

# The Guardian

卫报

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## Headlines thursday 8 june 2023

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Sewage at the Olympic Park in London in 2020, the year the storm overflows taskforce was set up after the Guardian revealed the scale of discharges. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

## Water

# **England raw sewage taskforce has only met once in last year, FoI request reveals**

Storm overflows group has been promoted by ministers as evidence they are taking issue seriously

- [UK politics live – latest updates](#)

*[Sandra Laville](#)*

Thu 8 Jun 2023 04.48 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Jun 2023 06.41 EDT

The storm overflows taskforce set up by the government to tackle raw sewage discharges by water companies in [England](#) has only met once in the

last year, a freedom of information request has revealed.

The group, which was promoted by ministers as evidence that they were taking the issue of raw sewage discharges by water companies seriously, is supposed to meet fortnightly, according to its mission statement.

But in response to a freedom of information request by the Good Law Project, officials from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) said the taskforce had only met once in the last year.

The storm overflows taskforce was set up in August 2020 after the Guardian first uncovered the scale of [raw sewage discharges into rivers by water companies](#).

It is made up of representatives from government, regulators, the water industry and environmental NGOs. Its terms of reference state: “The taskforce will meet fortnightly, with exact frequency and timings of meetings at the discretion of the chairperson in consultation with the group members.” Its goals are “to develop: proposals to significantly reduce the frequency and impact of sewage discharges from storm overflows short-term actions to accelerate progress to reduce the harm caused by storm overflows”.

Last August the group published its [storm overflows reduction plan](#), which gives water companies a deadline of 2035 to reduce the amount of sewage flowing into bathing water and areas of ecological importance. Water companies were given a deadline of 2050 to stop dumping raw sewage elsewhere.

The then environment secretary, George Eustice, said water companies would have to invest £56bn over 25 years to tackle storm sewage discharges by 2050. But the plan was [heavily criticised as too weak](#) and is to be challenged in court by the Good Law Project and the campaign group WildFish. Since that publication the taskforce has not met again, the freedom of information request shows.

The Good Law Project sought all fortnightly meeting dates of the taskforce between 1 April 2022 to 25 April this year, but Defra revealed it had only met once in that time, on 30 August 2022. There have been no follow-up meetings to drive through the storm overflow reduction plan, or to check progress.

A Defra spokesperson said: “Our taskforce delivered exactly what it set out to do – develop proposals to significantly reduce the frequency and impact of sewage discharges from storm overflows. This was delivered through our storm overflows discharge reduction plan, which was published in August 2022 and will require the largest infrastructure programme in water company history - £56bn capital investment over 25 years.”

England has about 14,500 storm overflows, which are supposed to be used in exceptionally heavy rain to stop the sewage system backing up into people’s homes. But water companies have been routinely dumping raw sewage into rivers and seas even in periods of dry weather.

In 2021 [the taskforce published a report](#) that estimated the cost of cutting millions of hours of raw sewage discharges from storm overflows would be between £150bn and £660bn – figures that were challenged by some experts.

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Emma Dearnaley, the legal director at the Good Law Project, said: “We now know that the government’s storm overflows taskforce has met only once since April 2022 – and not at all since its plan was published. That is, unfortunately, typical of this government’s laid-back approach to the sewage crisis blighting our country.

“We need the government to impose tougher measures to stop water companies from polluting our waters and bring this unacceptable situation to an end. That is why we are supporting a legal challenge to try to compel the government to put in place a much more robust and urgent plan.”

Ashley Smith, of the Windrush Against Sewage [Pollution](#) group, said: “[The taskforce] produced precisely what it was designed to do – nothing. We need an independent inquiry now to make sure this disgraceful scam on the public and environment is ended and never repeated.”

A Defra spokesperson said: “Our taskforce delivered exactly what it set out to do – develop proposals to significantly reduce the frequency and impact of sewage discharges from storm overflows. This was delivered through our Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan, which was published in August 2022 and will require the largest infrastructure programme in water company history - £56 billion capital investment over 25 years.”

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France knife attack: first responders arrive at scene where several children injured – video

[France](#)

## **Four children and two adults injured in knife attack in French Alps**

Police detain man after attacks in lakeside playground that left children in critical condition

*[Angelique Chrisafis](#) in Paris and [Alexandra Topping](#)*

Thu 8 Jun 2023 10.56 EDTFirst published on Thu 8 Jun 2023 05.02 EDT

Four children and two adults have been injured in a knife attack in the Alpine town of Annecy in [France](#).

The children – one aged 22 months, two aged two years old and one aged three – were in a critical condition from stab wounds, and were transferred to hospitals in the French Alps and across the Swiss border in Geneva on Thursday afternoon.

Dozens of other very young children were receiving support for the trauma of witnessing the stabbings, which happened at a lakeside playground. High school children who also witnessed the attack were being treated for shock.

One of the critically injured young children was British, the UK foreign secretary, James Cleverly, confirmed. French authorities said the British child was a tourist. Another of the children was Dutch. A 70-year-old man was also seriously injured – first stabbed by the knife-attacker and then injured by police fire. A second adult was treated for injuries.

At about 9.45am, a man armed with a knife entered the playground near Annecy's famous lake, an area prized by locals and tourists for its quiet calm and breathtaking views. The man walked past the adults in the park and

targeted very young children with a knife – including one child in a pushchair, according to witnesses. Within minutes, the attacker was pursued by police. He then attacked an elderly man in a different part of the park. Police fired shots and detained the attacker, who was unharmed, and was being questioned by police.



A man holding a knife leaves the park in Annecy after the attack on children. Photograph: UNPIXS/BFMTV

The local prosecutor said an inquiry was under way for attempted murder and the suspect, named as Abdalmasih H, was not under the influence of drugs or alcohol. National police, rather than anti-terrorist investigators, were heading the investigation. The prosecutor said the initial investigations showed that “there is no apparent terrorist motive”.

The French prime minister, Élisabeth Borne, said the suspect was a Syrian man who had been granted refugee status in Sweden. Police described him as aged in his early 30s. Borne said he was homeless and an “isolated individual”. He had asked for asylum in France, which had not been processed because he already had refugee status in Sweden. Because he had EU refugee status, he was free to travel legally to France.

Police sources told Le Monde that the man had declared himself to be a Syrian Christian in his French asylum application. Le Monde and other French media reported that he had been wearing a Christian cross on a chain round his neck when arrested.

Borne said French authorities had contacted international security and intelligence agencies and the man was unknown to any French, European or other foreign security service. He had no criminal record, and no apparent psychiatric record, she said.

Borne described the attack as “savage” and said the whole of France had been “shaken by this hateful, indescribable act”.

The French president, Emmanuel Macron, tweeted that it was an act of “absolute cowardice” and that the nation was in shock.

Attaque d'une lâcheté absolue ce matin dans un parc à Annecy. Des enfants et un adulte sont entre la vie et la mort. La Nation est sous le choc. Nos pensées les accompagnent ainsi que leurs familles et les secours mobilisés.

— Emmanuel Macron (@EmmanuelMacron) [June 8, 2023](#)

Cleverly, who was speaking at an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ministerial council press conference in France, called the attacks a “terrible act of violence” and said the British government was ready to support the French authorities in whatever way it could.

The former Liverpool footballer Anthony Le Tallec, who has also played for FC Annecy, was out running near the lake at the time of the attack. He described suddenly seeing dozens of people running towards him, a mother shouting: “Run, someone is stabbing everyone, he’s stabbing children!”

'It's unbelievable': witness describes seeing man stabbed in French knife attack – video

Le Tallec, 38, said on Instagram and in later French media interviews that he was surprised but kept running, then saw the attacker running followed by

police chasing him, trying to catch him. Le Tallec said he saw the attacker then rush towards a group of elderly people where he stabbed a man twice. Le Tallec said he had shouted at the police to shoot the man.

Another witness, Malo, told BFMTV that the man was “shouting, but it wasn’t really comprehensible”. Another witness told local public radio that the attacker had seemed “confused”. A witness called Nelly told France Info radio: “People were running, crying, panicking … it was horrible.”

The prime minister travelled to the scene alongside the interior minister, Gérald Darmanin. MPs in the national parliament held a minute’s silence as news of the attack broke in the French media.

France knife attack: lawmakers interrupt session to observe a minute's silence – video

Some politicians on the right and far right called for more scrutiny of France’s immigration and asylum policy, seizing on the suspected attacker’s identity as a refugee.

“The investigation will determine what happened, but it seems like the culprit has the same profile that you see often in these attacks,” the head of the rightwing Républicains party, Éric Ciotti, told reporters at parliament. “We need to draw conclusions without being naive, with strength and with a clear mind.”

Jordan Bardella, the head of Marine Le Pen’s far-right National Rally party, the biggest single opposition party in parliament, tweeted that French immigration policy and European rules should be reviewed.

Asked for her view on politicians who responded to the attack by saying France should tighten its immigration policy, Borne said all light should be shed on the investigation but that today was the “time for emotion” and she was in Annecy to express the support and solidarity of the nation.

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[Ukraine war liveUkraine](#)

# Russia-Ukraine war: Russian troops accused of shelling civilians during flood evacuations – as it happened

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Drone footage shows extent of damage to Ukraine dam – video

[Ukraine](#)

## Kakhovka dam: Zelenskiy visits flood-hit region and criticises international response

Ukraine president says it is impossible to predict death toll in Russian-occupied areas as he appeals for assistance

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

*Guardian staff and agencies*

Thu 8 Jun 2023 04.55 EDTFirst published on Wed 7 Jun 2023 22.23 EDT

Volodymyr Zelenskiy has visited the flood-hit southern Kherson region to evaluate the damage from the [breach of the Kakhovka dam](#) as he severely criticised the UN and the Red Cross, who he said were not helping the relief effort.

The [Ukraine](#) president's visit came as Russian-installed officials in occupied territory said five people had died in the town of Nova Kakhovka near the dam, and the exiled mayor of the Russian-occupied city of Oleshky, Yevhen Ryshchuk, said three people had drowned in the Kherson region.

Zelenskiy, speaking in his nightly address on Wednesday, voiced fears for the lives of Ukrainians in Russian-held areas hit by the disaster.

He said it was impossible to predict how many people would die in Russian-occupied parts of Kherson due to the flooding, urging a “clear and rapid reaction from the world” to support victims.

He criticised the UN and the Red Cross, who he said were not helping the relief effort. “Our military and special services are rescuing people as much as it is possible, despite the shelling. But large-scale efforts are needed,” he said.

“We need international organisations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, to immediately join the rescue operation and help people in the occupied part of Kherson region.

“If an international organisation is not present in the disaster zone, it means it does not exist at all or is incapable.”

### Dam locator map

Many hours after the disaster “they aren’t here”, Zelenskiy told the Bild, Die Welt and Politico news outlets. “We have had no response. I am shocked.”

The destruction of the dam near the frontline in Ukraine has flooded dozens of villages and parts of a nearby city, prompting fears of a humanitarian disaster. Officials have said thousands will have to leave their homes and many are already doing so without assistance. Zelenskiy has claimed the Russian occupation authorities were “not even trying to help people”.

He added: “The occupiers are simply abandoning people in frightful conditions. No help, without water, left on the roofs of houses in submerged communities.”

Shelling heard as boats deployed to thousands at risk from Kherson dam – video

Ukraine’s prime minister, Denys Shmyhal, urged the international humanitarian organisations to provide assistance on the occupied left bank.

“We appeal to you to take charge of evacuating people from the territory of Kherson oblast occupied by Russia. We must save the lives of people whom the occupiers have condemned to death,” he said.

The UN’s humanitarian affairs office said a team was in Kherson to coordinate relief efforts. It said access to drinking water was a significant

concern and about 12,000 bottles of water and 10,000 purification tablets had been distributed so far.



