pool their resources in order to provide a single national video feed of proceedings.

“There probably aren't many pieces of outside broadcast equipment in Britain that aren't on this event,” said Michael Jerney, the director of news at ITV. “People will be rigging cables and cameras throughout this weekend.”

Cameras that were due to be filming the arrival of Coronation Street stars at the cancelled National Television Awards have been redeployed to cover the

funeral of a monarch. Leading broadcast technicians were arriving in Amsterdam for an industry conference when the Queen's death was announced, only to immediately head back to London to start putting equipment in place.

ITV's Jerney said the pooled footage meant each broadcaster's coverage of the funeral would be shaped by the tone of its presenters and experts. His channel is relying on Tom Bradby and Julie Etchingham, with a promise to keep interventions to a minimum.

"It will be possible to watch ITV and see the events happening in front of you without too much interruption by commentators or people talking," Jerney said. "We will let the events breathe, people will hear the music, hear what people in the cathedral are saying."

Murnaghan, who will be based at Windsor Castle, said he hoped to keep out of shot for as long as possible. "This is a ceremony that's evolved over centuries with uniforms and magic wands, it's about letting the pictures do the talking." He said he had a rule for when he needed to make an intervention: "Do it solemnly, do it quickly, and shut up."



A car carrying King Charles III passes live TV coverage tents near Buckingham Palace on Wednesday. Photograph: Vadim Ghirdă/AP

TV viewing figures are likely to be high, even in an age when fewer people get their news from broadcast channels. The BBC, which has rarely interrupted its royal coverage since the Queen died, will rely on Huw Edwards and Kirsty Young to helm its coverage, with assistance from Fergal Keane, David Dimbleby and Sophie Raworth.

Millions more people are expected to watch online streams on sites such as YouTube or TikTok. There have been nerves at the BBC after its iPlayer service struggled to cope with the number of people trying to stream news of the Queen's death.

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British channels have also had to deal with requests for assistance from international broadcasters. US TV networks have deployed some of their top presenters to London, with the likes of the NBC Today presenter Savannah Guthrie flying to London for hosting duties.

While major international broadcasters had long-agreed logistics plans, channels from smaller countries have been left begging for space for their news anchors after failing to pre-book hotel balconies with a suitable backdrop.

There is particular overseas demand for stereotypically plummy voiced British "royal experts" who can explain various traditions to overseas viewers, with one delighted contributor admitting they have earned thousands of pounds over the past week by touring different channels.



Yet one thing you will not find in British TV's royal funeral coverage is much discussion of republicanism or the future of the monarchy.

Jermey said ITV had covered the arrests of anti-royal protesters and the free speech issues on its bulletins, but for now the coverage "is essentially around a funeral".

This view was echoed by Murnaghan, who said there would be time to discuss "wide-ranging questions" about the monarchy in the future.

"It's a funeral," he said. "A week before the Queen died, I was at my mother's funeral reading a eulogy, and the proper order of funerals is to retain respect. We should know how to behave."

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## [Queen Elizabeth II](#)

# Man detained after ‘disturbance’ at Queen’s lying in state in Westminster

Source said man ran up and touched the coffin in Westminster Hall before being arrested by police

- [Death of the Queen and King Charles’s accession - latest updates](#)



The coffin of Queen Elizabeth in Westminster Hall. Photograph: WPA/Getty

[Aubrey Allegretti](#)

[@breeallegretti](#)

Fri 16 Sep 2022 18.35 EDTLast modified on Sat 17 Sep 2022 09.57 EDT

A man has been arrested “following a disturbance” in Westminster Hall, where the Queen is lying in state, after reports of someone running up the steps to the catafalque and touching the coffin.



The Metropolitan police were said to have rushed to detain the man just before 10pm on Friday evening, the second full day that mourners have been able to pay their respects to the former monarch, just hours after senior royals held a vigil.

A source told the Guardian that the man darted out of the line passing the catafalque and managed to climb the steps and touch the coffin, before they were swiftly detained – an account that was not denied by either the Met or House of Commons.

A statement from Scotland Yard said: “Parliamentary and Diplomatic Protection Command detained a man in Westminster Hall following a disturbance.”

It added the man was “arrested for an offence under the Public Order Act and is currently in custody”.

Witness describes moment man 'ran up to Queen's coffin' – video

The disturbance is believed to have taken place just before 10pm, when many mourners would have been queueing for over 12 hours. Broadcasters showing the procession of mourners cut away from the scene and instead showed the view from outside parliament.

Just hours before, the King, Princess Anne, Prince Andrew and Prince Edward stood around the Queen’s coffin, in what was known as the vigil of the princes. A similar vigil is expected to be held on Saturday night by the Queen’s grandchildren.

It comes after a man appeared at Westminster magistrates court following allegations that two women were sexually assaulted while they were waiting in the queue to see the Queen lying in state.

A huge amount of planning for security arrangements has gone into the preparations for the lying in state, given the heightened risk of terrorist attacks due to the large crowds who have gathered in central London.

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## 2022.09.17 - Spotlight

- 'I 100% believe that secrets are toxic' Richard E Grant on grief, fame and life without a filter
- 'I always knew I was different from my parents' Willow Smith on life in Hollywood's most talked-about family
- Blind date 'The friend-zoning at the end was awkward'
- 'I think I was good, though I could have been better' Terry Pratchett and the writing of his life

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## **Richard E Grant on grief, fame and life without a filter: ‘I 100% believe that secrets are toxic’**

[Hadley Freeman](#)



Richard E Grant: ‘Being uncool made me – very briefly – cool.’ Photograph: Sophia Spring/The Guardian

He has delighted fans with his honesty about showbusiness – now he’s being just as open about the pain of losing his wife, Joan Washington. Is anything off limits?



[@HadleyFreeman](#)

Sat 17 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 17 Sep 2022 16.25 EDT

Five days after [Joan Washington](#), Richard E Grant’s wife of 35 years, died from lung cancer in September 2021, he got a phone call from a number he didn’t recognise. Grant and his daughter Olivia, then 32, were driving around, dealing with what he describes in his new memoir as “the bureaucracy of death”: filling out government forms, picking up hymn sheets for the funeral – all the banalities that come rushing at you when you’ve just lost the love of your life. Then the number flashed up. Olivia advised him not to answer, as it was probably a cold-caller. But Grant replied that it might be to do with the death certificate.

“Hi, it’s Elton,” said the caller.

“Sorry, you’re on speakerphone as I’m driving and the line is bad. Please say your name again?” replied Grant.

“It’s *Elton*,” the speaker repeated.

“As in *you-know-who*!” Grant writes in *A Pocketful of Happiness*.

It’s a classic Grant anecdote, a mix of the eminently relatable and the unimaginably starry, which he encounters with an endearing everyman kind of astonishment. Of course, given that Grant has been famous for 35 years now, ever since his career-defining debut in [Withnail and I](#), his phone call from Elton John didn’t come entirely out of the blue; he writes in the next paragraph that, in fact, he was quite pally with the singer for a while, before falling out of touch a few years ago “in the warp and weft of showbusiness friendships”. But ever since Grant published his first memoir, *With Nails*, in 1996, followed by *The Wah Wah Dairies: The Making of a Film* in 2006 – both about his adventures in moviemaking and written in his wry but wide-eyed tone – he has been making the public feel as if we are experiencing his extraordinary life alongside him, and displays the same excitement about it as we would.

In January 2019, the day he found out he had been nominated for an Oscar for his supporting role in the black comedy [Can You Ever Forgive Me?](#), he posted a video of himself in front of his first flat in London: “I’m absolutely overwhelmed. Thirty-six years ago I rented this bedsit here and I cannot believe I am standing here now with an Oscar nomination. Ha!” he cheered, weeping with excitement. It was a charming change from the usual thesipy insistence that the accolades mean nothing, and the video instantly went viral.

“Being uncool made me – very briefly – cool, which was odd, but lovely. I was very struck by something my great idol [Barbra Streisand](#) once said, which is that the most personal experience is the one that reaches the most people, because it’s likely they’ve experienced those feelings too, and they’ll connect with that,” Grant, 65, tells me.

We have arranged to meet at a photographer’s studio just a couple of hundred yards from his home in London. It’s a scaldingly hot day, but he is

looking fresh and dashing in a slightly lupine way, wearing a patterned shirt that's unbuttoned just that little bit lower than most Englishmen would go for, and slim black trousers. He also, incidentally, smells delicious – soapy and lemony. At first I assumed this was down to Grant's innate fragrant qualities, but it turns out he's wearing his own perfume, called Jack, which he launched in 2014.



With Melissa McCarthy in 2018's *Can You Ever Forgive Me?*. Photograph: Everett Collection Inc/Alamy

Having his own fragrance feels of a piece with Grant's persona of being a slightly eccentric dandy, one who is just as good at playing a drunken dropout (*Can You Ever Forgive Me?*) as an aristocrat ([Netflix's Persuasion](#)), and can also do both (*Withnail*). He is an outsider-insider, someone who looks upper class so gets cast in period dramas such as *The Age of Innocence*, but – unlike all the Old Etonians and Harrovians dominating today's British acting scene – doesn't entirely seem it. He has played the servant (*Gosford Park*) and the country-house guest (*Downton Abbey*), and hops with similar ease between charming (*Jack and Sarah*) and cringeworthy ([The Player](#) and – my favourite of his films – [LA Story](#)).

I ask if he thinks this is because he grew up in [Eswatini](#) (then called Swaziland) before moving to London in his 20s, so although he can charm

his way into English society – even going to Prince Charles and Camilla’s wedding – he is always standing a little to the side, trying to understand it. He smiles kindly at my armchair analysis: “It’s always a little odd to hear oneself defined by someone else, but that makes perfect sense. Yes, exactly.”

It’s certainly a useful quality to have as a diarist. Grant has been keeping a diary since he was 10, “after waking up on the back seat of a car to witness my mother bonking my father’s best friend on the front seat”, he writes in *A Pocketful of Happiness*. The 2005 film *Wah-Wah*, which Grant wrote and directed, was about his dysfunctional childhood in Swaziland. (“Wah wah” was how his stepmother mimicked the stiff-jawed, posh Swaziland accent.) But as a child, he couldn’t tell anyone what he saw, so he confided it to his diary, and he has continued the habit ever since.

“I find it very, very helpful, because it makes something that seems unreal feel real. It’s astonishing to me that I, who started out in one of the smallest countries in the southern hemisphere, should have this life, so if I write it all down, then it actually happened,” he says.

Was there a temptation to not keep a diary during his wife’s illness, so that it wouldn’t seem real?

I didn’t want it to be, ‘Oh, she was marvellous and everything was so wonderful’ because that’s not how life is

“No, I thought that keeping a very accurate record would be the best way to try to understand what was happening,” he says quietly. His voice today is a little huskier and flatter than usual, as if the events of the past year have hollowed the stuffing out of him.

Like his previous books, *A Pocketful of Happiness* is based on his diaries and stuffed with the kind of stories celebrities usually keep to themselves. But whereas the earlier books were about his encounters with other celebrities, *Pocketful* is about his wife.

“[Martin Amis](#) once wrote that the very act of writing is an act of love, and that’s what I feel writing about Joan. The best responses I’ve had to the book



so far are people saying they feel like they got to know who Joan is – was,” he corrects himself.

I felt something else: Washington is sick for much of the book, so she inevitably is a slightly shadowy figure. But by the end I felt that I really knew their marriage. “I didn’t want it to be one of those: ‘Oh, she was marvellous and we had a lovely time and everything was so wonderful,’ because that’s not how life is. It’s all the stuff in between,” he says.

Grant is very good on the in-between stuff, such as the joy of comparing stories with your partner after a party – “as delicious as Boxing Day leftovers” – and he writes sparsely but heartbreakingly about their prematurely born daughter, Tiffany, who died soon after her birth, while Grant was making *Withnail and I*. He and Washington eventually had their “miracle baby”, Olivia, whom they nicknamed Oilly, and the three were a cosily close family. When they would go out to the cinema together, Oilly and Grant would invariably be moved to tears, “while Joan was in the middle saying: ‘What the hell’s wrong with both of you? Pull yourself together!’ She was much less – how to put it? – emotionally raw than us,” he says. Grant and his daughter speak on the phone “at least once a day. As a teenager she identified that she and I have twin brains,” he says smiling.



‘A diary makes something that seems unreal feel real. If I write it all down, then it actually happened.’ Photograph: Sophia Spring/The Guardian

He details with evocative precision what it was like to care for Washington during her illness. Anyone who has ever looked after a terminally ill person will know exactly what he means when he describes her “lemony irritability” on a bad day, and I especially liked his description of Washington’s moods vacillating “like the cast of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, between Dopey, Grumpy, Sleepy, Happy, Bashful and visiting the Doc”.

“Initially, when I decided to write this book, I thought I wouldn’t write anything about the illness part of Joan’s life,” he says. “But then I remembered some advice Bruce [Robinson, writer and director of *Withnail and I*] gave me about screenwriting. He said: ‘Write about something that has happened today that’s never happened before,’ and nothing had ever been more life-changing for us than Joan’s diagnosis.”

Washington worked in the film business, but behind the camera. She was a dialect coach, helping actors such as Cate Blanchett and Ralph Fiennes perfect accents for their roles. The last chapter of the book is a collection of testimonies from her famous students, describing her as “one of the great unsung heroines of the British entertainment business” (Richard Eyre) and “just the best, hands down” (Liv Tyler). The book skips about in chronology so although it begins with Washington’s diagnosis and ends with her death, we get the full picture of her and Grant’s almost 40-year relationship. They met in 1982 when he moved to London from Africa and asked her to teach him privately “to iron out my colonial accent”. She was, he writes, “boiler-suited, Kicker-booted and sporting a Laurie Anderson spiked haircut, a charismatic and formidable presence”, and he was quickly smitten.

Joan and I were astonished by married people who slept in separate rooms. It would be like being an amputee

She took a little longer. The first time they went to bed together, she told him: “You’re as skinny as a stick insect!” “A passion killer if ever there was one,” he writes. The passion wasn’t dead for long: one of the more

memorable revelations in the book is how happy their sex life was. Even after 20 years of marriage they would slip off to a hotel in the middle of an afternoon for a spot of lovemaking. A lot of couples will be jealous of that, I tell him.

He nods solemnly: “Yes, in terms of sex, Joan and I were both astonished by the number of married people we know who said that for the last 10 years they slept in separate beds or rooms. I understand some people say: ‘Well, he or she snores’ – I get that. But the idea that you don’t share a bed any more – I mean, excuse the pun, but that is the bedrock of a relationship because everything gets sorted there. And if that’s not happening any more, I think it would be like being an amputee. Something’s been cut off.”



‘A passion killer if ever there was one,’ Grant says of Joan’s observation, the first time they went to bed together, that he’s ‘as skinny as a stick insect’. Photograph: Sophia Spring/The Guardian

Some of this passion was generated by the sparking of their opposite natures. Grant is an enthusiastic oversharer, Washington was more of a sceptical introvert. He loves all the celeb hullabaloo; she thought it silly, despite or possibly because she also worked in the business. Repeatedly, he describes her “pinpricking” his ego, such as when he came home from a wildly successful film premiere and her response was to tell him to fix the

dishwasher. Or when he excitedly finds out that [Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker](#), in which he appeared, grossed more than \$1bn, and she replies: “While you were very good, Swaz, I confess that I didn’t understand a word of it.” (She called him Swaz in reference to the country of his birth.)

“It was very salutary to be with somebody with that attitude,” he smiles.

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Was it not occasionally a bit frustrating?

“Frustrating? I suppose sometimes it was. But at the same time, you know, it was always a bit tongue-in-cheek-y from her,” he says.

In the early days of their relationship, she was the successful one, flying off to coach Mel Gibson on the set of *The Bounty*, while Grant pined away in London, hopelessly unemployed. But that shifted and Washington, he writes, “had to readjust and accommodate to being my plus-one at premieres and press junkets, which she understandably found uncomfortable”.

“It did change the dynamic of things, in that she was treated as if she were invisible, and she found that extremely annoying and uncomfortable,” he says. As readers of *With Nails* know, Grant is gloriously acidic about snubs within the celebrity world, and droplets of that acid speckle the pages of *Pocketful*. He describes how the uber-famous, such as [Nicole Kidman](#), suddenly became his best friend after *Can You Ever Forgive Me?* is released and there’s Oscar buzz around him. “She swans elegantly towards me, saying: ‘I hope you win every award coming your way, cos you’re

heartbreaking and brilliant.’ No denying the sea change from her polite greeting at Telluride [film festival] eight weeks ago, before she’d seen the movie. Feels like being given temporary membership of the elite Fame Club,” he writes.

Has he ever suffered any repercussions for something he’s written or said?

“Oh, well, I didn’t mean it as a criticism exactly – more an observation. You know Elizabeth Taylor’s aphorism: ‘There’s no deodorant like success.’ Oh, I don’t know. Interpret it as you will,” he shrugs.



With his wife, Joan Washington, and daughter Olivia in 2006. Photograph: Alan Davidson/Rex/Shutterstock

Grant’s nomination for an Oscar sparked an almighty row with Washington, because she told him she didn’t want to go to the ceremony. She always hated all that exhausting hobnobbing, and she’d be the plus-one again. He was devastated, and instead took Oilly, who loves socialising as much as him, so it was, he says, the right decision in the end.

This seems like the moment to remind him that the Oscars also sparked a massive row between him and me, because this is actually the second time we’ve met. In the run-up to the ceremony, Grant posted regular videos of his gleeful adventures on the Oscars circuit, including his eagerness to meet

Streisand, who lives in Los Angeles. Many people found all this adorable. Some did not. In *Pocketful*, he names and shames – oh dear – the Guardian for running a news piece shortly before the event with the headline: [“Richard E Grant’s Oscar glee: ingenue or a crafty campaigner?”](#) It suggested that maybe all this excitement was merely a press campaign from “a wily old pro”. I was covering the Oscars that year and, after Grant lost the best supporting actor award to Mahershala Ali for *Green Book*, I spotted him, said I was from the Guardian and asked for a quote. He promptly gave it to me with both barrels, raging about an article I didn’t write and telling me everyone on the internet was disgusted with me. I quickly scuttled away.

“That was you?” he says, reeling backwards. “Oh, the deep embarrassment! I called my daughter immediately afterwards and said what I had said to you, and she was absolutely appalled. She said: ‘You fucking idiot!’ Well, this answers your earlier question about whether I’d ever been bitten by something I’d said. Here’s a living, breathing example: hung, drawn and quartered as charged. Huge apologies. God!”

I thought about that encounter a lot as I read *A Pocketful of Happiness*, because the book clarified it for me. I hadn’t written that Guardian article about Grant, but the truth is, at the time, I shared its scepticism. His giddiness just seemed too over-the-top, too designed to please. But it was really the Streisand drama that piqued my cynicism. Ahead of the Oscars ceremony that year, Grant posted a photo of himself outside Streisand’s home, alongside a copy of the fan letter he’d sent her when he was 14. Streisand tweeted a reply, leading to Grant melting down with excitement on social media. Cue cooing news coverage about his “unique awards campaign”.