Flooded streets in Kherson, Ukraine. Photograph: Libkos/AP

Almost 6,000 people have been evacuated on both sides of the Dnipro River, officials said. “Our rescuers, police and volunteers have already evacuated 1,894 citizens,” Ukraine’s interior minister, Oleg Klymenko, said, adding that 30 settlements had been flooded, 10 of which were under Russian control.

“So far, more than 4,000 people have been evacuated”, in the part of the Kherson region occupied by Russia, the Moscow-installed head of the region, Vladimir Saldo, said on Telegram. “It is a bit premature to talk about going back,” he said, advising people to wait in centres for the displaced.

On the Russian side, the worst-affected town is Nova Kakhovka, where Russian authorities have imposed a state of emergency and said they would start pumping out water on Thursday.

Ukrainian officials have said the deluge will leave hundreds of thousands of people without access to drinking water, swamp tens of thousands of hectares of agricultural land and turn at least 500,000 hectares deprived of irrigation into “deserts”.

## map showing flooding areas

The World Bank has said it will support Ukraine by conducting a rapid assessment of damage and needs, as the destruction of the Novo Kakhovka dam had “many very serious consequences for essential service delivery and the broader environment”.

The new damage assessment will build on the bank’s previous analysis of damage to Ukraine’s infrastructure and buildings, which estimated that it would cost \$411bn to rebuild Ukraine’s economy after Russia’s invasion.

Nato will hold an emergency meeting on Thursday, the secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, has said, citing the “outrageous destruction” of the frontline dam.

The meeting will include the Ukrainian foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, who said the meeting was called at his request, adding that Stoltenberg had promised Nato mechanisms would be used to provide humanitarian assistance.

*Reuters and Agence France-Presse contributed to this report.*

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Residents evacuate from their building in a flooded area of Kherson, Ukraine, 7 June 2023 amid Russia's invasion. Photograph: George Ivanchenko/EPA

[Russia-Ukraine war at a glance](#)[Ukraine](#)

## **Russia-Ukraine war at a glance: what we know on day 470 of the invasion**

Zelenskiy visits flood-affected region of Kherson after destruction of dam; at five people dead in occupied Kherson due to floods

- [See all our Russia-Ukraine war coverage](#)

*Martin Belam, Guardian staff and agencies*

Thu 8 Jun 2023 05.44 EDTFirst published on Wed 7 Jun 2023 19.38 EDT

- **Volodymyr Zelenskiy has visited the Kherson region that has been impacted by flooding after the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam.** In a post to Telegram, Ukraine's president said the main issues

discussed during the visit were “The operational situation in the region as a result of the disaster, evacuation of the population from potential flood zones, elimination of the emergency caused by the dam explosion, organisation of life support for the flooded areas.”

- **In an address on Wednesday evening, Zelenskiy said it was impossible to predict how many people would die in Russian-occupied parts of Kherson due to the flooding, urging a “clear and rapid reaction from the world” to support victims.** He also severely criticised the UN and the Red Cross who he said were not helping the relief effort. “Our military and special services are rescuing people as much as it is possible, despite the shelling. But large-scale efforts are needed,” he said. “We need international organisations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, to immediately join the rescue operation and help people in the occupied part of Kherson region.
- **About 230 square miles (600 sq km) of the Kherson region was under water on Thursday, the regional governor said.** Oleksandr Prokudin said 68% of the flooded territory was on the Russian-occupied left bank of the Dnipro River. The average level of flooding in the Kherson region on Thursday morning was 5.61m (18.41ft), he said. He said almost 2,000 people had left flooded territory as of Thursday morning.

Drone footage shows extent of flooding in Ukraine's Kherson region – video

- **Five people have died due to flooding after the destruction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power station** according to the Russian-imposed mayor of occupied Nova Kakhovka, the nearest settlement to the dam. Russian media has claimed that over 14,000 houses were flooded, and almost 4,300 people were evacuated in occupied Kherson, but the claims have not been independently verified.
- **Volodymyr Litvinov**, the head of the **Beryslav** district administration in Kherson region, reported that there is a risk of flooding further

inland, due to rising level of the **Inhulets River**, which feeds into the Dnipro.

- The **International Atomic Energy Agency** has announced that it will strengthen its presence at the **Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant** amid concerns over water supplies for cooling the plant's reactors.
  - Russia's state-owned news agency Tass reported that "missiles flew over **Luhansk**, several explosions were heard in the city".
  - The Kyiv mayor, **Vitali Klitschko**, has issued a new statement about the situation with shelters in Ukraine's capital, saying that the city's council will warn the owners of private premises with shelters that if they are not properly maintained, or people are not admitted during an air raid, these premises may be seized from them. It follows the deaths last week of three people who were unable to get into a locked shelter and were then hit by falling debris from a Russian missile attack.
  - South Africa's president, **Cyril Ramaphosa**, had a telephone call with his Russian counterpart, **Vladimir Putin**, during which he briefed Putin on the forthcoming African leaders' peace mission to Russia and Ukraine, the South African presidency said.
  - US president **Joe Biden** is to welcome British prime minister **Rishi Sunak** for wide-ranging talks on Thursday as the British leader makes his first White House visit as premier. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the 15-Russian invasion of Ukraine will be "top of mind".
  - **A group of Nato countries may be willing to put troops on the ground in Ukraine if member states do not provide tangible security guarantees to Kyiv** at the alliance's summit in Vilnius, the former Nato secretary general Anders Rasmussen has said. Current Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg said the alliance must discuss options for giving Ukraine security assurances for the time after its war with Russia.
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## 2023.06.08 - Spotlight

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Clockwise from top left: Polite Society, Pearl, Marcel the Shell With Shoes On, Tár, Till and The Fabelmans. Illustration: Alamy/Parisa Taghizadeh/Focus Features / Origin Picture Show LLC / AP/The Guardian

[Best culture of 2023 so far](#)[Movies](#)

## **The best films of 2023 so far**

Cate Blanchett's unravelling conductor, Spielberg's semi-memoir and the stop-motion tale of a shell wearing shoes all feature in the pick of the year released in the UK to date

*Guardian film*

Thu 8 Jun 2023 03.15 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Jun 2023 11.19 EDT

## Alcarràs

Carla Simón's award-winning story of a peach farmer struggling to make ends meet asks many important questions about our relationship with the land and the human cost of progress.

**What we said:** "This is a really shrewd, empathic and subtle movie which engulfs you in its dust and sweat and heat." [Read the full review.](#)

## Till

The story of Emmett Till, the black 14-year-old tortured and lynched in 1955 Mississippi for supposedly whistling at a white woman, and his mother Mamie Till's fight for justice.

**What we said:** "A fierce portrait of courage and a sombre study of the human cost involved in resisting this kind of barbarity." [Read the full review.](#)

## Empire of Light

The "love letter to the movies" genre is revived in Sam Mendes' poignant, wonderfully acted drama about love, life and films, featuring Olivia Colman as a Margate cinema manager in the 1980s.

**What we said:** "A sweet, heartfelt, humane movie, which doesn't shy away from the brutality and the racism that was happening in the streets outside the cinema." [Read the full review.](#)



Olivia Colman and Micheal Ward in Empire of Light. Photograph: Landmark Media/Alamy

## Enys Men

Bait director Mark Jenkin delivers another eerie prose-poem of a film, about an isolated woman lost inside her own mind.

**What we said:** “This is not a scary film in the generic sense but there is something unsettling in the simple spectacle of solitude: no company, no television, no shopping, no diversions.” [Read the full review.](#)

## Tár

Todd Field’s outrageous tale stars Cate Blanchett as the orchestra conductor starting to unravel and unhinge into crisis.

**What we said:** “No one but Blanchett could have delivered the imperious hauteur necessary for portraying a great musician heading for a crackup or a creative epiphany.” [Read the full review.](#)

## All the Beauty and the Bloodshed

Laura Poitras' documentary following Nan Goldin, the artist who became addicted to OxyContin, as she confronts and protests against the wealthy art patrons who profited from its sale.

**What we said:** "Poitras shows that these protests were really Goldin's great artwork: her entire life had been leading to this moment of passionate expression, this inspired situationist gesture which fused the personal and the political." [Read the full review.](#)



Nan Goldin protests against the Sacklers in *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed*. Photograph: Seth Wenig/AP

## The Fabelmans

Steven Spielberg's 1950s-set semi-memoir about a movie-mad kid brilliantly examines how we edit our own life stories, and the repercussions.

**What we said:** "As with so many autobiographical movies, so much incidental pleasure lies in wondering what is real and what has been changed, and why? I wonder if the real Spielberg ever got to confront his mother as directly as Sammy manages to." [Read the full review.](#)

## Saint Omer

Alice Diop's unnerving fiction feature is based on the true case of a Senegalese immigrant accused in the French court of murdering her 15-month-old daughter.

**What we said:** "The severity and poise of this calmly paced movie, its emotional reserve and moral seriousness – and the elusive, implied confessional dimension concerning Diop herself – make it an extraordinary experience." [Read the full review.](#)

## Marcel the Shell With Shoes On

Stop-motion animation about a tiny talking shell with shoes trying to find his family is funny and beguiling.

**What we said:** "The film appears to exist in the Venn diagram overlap between twee and hipster, which isn't for everyone – but let it grow on you, and there is a real sweetness and gentleness in its absurdity, a savant innocence and charm." [Read the full review.](#)

## Town of Strangers

Documentary about the town of Gort in Galway, which has the highest percentage of migrants in Ireland, in which people talk to camera to wonderful effect.

**What we said:** "This film is an invigorating, refreshing experience because of its clear-sighted compassion and lack of parochialism, its interest in other people from other cultures, without these impulses being problematised in any way." [Read the full review.](#)



Town of Strangers.

## Sharper

Benjamin Caron applies Derren Brown experience to direct stylish swindler yarn set in Manhattan with Julianne Moore and John Lithgow leading the way.

**What we said:** “If in the final reel you can sort of guess what’s coming, or if you wonder a little bit about the plausibilities … that doesn’t stop this being a very smooth ride and a very classy piece of entertainment.” [Read the full review.](#)

## Nostalgia

A Neapolitan gangster drama from Mario Martone is a bittersweet crime yarn and also homecoming love-letter to the city.

**What we said:** “Nostalgia is tremendously shot, and terrifically acted … It challenges the idea of ‘nostalgia’ as broadcast in the title: it isn’t simply that nostalgia is delusional, or that the past wasn’t as great as it appears when viewed through rose-tinted spectacles. It is that there is no past and present.” [Read the full review.](#)

## The Son

Florian Zeller's follow-up to *The Father* features a tremendous performance from Hugh Jackman, as a divorced lawyer who agrees to look after his troubled offspring.

**What we said:** "A laceratingly painful drama, an incrementally increased agony without anaesthetic. At the centre of it, Hugh Jackman gives a performance of great dignity, presence and intelligence." [Read the full review.](#)

## Creature

Akram Khan's dance creation for English National Ballet, about a creature kept captive in some remote army research unit, starring the charismatic dancer Jeffrey Cirio, is filmed by Asif Kapadia.

**What we said:** "An intriguing one-off, reaching out beyond dance connoisseurs to anyone who wants to see something genuinely strange that can't be pinned down to a single explanation." [Read the full review.](#)



Jeffrey Cirio in *Creature*. Photograph: BFI

## Joyland

Subtle trans drama from Pakistan explores the unsettled social and sexual identities of a widower and his children with delicacy and tenderness.

**What we said:** “This is a movie about people who find their inner lives and sense of themselves don’t match up to what is expected of them. Their feeling of wrongness is part of what they have to suppress, from day to day.”

[Read the full review.](#)

## Close

When two 13-year-old boys are no longer close friends, the fallout is unbearably sad, in Girl director Lukas Dhont’s anguished second feature.

**What we said:** “The story of Close is disturbing because, however wised-up teenagers probably are now about the language of relationships and LGBT issues, compared with the relative naivety of maybe 10 years ago, the breakup of an intense friendship is shocking.” [Read the full review.](#)

## Pearl

Mia Goth and Ti West’s pandemic horror is a brilliant prequel to their previous collaboration, X, a ciné-fever dream set in the dying days of Spanish flu.

**What we said:** “This film is terrifically accomplished and horribly gripping, with golden-age movie pastiche and dashes of Psycho and The Wizard of Oz.” [Read the full review.](#)



Mia Goth in *Pearl*. Photograph: Christopher Moss/AP

## The Beasts

Middle-class incomers to a remote village in Spain's "wild west" expose fear, resentment and nationalism in Rodrigo Sorogoyen's disturbing true-crime drama.

**What we said:** "Here is a fierce, bitter tale with a flinty sharpness: partly a social-realist drama of class and xenophobia, and partly a rural noir horror, a Euro-arthouse twist on *Straw Dogs* or *Deliverance*." [Read the full review.](#)

## 1976

A wealthy woman is drawn into Chile's anti-Pinochet resistance in this thrilling feature debut from actor turned director Manuela Martelli.

**What we said:** "This film is part of that wave of Chilean cinema from filmmakers such as Pablo Larraín, Patricio Guzmán and Sebastián Lelio who are trying to make sense of the Pinochet era." [Read the full review.](#)

## Law of Tehran

Michael Mann-style thriller of the Iranian underworld with a morally ambiguous cop taking on a powerful drug lord.

**What we said:** “It is a grim and grisly world in which the ‘law of Tehran’ feels like a futile rearguard action against chaos.” [Read the full review.](#)

## Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman

Animated adaptation of Haruki Murakami’s surreal tales revolving around a Tokyo earthquake and a constellation of characters trying to save the city.

**What we said:** “It has the ruminative lightness, almost weightlessness, the watercolour delicacy and reticence of the emotions, the sense of the uncanny, the insistent play of erotic possibility and that Murakami keynote: a cat.” [Read the full review.](#)



Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman

## The Night of the 12th

A young woman is murdered in this unnerving version of a real case that haunts the French police officers unable to solve it.

**What we said:** “A desolate study of the ubiquity of evil and misogynist violence and the abyss of unknowing into which everyone finds themselves

gazing: crime victims, relatives and the police themselves.” [Read the full review.](#)

## Riotsville, USA

Film-maker Sierra Pettengill curates archive footage from riot-torn 60s America to create an unsettling picture of the authorities’ response.

**What we said:** “This film is obviously comparable to the work of Adam Curtis ... A shiver of disquiet runs right through it.” [Read the full review.](#)

## Godland

Hlynur Pálmason’s fictional account of a Danish pastor sent to Iceland in the 19th century offers nuanced depictions of hostility.

**What we said:** “I left the cinema dazed and elated by its artistry; it is breathtaking in its epic scale, magnificent in its comprehension of landscape, piercingly uncomfortable in its human intimacy and severity.” [Read the full review.](#)

## One Fine Morning

Mia Hansen-Løve returns to Paris with this powerful story of a single mother torn between emotionally unavailable men, starring Léa Seydoux.

**What we said:** “The mystery of what the heart wants, and what it might give in return, is the theme of this humane, sympathetic movie.” [Read the full review.](#)

## Cairo Conspiracy

Egypt’s religious and secular institutions both breed mistrust in Tarik Saleh’s superbly realised paranoid nightmare set on a Cairo campus.

**What we said:** “There’s an intriguing mix of scorn and paranoia here, together with a yearning for individual figures of decency halfway down the food chain – it reminded me of John le Carré.” [Read the full review.](#)



Cairo Conspiracy. Photograph: TCD/Prod.DB/Alamy

## The Three Musketeers: D'Artagnan

Part one of a glossy new French adaptation of Dumas, as the young fighter and his new gang journey entertainingly through palace intrigue with some excellent stunts.

**What we said:** “There’s not a lot of roistering going on in the cinema right now, but here’s a film which amusingly roisters its heart out.” [Read the full review.](#)

## Pacification

Benoît Magimel’s French high commissioner confronts the end of his personal Eden in Tahiti in Albert Serra’s distinctive film.

**What we said:** “It is a nightmare that moves as slowly and confidently as a somnambulist, and its pace, length, and Serra’s beautiful widescreen panoramic framings – in which conventional drama is almost camouflaged or lost – may divide opinion. I can only say I was captivated by the film and its stealthy evocation of pure evil.” [Read the full review.](#)

## How to Blow Up a Pipeline

Daniel Goldhaber's fiercely watchable film is an eco-thriller in which a young crew of protesters come together to destroy a Texas oil pipeline.

**What we said:** "Goldhaber's drama shows how this kind of paramilitary adventure might actually happen, month by month, moment by moment, as well as the kind of people who would be sufficiently motivated or reckless to risk decades in federal prison." [Read the full review.](#)

## Rodeo

Real-life rider Julie Ledru plays a young tearaway on the outskirts of Bordeaux, drawn to take desperate risks with a criminal biker gang.

**What we said:** "It's a movie made dense and vehement with Julie's passion for bikes and her angry sense of a death wish which is going to strike her ahead of anyone else." [Read the full review.](#)



Rodeo. Photograph: Album/Alamy

## Polite Society

A pointed satire of the marriage market from We Are Lady Parts' Nida Manzoor delivers the laughs – and some full tilt comedy action.

**What we said:** "Manzoor's fight scenes, so amusingly executed by [Priya] Kansara, effectively dramatise the terrible struggle that women are going to

endure – especially the ongoing duel with that certain special in-law. This film delivers a spinning back kick of laughs.” [Read the full review.](#)

## Little Richard: I Am Everything

Documentary about the trailblazing musician who influenced stars from the Beatles to Bowie also looks back at the artists who inspired him.

**What we said:** “Lisa Cortes’s documentary is an irresistible tribute to the pioneering rock’n’roll genius, whose wild transgressive energy and explosive sexuality blazed a trail and created a musical and performing language.” [Read the full review.](#)

## Pamfir

Violent story of a Ukrainian smuggler’s doomed efforts to settle back into family life after a shady trip abroad is dynamic but despairing.

**What we said:** “It does not allude to Russia’s war on Ukraine, but perhaps that conflict is there subtextually, in the sense of tribal loyalty, community tradition and the distinct, almost occult pull towards the west.” [Read the full review.](#)

## Return to Seoul

Korean drama about adoption with Park Ji-min, in her acting debut, visiting the country of her birth and deciding on a whim to seek out her biological parents.

**What we said:** “The implacable forces of nature, nurture and destiny are what this movie grapples with; it is a really emotional and absorbing drama.” [Read the full review.](#)

## Brainwashed: Sex-Camera-Power

Nina Menkes’s rigorous film-theory docu-essay teases out the differences in the ways men and women are treated, both on screen and in the industry.

**What we said:** “A bracing blast of critical rigour, taking a clear, cool look at the unexamined assumptions behind what we see on the screen.” [Read the full review.](#)



Brainwashed: Sex-Camera-Power Photograph: BFI

## The Eight Mountains

A meditation on our capacity for love shapes this sweeping story of two friends, torn apart by family and life's journeys but bound by something deeper.

**What we said:** “Belgian film-makers [Felix van Groeningen](#) and Charlotte Vandermeersch have ... created a deeply intelligent meditation on our capacity for love, and how it is shaped by the arbitrary, irreversible experiences of childhood, and by our relationship with the landscape.” [Read the full review.](#)

## Nam June Paik: Moon Is the Oldest TV

Documentary shows the awe-inspiring vocation of avant garde disruptor Nam June Paik, who foresaw the internet and meme culture’s importance in the 1970s.

**What we said:** “The overwhelming sense of vocation necessary for such a life is almost awe-inspiring, although Paik’s own jokey, opaque persona seems to exist as a rebuke to any reaction as bourgeois as that.” [Read the full review.](#)

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Lionel Messi is one of the most recognisable people on the planet.  
Photograph: Martin Rickett/PA

[Lionel Messi](#)

**Bigger than Beckham: Messi has the power to realise soccer's potential in the**

# US

Never before has MLS given up so much to sign a player. But with the 2026 World Cup on the horizon, the move could end up being a wise one

Graham Ruthven

Thu 8 Jun 2023 03.15 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Jun 2023 21.30 EDT

Lionel Messi is [taking his talents to South Beach](#) – or, more accurately, Fort Lauderdale. That's where he will play this summer after it was confirmed Inter Miami [have won the race](#) to sign arguably the greatest player of all time. It is the biggest transfer in Major League Soccer history. Bigger even than David Beckham's move to Los Angeles Galaxy in 2007.

Beckham changed the soccer landscape in the US. His move to the Galaxy didn't just [push MLS into the American mainstream](#), it made the league a viable destination for some of the sport's most recognisable names, and they don't come more recognisable than Messi. Beckham, an Inter Miami co-owner, has brought things full circle by getting the GOAT to MLS.

Inter Miami chased Messi for years. When the franchise [was awarded an MLS expansion spot](#) in 2018, the Argentinian congratulated Beckham. "Who knows, maybe in a few years you can give me a ring," he said in a social media video. When Messi left Barcelona in 2021, Inter Miami were quickly on the phone to make an offer, although he chose Paris Saint-Germain, where Beckham also once played. Earlier this year, Beckham attended a PSG training session and was pictured with Messi – a move to Inter Miami was surely mentioned.

Inter Miami were built around the idea Messi would one day join the club. Xavi Asensi was hired from Barcelona as the club's chief business officer while Victor Oliver, another former Barça executive, was named a senior vice-president. Recent reports suggest the former Argentina and Barcelona coach Tata Martino [has been approached](#) about the club's managerial vacancy. Sergio Busquets, Jordi Alba and Luis Suárez have also been linked

with a move to Inter Miami, who may end up looking like a Messi And Friends XI.

On the pitch, [Inter Miami are in bad shape](#). At PSG Messi lined up alongside Neymar and Kylian Mbappé, in Miami he will be a teammate of Robert Taylor, once of Lincoln City. Messi may have to win games on his own to push his team up the table: they are bottom of the Eastern Conference and on a run of five straight league defeats. There are also questions over whether Inter Miami's [temporary 18,000-capacity DRV PNK Stadium](#) in Fort Lauderdale will be suitable for the coming circus. Could the much larger Hard Rock Stadium, home of the NFL's Miami Dolphins, host some Inter Miami matches to sell more tickets? The appetite certainly appears to be there: [Forbes reported](#) that the cheapest tickets on resale websites for Messi's possible home debut in August are exchanging hands for more than \$500.

Messi's signing is about much more than just Inter Miami though. MLS has pulled all sorts of levers to make a deal for the World Cup winner possible because it believes he will kickstart a new phase of growth for the league, just as Beckham did 16 years ago. MLS [has generally moved beyond](#) its previous dependence on aging stars to attract new fans, but Messi is different – he can move the needle like nobody else.

Beckham changed the league. [MLS](#) grew from 13 teams at the time of his signing to the current number of 29 – the league's 30th franchise will join in 2025. Beckham sold 300,000 LA Galaxy jerseys a season during his five-and-a-half years at the club. He appeared on late-night talkshows and in adverts with NFL stars. Without the Englishman's star power, MLS would look very different.