In 2005 on the set of *Wah-Wah*, the film about his childhood he wrote and directed. Photograph: Lions Gate/Allstar

Come on, my inner cynic said. Grant has worked with *everyone*: Coppola, Scorsese, Altman. Would he really self-combust over a tweet from Streisand? Also, I knew full well he'd met her before: in *With Nails*, he describes – in some detail – talking with her at a party while he was making *The Player* in the 1990s. And yet, just minutes after Grant yelled at me at the Oscars, he was then “introduced” to Streisand, and uploaded photos of him looking delirious with happiness next to her. *What* a phoney, I grumped at the time.

Now I think I was as unfair on him as he was on me that night. The Streisand drama is quickly explained when I ask about it: when they spoke that first time he was pretty much an unknown actor in the US, “so I’m sure I didn’t even register on her fame-o-meter of people that she met”, he says. This time, she knew exactly who he was, so would remember the encounter, and that’s what made it so exciting.

But those are just details. What really comes across in *Pocketful* is just how intensely and determinedly Grant lives with his heart not so much on his sleeve, but out in front, leading him all the way. The man all but throbs with feeling, and there is a kind of compulsion in his oversharing, a reaction – no

doubt – from the familial secrets he was forced to keep as a child. When I ask how he thinks Washington – who initially hadn't even wanted to tell people she was ill – would feel about this book, in which he describes her on her deathbed, he says: "Gosh, I don't know. But I absolutely 100% believe that secrets are toxic, and I've seen so many people turned upside down because of some family secret, and she knew that about me."

I find it bizarre when people try to fix me up. It's too raw and I'm still having a conversation with my wife in my head

The need to share his and Washington's code when they were bored at a dinner party (they would stroke their nose), and to then describe his grief at her absence, is the same one that drives him to share his excitement about all the Hollywood hullabaloo. It's impossible to doubt the authenticity of a man who commissioned a sculpture of Streisand's face for his garden, which is still there today. And yes, of course he told Streisand about it; she told him – understandably – that he was crazy. He still posts frequent videos on social media, telling people what's going on in his life, how he's feeling, and he looks shocked when I ask if he ever feels he's given away too much of himself. "Never even thought about it," he says. There is no emotional filter. And the person who used to help him turn the temperature down a little is now gone.

I ask if his friends have started trying to fix him up with eligible women. "Some have, yes. And I find that absolutely bizarre. It's not something I could even conceive of at this point. It's still too raw and present, and I am still having an ongoing conversation with my wife in my head," he says. But it's not, of course, the same as the real thing.

"What's tough is no longer having what I call the 'steering wheel stuff', the stuff that you talk about at the end of the day, when you call the person you love most in the world and say: 'Well, I spoke to the person from the Guardian, and oh my God she was the person from the Guardian at the Oscars,' because I'd want her view on it," he says.

And what does he think Washington would say?



“Maybe: ‘Oh, I’m sure she’s got over that, but you are a complete idiot and you should have your tongue clamped and tied.’ ‘Yes, yes, you’re right.’ Not having those conversations any more. That’s what I miss.”

A Pocketful of Happiness by Richard E Grant is published by Simon & Schuster on 29 September at £20. To support The Guardian and Observer, order your copy at [guardianbookshop.com](https://guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply.

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# Willow Smith on life in Hollywood's most talked-about family: 'I always knew I was different from my parents'

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## Blind date: ‘The friend-zoning at the end was awkward’



Photograph: Antonio Olmos and Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

David, 28, TV researcher, meets Emma, 30, copywriter

Sat 17 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT

## **David on Emma**



### **What were you hoping for?**

A rare couple of hours where I don't put my foot in my mouth.

### **First impressions?**

Incredible eyes. Endearingly nervous.

### **What did you talk about?**

Dating horror stories. Clichéd things we'd seen on dating apps. Gluten-free pizza. Work. Families. Travel.

### **Any awkward moments?**

I had to build my own taco, which could have been a disaster, but my shirt came out unscathed. I wolfed down my first two tacos but noticed in time to slow down with the third, so I wasn't just weirdly watching her eat.

### **Good table manners?**

Can't say I noticed. I was really focusing on not wearing my DIY taco.

### **Best thing about Emma?**

She has many strings to her bow and some cool hobbies. I'll definitely be checking out her vintage clothes site.

**Would you introduce Emma to your friends?**

Maybe some of the quieter ones.

**Describe Emma in three words.**

Colourful, creative and quirky.

**What do you think Emma made of you?**

Probably that I talk too fast. I don't think she was impressed when I said I don't consider someone's political leanings when choosing a date (unless they're extreme or offensive).

**Did you go on somewhere?**

We walked through some filming in Borough market. A security guard told me it was for a mayonnaise advert.

**And ... did you kiss?**

A friendly hug and some bread was all we shared.

**If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?**

I'd have taken her up on the offer of some of her crème brûlée.

**Marks out of 10?**

A solid 7.

**Would you meet again?**

She's lovely, but I don't think either of us see the need to hang out again.

Q&A

**Want to be in Blind date?**

Show

Blind date is Saturday's dating column: every week, two strangers are paired up for dinner and drinks, and then spill the beans to us, answering a set of questions. This runs, with a photograph we take of each dater before the date, in Saturday magazine (in the UK) and online at [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com) every Saturday. It's been running since 2009 – you can [read all about how we put it together here](#).

**What questions will I be asked?**

We ask about age, location, occupation, hobbies, interests and the type of person you are looking to meet. If you do not think these questions cover everything you would like to know, tell us what's on your mind.

**Can I choose who I match with?**

No, it's a blind date! But we do ask you a bit about your interests, preferences, etc – the more you tell us, the better the match is likely to be.

**Can I pick the photograph?**

No, but don't worry: we'll choose the nicest ones.

**What personal details will appear?**

Your first name, job and age.

**How should I answer?**

Honestly but respectfully. Be mindful of how it will read to your date, and that Blind date reaches a large audience, in print and online.

**Will I see the other person's answers?**

No. We may edit yours and theirs for a range of reasons, including length, and we may ask you for more details.

**Will you find me The One?**

We'll try! Marriage! Babies!

**Can I do it in my home town?**

Only if it's in the UK. Many of our applicants live in London, but we would love to hear from people living elsewhere.

**How to apply**

Email [blind.date@theguardian.com](mailto:blind.date@theguardian.com)

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.



David and Emma on their date

### **Emma on David**



### **What were you hoping for?**

A good connection. Alternatively, a good picture to use on Hinge.

**First impressions?**

Friendly and polite. He seemed like a genuinely nice guy.

**What did you talk about?**

The intricacies of the Blind Date process. The density of gluten-free bread. Typical first-date cliches – I don't think we had much in common.

**Any awkward moments?**

The awkward friend-zoning at the end ... Spoiler alert, sorry.

**Good table manners?**

He was very well mannered and had impeccable napkin use: 10/10.

**Best thing about David?**

Very easy to talk to and he seemed interested in what I had to say, asking lots of questions.

**Would you introduce David to your friends?**

Sadly, no, I don't think there would be enough common ground.

**Describe David in three words?**

Engaging, open, warm.

**What do you think David made of you?**

Being mildly obsessive about getting at least 7/10 on this column.

**Did you go on somewhere?**

We walked by an incredibly elaborate film set (which we probably should have crashed for a better story) and then headed home.

**And ... did you kiss?**

No, just a friendly hug. We enjoyed a nice dinner but there was just no spark.

**If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?**

More chemistry and deeper conversation. And I'd completely milk the Guardian expenses budget.



## Marks out of 10?

7/10. I'm manifesting.

## Would you meet again?

I wouldn't, but I wish him all the best.

*David and Emma ate at [Mallow](#), London SE1. Fancy a blind date? Email [blind.date@theguardian.com](mailto:blind.date@theguardian.com)*

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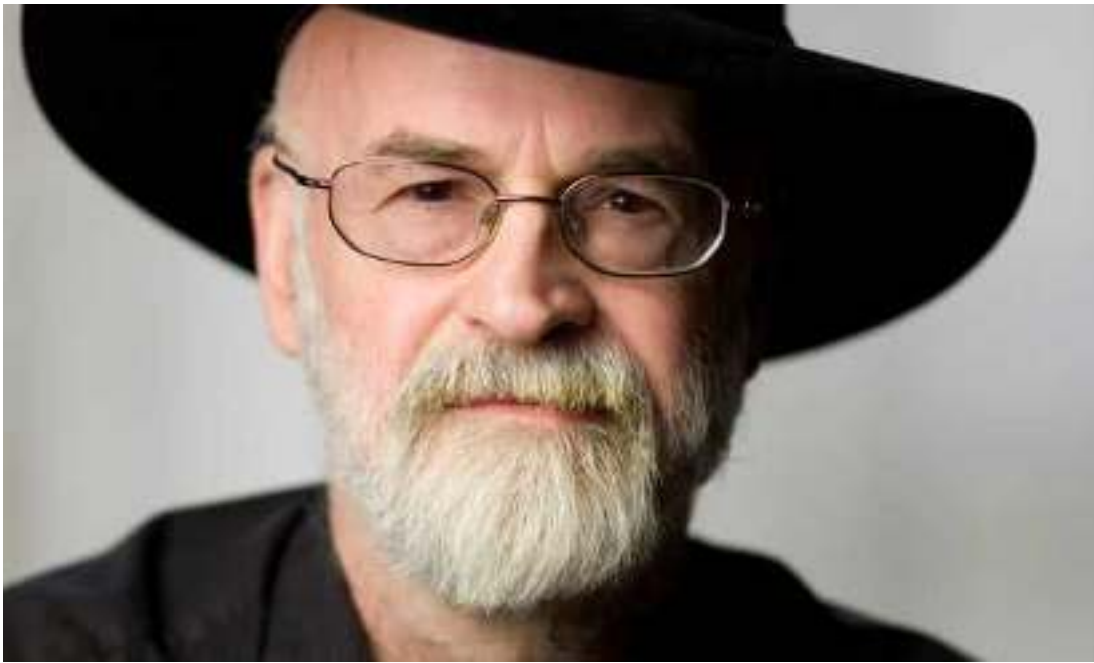
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## Autobiography and memoir

# ‘I think I was good, though I could have been better’: Terry Pratchett and the writing of his life

After he was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, the Discworld author began an autobiography. He never finished it, but seven years after his death, his long-time assistant has taken up the task



‘Your reward for doing something good is to do something else good’ ... Terry Pratchett. Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

*Rob Wilkins*

Sat 17 Sep 2022 04.00 EDT

*Five months before he died, [Terry Pratchett](#) wrote five letters, sealed them in envelopes and locked them in the safe in his office to be opened after his death. This was the one he addressed to me.*

Wiltshire

4th October 2014

Dear Rob,

So. I have gone. There were days when I felt I had already gone and so all I wish for now is a cool, quiet room and some peace to gather my addled thoughts. I think I was good, although I could have been better, but Terry Pratchett is dead and there are no more words.

Look after Lyn, please. Have those fine pieces of jewellery cast to my design and give them with my love. Choose a gift every Christmas and birthday. Send flowers. Have a big dinner each year, more if necessary or if a celebration is required, and raise a brandy to my memory and to happy days.

Look after the business and it will look after you. For all you have done, for all of the little things and all of the much bigger things and for the burying of the bodies ... I thank you.

Learn to fly. Do it now.

And mind how you go.

*Strive!*

Terry

Just to be clear: there were no actual bodies in need of burying during my more than 20 years of working with Terry Pratchett. Terry could get quite exasperated with people sometimes, and certainly did not (as people often found themselves saying about him) suffer fools gladly. But he never got *that* exasperated.



Neil Gaiman collaborated with Terry Pratchett on the novel *Good Omens*.

After Terry was diagnosed with Posterior Cortical Atrophy, a rare form of Alzheimer's disease, in 2007, at the cruelly early age of 59, I began to accompany him at public appearances, reading for him when he no longer could, helping him through interviews on stage as "keeper of the anecdote". We became, of necessity, a sort of double act.

There were, inevitably, grim and testing times in those years, and I spent a lot of that period in denial about the full gravity of what was unfolding. Yet Terry was doing exactly the opposite, reacting to the news of his imminent demise with bravery, with unsparing thought, with a determination to confront his condition head on in public, with a bold mission to force the topic of assisted dying into the national conversation, and most of all (being Terry) with work – three television documentaries and seven more bestsellers.

Terry often talked about "doing" his autobiography. In the years before he was ill, he talked about it almost exclusively to dismiss the idea. He didn't seem persuaded that there was anything in the story of the journey that took a kid from a council house in Beaconsfield to a knighthood and a mansion near Salisbury by the sheer power of his imagination alone; or in the tale of how a boy with, as Terry put it, "a mouthful of speech impediments" became

one of his generation's most popular communicators; or how someone who left school with five O-levels could also go on to have an honorary professorship at Trinity College Dublin. And besides, there were always other things waiting to be written – bigger stories in which far more outlandish and arresting things were free to happen.

But now that Terry's memory itself was under an explicit threat, the prospect of a memoir felt different. Even in the car driving back together from Addenbrooke's hospital in Cambridge that awful December afternoon when the devastating diagnosis had been given to him, Terry started talking about his autobiography – about how he needed to get going on it, and how the clock was running.

His hat possessed a transformative magic – simply by putting it on, he'd become his public persona

Yet we had no clear idea how long we had. One year? Two years? We had more time than we knew, in fact; it would be seven years before Terry's last day at work. Yet, when it came down to it, the priority was always the novels – first *Nation*, the book Terry was working on at the time of the diagnosis, and then *Unseen Academicals*, *I Shall Wear Midnight*, *Snuff*, *Dodger*, *Raising Steam*, *The Shepherd's Crown* ... All through this period he was chasing to get those stories down.

However, there would be days, when the mood was right, when Terry would tell me to open the memoir file, and he would do an afternoon on the autobiography, him dictating, me typing. At the point at which we ran out of time, the file had grown to just over 24,000 words, rough-hewn, disjointed, awaiting the essential polish that Terry would never be in a position to give them. He was intending to call the book *A Life With Footnotes*.

And so here is Terry Pratchett one night in 2006, wearing a purple velvet dinner jacket with black silk lapels and sitting in a chauffeur-driven silver Mercedes as it passes below a bright electric hoarding reading: "TERRY PRATCHETT'S HOGFATHER".

Here's the former press officer of the Central Electricity Generating Board, South Western Region, with his name in lights – Terry Pratchett at the peak of his powers.

And here he is, as the car pulls up outside the Curzon Cinema in Mayfair, putting on his signature black fedora and gathering up his purely decorative ebony cane with its silver Death's Head handle, and stepping out of the limo into a blizzard of flashbulbs and a gale of shouting photographers and hollering fans who are jammed along the pavement.

And then here's Terry Pratchett the morning after, back at his desk, where the previous night is of no interest, because it happened yesterday, and because the focus must always come back eventually to a man in his gardening clothes, sitting at a screen, getting on with the next book.

"Your reward for doing something good," Terry has taken to saying, "is to do something else good."

He left it a bit late, of course, and he would think about that ruefully near the end, when time was running out and we were losing him at 100mph.

In an interview in 2010, Terry was asked what advice he would give his younger self.

"Get more sex while you can," Terry straight away replied.

But then he thought about it more seriously. "I wish I had started writing for a living earlier," he said eventually. "I could probably have started to write full time about 10 years before I did."

What would those 10 extra years have amounted to, in Pratchett terms? Another 20 books?

In 1987, having finally taken the plunge and left the CEGB for Gaze Cottage in Somerset and "the cold waters of self-employment", he needed structure – the structure of an office day, only stricter. He sequestered himself in his room, with only the occasional cat for company. There were to be no interruptions. Daily word targets became even more important to him, 3,000 the goal he now set himself. Terry seems to have decided that his approach

to the business of being a novelist would be utterly blue-collar – industrial, even. Furthermore, he would be adamant about prioritising that industry in the face of all other claims on his time.



Rhianna, Terry and Lyn Pratchett, dressed for a stage adaptation of *Maskerade* in 1995. Photograph: Penguin

Aged nine or 10, his daughter Rhianna drew a picture of a hat and wrote underneath it: “I love my father but he is very busy.”

He was busy writing, but also busy building a following, at book signings, SF and fantasy conventions, games fairs – growing his brand, we would now say. The hat helped. It had been bought, in early 1988, at Lock & Company in St James’s Street, in a rare moment of extravagance. Lock & Company’s 18th-century shop, with its dark green paintwork, was itself a lasting fascination for Terry, not to mention a location to adapt eventually for the book *Dodger*. This single item gave him, with almost absurd ease, an image. It possessed a transformative magic, in the sense that, simply by putting it on, he could become the public Terry Pratchett that he was increasingly being asked to be. And of course, by the equally simple act of removing it, he could become himself again. It was, as he used to say, “an anti-disguise”.

It was a period of practically incessant work, but it was apparent very quickly, and very gratifyingly, that it was paying off. One Sunday, with Terry on a rare day off, Lyn opened the newspaper at the page with the bestseller lists and immediately went out into the garden to find him. “Terry, you’re number two!” she said.

Terry let it sink in for a second, before typically putting a dent in the glory of his own moment.

“Who is number one?” he said.

“Stephen King,” said Lyn.

“Yes,” said Terry, “and I bet he’s not in his back garden fixing a puncture on his daughter’s bike.”

It all got very big, very quickly. These were the years when Terry’s career caught fire and properly blazed and when all the crucial numbers began to escalate vertiginously. Through the 1990s, Terry sold an average of 3 million books each year. Nobody in Britain sold more and, as the newspaper profiles liked to express it, if you set end-to-end every Terry Pratchett book ever bought, they would reach ... well, from wherever you were to a very long way away.

Inevitably, Terry’s advances grew, too. They went from £51,000 a book to £200,000 a book, and then to £400,000 a book. And they would have carried on growing if they hadn’t met resistance from an unlikely source: Terry himself. After the six-book Gollancz deal which had floated him away from the safe harbour of full-time employment and which ended with *Witches Abroad* in 1991, he decided he no longer wanted the pressures of such a long-term arrangement, the responsibility of which seemed in practice to worry him more than make him feel secure. He instructed his agent Colin Smythe to strike deals for no more than two books at a time.





Pratchett with his agent, Colin Smythe (right), in 1971. Photograph: Penguin

Terry also had strong and, some might even say, puritanical ideas about how much money he should accept in advance of a book's publication. If he couldn't be confident that the advance would earn itself out inside three years and that the book would go into profit and yield royalties, he refused to accept it. At one point, for example, Transworld offered Terry £125,000 for a book. This was in the mid-1990s, when a generous offer for a book of its nature would have been in the region of £25,000, so that six-figure offer was an emphatic demonstration of confidence in Terry's writing. Colin, naturally, was excited to tell Terry about it. The conversation they had was short and pointed. Colin then found himself ringing Transworld and saying: "I have conveyed your offer to Terry, and I'm afraid he is not at all happy with it ... No, he says it's far too much and he would like me to agree a deal with you for less."

Similar qualms on Terry's part affected the price paid up front for *Good Omens*, his 1990 collaboration with Neil Gaiman. During 1985, Neil had shown Terry a file containing 5,282 words exploring a scenario in which Richmal Crompton's William Brown had somehow become the Antichrist. Terry loved it, and the concept stayed in his mind. A couple of years later, he rang Neil to ask him if he had done any more work on it. Neil, who had been spending that time thinking about his series *The Sandman*, for DC Comics,

said he hadn't really given it another thought. Terry said: "Well, I know what happens next, so either you can sell me the idea or we can write it together." Neil knew straight away which of those options he preferred. As he said: "It was like Michelangelo ringing up and saying, 'Do you fancy doing a ceiling?'"