Lionel Messi, David Beckham and Italy's Marco Verratti at a Paris Saint-Germain training session in April. Photograph: Aurélien Meunier/PSG/Getty Images

With the 2026 World Cup, which the US will co-host with Canada and Mexico, on the horizon, and with Messi now an MLS player, the drive for growth in soccer in the US will reach new levels over the next three years. If MLS is to become one of the strongest leagues in the world, this period will be crucial.

The allure of Miami itself should not be ignored. He already owns property there and his family are said to enjoy the city, which has a large Spanish-speaking population: language barriers should not be a problem for the Messis. The governing body of Argentinian soccer also plans to build a facility in Miami, and more and more South Americans are joining MLS.

It's possible Apple factored this, and the signing of Messi, into its decision to sign a [record-breaking \\$2.5bn broadcast contract](#) with MLS last year. Messi will reportedly receive a percentage of new MLS Season Pass subscriptions. A documentary series on the 35-year-old has already been ordered. AppleTV+ will essentially become MessiTV+.

A percentage of Adidas jersey sales is also believed to be included in the unprecedented commercial package put together by MLS for Messi. The Argentinian's face is already plastered on billboards around the world, but now it will be used to sell MLS – and the player himself appears to be banking on his own celebrity to make his time in the league as lucrative as possible.

Never before has MLS given up so much to sign a player. Beckham had the chance to purchase a franchise for just \$25m as part of his LA Galaxy contract, with the clause activated to create [Inter Miami](#), but Messi's overall package could be worth a lot more. "We have been pretty effective at coming up with clever ways to sign players for our clubs in the right market," said MLS commissioner Don Garber earlier this year, hinting at the creativity used to draw up Messi's deal.

It will be worth it if Messi makes the impact so many expect him to. "I think of him as someone who crosses so many barriers that he can be bigger than any athlete of any sport that has ever played here in the United States," said Garber.

If Beckham's move to MLS highlighted the potential of the league and soccer in the US, Messi could be the one who fully realises it.

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‘I’ve been broken. But I’ve always got back up.’ Mary Portas. Nakita trousers by Rejina Pyo. Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

[Mary Portas](#)

[Interview](#)

# **‘The last four years were horrendous’: Mary Portas on divorce, bereavement – and reinventing herself**

[Paula Cocozza](#)

After a lifetime in retail, the queen of shops has had a ‘proper epiphany’. She talks about her dislike of the fashion world, her painful childhood and the need for kindness

[@CocozzaPaula](#)

Thu 8 Jun 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Jun 2023 11.34 EDT

Mary Portas hates to use the word “transformation” with clients: she doesn’t want to spook them. “They get scared. They’d be like: ‘Oh dear God, let me lie down.’” But transformation is Portas’s signature move – whether she is [overhauling a charity shop](#) or [a pair of knickers](#) or the [British high street](#). Over the past few years, Portas, 63, has turned her magic on herself and undergone her own metamorphosis. It’s not so much a makeover as “a proper epiphany, an awakening”, she says, pointing to the ceiling of the office where we meet – by which she means to invoke not so much God or religion but “the greater energy and force” that has carried her here.

There are several visual cues to the new Mary. There is the hair, of course. The flame-coloured bob has long gone, scuppered by lockdown. In its place is a honeyed style, whose floppy top Portas lifts to show me the natural colour beneath: salt and pepper, but easy on the salt. Her brother, Lawrence, cuts it. And she is wearing beige, of all things. “This is me now. This is me,” she says. She has a habit of saying things twice, but is quieter than her television persona. “And, actually, this feels *Mary*.” One thing that hasn’t changed is that she is very much on first name terms with herself. She is sort of self-curious.

The new Portas emerged from a period of personal and professional challenge that came to a crisis when the first lockdown hit. “The last four years were horrendous. Completely horrendous,” she says. “I divorced. I had

to sell my family home, I had to reset my family with this young son [Horatio, 10, whom she co-parents with her ex-wife, Melanie Rickey], find another home and work out how things were going to work.” (Her two older children, from her first marriage, to Graham Portas, are grown up.) Rickey [has written about her alcoholism](#), but Portas will say only that her marriage was “incredible, lovely”, but addiction is “a shit thing” to share a home with. She was navigating all of that when the pandemic arrived, and suddenly her consultancy business, Portas, was losing “hundreds of thousands”.



Portas with her ex-wife, Melanie Rickey, in 2018. Photograph: David M Benett/Dave Benett/Getty Images

She has always had within herself the certainty “that I’ll be all right”. But now she felt real fear and another deeply unfamiliar sensation: doubt. She phoned her chief executive and said: “If we do rebuild, I don’t want the business the same. I don’t want to help people sell more shit … But it might not make money. Shall we do this?”

Portas says her thinking had already begun to shift. Shortly before lockdown, she gave a Ted talk on what she calls [“the kindness economy”](#) – and her most recent book, [Rebuild: How To Thrive in the New Kindness Economy](#), is heavy on how “rampant consumerism has been killing our planet”. When we meet, she has been filming a new programme for Channel

4 on the climate crisis, in which she lobbies government figures. She says it is “the most important thing I’ve ever done for TV”.

People often tell Portas she should go into politics, but she doesn’t like that idea. “No, no. I’d have to fit into a system that is, quite frankly, fucked.” As co-chair of the business-led campaign [Better Business Act](#), she is pushing for amendments to the Companies Act to make businesses benefit workers, customers, communities and the environment – rather than just shareholders. She has [met Keir Starmer](#), the Labour leader. And she is always on the road delivering keynote speeches: “You cannot go out in this world today and *not* think, ‘What am I doing that’s affecting or healing this planet?’”

She buys fewer clothes, she says. How many fewer a month? “Oh, I don’t know. I don’t even think I will buy each month.” All the different glasses she wears are free pairs people have sent her. Anyway, she says: “It’s bigger than that. Am I going to walk around in knitted muesli jumpers? No, I’m not.” She seems an unlikely advocate for less is more; it’s a brave move. “Was it brave? I don’t know. There was no option. It was in there,” she says, hitting her heart, chunky gold bracelets jangling.

After that heartfelt gesture, it feels mean to ask, but is this a genuine transformation or a rebrand? “That’s a fair enough thing to ask me,” she says, sounding only slightly wounded. “I think that would be a terrible thing I would be doing. I couldn’t face my … god. There’s a beautiful poem by [Gus Speth](#) [the former president of the World Resources Institute],” she says, rummaging in her bag for her phone and pulling out an assortment of different-sized wallets. “Rebranding! I love that. That’s a good question. Why wouldn’t people think that? You know what’s interesting? No one’s come at me. No one’s started any of that shit. I used to get more of it.”

She finds her phone in her pocket, types Speth into the search bar and reads. “*The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy. And to deal with these we need a spiritual and cultural transformation.*’ I didn’t know any of this,” she says.

In all those years as creative director at Harvey Nichols in the 1990s, she had no idea of the damage consumerism was wreaking. Portas loves reading, from [Hannah Arendt](#) to the poems of [Brendan Behan](#), keeps [Rilke](#) by her

bedside, and has a quote for every occasion. To explain her time at Harvey Nichols, she borrows [David Foster Wallace's tale of two fish](#). They are swimming along when an older fish asks, "Morning boys, how's the water?" They continue in silence before one of them finally asks the other, "What the hell is water?"

"I didn't know the water! When I made it at Harvey Nicks, I had brilliant years. I wasn't living a lie. But none of us knew what we were doing to the world, did we? But I do know now."



Portas at a London street market in 2011 with David Cameron, the prime minister. Photograph: Reuters/REUTERS

Anyhow, she didn't choose fashion. "I ended up in it. "It wasn't my world. I don't like it." Really? "I don't like the fashion world at all," she says. "I think that the fashion world is a very skin-deep world. And I think it is full of people who are also skin-deep. They might dislike me for saying that, but I look at the [Met ball](#) and I go, really? Is this what we've come to? It's like Marie Antoinette. It doesn't sit with me at all. If I got tickets to the Met ball, I wouldn't go. *I wouldn't go!*" In any case, she dislikes "a huge social diary". Her daughter says she's "a lone wolf", her friends know to wait for her call.

Besides, Portas's love of shops has always been about much more than buying and selling. As a child she would travel in her dad's van – he was a sales director for Brooke Bond tea – and she shopped daily with her mother. "You saw what life should be about," she says, slowing right down. "It's about connections, it's about community, it's about social infrastructure that makes us feel safe."

Not surprisingly, Portas's first Saturday job was in retail. It bugs her that reporters always say it was at John Lewis when really it was Garner's bread shop in Watford, near the family home. "They keep writing that shit. I had a Saturday job in John Lewis for a day and thought, I am bored stiff." So she left. "I'm sorry, but they were *so dry*. I thought, I can't bear this." She later worked as "a floater" in Watford's Clements department store, a place so revered that her mother put on a jacket to shop there.

Portas had just turned 17 when her mother died suddenly of meningitis, and in the months that followed she would get the bus back from school and stop off at those same shops her mother had stopped at, and the proprietors would hand her a bag of cut-price meat or groceries. No wonder she says that her connection to shops "was about the feeling of security and warmth and the physicality of these places".

It might seem a leap from Watford's kind-hearted grocers to Harvey Nichols, but when Portas started work there, "I felt I was coming home," she says. "You'd walk in, in the morning, and the women on the makeup counter would be getting ready. 'Look at this', 'The new Dior lipstick's come out'. You talk to them, then you go up to the next floor and see the buyers flitting around, then the homeware ... It was exciting. It was alive. Alive with the people. The byproduct was what we sold. Somehow that touched me."

It is this sort of emotional connectedness that Portas wants to foster when she advocates, instead of consumerism, "a shift of us coming together". She calls this "us-ness". She has a name for everything. AI stands for "aesthetic intelligence" ("Isn't that nice?") and ethical business is "beautiful business – to make people feel, '*Yes, I can be that.*'"



Portas dressing the windows of Mary's Living and Giving shop in Edinburgh, 2009. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

In line with the shift to “us-ness”, will Portas rethink the branding of her own ventures, which, like Alexander the Great, she has a habit of naming after herself? There’s [Mary’s Living & Giving charity shops](#) for Save the Children, the Portas Pilot towns that she worked on when she was the “high street tsar” to David Cameron’s coalition government. At the mention of these she rolls her eyes – [after five years, nearly 1,000 shops in the pilots had closed](#), and they are still a sore subject. Then there’s Portas, and Mary, the now defunct clothes line. Does she ever consider “us-ing” her brand?

“That’s like saying you can’t be Paula. Of course I’m me,” she says. “I’m using my name to make the world better.” She says the charity shops have made £32m for Save the Children. “If I’m using my name and I’m making a shitload on the back of it, I think that’s fair.”

As for the so-called [Portas Pilot towns](#), “I shouldn’t have let them call it Portas Pilots,” she says. The towns received £1m funding on the back of a white paper Portas produced in 2011, called – inevitably – [The Portas Review](#). In it, she considered many factors that had a negative impact on high streets, from parking to retail parks. The report was “multi, multi, multi-layered. They would say to me, ‘Have you met with Justin King, the

CEO of Sainsbury's?', and I'm thinking, what's he going to tell me? 'Have you met with Philip Green?' And I'd say, 'Sadly I have.' Cause what do these people have in common? Profit and money! This is where I should have stopped. This is where I should have said" – she slaps the table – "there's your white paper, you bunch of ... You're not listening."

When we meet, Portas has just returned from Turkey with her older sister, Tish – they go away every year. "We get quite emotional," she says, reminiscing about their childhoods. Portas is the fourth of five children: she interlocks the fingers of both hands to show how close they are. When their mother died, the three older siblings had already left home and Portas looked after her younger brother, Lawrence. Portas was the one who went with her father to organise the funeral.

"I don't know why I ended up being in that role in the family, but I did," she says. "I [went] from this naughty kid to ... OK. I've got to do this." In adulthood, she is a sort of bossy matriarch. Her father soon moved in with a new girlfriend, leaving Portas and her brother at home. He would "drop into us once a week, leave money on the table for food and go. I remember him saying:, 'You've got your lives before you and I'm only 50.' I remember thinking, *I've just lost my mum. I've just lost my mum.*" She says this so quietly she is almost inaudible. She has come to understand that "he just crumbled".



Portas ... 'I have had an extraordinary life.' Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

He died two years later, and left the family home to his wife, making Portas homeless. She loved theatre and had won a place at Rada, but enrolled instead on a college course in visual merchandising, to look after Lawrence, and cried on the bus there and back. They lived with family friends in a council house. "I was obviously in grief and trauma but I didn't know it ... That was tough," she whispers. "I was left with nothing. And I mean *nothing*. I used to get embarrassed about that because I didn't want people to feel sorry for me, and I never want people to feel sorry for me." But the problem with struggling to survive is that "you never really follow your true rhythm".

Portas has made a career from her ability to foresee and direct change, but it began with an urgent need to adapt young to extremely traumatic circumstances. "I have had an extraordinary and incredible life," she says. "I have had ups where I have soared and I've had downs where my face has been in the mud. And I mean *right in the mud*. Actually not as soft as mud. It's been in the concrete. I've been broken. But I've always got back up."

Now Portas feels that she has finally found her true rhythm. When she stops to think about her life, she can see that, "There has always been this thing in

me: I believe that if I get involved, I can make change happen.”

Mary Portas is an ambassador for Mastercard’s Strive initiative. To find out more, visit [mastercard.co.uk/strive](https://www.mastercard.co.uk/strive)

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‘Consider me a convert’ ... Bob Dylan, 50 Cent, Lady Gaga. Composite: Getty, PA

[Bob Dylan](#)

**The joy of the slow burn record: ‘Not only did I warm to his drawls, I became**

# obsessed'

Sometimes, 20 years after dismissing an album, it's suddenly exactly what you need. Our writers pick out the music that crept up on them

[Dave Simpson](#), [Laura Snakes](#), [Tayyab Amin](#), [Safi Bugel](#), [Tara Joshi](#), [Alexis Petridis](#), [Christine Ochefu](#) and [Shaad D'Souza](#)

Thu 8 Jun 2023 05.38 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Jun 2023 06.04 EDT

## The Clash – Sandinista! (1980)

When I first heard Sandinista! as a schoolboy, I was baffled by the way this supposed “punk band” careered between genres or combined them, several at a time. Today, now that revolutions such as the iPod and streaming have changed the way we listen to music, the 36-track triple album sounds like the ultimate mixtape. It’s a two-hour long hurtle through rock, pop, funk, soul, Motown, dub, jazz, calypso, R&B and swing. The Magnificent Seven – which I always loved, along with the anti-military The Call Up – is even thought to be the first UK rap track.



Careering between genres ... The Clash. Photograph: Michael Putland/Getty Images

Rediscovering it as an adult on a remastered CD version that came out in 2013, the sprawling opus certainly has flaws but I can't quite comprehend how my teenage ears didn't recognise the greatness of the likes of Police on My Back, Somebody Got Murdered or Charlie Don't Surf. Maybe Sandinista! was so far ahead the world needed to catch up. **Dave Simpson**

## Charli XCX – Vroom Vroom (2016)



New appeal ... Charli XCX. Photograph: Lorne Thomson/Redferns

One handy/mortifying thing about criticism is having your initial reactions preserved in print *forever*: it can help you plot your changing taste; it can also give that artist's fans a stick to beat you with for life. When I had Twitter, I never got as much blowback for anything as my [Pitchfork review](#) of Charli XCX's Vroom Vroom EP, which I slated on release in February 2016.

Charli's first full-length collaboration with PC Music's Sophie was a tweaky, blown-out romp through acid bass lines, panel-beater thwacks and demented baby voices. At the time, I dismissed it as "pointedly uncommercial and abrasive" and "ferociously trite". It took until seeing her live in 2019 to

appreciate those qualities: you'd call it a slow burn if the EP's car-obsessed lyrics weren't so speed-addled.

Where I once thought those asinine themes reduced her to a "vapid cypher", now their commanding hauteur connected directly to Charli's vulcanised stage presence. And by 2019, the general collapse of society brought a new appeal to a record that sounds like a pep rally on the edge of a black hole. I was relieved to boot some of my old self-seriousness into that void. And as ever, Charli was ahead of her time, leaving me gratefully eating her dust. Beep beep! **Laura Snapes**

## **Bob Dylan – Murder Most Foul (2020)**

It's not just that I wasn't into Bob Dylan, it's that I didn't *want* to be into him. As far as I could tell, his best song was bettered by Hendrix and his blues and folk forebears seemed much more deserving of this frankly obscene surplus of renown. Still, my contrarian self couldn't resist giving [Murder Most Foul](#) a listen; arriving at the advent of Covid with its amateur artwork and 17-minute runtime, the meditation on JFK's assassination appeared curiously, hilariously out of touch with the present to the point of becoming a meme.

I listened with intent to poke fun but soon found Dylan repeating himself – first as farce, then as tragedy. Not only did I warm to his lackadaisical drawls and those woozy wanderings of piano and violin, I became obsessed. Maybe it's the slapstick brutality of the lyrics that run the JFK tape back and forth like a sports action replay, or the way he embarks on an entire litany of Americana unprompted, winking as he places his ramblings on top like some cherry. Regardless, I've found an unlikely refuge in his mythological account of the day the US was born and the day it died. **Tayyab Amin**

## **50 Cent – Get Rich or Die Tryin' (2003)**

Like many who were born in the late 90s, 50 Cent's In Da Club featured heavily in my childhood. The track stayed in the UK charts for 32 weeks but

it lingered for much longer, its quickly renowned refrain about partying like it's your birthday reverberating from music channels and school playgrounds. As co-producer Sha Money XL once noted, In Da Club became "the birthday record": "You play Stevie Wonder and then you play In Da Club." It did indeed become ubiquitous at parties, but the novelty value quickly wore off and I began to find it intensely annoying.

After subconsciously writing 50 Cent off based on that track alone, hearing [Get Rich or Die Tryin'](#) played in full almost two decades later surprised me. This time, I heard his forays into new styles and moods that had been overshadowed by the hits, and the unfamiliar interludes that tied the songs together. I soon grew to love the record's steely keys and skulking percussion, the blockbuster bad-boy persona and the softer moments scattered throughout, like the surprisingly melodic account of his shooting in Many Men (Wish Death), or the pleas for commitment from a lover in 21 Questions, propped up by an achingly good Barry White riff. "Could you love me on a bus?" remains one of my all-time favourite corny lyrics.

Twenty years later, I've still not exactly 180'd on In Da Club, but as for the rest of it, consider me a convert. **Safi Bugel**

## Lana Del Rey – Norman Fucking Rockwell! (2019)

As someone occasionally drawn to melancholy and tragedy, friends thought I would love Lana Del Rey. People whose taste gelled with mine were obsessed but while Video Games stirred something in me back in 2012, I found tracks such as Summertime Sadness grating. Through some combination of silly contrarianism, a discomfort about her public persona as [a frequently thin-skinned, disengaged white woman](#), and perhaps an unease with sitting in my feelings beyond my established sad time records, I shrugged off one of the biggest singer-songwriters of the past decade as simply not for me.

Last year, shortly after turning 30, after taking stock of the way I was treating myself and letting others treat me, I finally put on [Norman Fucking Rockwell!](#) on a whim – and God, why had no one told me how funny Lana Del Rey is? Lines like "Why wait for the best when I could have you?"

eviscerated me. Now, I'm mesmerised by her silver-screen vocals delivering dark humour over dreamlike production . When I'm feeling fraught, her music is like being with friends, making fun of ourselves and misguided past romances, relinquishing ourselves to the ephemeral beauty of feeling it all.

**Tara Joshi**

## Miles Davis – Birth of the Cool (1957)



Beautiful, rich, transporting music ... Miles Davis. Photograph: Album/Alamy

I bought Miles Davis' [Birth of the Cool](#) about 20 years ago, because it was an album you're supposed to own: legendary, pivotal, turns up on the critics' best lists. I played it a couple of times without it making much impression, then filed it away. I came back to it during lockdown: by then I knew more about jazz, but I'm not sure a knowledge of the genre's history or an understanding of the album's context really figured in my appreciation.

My main reaction was a horrified shock: how had music as glaringly, self-evidently beautiful as Moon Dreams or Venus De Milo gone in one ear and out the other? How did I not notice the richness of Israel and Jeru? Perhaps it was a matter of time and place: beautiful, rich, transporting music was what I needed to hear during lockdown. Or perhaps you just can't predict

when music is going to beckon you in, which makes the moment it does all the more delicious. **Alexis Petridis**

## Deee-Lite – Dewdrops in the Garden (1994)



Deliciously uncategorisable ... Deee-Lite. Photograph: Tim Roney/Getty Images

Until a few years ago, I, like most people, only knew one Deee-Lite song: their 90s smash-hit Groove Is in the Heart. Though a technically excellent piece of music, it was repeated at one-too-many a cheesy club night for my liking, regrettably leading me to assume that the rest of their catalogue was also Austin Powers cosplay.

One day I was listening to an Apple Music radio show when the excellent Call Me, from the band's last album, Dewdrops in the Garden, rang out. It struck me as what might be the cheekiest ode to pining for a phone call ever made; a marvellously bubbly and eccentric track full of telephone noises over a thumping house beat.

It led me to check out the album, which turned out to be deliciously uncategorisable: a hedonistic mix of classic house, bratty eurotrance, brash pop and more. Vocalist Lady Miss Kier is a woman whose voice comes

straight from her diaphragm; Bittersweet Loving lays her impeccably soulful belt over Paradise Garage-era synths, while River of Freedom and Music Selector Is the Soul Reflector are part rave, part video game drones that increase the heart rate along with the BPM. It taught me to always listen beyond the hit – or potentially risk missing out on extreme delight.

**Christine Ochefu**

## Lady Gaga – Chromatica (2020)

I was 10 when Lady Gaga's debut single, Just Dance, came out and I found the hype confusing. At that age, I found her arch, somewhat intense, and a bit tuneless – an orgy of unmooored vowel sounds and over-the-top aesthetics that made me squirm. As the years passed, I found intermittent moments of enjoyment in her output: I liked the undeniable Paparazzi, the twisted Abba vibes of Alejandro, the Kevin Parker drums on Perfect Illusion. But, for the most part, I was a staunch hater who found her unapologetic too-much-ness too much.

Then A Star Is Born was released. At first I was underwhelmed by what I felt was a hokey and rockist longueur. A few weeks later, though, I heard I'll Never Love Again, the film's closing ballad, in a friend's car and inexplicably began to weep. I saw the film again during a moment of personal tragedy and found it impossibly moving. I started to warm to Gaga the person, although I still couldn't stomach her music.