So, mostly in the spirit of experiment, the two of them started building a book together. It was a lark, really – a side project with nothing hingeing on it except their own diversion. According to Terry they were "two guys who didn't have anything to lose by having fun". They were also two guys who operated at different ends of the day. Neil, at this point in his life, was largely allergic to the morning and would wake around lunchtime to flurries of crisp answerphone messages from his collaborator, which were generally variations on the theme of "Get up, you lazy bastard".

Yet somehow, a book emerged, in which the angel Aziraphale and the demon Crowley got together to head off the end times, and in which lastingly important thoughts were set down about witches, prophecies, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse and pets. The pair handed it over to their respective agents to see if it could be sold. Whereupon, this being a genuinely funny book with a manifest commercial appeal, the bidding rose rapidly into six figures and, according to Colin, would have happily continued rising if Terry hadn't panicked and called a stop to it.

There it was again – that anxiety about being paid too much, getting caught out and thereby destroying his good name for ever. And it never left him. In 2006, I was with Terry when the offer came in for a collection of his nonfiction writing – the book which eventually became *A Slip of the Keyboard*. The sum was £750,000. Terry was appalled. These publishers were all mad, flinging money around. "It's just testosterone," he exclaimed, in high dudgeon. "I withdraw the book." The book remained withdrawn for eight years.



Pratchett, Ian Stewart and Rob Wilkins in 2012. Photograph: Rob Wilkins

It was this fear that drove him to put up on the wall of his office a large picture of WH Smith's book-pulping machine. It was there, he said, to remind him to write a better book.

It wasn't that Terry was squeamish about having large sums of money connected with his name. On the contrary. "Thank you for all the words," fans would say at the signings. "Thank you for all the money," Terry would reply. He was, perhaps, eternally a working-class boy made good. Why go to the trouble of being rich if you aren't going to be proud of it? But he had an equally entrenched working-class belief that money had to be earned. Otherwise, what was there to be proud of? He would say: "It's not about the money, but it's all about the money." And what he meant was, in a world which did not seem overly inclined to reward him with critical praise or mainstream prizes, the money was "a way of keeping score". But, precisely because of that, he needed the score to be accurate – not distorted by news-grabbing and ultimately unworkable advances, but genuinely and calculatedly reflecting his status as a seller of books.

The truth is that very few novelists have interpreted the term "full-time" in the expression "full-time writer" as literally as Terry Pratchett did when he quit the day job. Sometimes, in that first decade, there was so much work

going on, and so little time in his week for anything else, that it would even enrage him. At such moments, he would lash out at the forces that were relentlessly cracking the whip – forgetting, of course, that chief among those forces was himself.

“He once phoned me up in exasperation that he was being totally taken for granted by his publishers,” his friend Dave Busby told me. “He was fuming. He had had enough. He was going to take a sabbatical. No more writing for at least six months. I felt very pleased for him. He needed that break. I think he planned to do a lot of travelling. I did not hear from him for about six months and when we made contact again, I asked him what he had done in his sabbatical. He replied, irritably, ‘I wrote two books.’”

The plainest – and saddest – truth of all, is that his autobiography has to take its place on the long list of books by Terry Pratchett that a merciless degenerative brain disorder harshly denied us the opportunity to read. That was the loss for which those of us who loved Terry ended up grieving, on top of our grief at the loss of Terry himself, and there is simply no mending either of those gaps.

This is an edited extract from Terry Pratchett: A Life with Footnotes by Rob Wilkins, published by Doubleday. To support The Guardian and Observer, order your copy at [guardianbookshop.com](https://guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply.

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## 2022.09.17 - Opinion

- Trussonomics is a fanatical, fantastical creed, and the last thing Britain needs
- Rock'n'roll or Thatcherism: how will the new Elizabethan era be remembered?
- Britain has become One Nation Under Brands, detained in our Center Parcs lodgings
- The NHS is falling apart but fear not: Thérèse Coffey is fixing it, one Oxford comma at a time

## [OpinionPolitics](#)

# Trussonomics is a fanatical, fantastical creed, and the last thing Britain needs

[George Monbiot](#)



Just when we need visions of a better world, the prime minister is proclaiming the toxic gospel of neoliberalism



Illustration: Nate Kitch/The Guardian

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Soon, the focus will return, and the collapse of many people's economic prospects will dominate once more. As winter approaches, it will become clear that our politics is spectacularly [lacking in answers](#).

Why? Because the doctrine destroying our condition of life is the doctrine Liz Truss has promised to extend to new extremes. She is fanatically devoted to an ideology misleadingly called Thatcherism or Reaganism (as if they invented it), but more accurately described as [neoliberalism](#).

This doctrine insists that politics submits to “the market”, which means, when translated, that democracy must submit to the power of money. Any impediment to the accumulation of wealth – such as public ownership, tax, regulation, trade unions and political protest – should be torn down, either quickly and noisily or slowly and stealthily. When consumer choice is unencumbered by political interference, the market is allowed to become a Great Winnower, sifting us into a natural hierarchy of winners and losers.

The doctrine has religious, quasi-Calvinist aspects: in the kingdom of the market we can see who is deserving and who is undeserving through the



grace bestowed upon them by the god of money. Any policy or protest that seeks to disrupt the formation of a natural order of rich and poor is an unwarranted stay upon the divine will of the invisible hand.

For 40 years or so, neoliberalism in the UK has been unchallengeable. For the Conservatives, especially those populating the current cabinet, the dogma cannot be shaken by mere evidence of harm, even when this includes the destitution of millions and the collapse of Earth systems. For Labour, it sets boundaries that cannot be crossed, for fear of punishment by the billionaire press. As our politics has turned further and further towards neoliberalism's glittering certainties, any deviation from the doctrine is akin to blasphemy. But the countries in which the ideology has been most fiercely applied are those that have seen the [steepest declines](#) in both their economic and civic prospects.

Neoliberalism promised that it would generate growth. The benefits of this growth would trickle from the rich to the poor, enhancing everyone's conditions of life. But growth, for better or worse, has been [slower globally](#) during the neoliberal era than during the years before Thatcher, Reagan and their many imitators came to power. And it has been overwhelmingly captured by the very rich. Far from ensuring that money trickles down, neoliberalism is the pump that shifts wealth from the poor to the rich.

In the US, for example, during the 1960s and early 1970s, the greatest beneficiaries of economic growth were [the poorest 20%](#). But from 1980 onwards, the proceeds of growth were transferred from the poorest people to the ultra-rich. Median income in the US rose at just one-third of the rate of GDP growth, while the income of the richest 1% rose at three times the rate. By comparison to the pre-neoliberal trend, the bottom 90% lost \$47tn between 1975 and 2018. Between 1990 and 2020, the wealth of US billionaires, adjusted for inflation, increased [roughly twelvefold](#). There's a [similar story in the UK](#). Of the poorest 10% of households, almost half now have [more debts than assets](#).

None of this is accidental. Neoliberalism is sold to us as a means of enhancing freedom and choice, but in reality it's about power. It shifts tax and regulation from those who are rich and powerful on to people who are



poor and weak. The taxes the wealthy once paid have been transferred to those with far smaller resources.

Look at Truss's proposal for addressing the energy bills crisis. Instead of taxing the record profits of oil and gas companies, she's using the taxes [the rest of us pay](#) to allow them to keep raking in monstrous sums. Even this policy, presented as a means of helping poor people with their bills, will, when combined with the new [cuts in national insurance](#), ensure that the richest households receive [twice as much help](#) with their living costs as the poorest households.

The "[plan for growth](#)" on which Truss campaigned was pure neoliberal gospel: "cut taxes now, unshackle business from burdensome regulation, implement supply side reform ... create new, low-tax, low-regulation 'investment zones'". Her key advisers are drawn from covertly funded [neoliberal thinktanks](#). She will go as far as electoral politics allow in transferring wealth from the poor to the rich, attacking trade unions and protesters, opening the floodgates for pollution and greenhouse gases and dismembering the NHS. Already, her government has floated proposals to scrap England's [anti-obesity measures](#) and to remove the [cap on bankers' bonuses](#), the purpose of which is to discourage the reckless gambles that caused the last financial crash.

After 40 years of this experiment, we can state with confidence that the economic success it proclaimed is illusory. Its buy-now-pay-later economics works by [inflating asset values and household debt](#) and burning through human relationships, conditions of employment and the living world. Now that there is little more to burn, Margaret Thatcher's fire is reduced to embers, as is much of the world we knew. Yet Truss seeks only to breathe life into the coals. And this is when it gets really dangerous.

As neoliberalism wages war on social security and the public sector, impoverishes millions and destroys conditions of employment, its political consequences could be as disastrous as its economic consequences. In the 30 years following the second world war, almost everyone in politics recognised that preventing the resurgence of fascism meant ensuring everyone's needs were met, through a strong social safety net and robust public services. But neoliberalism stripped these defences away, while

shutting down choice in the name of choice. Thatcher proclaimed “[there is no alternative](#)” and Labour appears, ever since, to have agreed. Worse still, the dogma has at the same time promoted extreme self-interest and egocentricity. At its heart is a mathematically impossible promise: everyone can be No 1.

In the gap between great expectations and low delivery, [humiliation and resentment grow](#). In these conditions, it is easy for demagogues to blame the frustration of people’s hopes on scapegoats: women, asylum seekers, Muslims, Jews, black and brown people, disabled people, LGBTQ people, unions, the left, protesters. [History shows](#) that when political choice is lacking and people see no prospect of relief, they become highly susceptible to the transfer of blame. The transfer – attacking refugees and fomenting culture wars – is already well under way. Truss’s [techniques of distraction](#) open the door to fascism. I no longer find it impossible to see the far right swarming into the policy vacuum left by Conservative indifference and Labour timidity, and taking power in this country.

We need real, inspiring alternatives, positive visions of a better world, rather than competing modifications of the disastrous ideology that got us into this mess. We need hope.

- George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist

## Opinion Queen Elizabeth II

# Rock'n'roll or Thatcherism: which will the new Elizabethan era be remembered for?

Matthew Engel



The sheer span of Elizabeth II's reign and the enormous changes that happened during it defy easy descriptions



‘In a country whose politics became increasingly fractious and bitter, she remained solid and unchanging.’ Photograph: Chris Jackson/Getty Images

Fri 16 Sep 2022 19.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 17 Sep 2022 07.11 EDT

When Elizabeth II came to the throne, in 1952, charming country houses that would now be worth several million could be picked up for under £10,000. Sweets, tea, butter, margarine and meat were among the foods still rationed. Only a small minority had fridges, washing machines or telephones. Outside toilets were common, cars aspirational, televisions a novelty item, central heating barely a rumour. Outside, the cities were smoky from the ubiquitous coal fires. Inside, houses were smoky because most adults’ lips held cigarettes.

Children began playing unsupervised shortly after they could walk. Crime rates were low, and front doors often unlocked. Hangings were common enough to be hardly worth reporting except in the most sensational cases. National service for young men was hard to avoid, and some conscripts were sent to fight and die in Korea.

Women mostly stayed at home and, the monarch excepted, almost never held prominent positions. Gay people were persecuted, more so in the early 1950s than before. Many Britons would never have seen a non-white face.

The country was still largely industrial. And it still had an empire, though not the resources to support it.

Every one of those facts, except the last seven words, changed in the course of Elizabeth II's reign. Never had Britain altered so much under the rule of a single monarch. Perhaps no other country has either. The swirl and churn around her (not least in her own family) made the Queen's constancy all the more remarkable. "Good old Watson! You are the one fixed point in a changing age," said Sherlock Holmes in *His Last Bow*. Elizabeth II played that role in our own times.

And yet, she did not manage to stamp her personality on the era. The word "Elizabethan" in 2022 still conjures up images of Sir Francis Drake playing bowls as the Armada came in, Sir Walter Raleigh laying his cloak down in a puddle and Miranda Richardson prancing around in *Blackadder*.

Churchill, in a majestic prime ministerial radio address the day after Elizabeth II became queen, invoked "the grandeur and genius of the Elizabethan age", and the concept of "new Elizabethans" did take hold for a while. A plane and a new fast train (less than seven hours from King's Cross to Edinburgh) were both named the Elizabethan. And public figures took to hectoring people on the need to work harder and reproduce the spirit of Good Queen Bess's time. The historian Sir Michael Howard [later reflected](#) that it was a good analogy: "Once again we were, as we had been then, a power of the second rank, teetering on the verge of bankruptcy."

But it did not stick. The last eponymous age was Queen Victoria's reign. "Victorian" instantly evokes the image of her times, or at least their perception as "prudish, strict; old-fashioned, outdated", (Oxford English Dictionary). It is even used in the US, particularly to describe houses.

Victoria spent 63 years on the throne, and change in that period was vast. When she became queen, most travel involved horses, and only a couple of railways had been built. By the time of her death, the first motor cars were on the roads and the Wright brothers were well on their way to inventing the aeroplane. But societal attitudes and the lives of the people were far more static than they would become under her great-great granddaughter.

Perhaps it is because the second Elizabethan age has seen such an extraordinary pace of change that trying to encompass it with a single adjective is futile. It is more convenient to split it into decades, with images that are evocative (even if not necessarily accurate). The 50s are dull and conformist, the 60s an age of sex and drugs and rock'n'roll, the 70s riddled with contentiousness and the 80s as Thatcherism, for better or worse (delete to taste), and so on.

Whereas Victoria could be perceived as embodying her own era, certainly in her sad and sullen widowhood, Elizabeth II stood in apposition (but not opposition) to hers. And maybe that is the key to her success as a monarch. In a country whose politics became increasingly fractious and bitter, and a nation often delusional about its place in the world, she remained solid and unchanging, a lighthouse on a rocky shore sending out a platitudinous message of decency, kindness and a little bit of God. And if she ever had been faced with a genuine political crisis that would have required her intervention as the referee of last resort, her instinct for fairness would have almost certainly led her to the right answer. Imagine if Margaret, her thoroughly modern flibbertigibbet of a sister, had ascended the throne, and think of how different things may have been.

Part of her impartiality, I am inclined to think, owed not only to her early accession at the age of 25, but to the rather meagre education she had received before then. Unlike [King Charles III](#), she had no time to acquire the kind of ideas that might feed controversy. Charles now has to unlearn much of what he knows. It is far better, perhaps, not to acquire views in the first place.

Charles, aged 73, is likely to have a relatively brief reign: although that worked for Edward VII, who only reigned for nine, and still managed to have his own evocative era. "Edwardian" had a certain elegance – a chimerical idyll before the cannon fire took over. Unfortunately, Charles is not a very adjectival name. Caroline, Carolean and Carline have been suggested. They seem unlikely to catch on.

Maybe his reign is going to be characterised by this decade. Judging by its performance so far, we will need to reach for one of the King's favourite

adjectives, most recently applied to his opinion – when he was still allowed to have one – on the plan to [airlift refugees to Rwanda](#): the Appalling era.

- Matthew Engel's book *The Reign – Life in Elizabeth's Britain, Part 1: The Way It Was, 1952-1979*, will be published next month
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at [guardian.letters@theguardian.com](mailto:guardian.letters@theguardian.com)***

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## OpinionQueen Elizabeth II

# Britain has become One Nation Under Brands, detained in our Center Parcs lodgings

[Marina Hyde](#)



When the revolution against corporate twee comes, I'll be down the front with a plastic putter and a bow and safety arrow





A shop window displaying a picture of Queen Elizabeth II. Photograph: Carl Court/Getty Images

Fri 16 Sep 2022 10.15 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Sep 2022 13.06 EDT

For all the horror and tragedy of death, the aftermaths of many bereavements produce unexpected moments of light relief. As long as the deceased is an adult who has lived to a ripe old age, you can pretty much guarantee that there will be some sudden instant – usually when you’re shoulder-deep in making the arrangements – that reduces you and perhaps a sibling or two to truly helpless giggles. We all need a pressure valve, and few things can be taken entirely seriously for 10 whole days.

Of course, you can never predict quite what is going to set you off. It might be as random as the undertaker leaning towards you, steeping his fingers, and asking in hushed tones bordering on reverence: “And did she have a favourite wood?” Nope, sorry. I’ve gone. I’ve absolutely gone.

In the wake of the Queen’s death, these moments of hopelessly unintentional, tenuously sane hilarity have surely been produced by the behaviour of any number of our commercial brands. Them and Nicholas Witchell, anyway. It’s been like a competition to see which retailer can act

the most preposterously, the most self-regardingly, and with the most complete commitment to the twee.

Could it be Morrisons, announcing that it had [turned down the volume](#) of its till beeps “out of respect”? Could it be pawnshop chain Cash Converters [formally announcing](#) its self-seclusion from social media? Or could it be – and this one’s the correct answer – [Center Parcs](#) decreeing that holidaymakers must be thrown out of its villages for the day of the Queen’s funeral “as a mark of respect”, before backtracking and permitting customers to remain on site, while ordering them to “[remain in their lodges](#)”?

Yup, I’ve gone. Completely gone. If you’ve felt slightly “managed” by aspects of the relentlessly choreographed elements of the past week, then this really was your Triumph of the Corporate Will. It was, all of a sudden, simply impossible not to picture oneself in one’s wood-effect, lodge-effect detention hut, cowering by the forest-mural feature wall as village guards toured the site with loudhailers while screaming “REMAIN IN YOUR LODGES!”

Thank heavens for a glimpse of the indomitable spirit of pisstake, as various online posters offered a masterclass in why brands really should avoid running their firms by the Pooterising diktats of social media. “Good luck removing guests from the parks,” ran one [Twitter response](#) to Center Parcs (heroically refusing to submit to the “parcs” affectation). “You’ve trained them in archery, shooting, swimming, canoeing and swinging through the trees like apes. You’ve basically got five village-loads of ninjas to clear out.”

Majestic. Yet still the brands came. No doubt the Queen’s death has taught us many things, but one of mine has been that I absolutely don’t need to be contacted about it in yet another non-Spandex-related email by a luxury UK yogawear brand. I didn’t need to hear from them after the death of George Floyd, and I sure as heck don’t need to hear from them again now. Honestly: get over yourself. You’re in retail! Just sell me your crap and be on your way.

The commercial landscape is awash with this nonsense. I know our society is measured by how it treats its most wantonly evil members, but my finger

does hover over the “deploy whole-life-tariff” button when I read about Innocent Fruit Smoothies not tweeting for a few days “out of respect” [for Her Majesty’s death](#). But of course – of *course* – Innocent would take this immensely self-righteous stand. Its products are just a few among an ever-growing mountain that plaster their terrible pious catechisms all over their packaging, and where the words “the good stuff” are supposed to signify something moral as well as nutritional. Sorry, but no. Stop managing me. Just sell me your crap and be on your way.

What have these companies been doing all week since the Queen died, other than getting it amusingly wrong and reminding us that, for all their tactical social positioning in the course of flogging more units of this or that, they actually have precisely zero idea how to behave in a situation that, amazingly, doesn’t require any input from them at all? The ludicrous attempts at managing their customers have sparked hugely funny and invigorating backlashes. Arguably much in need of a pressure valve, sections of the public have been given a fantastic opportunity to let out a cackle, and shout the simple, inescapable truth at whatever screen on which they’re viewing the brand announcement. Namely: “No one cares! Literally NO ONE CARES what you do or don’t do!”

I’m not suggesting everyone has woken up from some late-capitalist slumber with a howl of realisation that actually some bunch of plonkers at [British Cycling](#) are not in fact the boss of them. If they want to go for a bike ride on the day of the funeral, they don’t need permission. Alas, this is still a country where the annual release of the [John Lewis advert](#) is obediently greeted as though it’s one of the formal parts of Christmas. But what a great showing-of-the-arses the past week has been for so many firms and organisations, and a reminder that we really shouldn’t submit to our brand overlords, because they know very little and matter even less. The important things in life are nothing at all, ever, to do with retailers and brands. Any of them suggesting otherwise deserve total ridicule – or perhaps for some chaotically boring little American academic to accuse them of “centering themselves during a national tragedy”. Which is obviously a fate worse than total ridicule.

Quite how we’ve got to this ridiculous place where irrelevant retailers feel moved to act like the archbishop of Canterbury is unclear, but the past week

has certainly underscored the necessity of getting out of it before we submit fully to becoming One Nation Under Brands. Every one of these botched attempts at gravitas now turns me full Braveheart – and I very much hope you are with me.

Are we going to be confined to our metaphorical lodges by the preposterous posturing of retailers? Are we going to allow death – any death – to be part of their ridiculous “brand positioning”? Are we going to be told how to act by a flipping pawnbroker? No. No, my friends, we are not. Instead, let us rise up in defiance of the tyranny of corporate twee. Let us take up our bows and our safety-arrows, our plastic putters and our laser-rifles. Let us defy the orders of our corporate oppressors and roam the village of human pisstake and possibility, and beyond. They can take our cash – but we can NEVER take them seriously.

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist
- Marina Hyde will join Guardian Live for events in Manchester (4 October) and London (10 October) to discuss her new book, What Just Happened?! For details visit [theguardian.com/guardianlive](https://theguardian.com/guardianlive)

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## Thérèse Coffey

# **The NHS is falling apart but fear not: Thérèse Coffey is fixing it, one Oxford comma at a time**

[Hannah Jane Parkinson](#)



The health secretary's email to civil servants about grammar was patronising, unnecessary, and a distraction



‘Coffey has more important things to focus on when the health service is in its worst ever state.’ Photograph: James Manning/PA

Fri 16 Sep 2022 12.52 EDTLast modified on Fri 16 Sep 2022 16.38 EDT

“Who gives a fuck about an Oxford comma?” became [the surprise earworm lyric](#) of the late noughties when the Ivy League-educated band Vampire Weekend asked the question on their debut album. Fourteen years later, I can tell you that the definitive answer is: [Thérèse Coffey](#).

The new health secretary and deputy prime minister has begun her tenure by issuing language-use directives in an email to departmental civil servants. Language should “be positive”, “precise”, and “avoid jargon”. But most importantly: there should not be, under any circumstances, Oxford commas.

You might think: given the NHS falling apart, aren’t there rather more important things Coffey should be addressing? What about the [6.8 million people](#) waiting for routine treatment? Or [the 132,000](#) unfilled NHS posts? Or the patients [dying in ward corridors](#)? Look, those things can wait because Coffey hates the comma.

It is, after all, perhaps the most contentious piece of grammar there is. Its defenders would die for it; its detractors consider it an abomination.



Gertrude Stein [apparently](#) hated it. But [Philip Pullman](#) was one of [many displeased](#) with its non-inclusion on a Brexit memorial 50p. Memes abound: [a mock-up of a Nike advert](#) with the company's tick logo inverted to resemble a comma, and the famous slogan "Just Do It" altered to "Just Use It". Its usage was even [the deciding factor](#) in a three-year, multimillion dollar US lawsuit. In the judge's 29-page opinion, it was pointed out that 43 states use it.

So, what is this contentious comma exactly? The simplest explanation is that it is a comma placed before the final item in a list. For example: Coffey's email was patronising, unnecessary, and a distraction. But even the specifics of the definition are hotly disputed.

My main reason for enthusiastically supporting the Oxford comma is that it is important to the cadence and rhythm of a sentence. I feel this in my bones. But another argument is that its omission can change the meaning of a sentence, or introduce ambiguity.

This sentence, for example: "At the government's circus-themed party, I struck up a conversation with the clowns, Suella Braverman and Nadine Dorries," which does not have an Oxford comma, has a different meaning to: "At the government's circus-themed party, I struck up a conversation with the clowns, Suella Braverman, and Nadine Dorries."

One of the most famous rumours of an Oxford-comma fail relates to [The Times](#) supposedly publishing a description of a travel programme starring Peter Ustinov which included the sentence: "The highlights of his global tour include encounters with Nelson Mandela, an 800-year-old demigod and a dildo collector." Another is the (probably apocryphal) book dedication: "To my parents, Ayn Rand and God." That would be a truly wild coupling.

Despite its most common moniker, the Oxford comma is actually more widespread in American English. Some in the US call it the "Harvard comma", which is rather sweet. The New Yorker, which readers will know takes its style choices extremely seriously, is a [user of the "serial comma"](#). Benjamin Dreyer, the copy chief at Random House, describes those who do not use the Oxford comma as ["godless savages"](#). But in British English,



many style guides eschew it. The Guardian's style guide [rather fudges the issue](#), in my opinion.

In Coffey's defence, she is correct that clear and precise language is important when it comes to optimal outcomes of communication. Coffey was referring to internal Department of Health and Social Care comms, but as an NHS patient, I have frequently despaired at grammatical mistakes in correspondence. There's something rather dispiriting about receiving medical letters, so often sensitive in nature, riddled with errors. And I rather respect the long history of her opposition, [tweeting for more than 10 years](#) about how she "abhors" the comma.

And we all have our grammar bugbears (some people may disagree with my choice to start that sentence with "and"). I physically recoil when "thank you" is written as a single word. But, of course, it's also important to allow language to evolve and diversify, and different registers suit different mediums. I often write in all lower-case for social media posts, but I wouldn't dream of doing so elsewhere.

But really, the main point remains that Coffey has more important things to focus on when staffing in the health service is in its [worst ever state](#). She's not the only one fiddling while Rome burns. Gimmicks among her colleagues are proliferating as the Tories' barely disguised hostility towards the civil service grows. Jacob Rees-Mogg, now [in charge of the energy brief](#) at a time of global industry crisis, notoriously [left notes](#) saying "sorry you were out when I visited" on the vacant desks of civil servants – pretty rich for a man [who acts as though](#) his own workplace is a DFS showroom. Will our elected politicians just please do their jobs? Is that really so much to ask? Because, for now at least, absolutely no one gives a fuck about an Oxford comma.

- Hannah Jane Parkinson is a Guardian columnist

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## 2022.09.17 - Around the world

- [Kyrgyzstan Tajik border clashes kills 24 amid more violence in former Soviet states](#)
- [Wildlife India reintroduces cheetahs to wild after airlifted from Namibia](#)
- [Italy Deadly flood-water 'tsunami' sweeps through towns](#)
- [France Man in wigs led string of thefts from first-class train passengers](#)
- [Syria Israeli airstrike on Damascus airport kills five troops – reports](#)

## [Kyrgyzstan](#)

# Fighting flares on disputed Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border, killing 24 people

‘Intense battles’ in the contested region is the latest outbreak of violence to hit the former Soviet Union



An image released by the Kyrgyzstan border service said to show fighting on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border in the disputed Batken region. Photograph: Kyrgyz border guard service/Reuters

*Reuters*

Fri 16 Sep 2022 23.07 EDT

Fighting has erupted on the disputed border between Kyrgyzstan and its central Asian neighbour [Tajikistan](#), leaving 24 people dead in the latest outbreak of violence to hit the former Soviet Union.

Both of the impoverished landlocked nations have accused each other of restarting fighting in a disputed area, despite a ceasefire deal.

In a statement on Friday, the Kyrgyz border service said its forces were continuing to repel Tajik attacks.

“From the Tajik side, shelling of the positions of the Kyrgyz side continues, and in some areas intense battles are going on,” it said.

The Kyrgyz health ministry later said that 24 citizens had been killed and 87 wounded.

Russia’s Interfax news agency did not say how many of the victims were from the military.

### [Kyrgyzstan](#)

Kamchybek Tashiev, the head of the Kyrgyz state committee on national security, was quoted by Russia’s RIA news agency as saying military casualties had been high.

“The situation is difficult and as for what will happen tomorrow, no one can give any guarantees,” he said.

The Kyrgyz ministry of emergency situations said more than 136,000 civilians had been evacuated from the conflict zone, Interfax said.

Earlier in the day the Kyrgyz president, Sadyr Japarov, and his Tajik counterpart, Emomali Rakhmon, agreed to order a ceasefire and troop pullback at a regional summit in Uzbekistan, Japarov’s office said.

Kyrgyzstan reported fighting in its southern Batken province which is bounded on the south, west and north by Tajikistan, and on the north-east by Uzbekistan. It also features a Tajik exclave, Vorukh.

The area is notorious for its jigsaw-puzzle political and ethnic geography and became the site of [similar hostilities last year](#), also nearly leading to a

war.

Clashes over the poorly demarcated border are frequent, but usually de-escalate quickly.

The clashes come amid the [Russian invasion of Ukraine](#), and as a new ceasefire appears to be holding between [former Soviet states Armenia and Azerbaijan](#).

Kyrgyzstan has said that Tajik forces using tanks, armoured personnel carriers and mortars entered at least one Kyrgyz village and shelled the airport of the Kyrgyz town of Batken and adjacent areas.

In turn, Tajikistan accused Kyrgyz forces of shelling an outpost and seven villages with “heavy weaponry”.

Temur Umarov, a fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said the remote villages at the centre of the dispute were not economically significant, but that both sides had given it an exaggerated political importance.

Umarov said both governments had come to rely on what he called “populist, nationalist rhetoric” that made an exchange of territory aimed at ending the conflict impossible.

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## Namibia

# India reintroduces cheetahs to wild after big cats airlifted from Namibia

PM Narendra Modi to welcome the eight animals amid fears that they may struggle with Kuno national park habitat or clash with leopards



A sanctuary created for the cats south of New Delhi is to house eight Namibian cheetahs being transported there after the animals were declared extinct in India in 1952. Photograph: F1online digitale Bildagentur GmbH/Alamy

*Agence France-Presse in Windhoek*

Fri 16 Sep 2022 23.47 EDT

Eight Namibian cheetahs have been airlifted to India, part of an ambitious project to reintroduce the big cats after they were driven to extinction there decades ago, officials and vets said.

The wild cheetahs were moved by road from a game park north of the Namibian capital of Windhoek on Friday to board a chartered Boeing 747 dubbed “Cat plane” for an 11-hour flight.

They are to be welcomed by the prime minister, Narendra Modi, on Saturday, his 72nd birthday.

He will swing open the gates of Kuno national park, a new sanctuary created for the cats, 320km (200 miles) south of New Delhi.

The 750 sq km (290 sq mile) protected park was selected as a home because of its abundant prey and grasslands.

The project is the world’s first inter-continental translocation of cheetahs, the world’s fastest land animal, according to the Indian high commissioner to Namibia, Prashant Agrawal.

“This is historic, global first – game-changing,” he said. “We are all the more excited because it is happening in the 75th year of Indian independence.”

Critics have warned that the Namibian cheetahs may struggle to adapt to the Indian habitat and may clash with the significant number of leopards already present. But organisers are unfazed.





One of the cheetahs in a transport cage at the Cheetah Conservation Fund in Otjiwarongo, Namibia, before being airlifted to India. Photograph: Dirk Heinrich/AP

“Cheetahs are very adaptable and [I’m] assuming that they will adapt well into this environment,” said Dr Laurie Marker, founder of the Namibia-based charity Cheetah Conservation Fund, which has been central to the project logistics. “So I don’t have a lot of worries.”

The project has been in the making for more than a decade. Initial discussion started in the 1990s, she told AFP.

India was once home to the Asiatic cheetah but it was declared extinct there by 1952. The critically endangered subspecies, which once roamed across the Middle East, Central Asia and India, are now only found – in very small numbers – in Iran.

New Delhi has since 2020 been working to reintroduce the animals after the supreme court announced that African cheetahs, a different subspecies, could be settled in a “carefully chosen location” on an experimental basis.

The five females and three males, aged between two and five-and-a-half, will each be fitted with a satellite collar.

They are a donation from the government of Namibia, one of a tiny handful of countries in Africa where the creature survives in the wild.



Vets draw blood from one of the Namibian cheetahs in preparation for the relocation. Photograph: Cheetah Conservation Fund/Reuters

Negotiations are ongoing for similar translocation from South Africa, a government official said on Friday, with vets suggesting 12 cats could be moved.

Cheetahs became extinct in India primarily because of habitat loss and hunting for their distinctive spotted coats.

An Indian prince, the Maharaja Ramanuj Pratap Singh Deo, is widely believed to have killed the last three recorded cheetahs in India in the late 1940s.

One of the oldest of the big cat species, with ancestors dating back about 8.5m years, cheetahs once roamed widely throughout Asia and Africa in great numbers, the Cheetah Conservation Fund said.

But today only about 7,000 remained, primarily in the African savannas.

The cheetah is listed globally as “vulnerable” on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature’s red list of threatened species. In North Africa and Asia it is “critically endangered”.

Their survival is threatened primarily by dwindling natural habitat and loss of prey due to human hunting, the development of land for other purposes and climate change.

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[Italy](#).

## Deadly flood-water ‘tsunami’ sweeps through Italian towns

Rescue operation ongoing in central region of Marche after ‘exceptional’ extreme weather event

Aerial footage shows scale of damage after floods hit central-east Italy – video

[Angela Giuffrida](#) in Rome

Fri 16 Sep 2022 08.50 EDTFirst published on Fri 16 Sep 2022 06.45 EDT

At least nine people have died and four are missing after dramatic storms provoked severe flooding in Italy’s central Marche region, forcing politicians to finally raise the topic of the climate crisis a week before general elections.

Dozens of others are reported to have saved themselves by climbing on to rooftops and trees, in scenes described as being akin to an “apocalypse”. Fifty people are being treated in hospital.

Heavy rain began to lash the region on Thursday afternoon, with streets turning into rivers and 420mm of rain falling in the worst-hit town, Cantiano, within a few hours, half the amount that fell on the town throughout the whole of 2021, Corriere della Sera reported.

Mario Tozzi, a geologist, told La Presse that six months’ worth of rain had fallen across the region within three hours.

The regional capital of Ancona and areas surrounding it were also badly affected.

“It’s a tragedy,” said Manuela Bora, a local councillor with the centre-left Democratic party. “But there was no warning, which leaves us speechless – we weren’t prepared for such intense rain. It started yesterday and by about 9pm I was receiving videos where you could see the disaster the storms were causing. It’s a bit more under control now in Ancona city but in some towns it is very serious, like an apocalypse.”

Carlo Manfredi, the mayor of Castelleone di Suasa, told Rai News on Friday morning that rescuers were still searching for an eight-year-old boy.

“Last night we found his mother alive,” he said. “She was in her car when she saw the water coming and she got out with the child in other arms. But then they got dragged away.”

A 17-year-old girl and her mother are believed to have been swept away by flood waters near the town of Senigallia as they tried to flee the area by car.

Francesco Acquaroli, the governor of Marche, which is led by the far-right Brothers of Italy, the party on the verge of national power after elections on 25 September, said he had received calls of solidarity from President Sergio Mattarella and the prime minister, Mario Draghi. “The pain over what has happened is deep, but the Marche community is strong and will know how to react,” he said.

Giorgia Meloni, the Brothers of Italy leader who could become Italy’s prime minister, offered “full solidarity” to those affected.

The climate crisis has been largely absent from the debate in the run-up to the elections, despite scientists launching a petition in August that was signed by more than 120,000 people urging politicians to make the issue a priority.

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Enrico Letta, the leader of the centre-left Democratic party, announced on Friday that he was suspending campaigning over the tragedy, adding that he was “stunned and speechless”.

“How can you think that the fight against climate change is not the first priority?” he said.

Francesco Rocca, the president of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, wrote on Twitter that he was “very concerned by the growth of extreme weather events”.

Italy’s longest river, the Po, this year suffered [its worst drought in seven decades](#). In early July, 11 people were killed when a huge mass of ice from a glacier on the north side of the Marmolada mountain in the Dolomites [broke away](#), causing a fatal avalanche.

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## [France](#)

# Man in wigs led string of thefts from French first-class train passengers

Police aim to reunite stolen goods including 150 pieces of luggage with owners around the world



Some of the stolen luggage on display at a police press conference in Marseille. Photograph: handout

[Angelique Chrisafis](#) in Paris

[@achrisafis](#)

Fri 16 Sep 2022 10.48 EDTLast modified on Sat 17 Sep 2022 00.12 EDT

Police in Marseille are attempting to track down more than 100 first-class train passengers from around the world who had their luggage or wallets stolen by a gang whose leader would disguise himself in wigs.

When a woman leaving a high-speed train at Aix-en-Provence station earlier this year reported to police that her bag containing €50,000 of jewellery had

disappeared during the journey, station CCTV footage led to a months-long investigation. Police discovered what they called an experienced operation by three thieves regularly targeting first-class carriages on high-speed trains.

“They were perfectly organised,” the local police chief, David Brugère, told a press conference in Marseille.

The men, in their 40s and 50s from Marseille and Nice, were “skilled and quick”, he said. “They bought valid tickets to get on the train.” The men had tickets for different routes including Paris to Nice, Paris to Marseille, and Lyon to Geneva. One would disguise himself in a variety of wigs and women’s clothing and take a seat next to unsuspecting passengers. Subtly, that thief and two accomplices would take wallets, luggage left at people’s feet or bags left unattended, without raising suspicions. They then got off at the next station.

In a small flat near Marseille’s Saint-Charles station, police found a stockpile of stolen goods including 150 pieces of luggage, 170 wallets, hundreds of pairs of sunglasses, fountain pens, camera equipment, gadgets and expensive shoes. They also found €137,000 in small denominations of cash. Officers said they were surprised that so many of the stolen goods were held in one place.

Police believe there are at least 170 victims spread across [France](#) and abroad. The complex task has now begun to try to trace the owners of the stolen goods. One victim, the owner of a €70,000 watch, was traced to San Francisco. His belongings had been stolen when he was heading to the Cannes film festival in 2019.

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Three men have been charged with robbery and could face up to seven years in prison if convicted.

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## Syria

# Israeli airstrike on Damascus airport kills five Syrian troops – reports

The bombings also targeted the countryside, according to Syrian state media, and reportedly killed two Iranians as well



Damage at Damascus airport after Israeli airstrikes in June. Photograph: Sana/Reuters

*Agence France-Presse*

Fri 16 Sep 2022 21.54 EDTLast modified on Sat 17 Sep 2022 08.06 EDT

An Israeli airstrike near Damascus airport has killed five Syrian soldiers, according to state media in Syria.

“The aggression led to the death of five soldiers and some material damage,” Syria’s official news agency Sana quoted a military source as saying on Saturday.

The strike in the early hours of the day came “from the north-eastern side of Lake Tiberias, targeting Damascus airport and some points south of Damascus”, it added.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor confirmed that the strikes killed five Syrian soldiers, and said two Iran-backed fighters were also killed.