During the pandemic, her 2020 album [Chromatica](#) became an unexpected salve for me and my housemates. Every Friday night, we sat in our living room and quietly drank whatever liquor we had, enjoying the perverse feeling of listening to euphoric music while not having much fun at all. When lockdown lifted, we all still loved Chromatica, and delved deeper into her catalogue, finding wry humour, intense hooks, bizarre classic rock tributes (such as the Queen homage You and I and the brilliant, Paul McCartney-like Just Another Day) and, suddenly, I was an absolute Gaga-head, rattling off trivia at bars and vying desperately to get tickets to the Chromatica tour. Now I look back and find it unconscionable that I ever saw

anything in Gaga other than a generous entertainer, brilliant songwriter and enduring icon. **Shaad D'Souza**

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## 2023.06.08 - Opinion

- Notes on a scandal: this is how Starmer's bullies took out Jamie Driscoll – and why it matters
- Prince Harry is not wrong to feel injustice, but he won't find vindication in a court of law
- Must we hate Noel Gallagher's version of Love Will Tear Us Apart? I'm loving it
- Your partner wants the truth? They can't handle the truth! At least, according to film and TV



Illustration by Ben Jennings

[OpinionLabour](#)

## **Notes on a scandal: this is how Starmer's bullies took out Jamie Driscoll – and why it matters**

[Aditya Chakrabortty](#)



Having examined how the North of Tyne mayor was barred from standing again, I see something akin to McCarthyism

Thu 8 Jun 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Jun 2023 02.29 EDT

I first met the man who has been all over this week's political headlines four years ago, 300 miles up the A1 from Westminster. It was a bitterly cold Saturday morning in the Northumberland coastal town of Newbiggin and Jamie Driscoll was asking for votes. He'd just caused a minor political earthquake by winning [Labour](#) members' support to run for the new position of mayor of North of Tyne. The cert for that role had been Nick Forbes, Newcastle council leader and longtime big beast – not Driscoll, who had been a local councillor for a few months and who, on winning the selection, had had to rush out to buy his only suit.

I watched this stubbly, scruffy, upbeat outsider doorknock around an estate of small houses and exotic garden statuettes, to a reaction chillier than the wind whipping in from the North Sea. For decades, this had been Labour country, where that political tradition ran through the local economy, its institutions and people's very identities. But over the past 50 years all that had been destroyed and now it was the land of Vote Leave, desolate and

nihilistic. If residents spoke to canvassers at all, it was to spit out statements like “I don’t follow politics”.

After more slammed doors, one activist sighed: “[Policy doesn’t matter here](#). They’ve forgotten what government can do.” For all Driscoll’s ideas and energy, I wrote at the time, his biggest challenge would be closing the vast gulf between the governed and their governors.

That tableau has come to mind many times since the Labour party [barred Driscoll from standing](#) for re-election. No more will he trigger democratic earthquakes. Instead, he has become fodder for lobby journalists. When I met him in Newcastle this week, he was slaloming between interviews for Radio 4, ITV, national newspapers, Newsnight and more. The ending of his political career has done more for his national profile than four years in office. I listened as each outlet demanded its shot of Westminster caffeine. Hardly anyone asked what it meant for the north-east, for local democracy, for the people in Newbiggin and anyone else who long ago tuned out all politicians as fraudulent liars only in it for themselves.

And why wouldn’t they? I have chased down and sifted through evidence, much of it never revealed before, and it points to a stitch-up bigger than anything on the Great Sewing Bee. The jumped-up outsider, Driscoll, has been tossed in the bin – but he is merely collateral damage in a one-sided Labour factional fight, whose actors appear not to give a damn for people’s reputations or for the public they’re meant to serve.

Let’s work backwards. Labour officials blocked Driscoll last Friday, soon after he’d been interviewed by a panel drawn largely from the party’s national executive committee. The email he received reads: “[T]he NEC panel has determined that you will not be progressing further as a candidate in this process.” But while the party gave no official reason to the candidate, its enforcers were happy to brief lobby journalists – who in turn quoted anonymous sources that it was because in March he had appeared at a Newcastle theatre with Ken Loach to discuss his films. The renowned director had been [expelled as a Labour member](#) in 2021.



Jamie Driscoll addresses the Transport for the North conference in March.  
Photograph: Ian Forsyth/Getty Images

On Sunday, Labour frontbencher [Jonathan Reynolds told Sky News](#) that Driscoll was excluded for sharing a platform with “someone who themselves has been expelled for their views on antisemitism” – a line swiftly amplified by the media, yet not quite true. I asked Loach’s office to forward his letters of expulsion, which say only that he is “ineligible” due to his support of “a political organisation other than an official Labour group”. That was Labour Against the Witchhunt, which did claim allegations of Labour antisemitism were “politically motivated”. Reynolds was conflating the two. I asked how many other journalists had sought clarification. The answer was one.

A column about Driscoll is not the place to litigate Ken Loach’s views, even if I disagree with much of what he says about Labour’s treatment of antisemitism. It barely needs saying that sitting on stage with a director to discuss their films does not mean you share all their opinions. Far more troubling for British democracy is how anonymous, factional briefings are simply machine-pressed into newspaper “facts” then spewed out on TV.

“They were always looking to get me,” Driscoll claimed this week. I have read emails dating back to 2020 where the new metro mayor asks Labour officials for the party’s local membership lists used by councillors, MPs and

mayors as standard. But not here: IT issues meant the lists supposedly weren't shareable. Until this year that is, when he was told the upcoming mayoral contest meant he could only access lists "if you make a confirmation that you are not seeking the selection". Another email, sent by Driscoll last month to party officials, notes that a local constituency party has been told by a senior official to disinvite him from speaking.

Asked for comment, Labour didn't reply – but this is petty, attritional stuff, which is what happens when politics is evacuated of ideas and arguments and becomes simply about who is in whose good books. Cliqueishness is hardly exclusive to Keir Starmer's Labour, but it is starker now because instead of real politics all this lot have is office politics.

Which brings us back to the much-discussed NEC panel, supposedly to divine his suitability to stand. I have viewed footage of the entire hour on Zoom, which discusses nothing of Driscoll's beliefs or achievements. Three of the five panel members are from groups on the right of the party, and all anyone wants to know is why he spoke to Loach. They refer to the director's "controversial views" and quote [the Jewish Chronicle's coverage](#). How, they ask, might the event be viewed by a "hostile media"?

Driscoll replies that Holocaust denial is "abhorrent" and that he has signed up to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism. He recalls how he used to fight fascists in the street. None of it is good enough.

A rather bumptious young man informs the mayor that "you can't separate someone's views from their work". The twentysomething declares that Driscoll shouldn't have discussed the films but instead attacked Loach's politics. On that basis, Starmer ought to be disqualified for appearing with Loach on the BBC's [Question Time](#) – and so too should the shadow foreign secretary, [David Lammy](#), who in 2019 wrote a paean in this paper to Loach's Sorry We Missed You, praising the way it "brings across how the right to a family life has been eroded in modern Britain".

We all know that a week is a long time in Starmer's politics, but he did once proclaim a proud regionalism. Now what's left?

Attacking McCarthyism, [Ed Murrow](#) told his TV audience: “We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. We must remember always that accusation is not proof and that conviction depends upon evidence and due process of law. We will not walk in fear, one of another.”

By these standards, Driscoll is a victim of McCarthyism. The office he holds is now a mere electoral toy to be enjoyed by a favoured faction. And those people in Newbiggin and Ashington and anyone else who might be looking on with half an eye will see nothing but machine politicians serving themselves. This was the swamp out of which Nigel Farage emerged.

- Aditya Chakrabortty is a Guardian columnist
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‘Prince Harry is an object lesson in why people so rarely choose to go to war against the press.’ The Duke of Sussex outside the high court in London, 7 June 2023. Photograph: Carl Court/Getty Images

[Opinion](#)[Prince Harry](#)

## **Prince Harry is not wrong to feel injustice, but he won't find vindication in a court of law**

[Zoe Williams](#)



The royal is dogged, but what he's fighting is tabloid culture. It will be difficult for him to ever establish the guilt of individuals

Thu 8 Jun 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Jun 2023 02.28 EDT

Never mind waiting for Mr Justice Fancourt to produce his findings, the tabloid newspapers were declaring their collective triumph before [Prince Harry](#) had even been released from giving evidence against Mirror Group Newspapers (MGN).

“He must have longed for the schmaltzy embrace of Oprah,” [the Mail said](#); “Me, Hewitt … and that two-faced shit Burrell,” the Sun sort-of quotes the prince. The Mirror went with the more sober “Harry vs the Press”, with only a silent nod to the fact that it is their newspaper group, specifically, he’s been fighting in this week’s hearing.

Harry isn’t the only person chasing the hacking scandal all the way to court: he’s one of four claimants in this trial, along with ex and current Corrie actors Nikki Sanderson and Michael Le Vell, and Fiona Wightman, Paul Whitehouse’s ex-wife. In 2015, a judge [ruled in favour of Paul Gascoigne](#) and seven others, awarding £1.2m in compensation. Yet the prince is an

object lesson in why people so rarely choose to go to war against the press: it's like playing a game of football in which the other team is also both referee and commentator. They can make up the rules as they go along, and even after you've lost, the game will never, ever end.

Harry's overall charge is that MGN, whether by phone hacking, obtaining information by deception, or employing private investigators who used illegal methods, has been trashing his reputation since before he could read newspapers (some poetic licence there, as I have no idea when he learned to read; but thanks to the tabloids' narrative, in which he's portrayed as – in his words – a "thicko" and a "drug taker", I'm guessing about 17?). His day in court came and it went; it will be adjudicated in due course, and then it will be over; but I think it doubtful that the tabloids will ever, whether in concert or one at a time, stop trashing his reputation. He tried to put this fire out with petrol.

Yet the other problem is correctly identified by the Mail: court is not the place to go with a moral case, and it's not the right precinct for dealing with feelings, however profound and justified they are. In its literal-minded way, it requires a law to have demonstrably been broken. The exchange I found most telling was this one, with Andrew Green KC, acting for MGN: "Do you think the absence of call data suggests you were not hacked by any MGN journalist?" Green asked.

"Absolutely not," Harry said. "If the court finds that you were not hacked by MGN would you be relieved or disappointed?" He replied that since hacking was everywhere, he'd "feel some injustice" if his claim wasn't accepted.

He says, but can't prove, that journalists were all using burner phones, and that's why there are no records; he says information could only have come from his phone, but of course can't prove the absence of "royal sources" or friends of girlfriends that MGN says were in fact providing its intel; he needs a case specific to the Mirror, since you can't put "tabloid culture" in the dock, and yet on multiple occasions, the publisher was able to show that his personal information was already in the public domain. It may have arrived there through other papers' hacking, but that would just be a piquant detail and would do nothing to strengthen Harry's case.

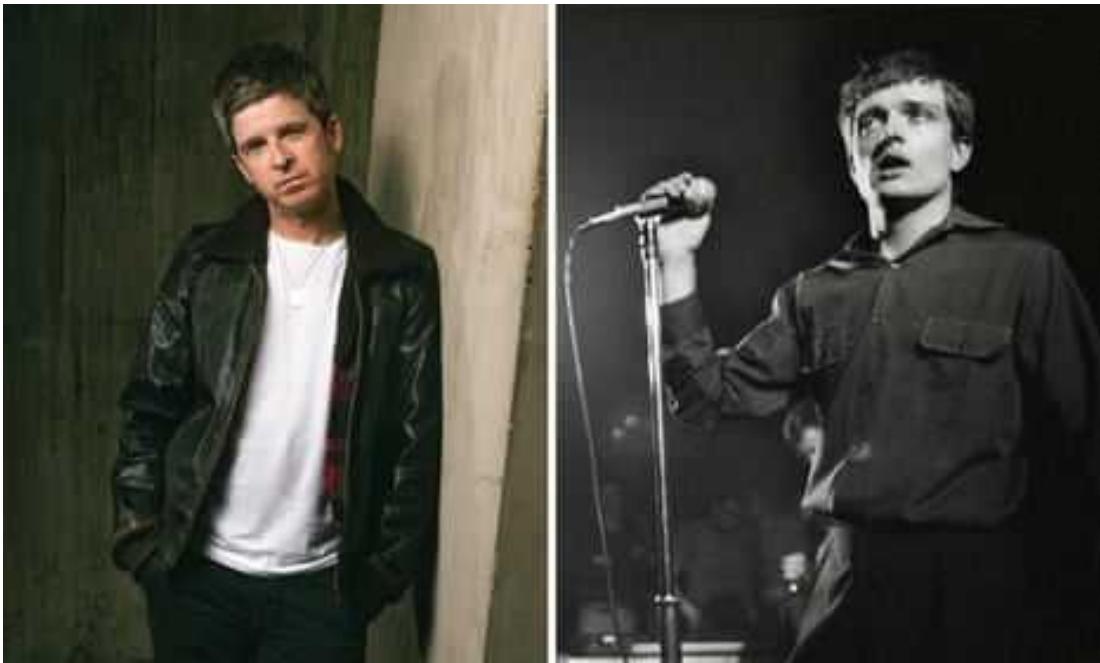
He's not wrong to "feel some injustice" – without question, this country's media culture, and its labile relationship with the royals, craven one minute, insatiable and crowing the next, has changed his life. Few characters could have withstood seeing every failed relationship, every misadventure, immediately in the spotlight. I don't have any real doubt that racist dog-whistling, in some sections of the media, made his life in the UK untenable after his marriage. And that's all to put aside the [death of his mother](#), for which he holds press intrusion squarely responsible. But because it's a culture, rather than a single news organisation, firing-squad rules apply: it is exceedingly difficult to pinpoint the individual gun, let alone find it still smoking. All he's really been able to show are the exit wounds.