The monitor, which relies on a wide network of sources inside Syria, said Israel targeted sites where Iranian-backed groups were stationed near Damascus airport and surrounding area.

An Israeli strike in the countryside around the capital and south of the coastal Tartus province killed three soldiers last month.

In June, Israeli airstrikes put Damascus airport out of service for nearly two weeks.

In the past month, Israeli airstrikes have twice targeted Aleppo airport.

The rights monitor said at the time that those strikes had targeted weapons depots belonging to Iran-backed militias.

Since civil war erupted in Syria in 2011, Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes against its northern neighbour, targeting government troops as well as allied Iran-backed forces and Hezbollah fighters.

Israel rarely comments on individual strikes but has acknowledged carrying out hundreds. It says its air campaign is necessary to stop arch-foe Iran gaining a foothold on its doorstep.

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## Headlines

- [Live Kwasi Kwarteng ‘tells Treasury to focus entirely on growth’ ahead of expected emergency budget next week](#)
- [Economy Focus on growth not fiscal discipline, Kwasi Kwarteng tells Treasury](#)
- [Cost of living crisis UK pay growth lags behind inflation as cost of living crisis bites](#)
- [Jean-Luc Godard Giant of the French new wave dies at 91](#)
- [A life in pictures Jean-Luc Godard](#)

[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)Politics

# Kwarteng ‘tells Treasury to focus entirely on growth’ as Tory peer defends sacking of senior civil servant – as it happened

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/live/2022/sep/13/kwasi-kwarteng-treasury-uk-politics-liz-truss-latest-live-news>

## Economic policy.

# Focus on growth not fiscal discipline, Kwasi Kwarteng tells Treasury

Chancellor suggests change of emphasis is needed after he sacked top civil servant whom he credited for tight control of spending



Kwarteng sacked the Treasury's permanent secretary, Tom Scholar, in his first day in the job. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[Jessica Elgot](#) *Chief political correspondent*

[@jessicaelgot](#)

Tue 13 Sep 2022 04.39 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Sep 2022 07.08 EDT

UK Treasury officials have been told to refocus on annual growth of 2.5% rather than prioritising fiscal discipline, in a call with the chancellor, [Kwasi Kwarteng](#).

The prime minister, Liz Truss, promised a return to the economic growth target for the UK of 2.5% a year during her campaign for the Conservative

party leadership, a level that has not been consistently met since before the 2008 banking crisis.

An emergency fiscal package to bring in winter tax cuts for millions of people is expected late next week after national mourning for the Queen's death.

Treasury sources confirmed that no requests had been made to the Office for Budget Responsibility to produce economic forecasts that would normally accompany the chancellor's speech at a budget.

No 10 said legislation would not be needed to bring in the energy support package for households as it would involve guarantees between the government and private energy suppliers. However, some legislation may be needed to enact support for businesses.

Last week, Kwarteng sacked the Treasury's permanent secretary, Tom Scholar, in his first day in the job, a move that sent shock waves through Whitehall. Numerous former Whitehall chiefs have questioned the decision, given Scholar's extensive experience of handling financial crises.

Kwarteng told civil servants in a call that Scholar had led "an excellent finance ministry" – a reference to the department's commitment to keeping a tight leash on spending. But in comments first reported [by the FT](#), he said the focus must now be "entirely on growth".

Kwarteng argued that by returning to the 2.5% growth rate, Britain would be better placed to bear down on its budget deficit. During her leadership campaign, Truss told ConservativeHome: "We should be growing on average at 2.5. And happiness is a faster-growing private sector than public sector. That's what we need to achieve."

The "fiscal event" planned by Kwarteng is expected to take place on Thursday or Friday next week, before the Commons breaks up for party conferences.

Measures will include reversing April's rise in national insurance contributions and pledging not to increase corporation tax from 19% to 25%

next year. These two measures alone, however, would entail permanent tax cuts of £30bn a year – more than 1% of national income. Kwarteng may also bring forward a one percentage-point cut in the basic rate of income tax.

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Truss's team has also spoken to business groups about changes to business rates and cuts to VAT to help with the energy crisis, as well as a longer-term review of these taxes.

The prime minister is planning to travel to the UN general assembly in New York in the days after the Queen's funeral, returning in time to sit alongside Kwarteng in the Commons as he delivers his fiscal event.

The most obvious day for it would be Thursday 22 September, as parliamentary business has been postponed until after Wednesday 21st and Truss is likely to be in New York until then.

At the mini-budget, the government is expected to confirm plans to reverse the recent rise in national insurance, even though it benefits higher earners the most, handing back about £1,800 a year to top earners while the lowest earners get about £7 a year.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/sep/13/focus-on-growth-not-fiscal-discipline-kwasi-kwarteng-tells-treasury>.



## [Office for National Statistics](#)

# Number of people in UK with long-term sickness rose to record 2.5m in July

Almost 400,000 have exited jobs market with long-term health problems since early 2020, ONS says

- [Analysis: UK unemployment is low but workers face pay squeeze](#)



An exodus by workers aged between 50 and 64 accounted for the largest losses since March 2020, the ONS says. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

[Phillip Inman](#)  
[@phillipinman](#)

Tue 13 Sep 2022 03.19 EDTLast modified on Wed 14 Sep 2022 00.12 EDT

The number of workers experiencing long-term sickness reached a record high of 2.5 million in July, even as unemployment dropped to levels last

seen in 1974.

Official figures giving an overview of the jobs market showed more than 150,000 workers joined [the list of people with persistent ill-health](#) in just two months to the end of July.

Almost 400,000 have exited the jobs market owing to long-term health problems since early 2020, as Covid-19 took its toll and other illnesses went untreated, but they are not classed as unemployed.

An exodus by workers aged between 50 and 64 accounted for the largest losses since March 2020, according to the [Office for National Statistics](#) (ONS), which said the pandemic ended a 20-year run of improvements in the health of people eligible for work.

Analysts said a drop in unemployment to from 3.8% to 3.6% – its lowest level since 1974 – could partly be explained by a rise in the number of workers classified as long-term sick.

James Smith, an economist at ING, said people looking for work had registered as inactive rather than unemployed and given ill-health as their reason for stepping back.

“It’s hard to escape the conclusion that this is linked to the pressures in the NHS,” he said.

### [Economic inactivity chart](#)

A rise in the number of students was another factor pushing the number of those classed as economically inactive – measuring the share of the population who are not in work and not looking for work – up by 194,000 during the quarter to 9 million.

“We are starting to see signs of a labour market losing its momentum,” said Jack Kennedy, a UK economist at the global job site Indeed.

The Bank of England is worried tightness in the labour market could spark a round of inflation-linked pay claims, adding to the recent increase in price

pressures.

The central bank raised interest rates the most since 1995 last month, and is expected to increase them again on 22 September.

Sterling jumped against the US dollar after Tuesday's data, and investors were pricing in an 83% chance of a three-quarters of a percentage-point Bank rate rise next week, which would be its biggest since 1989, excluding an attempt to shore up the pound in 1992 that was quickly reversed.

The ONS said the employment rate also fell as the number of part-time staff declined at a faster rate than full-timers were added to the figures.

The cost of living crisis continued to affect millions of households throughout the summer after pay growth failed to keep pace with rising prices in July despite a rise in average wages.

Average pay including bonuses increased by 5.5% in the three months to July, while regular pay (excluding bonuses) climbed by 5.2%, [up from 4.7% in June](#).

Workers continued to be hardest hit in the public sector, where regular pay grew by 2%, compared with 6% in the private sector. Annual [inflation was 10.1% in July](#), the highest level in 40 years.

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According to the ONS, wages adjusted for inflation fell by 2.6% including bonuses and by 2.8% excluding bonuses.

Samuel Tombs, the chief UK economist at the consultancy Pantheon Macroeconomics, said the business surveys chimed with the official data to show that “labour demand is barely rising”.

He said: “Alas, the workforce contracted by 36,000 in the three months to July, led by a further sharp rise in long-term sickness among working-age adults.”

Tombs added that unemployment would rise as the economic situation worsened over the coming months and unemployment would increase to about 4% by the end of the year and 4.5% by mid-2023.

Jane Gratton, the head of people policy at the British Chambers of Commerce, said the mismatch between the high level of vacancies and the number of people looking for work was harming thousands of businesses.

“With firms doing their best to keep afloat during a period of spiralling costs, they are also facing an extremely tight labour market which is further impacting their ability to invest and grow,” she added.

“Despite a second month of a decrease in job vacancies, the overall number of vacancies in the labour market remains high. With more than 1.2 million unfilled jobs across the country, labour shortages have reached crisis levels for businesses across many sectors and regions.

“During a period of increasing inflation, and a stagnant economy, we cannot afford to let recruitment problems further dampen growth.”

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## [Jean-Luc Godard](#)

# Jean-Luc Godard, giant of the French New Wave, dies at 91

The radical director of *Breathless* and *Alphaville*, and who was a key figure in the French Nouvelle Vague, has died

- [Peter Bradshaw on Godard: a genius who tore up rule book without troubling to read it](#)



Jean-Luc Godard. Photograph: Gaetan Bally/AP

[Andrew Pulver](#) and [Angelique Chrisafis](#) in Paris

Tue 13 Sep 2022 04.17 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Sep 2022 19.20 EDT

Jean-Luc Godard, the French-Swiss director who was a key figure in the Nouvelle Vague, the film-making movement that revolutionised cinema in the late 1950s and 60s, has died aged 91. French news agency AFP reported that he died “peacefully at home” in Switzerland with his wife Anne-Marie

Mieville at his side. Liberation, quoting an unnamed family member, [reported](#) that Godard's death was assisted, which is legal in Switzerland. "He was not sick, he was simply exhausted. So he had made the decision to end it. It was his decision and it was important for him that it be known." Godard's lawyer Patrick Jeanneret told AFP Godard's death followed "multiple disabling pathologies".

Best known for his iconoclastic, seemingly improvised filming style, as well as unbending radicalism, Godard made his mark with a series of increasingly politicised films in the 1960s, before enjoying an unlikely career revival in recent years, with films such as *Film Socialisme* and *Goodbye to Language* as he experimented with digital technology.

The French president Emmanuel Macron [tweeted](#): "We've lost a national treasure, the eye of a genius". He said Godard was a "master" of cinema – "the most iconoclastic of the Nouvelle Vague".

Film-makers who paid tribute included *Last Night in Soho* director Edgar Wright, [who called him](#) "one of the most influential, iconoclastic film-makers of them all".

Born in Paris in 1930, Godard grew up and went to school in Nyon, on the banks of Lake Geneva in [Switzerland](#). After moving back to Paris after finishing school in 1949, Godard found a natural habitat in the intellectual "cine-clubs" that flourished in the French capital after the war, and proved the crucible of the French New Wave. Having met the likes of critic André Bazin and future fellow directors François Truffaut, Claude Chabrol and Jacques Rivette, Godard began writing for the new film magazines, including Bazin's soon-to-be-influential *Cahiers du Cinema*. Godard struck a maverick note from the start, defending traditional Hollywood film-making and promoting the likes of Howard Hawks and Otto Preminger over more fashionable figures. Godard also had a reverence for Humphrey Bogart, something that would come out in his first feature, *Breathless*, which he released in 1960.

Before that, however, Godard eased his way into film-making via a series of short films, such as [Charlotte and Véronique, or All the Boys Are Named](#)



[Patrick](#) in 1957, which prefigured his loose, apparently slipshod film-making style. An earlier idea of Truffaut's, about a petty criminal and his girlfriend, had been abandoned, but Godard thought he could turn it into a feature, and asked for permission to use it. Truffaut, meanwhile, had scored a major success with his own feature, *The 400 Blows*, and his clout helped Godard get his project off the ground. Shot on the Paris streets in 1959, with negligible use of artificial lighting, and a script written day-to-day, *Breathless* turned into a bona fide cultural phenomenon on its release, making a star of [Jean-Paul Belmondo](#) and winning Godard best director at the Berlin film festival.

A look back at Jean-Luc Godard's most famous films – video

Godard went on to make a string of seminal films in the 1960s at a furious rate. His next film, *Le Petit Soldat*, suggested the French government condoned torture, and it was banned until 1963, but it was also the film on which Godard met his future wife, Anna Karina, as well as coining his most famous aphorism, "Cinema is truth at 24 frames a second." Other highlights included *A Woman Is a Woman*, a self-referential homage to the Hollywood musical, which again starred Karina, along with Belmondo and won more Berlin awards; the extravagant, epic film-about-film-making *Contempt*, with Michel Piccoli, Brigitte Bardot, Jack Palance and Fritz Lang; and [Alphaville](#), a bizarre hybrid of film noir and science fiction.

By 1965 Godard's marriage with Karina had ended in divorce; their last feature together was *Made in USA*, a homage to American pulp fiction that ran into copyright trouble in the US. By this time Godard was also thoroughly identified with the revolutionary politics of the age, and his film-making reflected this: he set up a film-making collective named after Dziga Vertov, the Soviet director of *Man with a Movie Camera*, helped to shut down the Cannes film festival in 1968 in sympathy with the student riots in Paris, and collaborated with young Marxist student Jean-Pierre Gorin on *Tout Va Bien*, a study of a strike in a sausage factory featuring Jane Fonda.

Godard also met, in 1970, film-maker Anne-Marie Miéville who would become a regular collaborator, and later partner after the breakdown of his

second marriage, to Anne Wiazemsky, who had starred in Godard's 1967 study of student radicals, *La Chinoise*.



Goodbye to Language. Photograph: StudioCanal

As the 70s moved on, Godard's strident political and intellectual stances began to lose their cachet, and his work reduced in impact in the 1980s – though, improbably, his 1987 film of *King Lear*, reconfigured as a post-apocalyptic farce featuring a gangster called Learo, was financed by action specialists Cannon Films.

His 2001 feature *In Praise of Love* marked a comeback, being selected for the Cannes film festival, while the release of *Film Socialisme* in 2010 preceded the award in 2010 of an honorary Oscar (the citation read: "For passion. For confrontation. For a new kind of cinema"). Typically, Godard failed to collect it in person. His 2014 film *Goodbye to Language* saw him pick up a major film-making award, the jury prize at Cannes, and *Image Book*, which was selected for the 2018 Cannes film festival, was given a one-off "special Palme d'Or".



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# Jean-Luc Godard: a life in pictures

## À bout de souffle, 1960 Photograph: Ronald Grant Archive

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### Music

## **‘It’s no surprise I gravitated to punk’: the military brats who found a home in hardcore**



‘It’s a misfit thing, moving all the time’ ... Fiddlehead performing at Underworld in Camden. Photograph: Alecsandra Dragoi/the Guardian

For children of parents in the armed services, hardcore punk provided stability and community. Members of Minutemen, Fiddlehead and Entry reflect on what led them to the scene

[Huw Baines](#)

Tue 13 Sep 2022 05.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Sep 2022 07.48 EDT

Pat Flynn’s scream of “U-S-M-A!” hangs in the air at the Underworld in Camden, London. A guy in a billowing white T-shirt dives from the stage and is held aloft by the crowd – a typically energetic snapshot from a hardcore show. Except that, on this occasion, it’s not all that typical. With that roar, the Fiddlehead vocalist isn’t preaching positivity or inciting the pit: he’s remembering his father, whose acceptance into the the United States Military Academy almost six decades ago had a profound effect on his life.

Hardcore and the military aren’t obvious bedfellows, but Flynn is among a number of musicians for whom the two are inextricable. He was an army brat – his father studied at USMA, commonly known as West Point, before he served in Vietnam, and taught there afterwards. Later, Flynn bounced between Germany, Connecticut, Arizona and Washington DC with his family before settling in Massachusetts. “It created this misfit thing, moving all the time,” Flynn says, sitting in a coffee shop before the show.

American hardcore grew out of fading punk scenes in the late 70s, bringing regional identities to international prominence. Early New York hardcore was macho and gritty, led by bands such as Cro-Mags and Agnostic Front. In DC, Minor Threat and the [Dischord Records](#) stable blended speed with social commentary. Los Angeles bands such as Black Flag and Germs found nihilism in the sunshine.

There were brats in all these scenes. Pivotal east coast hardcore band Bad Brains was fronted by Paul “HR” Hudson, who was born in Liverpool while his father served in the US air force. In San Pedro, California, Mike Watt ventured out from navy housing and found a friend with whom he would redefine DIY punk as a member of Minutemen. “My pop was a machinist’s mate in engine rooms, mainly nuke ones,” Watt says in an email. “The

reason I met [bandmate] D Boon was cuz Cali is way closer to Vietnam than Virginia.”



Bad Brains performing in 1982, watched by Nancy Barile, with short blond hair, bottom right. Photograph: Karen Koumjian

Hardcore can seem like an attractive way of life to people seeking an anchor. The music is an amped-up version of punk that is fast, aggressive and, at times, driven by strict belief systems: straight edge, an offshoot of hardcore, preaches abstinence from drugs and alcohol. The genre is built around cathartic release, and its prioritising of all-ages venues and local scenes has created a culture of tribalism and community.

“I went to five elementary schools, so not a lot of friends,” says Entry vocalist Sara Gregory. The daughter of a marine, Gregory grew up between Virginia, Kentucky and Pennsylvania, where she discovered the hardcore scene in Wilkes-Barre. “When you become involved in hardcore, immediately [you know] where to find friends – I’m gonna go to a show.”

For Wesley Eisold, founder of Boston outfit American Nightmare, hardcore became a respite from the cruelties of high-school life, even when he lived miles away from the scenes he coveted. Eisold frequently relocated thanks to his father’s career as a naval officer; born with one hand, his parents signed

him up for football to make friends – a futile pursuit, given that he would often have to quit the team when his family inevitably moved again. Music, though, was a constant.

In Eisold's junior year of high school, his family moved to Maine, and he fell in with the Boston straight edge scene, which had captivated him even when he was living on a base in Stuttgart. "The popular girl in high school likes you, the popular guy in high school hates you, and you're into punk, and you have one hand, and it's just a fucking weird combination," he says. "You're like, 'I can ride this out for a year because I'm gonna bounce anyway.' But music stays with you. It exists within you."

"With bands you eventually feel deflated, based on success, or people's reactions, or what a label is telling you," he adds. "When I got to that point I had no problem starting over. To me, it was just moving to a new town again where you're the weird new person – just keep quiet, and do the work. Eventually, you'll meet the people you need to meet."



'Everyone was different' ... Barteaux Strange. Photograph: Julia Leiby

Born in the UK while his engineer father was stationed at an air force station near Ipswich, Barteaux Cox Jr – the rising indie-rock musician better known as [Barteaux Strange](#) – gravitated to hardcore as a teen while living with his

family in the “overwhelmingly white and racist” town of Mustang, Oklahoma. “Even though I was the only Black person [at a show], everyone was different,” he says. “I didn’t feel I stood out among people with piercings and tattoos, and the individualist nature of the situation.”

But, for a teenager growing up on bases, expressions of individuality could only go so far. “You had to be secretive, because your actions would affect your parent’s career,” Eisold says. “I was gothed out, wearing fishnets underneath cut-off shorts and Doc Martens, and I remember being ripped out of a room by my father, saying: ‘You cannot look like this.’”

Nancy Barile promoted shows and managed Philadelphia band Sadistic Exploits in the early 80s. Her father, a second world war marine, instituted a strict, patriarchal system at home. “He would tell people he expected instant obedience, that if he was driving down the highway and said, ‘Dive!’, three kids would go out the window,” she says. “I don’t think it’s a surprise that I gravitated to punk and hardcore.”

At 16, Barile met Patti Smith’s mother at one of the proto-punk legend’s Philly shows and the two became intergenerational pen pals. “When I got my first letter, I was so excited,” she says. “I was reading it when my dad came in. I apparently wasn’t paying enough attention to him. He tore it to pieces. I was crushed. I still have it, all taped up.”





Nancy Barile, front, with Sadistic Exploits. Photograph: Lisa Haun

Barile's participation in hardcore was a form of rebellion, but her father's strictures helped her understand how to bring order to the DIY shows she put on. "A marine principle is you ensure the task is understood, supervised and accomplished," she says. "Our first fest, we didn't know what we were doing, so these principles ruled. Employ your command in accordance with its capabilities – figure out who has the skillset to do what you need."

Flynn partly responded to hardcore for a similar reason: the punks he booked for shows as a teenager kept ghosting him, but the hardcore bands always turned up. "As a kid, you want to rebel, but you don't want to self-destruct," he says. "I knew I was getting into something that wasn't in disarray."

Cox Jr sees his later movements, jumping between jobs and cities before becoming a touring musician, as a byproduct of unsettled geography: "[Brats] get happy feet – they don't like staying anywhere too long," he says. Eisold, Flynn and Gregory agree. "I've been in LA for seven years," Gregory says. "It's the longest I've lived anywhere my entire life."

When confronted with its hallmarks – the tangle of raised fists, people launching off stages – hardcore seems like an expression of chaos. But beneath that are values that speak to the lived experience of these brats:

hard-won independence and self-expression, a DIY work ethic, and a longing to feel like you belong. “Here I am now, still doing it,” Gregory says. “I found the place I wanted to be.”

This article was amended on 13 September 2022. An earlier version misnamed the band Sadistic Exploits as “Sadistic Elements” in a picture caption.

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### [WhatsApp](#)

**‘So many people tell me they wish they could get out!’ Can we escape the tyranny of WhatsApp groups?**



‘This is just mind clutter!’ Illustration: Rob Pybus/The Guardian

Group chats were a lifeline during lockdown – but for many, the constant messages have become an oppressive distraction. Leaving, however, is not

so simple



[Sirin Kale](#)

Tue 13 Sep 2022 01.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Sep 2022 05.42 EDT

As I write, I have 101 unread WhatsApp messages, 254 unread iPhone messages and 46,252 unread emails across three separate accounts. For me, [Inbox Zero](#) is a faraway goal, as unachievable as mastering the perfect cat's-eye flick, or learning how to cook.

But it is the [WhatsApp](#) messages, specifically the WhatsApp group chats, that terrorise me the most. If I were a woman of courage, I would simply exit these chats as soon as I am added to them; but I feel the weight of social obligation, and so I remain.

I am not the only person to feel this way. Last month, WhatsApp [bowed to public pressure](#), and announced that users will be able to exit groups invisibly, without notifying other members of their decision. (The new policy has yet to be implemented, however.) The conflict-avoidant among us rejoiced: now, finally, we can slink out of groups without being perceived as rude. But 11 years after the instant messaging app [introduced](#) a group chat feature, will we ever truly escape the tyranny of the WhatsApp group?



‘Just to be clear. It’s not about my cousins. They are lovely people’: Danny Groner.

“I am probably on the wrong side of history on this,” says Danny Groner, 39, a marketing director from New York. “Just to be clear. It’s not about my cousins. They are lovely people.” Groner is referring to a 25-strong WhatsApp group consisting of his first and second cousins. It is a space to keep up with family news: birthdays, anniversaries, births, new jobs. “Everyone is well-meaning,” says Groner. “But I wasn’t getting any value out of it.”

Groner has left the group three times. Each time, a cousin has added him back in, usually to wish him a happy birthday or happy anniversary, and Groner has gone straight back out again, without thanking them.

“I’m sure people in the group think it’s aggressive, or strange at the very least,” he says. “But I need to uphold these boundaries for myself, so I don’t get sucked in.”

Instead, Groner has hit on a workable compromise, at least for him: his wife monitors the group on his behalf. “She is willing to sacrifice herself to be a part of it,” he says, “because it doesn’t bother her in the way it does me.” Although Groner is often told that he is rude, he is also an unlikely hero for

the WhatsApp group resistance: “I have so many people telling me that they wish they could get out of groups, but they’re afraid they’ll offend people if they leave.”

In effect, Groner has asserted his desire to live without being assailed by incessant messages that require immediate responses. “I just can’t live a life these days where I come back to my phone and have several dozen messages to sift through,” he explains. In this, he is exercising what the philosopher Gilles Deleuze describes as “the right to say nothing”. Deleuze writes: “Repressive forces don’t stop people expressing themselves, but rather force them to express themselves; what a relief to have nothing to say. Because only then is there a chance of framing the rare, and even rarer, thing that might be worth saying.”



WhatsApp: ‘The basic thing it does is eat away at bits of your attention here and there.’ Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

Although Deleuze died before social media took off, the phenomenon he observed – how pointless chatter takes us away from the conversations that really matter – could easily be applied to any fast-flashing WhatsApp group. These chats reduce us all to an army of modern-day Mrs Bennets, endlessly gossiping or swapping mundane observations, rather than working, thinking, or simply existing.



“Take an executive overview of how WhatsApp is eating into your life,” says Richard Seymour, author of *The Twittering Machine*. “The basic thing it does is colonise and eat away at bits of your attention here and there, until gradually it starts to occupy a bigger and bigger part of it. Think about what you can be doing in that time. There is something to be said for the idea that not everything needs to be responded to, or deserves a response.”

For many, WhatsApp group chats began infiltrating their time like Japanese knotweed during the Covid-19 pandemic. “Covid made WhatsApp far more important,” says Dr Tali Gazit, a lecturer in information science at Bar-Ilan University in Israel. “We couldn’t get out of the house, but we could have communities inside our phones.”

Once the pandemic died down, however, the chats took on a different role. During the first lockdown, Amal, 21, a retail assistant from Birmingham, formed a 12-person WhatsApp group with friends from college. After things returned to normal, she says, the group chat fizzled out. “Everyone got back to being busy,” Amal says. “But there were two people in the group who just couldn’t come to grips with it ... It was a big thing for them.”



Illustration: Rob Pybus/*The Guardian*

These friends, says Amal, became fixated with her. They kept changing the name of the group chat to “Hello Amal” or “We Miss You Amal” in an attempt to get her attention. At first, Amal found the changes funny, if odd. But then “they came into my workplace,” she says, and asked her if she wanted to come out for a drink. “It was confusing. I hadn’t spoken to them properly in weeks.” Amal declined, and left the WhatsApp group shortly afterwards. When she reflects on this experience, what she sees is “a sense of entitlement ... people have different interpretations of what it means to communicate, and their expectations of communication from a WhatsApp group.”

Seymour says that WhatsApp is as addictive as other social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter. “One thing WhatsApp has in common with these platforms is transience,” he says, “meaning that you have to respond quickly. Otherwise what you want to say is lost in the flow, particularly with fast-moving conversations. That pressure to respond quickly and to be concise, to be witty, to grandstand, to showboat – that is very powerful.”

He cites the anthropologist Natasha Dow Schüll’s concept of the “machine zone”, a trance-like state observed in casino gamblers who become entranced by the whirring and flashing of slot machines. “These machines regulate your emotions and give you losses designed as wins. WhatsApp does something similar,” says Seymour. Each notification rewards users with a tiny dopamine spike, locking us back into our smartphones, oblivious to the passage of time. “All these platforms are structured around user engagement to maximise the production of data,” says Seymour. “WhatsApp wants you to be constantly logging in. Even if the loss is only that you spend much of your day in this distracted mode, think about what other enjoyment or pleasures you could be having in your life.”

Slot machines give you losses designed as wins. WhatsApp does something similar

Extracting yourself from these group chats can feel like being in a shallow but particularly vicious surf: every time you try to tear yourself away, you are knocked off your feet. Gazit explains that this is similar to a real-world phenomenon: the fear of missing out.



“We know this is harmful,” she says. “You’re constantly informed about what’s going on, and for a short while this may decrease your social anxiety, but in the long run, your anxiety is only going to grow. It seems like Meta [WhatsApp’s parent company] knows this, which is why they use the alerts, as they feed our Fomo.”

“Our attention spans have become like that of a mayfly,” says Irene, a 41-year-old marketing strategist from London. “The chats are fun for a bit, but when you’re trying to get on with stuff, it’s like: ‘Dude, leave me alone!’ This is just mind clutter. It is input that isn’t going anywhere.”

In 2019, Irene’s friend asked her if she would be willing to coordinate an 80-person WhatsApp group on her behalf. It consisted of people from Germany and the UK, all attending the friend’s wedding. Irene recalls: “She said, can you make sure that if people talk about gifts, nothing doubles up? And can you also make sure people don’t plan any silly games, because we hate that?”

Irene, appalled, refused. “I thought: I cannot fathom doing this. This will kill me. Just being in this WhatsApp group will kill me. But having to be the admin, and police stuff?” Her friend was upset. “I think she was quite pissed off with me,” says Irene. “Ultimately, it’s fine. It didn’t kill our friendship. But I think she thought that would be an act of service that I should really do for her. And I didn’t feel I could do that.”



For new parents, group chats can be helpful, but also problematic. (Picture posed by models.) Photograph: Getty Images/iStockphoto

Irene, at least, had the fortitude to refuse her friend's request outright. For Claudia, a 32-year-old stay-at-home parent from Kent, such candour was inconceivable. She joined a group chat for parents she had met through an antenatal class while pregnant with her first child in 2014, but quickly found the group irritating. "There was a bit of competition there," she says. "One person would say she was struggling with breastfeeding, and another lady would chime in and say: 'I'm finding it really easy.'"

As Claudia did not feel she could simply leave the group without social awkwardness, she told everyone she was leaving it because her dyslexia made it impossible to keep up with all the messages. Claudia is not dyslexic. "I hate confrontation," she says apologetically.

The pressure to dissemble in social situations is strong, and this is why Gazit welcomes the new WhatsApp feature. "It should have been obvious from the beginning that notifying people when someone leaves a group harms their privacy," she says. "Because everyone can see you are leaving the group, and a lot of people don't want to leave because of that, because they feel it creates drama around them." For those seeking to exit a quarrelsome group without social fallout, Gazit advises: "If you can leave the group quietly, I

think that's for the best." Seymour suggests users who do remain switch off notifications on their WhatsApp chats. "Drop in once in a while," he says. "Don't take it seriously. Refuse to respond to obvious bait."

It is worth remembering that WhatsApp, if used in moderation, can play a positive role in connecting people. "The world has become more lonely," says Gazit, "and virtual communities can be solutions to the loneliness people feel." Her research shows that those who belong to family WhatsApp groups typically have better wellbeing than [those who don't](#). She herself is an enthusiastic user. "I am a member of a WhatsApp group of mums who just had a new baby," Gazit says. "I don't know them personally, but we discuss the issue of new motherhood, they support me when I need, and we exchange information. It's great. Virtual groups can be very powerful."

And of course, they are tremendously useful. "If something needs to be coordinated," Irene says, "I'd set up a WhatsApp group for that specific reason. But I'd delete it afterwards. OK, we've organised this weekend away. The weekend is over! Goodbye."

It can feel like you are talking to your friends, but that is not what happens at all. You are talking to a machine

Seymour urges users to put their phones down and step out into the real world. "These platforms create a spurious intimacy," he says. "It can feel like you are talking to your friends, but that is not what happens at all. You are talking to a machine. The machine takes a copy of your message, and passes it on, and you have a conversation on the terms of the machine. Perhaps people may wish to consider withdrawing their labour from that exchange, and only using it when they want and need to. Use WhatsApp for personal conversations, and keeping up with friends. But don't let it damage your life."

Because although it can feel like WhatsApp group chats are substitutes for human contact, in effect what we're really doing is smacking back conversations as if volleyed at us by a tennis-ball machine. It fires, we respond, and the hours pass. We do not have to engage with these attention-

devouring devices. We – all of us – can simply put down our rackets, and walk away.

Some names have been changed.

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[Food](#)

## From pasta and rice to pesto and ketchup: the most ethical and eco-friendly products for your kitchen cupboards



Cupboard love ... buy loose and in bulk where possible. Photograph: Denis Tevekov/Getty Images/Tetra images RF

A well-stocked kitchen can help you cut your carbon footprint, reduce waste and insulate you against food shortages. Here are some staple ingredients to get you started



[Clare Finney](#)

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When it comes to fresh food, we know what we should do: buy local, eat less meat, look for fish approved by the [Good Fish Guide](#). But what about the items in our store cupboard – the sauces, spices, condiments, spreads and ingredients that are canned, jarred or dried? How do we choose them so as to inflict as little damage on the planet as possible?

The bad news is, it's not that simple. Sustainability is a complex hydra. "There are social criteria, health criteria, embedded carbon [all the CO<sub>2</sub> emitted in producing a product throughout its lifecycle] and embedded water [all the water entailed]," says Tim Lang, professor of food policy at City, University of London and [the person who coined the phrase "food miles"](#). For example, buying dried pulses and cooking them yourself will reduce the energy expended on packaging and transporting cans, but it entails more emissions than in a factory where the process is streamlined. In theory, dried



fruits and spices have a low environmental impact – but this is increased if they are quickly freeze dried rather than dried slowly in the sunshine.

The good news is that a well-stocked store cupboard can help to reduce food waste, which is [responsible for 6% of global greenhouse gas emissions](#). It can also play a part in food security.

“A store cupboard is ultimately about giving the household a buffer,” says Lang. “We need to transform consumers’ approach to household planning and to cooking – not assume supermarkets will do that for us.” Since refrigerators replaced larders, technology “made consumers dependent on energy-guzzling supply chains”, he says, which are now facing uncertainty. Long term, this will require changes in public policy: sustainable store cupboard products are far from being universally affordable. Still, there are cheaper – if ever so slightly less sustainable – options, and if you have space and can afford to, buy loose and in bulk where possible to save money and packaging.

## British pulses: Hodmedod’s



Hodmedod's pulses. Photograph: Gareth Phillips/The Guardian

Pulses are truly the holy grail of store cupboard goods, says Lang. They are storable, nutritious, grow easily and abundantly in the UK, and are great for soil health. In fact, Josiah Meldrum of [Hodmedod's](#) – purveyor of British pulses – is almost embarrassed by how positive pulses are for the environment. “There really is no bad news,” he says. Being rich in protein, they are perfect as a substitute for or supplement to meat, so that we consume less of it. Then there’s their ability to fertilise the soil, using root nodules containing bacteria which convert atmospheric nitrogen into ammonia – “so they don’t need any artificial fertilisers, which degrade the soil,” continues Meldrum. The nodules increase organic matter by feeding microbial life which, when it dies, “ensures carbon is locked into the soil”. Hodmedod’s baked beans taste at least as good as Heinz’s, and its carlin peas are an excellent British substitute for chickpeas.

## **Palm oil-free peanut butter: Manilife, Meridian**

Like pulses, peanuts are naturally a sustainable crop that demands little water, has nitrogen-fixing properties and, when planted in rotation with other crops, reduces soil erosion. Other nut butters are available, of course, but walnuts and almonds are more water intensive and less versatile than peanut butter, which can be used in a variety of soups and sauces as well as on toast. [Manilife sources its peanuts from a family-run farm in Argentina](#) which follows organic processes as closely as possible, and eschews palm oil: one of the biggest drivers of deforestation worldwide.

**‘Heritage grain’ flour: Sharpham Park,  
[Wildfarmed](#), Gilchesters, Doves Farm**





Heritage grain ... emmer wheat. Photograph: Riccardo Sala/Alamy

It's hard to believe something so ubiquitous and innocuous as flour could be environmentally problematic, but modern, hybridised wheat has a lot to answer for. Being bred over the years to have a short stem and no protective husk has left the strain entirely dependent on pesticides and fertilisers, which reduces biodiversity and strips the soil of organic matter, leaving it susceptible to flooding and erosion. Heritage grains such as spelt, emmer and einkorn have deeper roots and can be grown without chemicals on farms that adopt [regenerative](#) practices. They are then stoneground – a process which preserves the nutritional properties of the grain – into a flavourful flour. Will Murray, of the sustainably minded restaurant [Fallow](#), is a particular fan of Wildfarmed. “They buy the flour before it has been grown, so they’re not driven by yield, they’re driven by quality, which means supporting soil nutrients and soil health.”

## **‘Heritage grain’ pasta: Pastificio Carleschi, [Sharpham Park](#), Fresh Flour Company**

As with flour, so with pasta. [Pastificio Carleschi](#) and the [Fresh Flour Company](#) use the stoneground flour of British-grown heritage grains to produce beautiful, bronze-cut pasta, dried at low temperatures to maintain

the nutrition, flavour and texture of the final product. Pastificio Carleschi avoids plastic packaging. Fresh Flour Company supplies loose pasta, direct from the mill and through a network of zero-waste shops as well as online. “I struggled a bit with [sustainable] pasta, but I really like the Fresh Flour Company,” says Michelin-green-starred chef Chantelle Nicholson, of [the zero-waste restaurant Apricity](#) in London. “They do fettuccini, ramen noodles, bucatini – all sorts of shapes.”

## **Raw honey: Oliveology, Field & Flower, Local Honey Man, Bermondsey Street Bees (look for your nearest local small-scale supplier)**



Air miles ... source your closest small-scale supplier. Photograph: Stephen Hyde/Alamy

Around two-thirds of the crops that feed the world rely on pollination by bees, birds and bats. Pollination benefits both human nutrition and biodiversity, yet monocultures and the blanket use of chemicals in intensive agriculture are [compromising bees' ability to support the ecosystem](#), putting their – and, ultimately, our – survival at risk. Supporting beekeepers who prioritise the health of their hives and work alongside organic farmers is one way of safeguarding against this risk – and the best way to do that is to look

for raw honey, which will by definition have been produced on a small scale. Being a natural preservative, honey does not need heating – yet industrial honeys are made from a huge number of sources, and each honey will vary wildly in colour and viscosity. “They blend them together and heat them to make a uniform product,” says Sam Wallace, co-founder of Field & Flower, which sources honeys from independent producers in UK and Europe. This means the ethics of how and where it is gathered are muddier, and that the market for honey is distorted, she continues, making sustainable beekeeping less financially viable.

## **Fava bean umami paste: Hodmedod’s**

“We love using miso in our cooking,” says Murray, “and [Hodmedod’s umami paste](#) is a good alternative to the Japanese product. It’s very dark, intense and umami.” Like all legumes, fava beans flourish in regenerative farming systems, support soil fertility and soil carbon and work well in crop rotations with grains and cereals. Hodmedod’s ferments these beans to create a paste that can serve instead of miso, which is traditionally made with fermented soy and imported to the UK from Asia. It’s available to buy online in bulk, in 20kg tubs, or in smaller recyclable glass jars.