Which makes me wonder whether that wasn't the point all along, whether he came to court because, win or lose, the sheer impact of a royal in the witness box would make the statement that previous attempts – the [Netflix documentary](#), the memoir – have only partially landed: that they may be royal, but they're still human, and it's wrong to treat them like zoo animals. I don't know if that statement will ever land, or whether the value proposition of royalty evaporates once you start insisting on the ordinary flesh and blood of which it is composed.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
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Battle of the legends ... Noel Gallagher and Ian Curtis. Composite: Matt Crockett; Rob Verhorst/Redferns

[Opinion](#)[Noel Gallagher](#)

## **Must we hate Noel Gallagher's version of Love Will Tear Us Apart? I'm loving it**

[Rich Pelley](#)



Noel's own brother has apologised for a 'blasphemous' reinterpretation of the Joy Division classic. Sorry, Liam, you're wrong

Thu 8 Jun 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Jun 2023 03.44 EDT

When it comes to cover versions, there seems to be an unspoken rule: be careful if the artist is dead. Sure, some covers surpass their originals, such as Nothing Compares 2 U by Sinéad O'Connor (originally by Prince) and I Will Always Love You by Whitney Houston (Dolly Parton). But is that true of, say, Nirvana?

This makes Noel Gallagher's reinterpretation of Joy Division's Love Will Tear Us Apart – performed so far on [BBC Radio 2](#) and on his US tour, which started last week – particularly alarming.

The main problem is that it is not as good as the original. Gallagher has previous form on this, with his cover of There Is a Light That Never Goes Out by the Smiths. And he knows the risks. Speaking of the [Joy Division](#) cover on Radio 2, he said: "I was like: 'Can we get away with that?' Because it's such an iconic song – and being from Manchester as well ... this is going to be tricky."

Unsurprisingly, this latest offering has divided audiences. His brother, Liam, came down clearly on one side, [writing on Twitter](#): “I must once again apologise on behalf of my family for Rkids piss poor and damn rite blasphemous version of joy division’s love will tear us apart tut fucking tut SORRY.”

But is it really that bad? No. The problem is that it doesn’t sound like Noel Gallagher. It also doesn’t sound much like Love Will Tear Us Apart. It lacks the bass line, which is the best bit. Or does it? If you listen closely, you’ll hear the backing musicians playing it subtly, while Gallagher’s take on Ian Curtis’s vocals pushes him out of his comfort zone, which is striking. Plus, he dedicated the song [to my cousin](#) when he played it in Ridgefield, Washington. So, after hating it at first, I now love it.

Who’s next, I wonder? Might Lemmy from Motörhead soon be turning in his grave thanks to a Gallagher cover of Ace of Spades?

Rich Pelley is a freelance writer. Adrian Chiles is away

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‘These things never feel small when they happen to you.’ Tobias Menzies and Julia Louis-Dreyfus in You Hurt My Feelings. Photograph: Jeong Park/AP

[OpinionCulture](#)

## **Your partner wants the truth? They can't handle the truth! At least, according to film and TV**

[Emma Brockes](#)



From You Hurt My Feelings to Platonic, our screens are now full of middle-aged relationships built on little white lies

Thu 8 Jun 2023 04.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Jun 2023 23.19 EDT

The premise of [You Hurt My Feelings](#), a new movie by Nicole Holofcener starring Julia Louis-Dreyfus, is deceptively simple: to what degree, when asked for your opinion by a spouse or equivalent, do you tell them the truth? Louis-Dreyfus plays Beth, a writer whose husband, Don (Tobias Menzies), is her primary cheerleader until she overhears him expressing negative opinions about her new book. Anyone who has ever produced anything at all will die at the accuracy of this scene and identify with Beth's instinct to throw up in the nearest bin. The movie asks if the husband has been right to conceal his true feelings, and if she is right to react as she does.

The cleverness of the set-up is in how endlessly applicable it is and how disproportionate the feelings are that these kinds of incidents trigger. Most of us have been on both sides of this equation, struggling to find the right answer when a partner asks: "How do I look in this?", and also trying to temper our own neediness when asking (pleading) for similar reassurances. As Don discovers, there is often no winning: overpraise may be rejected as rote and therefore worthless, but anything that tips even close to frank

criticism risks triggering a rage spiral. Meanwhile, as he points out in defensive frustration, the world is going to hell in a handcart and this is what she freaks out about?

It's an unfair observation, somewhat defensively presented in the script – perhaps to ward off similar accusations about the movie. But the question of these sensitivities and the presumption behind it – that we get less sure, not more, about things as we age – stands, and is echoed in other recent productions, namely [Platonic](#), a new show on Apple TV+ in which Rose Byrne and Seth Rogen endure different iterations of midlife collapse. All these protagonists live relatively useful lives in art-directed versions of New York and LA. All are disgruntled with the places in which they find themselves; Byrne's character seethes with resentment at having given up work as a lawyer to raise her and her husband's three kids. And all hang their disgruntlement on ostensibly small missteps inadvertently taken by their loved ones.

Except, of course, these things never feel small when they happen to you. If these shows are to some extent about happiness, or self-esteem, or the interface between those two things, they remind us how fragile and babyish and needy most of us are at an age when we might have imagined we'd have grown out of it. In the Holofcener movie, the couple's young adult son goes off on a whiny rant about how they've ruined him through overenthusiasm. How, he asks his parents, is he supposed to figure out what he is good at when, as a child, they showered him with such blanket support that he developed a thoroughly delusional view of his own abilities?

This is part of a wider discussion about the prizes-for-all flavour of much modern parenting and it's a smart reversal, on the part of the writer, to locate it alongside the way adults interact with each other. What, then, is the answer? Where does the white lie of a kneejerk "it's great, honey!" shade from support into unhelpful pandering? One is reminded, oddly, of Simon Cowell and the first flush justification he used to use for his judging panels: that the ruthless piercing of the contestants' delusions did them a favour in the long run.

Neither Holofcener nor the makers of Platonic come to any firm conclusion, beyond the fact that the instinct to protect those we love from painful truths is a decent one, and entirely necessary if we expect to enjoy the same soft landing. I have seen families in which other principles dominate, and the phrase “I’m just being honest” is used as a Trojan horse for all sorts of undermining and vaguely abusive behaviour. (And of course, in these contexts, there is often no more honesty at work than in gentler environments, given the undeclared kick the person criticising may be getting out of it). The only surety, given how febrile we all are, is that if it’s impossible to get it right all of the time, the good faith of the effort goes a long way.

- Emma Brockes is a Guardian columnist
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## 2023.06.08 - Around the world

- [US Tens of millions under air quality alerts as Canada fire smoke drifts south](#)
- [Jodie Comer Actor stops her show because of New York air](#)
- [Poland Russian man who claimed to have been FSB officer deported](#)
- [Kevin McCarthy Republican hardliners' revolt against speaker shuts down US House of Representatives](#)

Canadian wildfires trigger air quality alerts in US as smoke reaches cities – video

**Pollution**

## Tens of millions under air quality alerts in US as Canada fire smoke drifts south

Eastern US states including New York, Massachusetts and Connecticut issue alerts as hundreds of wildfires burn in Canada

*[Adam Gabbatt in New York](#)*

*[@adamgabbatt](#)*

Wed 7 Jun 2023 21.57 EDTFirst published on Wed 7 Jun 2023 10.36 EDT

Tens of millions of people in the US were under air quality alerts on Wednesday, as smoke from Canadian wildfires drifted south, turning the sky in some of the country's biggest cities a murky brown and saturating the air with harmful pollution.

States across the east, including [New York](#), Massachusetts and Connecticut, issued air quality alerts, with officials recommending that people limit outdoor activity.

[smoke map](#)

In New York City, where conditions were expected to deteriorate further through the day, residents were urged to limit their time outdoors, as public schools canceled outdoor activities.

Smoke from wildfires in Canada has been [moving south](#) into the US since May. Hundreds of fires are burning in Canada, from the western provinces to Nova Scotia and Quebec in the east, where there are more than 150 active fires in a particularly fierce start to the summer season.

New York City had the worst air quality of any big city in the world on Wednesday, according to [IQAir](#). Second worst was Lahore, Pakistan, while the next worst major US city, Detroit, Michigan, came in at 13th. Delhi, India, which consistently ranks among the worst cities for air pollution, was sixth worst.

The smell of smoke was detectable in New York on Tuesday evening as the sky turned orange-brown and visibility shrank before sunset. The smell persisted on Wednesday, and an [air quality advisory](#) was expected to remain in place until Wednesday night in much of central and eastern New York state. In New York City, schools [canceled all outdoor events](#) and residents were encouraged to wear face masks, which many had shed as the coronavirus pandemic waned.

“We recommend all New Yorkers limit outdoor activity to the greatest extent possible,” the mayor, Eric Adams, said.

“Those with pre-existing respiratory problems, like heart or breathing problems, as well as children and older adults, may be especially sensitive and should stay indoors at this time.”

Canada: wildfires rage across British Columbia – video

Adams said air conditions were expected to deteriorate throughout Wednesday afternoon and evening.

Almost the entire state of New Jersey was [under an air quality alert](#), while hazy conditions and smoke from the wildfires were reported across the Great Lakes region from Cleveland, Ohio, to Buffalo, New York.

The smoke had drifted as far south as South Carolina, where officials [recommended](#) that people keep doors and windows closed.



A woman looks at the Manhattan skyline engulfed in haze on 7 June.  
Photograph: Justin Lane/EPA

In Philadelphia, the smell of smoke prompted a spate of 911 calls on Tuesday night, [6ABC reported](#), as residents were asked to avoid going outdoors as much as possible.

Air-quality alerts are triggered by a number of factors, including the detection of fine-particle pollution – known as “PM 2.5” – which can irritate the lungs.

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“We have defenses in our upper airway to trap larger particles and prevent them from getting down into the lungs. These are sort of the right size to get past those defenses,” Dr David Hill, a pulmonologist in Waterbury, Connecticut, and a member of the American Lung Association’s national board of directors, [told the Associated Press](#).

“When those particles get down into the respiratory space, they cause the body to have an inflammatory reaction to them.”

Drone footage shows New York City in a blanket of smoke from Canada wildfires – video

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said hazy skies, reduced visibility and the odor of burning wood are likely, and that the smoke will linger for a few days in northern states.