## **Seaweed: Cornish Seaweed Company, Mara Seaweed, Wild Irish Seaweeds**

Seaweed is only as niche as your knowhow. At Fallow, Murray uses sustainably harvested seaweed from Cornwall to make all sorts of savoury sauces and stocks, including dashi, one of the foundational stocks of Japanese cooking that is most commonly made with sardines, dried bonito flakes or shiitake mushrooms. “It’s one of the most sustainable foods you can eat,” Murray says. It requires no chemicals or fertilisers to grow and, by absorbing huge quantities of carbon dioxide, its cultivation improves the quality of the surrounding water and ultimately our atmosphere. In Scotland, [saucier Jacob Thundil uses seaweed to make a plant-based alternative to soy sauce](#). “I wanted to avoid soy, because it’s a potential allergen and often [intensively farmed](#) – and when I was experimenting with seaweed grown at my friend’s farm, I found I could create similar flavours,” he says. The seaweed is aged, and only a small amount is used so it is not overpowering.

## **Fish sauce: Red Boat, Sozyë**

Thundil uses Scottish seaweed to make plant-based “fish” sauce, for similar reasons: “It often contains shrimp, which is an allergen; there are ethical issues around farming; and fish sauce is transported over long distances.” The main issue with traditional fish sauce is the lack of transparency. Sustainable shrimp farms do exist, and the other common ingredients for fish sauce, anchovies and sardines, are “good candidates for sustainable fisheries because they reproduce rapidly at a relatively young age and, when well managed, are a great source of sustainable, highly nutritious seafood. But this isn’t always the case and sadly, south-east Asia isn’t renowned for its sustainably managed fisheries,” says Jack Clarke, a sustainable seafood advocate at the [Marine Conservation Society](#). That said, fish sauce needs to be viewed in the round. “A bottle lasts a long time and a few splashes impart a lot of flavour. I’ll add fish sauce to otherwise vegetarian dishes to give them a slap of umami ... you’re using a tiny proportion of animal-derived ingredients to potentially take the place of something like prawns or beef, and this could be seen as reducing a dish’s impact on the planet.”

To that end, many chefs swear by [Red Boat](#), which is simply made from salt and barrel-fermented wild-caught black anchovies. Clarke can’t comment on the sustainability of the fishery – it doesn’t have a rating – but given “a third of global fish catches are turned into animal feed, the more we can divert directly into human nutrition, the better, in my opinion.”

## **Pesto: homemade**



Just better ... homemade wild garlic pesto. Photograph: Madeleine Steinbach/Alamy

“Even from a flavour perspective I wouldn’t buy pesto,” says Nicholson; homemade is a no-brainer. Mass-produced pesto often uses pine nuts from China. The olive oil is rarely sustainably sourced. The jars are small, and yet somehow you always end up with a little bit left that accrues mould within days. Yet there are few better ways of using up old herbs, salad leaves, carrot tops and leafy vegetables [than blending them with oil and nuts](#). Use pumpkin or sunflower seeds rather than pine nuts, says Nicholson – or better yet, British cobnuts; [Food & Forest have an excellent, regeneratively farmed supply](#). Use a pestle and mortar rather than an electric grinder to make it more sustainable still, and sterilise your jars so it will last longer.

## **Regeneratively farmed extra virgin olive oil: The Oil Merchant, [Citizens of Soil](#), Two Fields, Oliveology, Honest Toil**

It’s hard to believe something as ancient and poetic as the olive tree could be intensively farmed, but it can – and with that comes [all the attendant environmental problems of pollution, erosion and lost biodiversity](#). Traditional small-scale methods of olive oil production have very little



environmental impact, however. Olive trees can grow in areas of mixed land use, promoting biodiversity, and require very little water compared with other crops. They are well suited to regenerative farming practices – but these are only viable if growers are selling their oil directly to consumers rather than into global supply chains, where they would get homogenised and depreciated. Mercifully, these are just a few of many suppliers who source their olive oil direct from small-scale producers. Opt for refillable cans and bottles if you can.

## **Organic Joha rice, millet, barley: Forest Whole Foods, Hodmedod's, Doves Farm, Hatton Hill**

Is there such a thing as sustainable rice? Lang doesn't think so. "The UN assessments all say rice is the staple food most at risk from climate change," he tells me. It is responsible for [10% of the world's methane emissions](#), and the embedded water cost – the amount of water entailed in the production of rice – is high. "Until the catastrophic River Po drought I'd say you could opt for Italian risotto rice over Indian, but now Italy is also water-stressed," says Lang. Even the [award-winning Indian chef Chet Sharma is steering clear of rice as far as possible in his restaurant Bibi](#), with the exception of Joha rice, which is slowly grown and organically farmed in the Assam region. Yet there are plenty of sustainably grown British grains that can stand in for rice, depending on the dish you're cooking. "Emmer wheat doesn't have the softness of rice, but it has a lovely bite to it. Pearled barley would work alongside curries or in risottos," says Nicholson.

## **Rubies in the Rubble ketchup**

It doesn't have to be Heinz; it can be Rubies in the Rubble ketchup, made with organic tomatoes and sweetened with oversized or misshaped pears and apples which are surplus to demand and have no other buyer. Nicholson actively prefers this ketchup to Heinz – and it doesn't just come in glass bottles: the new recyclable squeeze bottle is 100% post-consumer recycled plastic waste. "I would say it's my favourite – and you can buy it in the supermarket now, too."

# Spices: Steenbergs, Ren's Kitchen, Spice Mountain, Top Up Truck, Hodmedod's

The same rules which apply to all foods apply to spices: the shorter and more transparent the supply chain, the better. These suppliers are all either fair trade, or have direct links with spice producers, and are familiar with the way they are grown and dried. Steenbergs sources organic, Fairtrade spices if possible, Hodmedod's sources only organic, British-grown spices, while Top Up Truck and Ren's Kitchen – Nicholson's favoured spice purveyor – allow you to buy in bulk.

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[Emmys 2022](#)

## **‘A victory for the ages’ – the biggest surprises at the 2022 Emmys**



‘This never seemed like something that could happen’ ... Squid Game’s historic wins at the 2022 Emmys. Photograph: Noh Juhan/Netflix

Forget the fact that we’re in the tedious ‘Ted Lasso era’ of the Emmys. Who really deserved their awards? And which win was nothing short of



spectacular?

[Emmys 2022: the full list of winners](#)

[Emmys 2022: on the red carpet with Lizzo, Zendaya, Sandra Oh and more](#)



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Tue 13 Sep 2022 02.37 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Sep 2022 04.02 EDT

Nothing on Earth resists change quite like the [Emmys](#). The seas can rise, the mountains can fall, the sun can expand and swallow us whole, but the Emmys will still be there, doing its absolute best to do the exact same thing as it did last year.

We all know how the Emmys work by now. Once every half decade it coalesces around one comedy series and one drama series, and hurls everything it has at them at the expense of several far better shows. You will remember the Modern Family era of the Emmys, and the Veep era. It turns out that, like it or not, we are now deep in the [Ted Lasso](#) era.

Almost anything even remotely comedy-related went Lasso's way last night. Best comedy, best comedy actor, best comedy supporting actor, best director.

True, [Jean Smart](#) won for [Hacks](#), and [Abbott Elementary](#) picked up a couple of awards – but it was yet another reminder that the Emmys will always play it safe when it comes to comedy. And nothing is safer than Ted Lasso, the comedy equivalent of rice pudding.



At least Ted Lasso didn't win them all ... Quinta Brunson, who won the awards for lead actress in a comedy series and writing for a comedy series for Abbott Elementary. Photograph: Bonnie Osborne/ABC/Getty Images

Lasso's dominance meant that [Barry](#) didn't win a single thing. Barry, for crying out loud. One of the knottiest, darkest, most stylish programmes of the last 10 years, hot off a season that rivals anything that has ever been made. And it won nothing. What an injustice.

Other than comedy, the big winners were [Succession](#) and [The White Lotus](#). There are fewer complaints about these shows, because they are actually very good, but outside of those were some very weird decisions. The Emmys' inexplicable fondness for [Ozark](#) meant that Julia Garner won best supporting actress, when the award really belonged to [Better Call Saul](#)'s Rhea Seehorn.

But all is not lost. Thanks to its technically bisected final season, Better Call Saul's final few episodes are eligible for next year's awards. By rights –

given that the show crafted one of [the most perfect endings to any TV series in history](#) – it should wipe the board. In truth, though, next year is a long time away, and even something as astounding as Seehorn’s virtuoso bus breakdown scene might get lost in the mix. It’s sad, but Better Call Saul is shaping up to be the great underappreciated series of our time.

In happier news, Squid Game won two Emmys. Given the sheer conservatism at the heart of these awards, this never seemed like something that could ever happen. [Squid Game](#), though wildly popular, seemed like an art piece compared to most shows. It was too violent, too angular, too foreign. So for it to win best directing is a sign that Emmy voters do sometimes take a punt on boldness. And Lee Jung-jae’s win for best actor (pushing out titans like Brian Cox, Bob Odenkirk and Jason Bateman) was little short of spectacular. This time yesterday, I would have put money on the language barrier blocking him from victory. But I was wrong, and this was a victory for the ages.



Sheer brilliance ... Amanda Seyfried as Elizabeth Holmes in the Hulu series [The Dropout](#). Photograph: Beth Dubber/AP

Plus, any award show that recognises the brilliance of Amanda Seyfried in [The Dropout](#) can’t be all bad. What a stunning performance that was; it was as if Seyfried managed to physically alter her entire DNA a few episodes in.

Her win was entirely deserved, especially if it means that more people will watch The Dropout. The Emmys clearly don't agree, but it might just qualify as my favourite show of the year.

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# Emmys 2022 red carpet: Lizzo, RuPaul, Zendaya and Sandra Oh – in pictures

Lizzo and the team from Lizzo's Watch Out For The Big Grrrls accept the Emmy for outstanding competition program. Photograph: Mark Terrill/Invision/AP

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## 2022.09.13 - Opinion

- This is a Britain that has lost its Queen – and the luxury of denial about its past
- What's behind the mystery of thousands of excess deaths this summer?
- The royals have a duty to the Commonwealth: pay your debts, and apologise
- The world's biggest office whinge-fest on an away day – yes, it is party conference season

## Opinion Queen Elizabeth II

# **This is a Britain that has lost its Queen – and the luxury of denial about its past**

[Afua Hirsch](#)



So long as she reigned, the establishment was able to gloss over the horrors of empire. Now is a time for painful truths



The Queen and Prince Philip visit Bathurst in the Gambia in 1961.  
Photograph: Reed Freddie/Mirrorpix via Getty Images

Tue 13 Sep 2022 01.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Sep 2022 14.01 EDT

This will be remembered as a watershed moment in British history for two reasons. First, for the death of [Queen Elizabeth II](#). Second, for what happened next: the voices of those colonised in the name of the British crown being heard, not as a fringe, exceptional view, but as a clamouring chorus of global trauma.

I had prepared for this moment as a time when I would not be free. I have no idea how I actually feel about the passing of Queen Elizabeth – the only British monarch I have known in my lifetime – because for all my life deference and admiration have been drilled into me as mandatory.

I had expected that those of us minoritised in Britain would understand this as a test of our loyalty, patriotism and Good Immigrant status. We would therefore fall into two categories: those who sought to pass the test, by enthusiastically toeing the line of national mourning, and those too conscious of the harm Britain's power has caused, who would stay silent.



But it turns out that tone policing is no longer tenable. Social media have been saturated by the harrowing memories of a legacy the British establishment has refused to acknowledge. The plunder of land and diamonds in South Africa, crimes that adorned the Queen's very crown. The physical suffering that continues from [violence inflicted by her government in Kenya](#), even as her reign was celebrated for having begun there. The [scars of genocide in Nigeria](#), events that took place a decade into her rule. In Britain, minoritised people are remembering this Elizabethan era through the lens of the racism that was allowed to thrive during it. Shooting the messenger – the radio host and former footballer Trevor Sinclair was [quickly hung, drawn and quartered](#) for voicing this perspective – has failed to quell the tide of global truth-telling.

The burdensome task of truth-telling – to a hostile Britain more used to hearing that its past is glorious – has always fallen unequally on the descendants of empire. Yet as I write, our stories are continuing to be erased. During her reign, the BBC tells us, colonies “[gained independence](#)”, but there's no mention of those who were imprisoned, shot and killed in the struggles – from the Gold Coast to Cyprus, India and Malaya – that were required to win it.

This trauma is not recalled with a single voice. One of the effects of the empire that Queen Elizabeth personified is that it is unevenly remembered within our communities. People who were enslaved were taught that their assimilation into the culturally superior empire was a form of advancement. Families such as mine in Ghana experienced the violence of colonialism, and were then educated to believe it was justified.

I will never forget visiting [Independence Arch](#) in Ghana. This was the nation proud to have been the first black African people to successfully break free from empire, and here was the physical focal point of that freedom – an archway bearing a symbolic black star. When I looked inside, I found a reality check: a plaque dedicated this freedom to none other than Queen Elizabeth II.

I understood it as a lesson that even in our freedom, we are not free. We are expected to be grateful for having been colonised. We are racialised, and then expected to prove that racism exists. Even as black British people

continue to die at the hands of the state, such as the unarmed Chris Kaba, news of the [black community's mourning](#) is obscured by the more important story of royal mourning. To the extent that it's ever acknowledged that black lives matter, now is certainly not the time.

Yet I sympathise with those who feel the Queen's loss. Under her reign, many latched on to the stabilising sense of cultural continuity. To lose that is to feel disrupted and uncertain. For me, it's a familiar anxiety – Britain's empire by definition redrew boundaries, and swept aside generations of tradition. Our parents and grandparents were recruited to Britain for its benefit, the terms and conditions of which my generation are still trying to make sense. We know how it feels to lack cultural continuity. Others in Britain enjoyed it at our expense.

If continuity is an abstract subject, the other trappings of royal symbolism are more concrete. There were pompous reflections last week with the idea expressed in the Economist's obituary that the Queen “[came from good Hanoverian blood](#)”. If that sounds like a white supremacist idea, that's because it is.

When I am attacked for applying reason to what is obviously an emotional situation, one of the allegations will be that I dare speak of race, when the real oppressor is class. And yet here we come to the other mainstay of royal ideology – the Queen was the class system personified. Her role, and that of the King who succeeds her, is to sit at the apex of a class system, in a hierarchy anointed by God. In some cases, it's hard to distinguish this from the idea that she was indeed a god herself – the British tabloids began seeing her [omnipresence in rainbows](#) and [old-lady-with-a-hat-shaped clouds](#) hovering benignly over the land.

Change has come, but the systems of race and class that delineate our destinies remain. The genius of our monarchy is that it transforms people who have the most to gain from dismantling those systems into passionate subjects of the Crown instead.

If it were possible to set all of this to one side, maybe I would like to mourn the Queen, the hard-working old lady who has been the symbol of my country for my, even my parents', entire lives. But I can't separate her from

a reign that refused to acknowledge this reality, let alone attempt to change it.

Nor do I get to opt out of the emotional labour of processing the memories that other British people refuse to acknowledge. Until now. Last week, Britain lost the luxury of long-lasting denial, at the same time as it lost its Queen.

- Afua Hirsch is a Guardian columnist
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[OpinionHealth](#)

## What's behind the mystery of thousands of excess deaths this summer?

[Devi Sridhar](#)



The real reason is as mundane, and tragic, as an underfunded NHS still struggling with the terrible effects of Covid



‘Turning the NHS into a Covid health service prevented people from being diagnosed or treated for other conditions.’ Photograph: Jane Barlow/PA

Tue 13 Sep 2022 03.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Sep 2022 08.22 EDT

Over the past couple of months, [deaths in England and Wales have been higher](#) than would be expected for a typical summer. In July and August, there were several weeks with deaths 10% to 13% above the five-year average, meaning that in England about 900 extra people a week were dying compared with the past few years.

The leading causes of death are within the typical range (the five-year average): heart and lung diseases, cancers, dementia and Alzheimer’s disease. Covid-19 deaths could account for half of the excess mortality, but the other half is puzzling, as there’s no one clear reason that jumps out.

It’s likely to be a mix of factors: Covid is making us sicker and more vulnerable to other diseases (research suggests it may contribute to [delayed heart attacks, strokes, and dementia](#)); an ageing population; an extremely hot summer; and an overloaded health service meaning that people are dying from lack of timely medical care. This winter, the cost of living crisis and concerns about fuel poverty will add to these contributory factors, given the

links between deprivation and ill health. So we may see these excess death numbers continue.

The excess mortality puzzle has been [weaponised by some](#) to argue that this is a delayed consequence of lockdown. In essence, this is to say that mandatory restrictions on mixing and stay-at-home legal orders, as well as turning the NHS into a Covid health service during the first and second waves of infection, prevented people from being diagnosed or treated for other conditions such as cancer, heart disease, or even depression – and that those long-hidden conditions are now killing people.

Of course, some medical care suffered during the pandemic, and [delayed diagnosis](#) leads to poor health outcomes. But to say that not having restrictions would have solved this problem is naive. Restrictions ultimately limited the number of people hospitalised for Covid-19 at any one time, so that the health services could cope with these numbers. Healthcare is finite: the best way to preserve resources for non-Covid conditions was to keep Covid infections as low as possible.

Given the UK government's delay in responding to Covid-19 and implementing measures to suppress it in the first and second waves, the [NHS](#) struggled to provide high-quality care to all those who arrived in hospital. Countries that managed to avoid large numbers of Covid-19 patients in the pre-vaccine era through smart suppression based on testing and isolation, such as New Zealand and South Korea, managed to keep their health services running for a wider range of conditions. The UK initially took the path of late, and thus longer, lockdowns without a clear exit strategy, with England in particular struggling to implement test/trace/isolate and learn from the mistakes of the first wave.

The excess mortality data points to three key issues. The first is that the NHS is overloaded, quality of care is suffering, staff are burnt-out and leaving their positions, and this is leading to medical care being delayed for acute conditions (heart attacks and strokes) but also chronic ones, where every week and month matters, such as cancer treatment and surgeries. Too many ambulances are unable to offload.

Unfortunately, certain politicians have turned to blaming NHS staff for being lazy and only doing virtual appointments, or being off work with illness. What's clear is that we need real investment in the NHS, in its people, facilities and operations, so that it is an attractive place to work that can provide the volume and quality of care needed.

Second, Office for National Statistics data has shown that mortality jumped on days with [extreme heat](#). We know extreme weather events are becoming more common, and that higher temperatures can lead to strokes, heart attacks and blood clotting in elderly and vulnerable groups. This problem is not going away as climate experts warn that what we see as unusually hot temperatures will become the norm over the next 50 years.

But most importantly: Covid-19 is still circulating and killing people, especially those in elderly groups and those who are unvaccinated. While it has dropped from being the leading cause of death, it is still one of the top 10 causes of death in the population, and even with a much-reduced fatality rate due to vaccination and prior infection, it is contributing to that 10-13% jump in summer excess mortality. In fact, as [these figures](#) show from the ONS, many other major causes of death are slightly below the five-year average.

The good news is that the fatality rate for Covid-19 – the chance of death when infected – is now [below seasonal flu for the vast majority of people](#). This is because of scientific developments and the efforts by governments to delay the spread of Covid-19 until vaccinations could be rolled out. The bad news is that it's still a cause of disability and death, alongside heart disease, cancer, dementia and other challenges.

Instead of illogical arguments about whether lockdown was responsible for excess mortality – entirely without evidence – it's worth taking a closer look at the data, which suggests that, in fact, it's a mix of the new burden of Covid-19 and an overloaded health service, with days of extreme heat thrown in.

As always, a clearer picture will emerge with more research and analysis over time. For now, we should be focusing on how to develop better treatments and vaccines to bring the mortality rate of Covid-19 down

further, investing in the NHS to ensure quality and timely care, and looking at how to better cope with extreme weather events. Global events such as the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change are making us all sicker. If we could just acknowledge their impact across political lines, we could work together on solutions.

- Devi Sridhar is chair of global public health at the University of Edinburgh
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## [Opinion](#)**Commonwealth of Nations**

# The royals have a duty to the Commonwealth: pay your debts, and apologise

[Nalini Mohabir](#)

Monarchy has been harmful for former colonies and those who live in its gilded cage. It's time to imagine a future without it



The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge in Jamaica during their ‘disastrous’ Caribbean tour in March 2022. Photograph: Ricardo Makyn/AFP/Getty Images

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I live at the crossroads of the Commonwealth. My home is Canada, where [First Nations people have called](#) on King Charles to renounce the Doctrine of Discovery as his first official act. This law sanctioned the colonial possession of Indigenous lands and has justified violence against Indigenous

people. I live in the French-speaking province of Quebec, which was ceded to the British empire in 1763. Here, the proposed abolition of the role of [“lieutenant-governor”](#), the crown’s provincial representative, is a flashpoint in the upcoming election. And I am also a member of the Caribbean diaspora, a region that was violently pulled into the production of sugar to satisfy the bourgeois tastes of the British empire. To this day, the Caribbean bears the scars of Indigenous genocide, slavery, indentureship and colonialism.

For the people of formerly colonised countries, the monarchy is not a neutral institution. It is the embodiment of imperial legacies that benefited Britain at the expense of its colonies, and played an active role in the slave trade. [Queen Elizabeth I financially backed slave-trading voyages](#), and by the 17th-century King [Charles II](#) granted royal approval to the Company of Adventurers of London Trading to the Ports of Africa, marking the moment at which transatlantic slavery officially began.

In the mid-20th century, when Caribbean countries were agitating for independence, the British government, under prime minister Winston Churchill, sent warships to British Guiana, a member of the Commonwealth, and [openly removed](#) an elected government in 1953. Even after Caribbean countries achieved independence, many remained members of the Commonwealth, retained colonial curriculums in their schools, and were sold consumer dreams by companies bearing royal warrants. Yet these associations did little to protect these member states. Indeed, when Grenada was invaded by the US in 1983, Britain did not intervene.

For remembering this history just when the Queen’s coffin is travelling through Britain, I might be accused by some of speaking ill of the dead. The media have been dominated by reverential comments and melancholic coverage. Some have focused not on the Queen as the personal embodiment of empire, but rather as the figurehead of political institutions (in Canada, for example, the media seem concerned about whether the Bank of Canada will [change the look of its currency](#) to reflect the King’s accession).

The monarchy has been politically and economically devastating for former colonies. It has also had damaging consequences for those who live in its

gilded cage. King Charles III was required to marry and produce an heir; as a consequence, he married into an unhappy relationship that eventually fell apart. Prince Harry and Meghan's relationship has been the subject of racism from the tabloids and allegedly from royal family members, leading the couple to make the decision to leave "the firm".

Britain and the Commonwealth now have a new king. What else has died with Elizabeth? Barbados recently made the landmark decision to free itself of imperial bonds by [removing the Queen as head of state](#). Following the Queen's death, other Caribbean countries may follow suit. The Caribbean is still undergoing the process of decolonisation; many countries are dealing with the open wounds inflicted by colonial conquest and resource extraction. They are shifting from being smaller nations within a neocolonial world that required they remain members of the Commonwealth, to becoming protagonists that are actively unsettling the legacies of empire through calls for reparations.

Across the Caribbean, countries such as Jamaica, the Bahamas and Belize are calling for reparations. These demands were only accelerated after the [disastrous visit](#) of Prince William and Kate earlier this year. Such reparations would mean not just an apology, but [distributive justice](#) between so-called developed and developing countries. Integral to reparations is the idea of repairing unequal, one-sided relationships.

In his first [address](#) to the British nation and Commonwealth "realms", Charles said "relationships change, friendship endures". Yet friendship requires accountability, especially when there's a power imbalance – such as when one side speaks of service and duty but such aspirations remain unfulfilled. Surely in 2022, 70 years after his mother ascended the throne in 1952, we have a more nuanced and accurate understanding of these issues. What might duty look like if we understood that debts need to be paid and apologists held accountable? What might public service mean if we understood that imperial attitudes and monarchic institutions must be abolished for an alternative future to be born?

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## [OpinionQueen Elizabeth II](#)

# The world's biggest office whinge-fest on an away day – yes, it is party conference season

[Zoe Williams](#)



The opening day at Labour's get-together will be given over to royal tributes this year. But that's fine, because I spend most of my time outside the conference hall anyway, listening to the chorus of discontent



‘The world’s biggest office bitch-fest on an away day’ ... The Labour party conference, in 2021. Photograph: Andrew Matthews/PA

Tue 13 Sep 2022 02.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Sep 2022 02.35 EDT

I miss the days when the smell of autumn meant you were in line for a new pencil case. Now it means it’s [party conference season](#). The TUC and the Lib Dems had to cancel, their luckless plans falling in the middle of the period of national mourning. What has to be axed and what can continue doesn’t make a whole heap of sense. You can’t go to the football but you still have to go to work. You can’t have a festival of pedestrianisation (Hammersmith and Fulham council cancelled its car-free day at the weekend) but you can go to the gee-gees.

Labour must have had this conversation: what makes us look more patriotic, cancelling or carrying on? It decided to go ahead, giving over the first day of its conference to assorted royal tributes. I wish people would focus more on the bit that comes before “carry on”: “keep calm”. But actually, can it be any worse than regular conference? The first day is always full of big-ticket platitudes, backgrounded by grumbling delegates, going: “I remember the days when we wanted to smash the system.” If anyone accidentally says anything interesting (as a wild for-instance, [Angela Rayner calling Tories scum](#) last year) they are pilloried for days and the leader has to go on the radio to apologise for them, as if they have been caught playing knock down

ginger, rather than saying something oppositional. It's quite fun, though, for the endless gaggles of local members, vividly indignant at the speech of some shadow whatever secretary, like the world's biggest office whinge-fest on an away day. I've been to Labour conferences and not set foot in the conference hall, just roamed along the seafront, joining in with the chorus of discontent.

How the Conservatives will cope with this unusual time is anyone's guess. The delegate mood is generally much more respectful, almost servile, but they have landed on a leader none of them seems wild about, the MPs are less enthusiastic still, there is division in the ranks about why they had to get rid of that fun Boris chap, and the pressure is really on to outgrieve the rest of the nation, while maintaining the stiff upper lips for which the British are putatively fabled. It's so impossible that, if it were up to me, I'd cancel the whole lot. But then, how would we know it's autumn?

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

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## US elections 2020

# US issues 40 subpoenas about Trump's failed bid to overturn the 2020 election

The justice department has cast a wide net seeking tips on efforts by Donald Trump and his allies to submit alternatives slates of fake electors



The US Justice Department has issued 40 subpoenas seeking information on the failed plot by Donald Trump and his allies to overturn the 2020 election. Photograph: Tom Brenner/Reuters

*Reuters*

Mon 12 Sep 2022 21.04 EDTLast modified on Mon 12 Sep 2022 21.10 EDT

The US Justice Department has issued about 40 subpoenas over the past week seeking information about efforts by Donald Trump and his allies to overturn the 2020 election, the New York Times [reported](#) on Monday.

Boris Epshteyn, a longtime Trump adviser, and Mike Roman, a campaign strategist for Trump, had their phones seized last week as evidence, the Times said, citing people familiar with the situation.

Dan Scavino, Trump's former social media director, was also among those who were subpoenaed, according to the paper, which said the group included low-level aides as well as senior advisers.

An attorney for Scavino did not immediately respond to a request for comment from Reuters, while Reuters was unable to contact Roman and Epshteyn.

The subpoenas seek information on a failed bid by the former president and his allies to overturn the results of the 2020 election by submitting alternative slates of fake electors.

The inquiry is also looking at the assault on the US Capitol on 6 January 2021 by Trump supporters.

Some of the subpoenas also seek information on Trump's Save America political fundraising group, which the Times said was a new line of inquiry by the justice department.

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## [Russia](#)

# First climate lawsuit against Russian government launched over emissions

Group of activists file supreme court case demanding stronger action on meeting Paris accord goals



Smoke rises from chimneys in Moscow. Russia is the fourth biggest producer of carbon emissions worldwide. Photograph: Maxim Shipenkov/EPA

*Waseem Mohamed*

Tue 13 Sep 2022 05.49 EDTLast modified on Wed 14 Sep 2022 10.36 EDT

The first-ever climate lawsuit in [Russia](#) has been filed by a group of activists demanding that the the government take stronger action over the climate crisis.

The group wants the Russian authorities to take measures that will reduce the country's greenhouse emissions, in line with targets of limiting the

global temperature rise to 1.5C agreed under the 2015 Paris climate accords.

Russia is the fourth biggest producer of carbon emissions worldwide, and its average temperatures have risen twice as fast as the global average. The country's emissions are predicted to reach 2,212m tons of carbon dioxide by 2030.

However, to have a two-thirds chance of meeting the Paris climate goal, Russia needs to reduce its greenhouse emissions to 968 m tons of CO<sub>2</sub> by 2030, which would be 31% of 1990 levels. By 2050, Russia plans to reduce its emissions to 1,830m tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, when under Paris targets the country should be emitting just 157m tons.

The figures, taken from a report written by Mark Chernaik of the Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide, warns of the devastating consequences that Russia faces due to climate change, ranging from severe health impacts due to recent heatwaves and outbreaks of vector-borne diseases, to increased exposure to anthrax disease and infrastructure damage due to melting permafrost.

By taking the government to Russia's supreme court, the group hopes it will "save the lives of hundreds of thousands of people".

Grigory Vaypan, the spokesperson for the group's legal team, said: "The Russian government's approach to climate change is irresponsible and contrary to its international law obligations."

For Vaypan, the case represents the need for "the court to recognise that these [climate] targets are manifestly insufficient to fulfil Russia's obligation to mitigate climate change, and order the government to set new, Paris-compliant targets."

The group says Russia's insufficient measures on climate change are "violating the Russian constitution and the European convention on human rights". Russia will withdraw from the ECHR on Friday 16 September, which means the climate lawsuit could be among the last cases in the

country that the ECHR could issue a binding agreement on, if it is taken to the European courts.

Activists from several climate action groups in Russia joined forces to file the court case against the government. They include members of the Fridays for Future school strikers, senior figures from climate NGOs such as Ecodefense and the Russian Socio-Ecological Union, and human rights campaigners from various Indigenous populations.

The group filing the court case says it faces “considerable risks”, in light of recent government crackdowns on civil and opposition movements in Russia, especially since the invasion of Ukraine. Many of the climate activists in the country are also anti-war activists, who worry that they are already “paying a heavy price” for speaking out.

For activist Arshak Makichyan, this court case goes beyond climate policy in Russia. “This is a case against the government,” he said. “Russia after 24 February [the date of the Ukraine invasion] became a dictatorship, and I can no longer live my life there. I don’t understand how Russia will negotiate any climate deals ... they have been lying to people about the climate crisis.

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“The government has never wanted to have a climate policy. For them, the climate is a way to not talk about the war in Ukraine, but they have never cared about the climate.”

Makichyan, who has since moved to Germany, is sceptical that the present government’s promises on climate change will lead to sufficient action. “We

keep lying to ourselves – they’re not going to do anything. It’s the same government as 20 years ago.”

The court case presents a great opportunity to “make noise”, Makichyan said. “I want to shout and make noise because the government is responsible for all the suffering due to climate change in the country, but most people do not care. I want people to see the truth, and shouting is the only thing we can do.”

The Russian government has been contacted for comment.

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## [Japan](#)

# Pressure builds on Japan to return to unrestricted tourism by end of month

Businesses want prime minister Fumio Kishida to loosen restrictions to help the world's third-biggest economy recover from the pandemic



Dancers perform during a preview of the Asakusa Yokochō alley, a newly-built restaurant in one of Tokyo's most famous tourist spots. Photograph: Tomohiro Ohsumi/Getty Images

[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo

Tue 13 Sep 2022 00.57 EDTLast modified on Tue 13 Sep 2022 05.07 EDT

[Japan](#) could return to unfettered tourism by the end of next month as pressure builds on the government to end [Covid-19](#) travel restrictions and cash in on a weak yen.

Officials are reportedly considering removing the current daily cap of 50,000 arrivals, which includes returning residents, and a return to visa-free travel.



A rule requiring individual travellers to make bookings through travel agencies could also be lifted, according to media reports.

Japan experienced a tourism boom in the years leading up to the start of the pandemic in early 2020, but has since imposed some of the strictest travel restrictions in the world.

Late last year it introduced a near-blanket travel ban amid a global surge in infections driven by the highly transmissible Omicron variant, prompting criticism from workers, students and others who found themselves effectively [locked out](#) of the country as other G7 nations began to open up.

The prime minister, Fumio Kishida, has come under pressure from businesses to loosen restrictions to help the world's third-biggest economy recover from the pandemic, the Kyodo news agency said.

The chief cabinet secretary, Hirokazu Matsuno, said this week the government was looking to ease Covid-19 restrictions while “maintaining a balance between preventing the spread of infection and promoting social and economic activities”.

Japan last week raised its daily ceiling on inbound travellers from 20,000 to 50,000, and travellers who have been vaccinated at least three times are no longer required to take a Covid-19 test within 72 hours of departure.

Officials are hoping that an end to the restrictions will boost visitor numbers, although residents in some popular destinations are [wary](#) of a return to the “[tourism pollution](#)” that blighted their neighbourhoods before the pandemic.

Just 245,900 foreign visitors entered Japan last year – the lowest number since records were kept in 1964. In 2019, by contrast, a record 31 million people visited from overseas, while the government set an ambitious target of 60 million by the end of this decade.

Amid warnings from analysts of sluggish consumer spending, officials hope tourists will be attracted by the weak yen, which has recently slumped to historic lows against the dollar.



Full resumption of inbound travel could generate ¥6tn yen (\$42bn) in tourist spending, according to a Barclays Securities estimate reported by the Nikkei business newspaper.

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## [The Pacific project](#)[Papua New Guinea](#)

# Papua New Guinea earthquake: seven dead amid fears more are buried under landslides

Community leaders are searching for people they fear may be buried under landslides triggered by a magnitude 7.6 quake on Sunday



A person is evacuated following an earthquake, in Kabwum, Papua New Guinea. Photograph: Manolos Aviation/Reuters

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[Rebecca Kuku](#) in Port Moresby

Mon 12 Sep 2022 23.25 EDT Last modified on Mon 12 Sep 2022 23.30 EDT

The death toll from a magnitude 7.6 magnitude earthquake that hit [Papua New Guinea](#) on Sunday has risen to seven, and authorities fear many more could be missing, dead, or buried under landslides.

The earthquake struck in the Markham Valley, in Morobe, on the north coast of Papua New Guinea, and was followed by a second 5.0 magnitude earthquake.

Police Commissioner David Manning, who is in charge of the National Command Centre Response, said that the tremors caused damage to buildings and roads and a number of landslides were triggered.

“Sadly, seven people have been confirmed dead as a result of these landslides,” he said. “I offer our condolences to the families of those who have died in these tragic circumstances.”

He also warned about the “significant risk of aftershocks”, warning people to avoid areas where there is the potential for landslides and coastal areas

that could be at risk of tsunamis.

The most significant damage reported to date has been in the districts of Morobe, Eastern Highlands, Madang and parts of Gulf Province.



Mr Siruwe, ward member for Ward 18, Rai Coast, searching for people from his ward feared to have been by a landslide triggered by an earthquake in Papua New Guinea. Photograph: Supplied

Rai Coast Community Leader Kevin Sandip said that so far there had been two confirmed deaths in the area.

“One was a woman, she was covered by the land slide and buried under and the other was a little girl, she was struck by a big stone that fell on her during the landslide. She died instantly,” he said over the phone from Rai Coast in Madang.

“A lot of people are wounded and those in critical conditions have been flown out to nearby hospital. But many of our homes have been damaged, and some are buried under the landslide.”

“So right now, we are helping one another, we are visiting nearby villages and helping wherever we can.”

The new MP for Rai Coast, Kessy Sawang, said that while there were two confirmed deaths in the area, there were fears the death toll could be much higher.

“The damage is extensive, houses destroyed, some buried under the landslide. A lot of people are injured and we fear some people may also be buried under the landslide,” she said.

“I’m very worried about the villages in the remotest part of the district, places where there is no telecommunication network.”

Telecommunications and electricity have been knocked out in some parts of the country, meaning that the extent of the damage and the true death toll is not yet known.

Prime minister James Marape urged those affected to call their local disaster offices for assistance, or a national hotline.

“Teams will also be deployed to make assessments, but let me assure the people, the government stands ready to assist, and we are taking stock and will respond,” he said.

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## [Pakistan](#)

# Pakistan rushes to protect key power station as flood threat rises

Army working to protect electricity station that serves millions of residents in Sindh province, with more rain forecast this week



Members of Pakistan's army guard a dike in Dadu, Sindh province, to protect a power station that supplies electricity to millions of people against a growing threat of flooding. Photograph: Reuters

*Reuters*

Mon 12 Sep 2022 20.59 EDT

Authorities in [Pakistan](#) are scrambling to protect a vital power station supplying electricity to millions of people against a growing threat of flooding, officials said.



Floods from record monsoon rains and glacial melt in the mountainous north have [affected 33 million people and killed almost 1,400](#), washing away homes, roads, railways, livestock and crops, in damage estimated at \$30bn.

Both the government and the UN secretary general, António Guterres, have blamed climate change for the extreme weather that led to the flooding that submerged huge areas of the nation of 220 million.

The electricity station in the district of Dadu in the southern province of Sindh, one of the country's worst affected areas, supplies power to six provincial districts.

Troops were busy strengthening a dike built in front of the station, a visit to the site showed on Sunday.

“All preventive measures have been taken already to save the grid in case any flooding happens,” Syed Murtaza Ali Shah, a top district official, told Reuters on Monday.

The comment followed orders from prime minister Shehbaz Sharif, reported by state broadcaster Radio Pakistan, to ensure the 500kV power station did not get flooded.

On Monday, a dust storm in nearby Sehwan town uprooted hundreds of tents pitched at roadsides by people made homeless by the floods, as a fresh spell of rains expected in the middle of the month begins to set in, officials said.

“If rains come where would we go – we are sitting under open sky, we don't know what to eat, what to cook,” Muhammad Hasan, one of those affected by the storm, told Reuters.

“All the tents got uprooted by strong winds today, we do not know where to go. We are desperate.”

The Pakistan Meteorological Department said on Monday it expects more rain in the area in the next few days, posing a new threat to displaced people living in tents or in the open along raised highways.

UN agencies have begun work to assess the South Asian nation's reconstruction needs after it received 391 mm (15.4 inches) of rain, or nearly 190% more than the 30-year average, in July and August.

Sindh received 466% more rain than average and all the flood waters pass through Dadu, a district with a population of 1.5 million, because of its location.

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