“It’s not unusual for us to get fire smoke in our area. It’s very typical in terms of north-west [Canada](#),” Darren Austin, a meteorologist and senior air quality specialist with the Rhode Island department of environmental management, told the AP. But, usually, the smoke has been aloft and hasn’t affected people’s health, Austin said.

Experts, and some [political leaders](#) were highlighting links between the wildfires and the climate crisis.

A 2021 study supported by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association found that climate change has been the main driver of the increase in hot, dry fire weather in the western US.

By 2090, global wildfires are expected to increase in intensity by up to 57% thanks to climate change, a [United Nations report](#) warned last year.

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Jodie Comer in *Prima Facie*. ‘I can’t breathe in this air,’ she said, before being helped off stage. Photograph: Helen Murray/AP

[Jodie Comer](#)

## **Jodie Comer stops stage performance because of New York air: ‘I can’t breathe’**

Actor was helped off stage from her one-woman show *Prima Facie*, and performances of *Hamilton* and *Camelot* cancelled, after city’s poor air quality prompted breathing issues

- [Canada wildfires smoke – follow live](#)

[Benjamin Lee in New York](#)

Wed 7 Jun 2023 15.35 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Jun 2023 06.14 EDT

Jodie Comer stopped her one-woman show *Prima Facie* on Broadway because of breathing difficulties owing to New York’s air crisis.

According to eyewitnesses, the award-winning star of Killing Eve, tipped to win a Tony award this weekend, was 10 minutes late for the matinee performance. After three minutes of the show, she announced that she couldn't proceed.

"I can't breathe in this air," she said, before being helped off stage.

As reported by [Deadline](#), after Comer left the stage, attendees were told an understudy would be taking over.

A spokesperson for the show confirmed to the [Hollywood Reporter](#) that Comer "had difficulty breathing due to the poor air quality in New York City".

Performances of Hamilton and Camelot were also cancelled hours before curtain call on Wednesday night, due to the air difficulties caused by smoke from huge wildfires in Canada.

Drone footage shows New York City in a blanket of smoke from Canada wildfires – video

"Tonight's performance of Hamilton will not go on as scheduled," Shane Marshall Brown, a spokesperson for the production, said. "The hazardous air quality in [New York](#) City has made it impossible for a number of our artists to perform this evening."

More than 400 fires are blazing in Canada with hundreds of firefighters working to put them out. As of Wednesday, New York had the [second worst air quality](#) of any big city in the world after Delhi.

Canadian wildfires trigger air quality alerts in US as smoke reaches cities – video

"We recommend all New Yorkers limit outdoor activity to the greatest extent possible," Eric Adams, the mayor, said. "Those with pre-existing respiratory problems, like heart or breathing problems, as well as children and older adults, may be especially sensitive and should stay indoors at this time."

Wednesday has also seen the cancellation of a planned picketing by the Writers Guild of America in New York because of the air quality. The organisers of this year's Tribeca film festival, which starts today, are "monitoring the situation closely and following guidance from the city". Tonight's events are indoors but red carpet arrivals and interviews are set to be outside which may be cancelled with limited outdoor activity recommended.

Prima Facie tells the story of a lawyer grappling with the fallout from a sexual assault. It involves Comer monologuing for 100 minutes, a performance that the Guardian's Arifa Akbar praised for infusing "breathtaking emotional drama in every last word" when it was on in the West End. Comer won an Olivier award for her performance.

This weekend's Tony awards sees Comer up against Jessica Chastain for the best actress award. It was recently announced that Cynthia Erivo would be playing the role in a big-screen adaptation of the play.

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Emran Navruzbekov says he was a senior officer in the FSB, Russia's security service. Photograph: Emran Navruzbekov

[Poland](#)

## **Poland deports Russian man who claimed to have been FSB officer**

Secret service decided backstory of purported Russian security service officer was not credible

*[Shaun Walker](#) in Warsaw*

Thu 8 Jun 2023 03.05 EDTFirst published on Thu 8 Jun 2023 02.00 EDT

Poland has deported a purported former Russian FSB officer who sought asylum in the country back to [Russia](#), accusing him of lying about his past and background.

Emran Navruzbekov claimed to have been a senior officer in Russia's FSB security service in the southern region of Dagestan, and had recently given numerous media interviews about FSB operations and alleged misdeeds. He

was handed over to Russia at Poland's land border with the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad on Tuesday.

The move prompted outrage from one of Navruzbekov's lawyers, who said he faced the risk of jail, torture or worse back in Russia, and that the decision came as a surprise given that Poland is one of the most vocal critics of the Russian regime.

A spokesperson for the Polish border guard confirmed in an emailed statement that Navruzbekov was deported on Tuesday, after it was found that he "posed a threat to the defence, state security or the protection of public order", adding that he had been banned from entering Poland and the Schengen area for 10 years.

"The foreign citizen was deported from Poland to his country of origin, which is Russia," said the border guard statement.

Navruzbekov fled Russia in 2017, apparently as he was being prepared for an FSB mission to follow exiles in Turkey. After several years living in [Europe](#) without his name being public, last December he gave a long interview to Vladimir Osechkin, founder of the organisation [gulagu.net](#), which has worked extensively with defecting Russian soldiers.

The [video interview](#), which has been viewed almost 1m times on YouTube, described Navruzbekov as "a 2022 version of Litvinenko", who had provided valuable information on the crimes of the Russian regime.



Emran Navruzbekov in a video interview. Photograph: No Gulag Official channel

Navruzbekov subsequently spoke to various media outlets, and said he feared he may face consequences for his disclosures. “Of course I am afraid. I know how they work. History says that in any case I will be killed,” he told CNN in January.

However, in mid-May he was arrested by Polish authorities and told he would be deported. He was placed in a detention centre while his appeal was processed, but his lawyers believed they had until mid-August to appeal against the decision, and had lodged an emergency request for a hearing to prevent the deportation at the European court of human rights on Tuesday morning. Before the appeal could be heard, news came that he had already been deported.

Karinna Moskalenko, a well-known Russian human rights lawyer who is part of Navruzbekov’s legal team, said she hoped Poland would face consequences for deporting a person who was at “significant risk of torture” in his homeland.

“Other nations should know that they cannot deport people who have fled Russia back to Russia at the current time,” she said.

Polish authorities, in a statement released on Wednesday afternoon, said they had carefully studied Navruzbekov's case and found his story not to be credible.

"Polish secret services assessed Navruzbekov as a person whose intentions and testimonies are unreliable and raise real doubts about the reason for his presence in Poland," said the statement.

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"The biographical data provided by him, his described professional path and the information he gave about Russia's activities ... turned out to be inconsistent, in many places also untrue or unverifiable," it continued.

Osechkin, reached by telephone on Tuesday, said Navruzbekov's story was "complicated and difficult" and said he understood why Polish authorities had become suspicious of the Russian.

Moskalenko said she could not comment on the nature of the Polish allegations, but accused authorities there of a "crude violation of human rights" for deporting Navruzbekov before the appeal process had been exhausted.

“Suddenly, in a huge rush they pulled him out of the facility where he was being held waiting for the decision on his appeal. The appeal had not been heard yet, so you cannot call the deportation decision a final decision,” she said.

Navruzbekov’s wife, Irada Navruzbekova, said on Wednesday that she understood her husband was now in Kaliningrad and facing an immediate court case, though she had no information about what charges he faced or whether he had a lawyer.

“I don’t know what to do, and I don’t know what they will do with him. I really hope he stays alive; that my children will still have a father,” she said in a telephone interview.

The couple have two children including a two-month-old baby, she said. Poland granted asylum protection to her and the two children on the same day her husband was deported.

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Republican speaker of the House, Kevin McCarthy, and Hakeem Jeffries, the Democratic minority leader, at the Capitol on Wednesday. Photograph: Will Oliver/EPA

### [House of Representatives](#)

## **Republican hardliners' revolt against Kevin McCarthy shuts down US House of Representatives**

Ultra-conservatives from speaker's own party are unhappy about debt ceiling deal and say he hasn't delivered on promises made to secure the chair

*Staff and agencies*

Thu 8 Jun 2023 00.37 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Jun 2023 11.35 EDT

The US [House of Representatives](#) has been forced to postpone all votes until next week – paralyzed by a revolt against its Republican speaker, Kevin McCarthy, by ultra-conservative members of his own party.

The standoff between McCarthy and a hardline faction of his own Republican majority has forced the chamber into a holding pattern that looks likely to persist until at least Monday.

Members of the House Freedom Caucus have been upset over the bipartisan debt ceiling bill that McCarthy recently brokered with the Democratic president, Joe Biden, as well as claims that some hardliners had been threatened over their opposition to the deal.

“You’ve got a small group of people who are pissed off that are keeping the House of Representatives from functioning,” said Republican representative Steve Womack.

“This is insane. This is not the way a governing majority is expected to behave, and frankly, I think there will be a political cost to it.”

The hardliners were among the 71 Republicans who opposed debt ceiling legislation that passed the House last week. They say McCarthy did not cut spending deeply enough and retaliated against at least one of their members. McCarthy and other House Republican leaders dismissed the retaliation claims.

They also accuse McCarthy of violating the terms of an agreement that allowed him to secure the speaker’s gavel in January, though it was not clear which aspects they believe were not honored.

House action came to a sudden halt midday on Tuesday when the band of conservatives refused to support a routine procedural vote to set the rules schedule for the day’s debate. It was the first time in some 20 years a routine rules vote was defeated.

Days of closed-door negotiations have not yielded a resolution, but McCarthy said he was confident they would sort out their differences. “We’re going to come back on Monday, work through it and be back up for the American public.”

McCarthy oversees a narrow House Republican majority of 222-213, meaning that he can lose only four votes from his own party on any measure that faces uniform opposition from Democrats.

Along with an attempt by Republicans to pass a bill preventing the banning of gas stoves, the dispute also has delayed bills that would increase congressional scrutiny of regulations and expand the scope of judicial review of federal agencies.

As a result of the revolt against McCarthy, routine votes could not be taken, and the pair of pro-gas stove bills important to GOP activists stalled out. Some lawmakers asked if they could simply go home.

McCarthy brushed off the disruption as healthy political debate, part of his “risk taker” way of being a leader — not too different, he said, from the 15-vote spectacle it took in January for him to finally convince his colleagues to elect him as speaker. With a paper-thin GOP majority, any few Republicans have outsized sway.

But the aftermath of the debt ceiling deal is coming into focus. The McCarthy-Biden compromise set overall federal budget caps — holding spending flat for 2024, and with a 1% growth for 2025 — and Congress still needs to pass appropriations bills to fund the various federal agencies at the agreed-to amounts. That is typically done by 1 October. After Biden signed the debt deal into law last weekend, lawmakers have been fast at work on the agency-spending bills ahead of votes this summer to meet the deadline.

Not only did the conservatives object to the deal with Biden as insufficient, they claim it violated the terms of an agreement they had reached with McCarthy to roll back spending even further, to 2022 levels, to make him speaker.

“There was an agreement in January,” Ken Buck, a Republican representative from Colorado, told reporters after he left the speaker’s office on Wednesday morning. “And it was violated in the debt-ceiling bill.”

If Congress fails to pass the spending bills by fall it risks a federal government shutdown – an outcome conservatives have forced multiple times before, starting in the Clinton era when then-Speaker Newt Gingrich led the House into a budget standoff, and again in 2013 when conservatives shut down the government as they tried to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

The longest federal shutdown in history was during the Trump era when Congress refused his demands for money to build the border wall between the US and Mexico.

*With Reuters and the Associated Press*

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- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: Ukraine has penetrated Russian lines in some areas, says UK](#)
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Amazon plane crash: Colombian military rescue children found alive after 40 days – video

[\*\*The ObserverColombia\*\*](#)

## **‘Miracle, miracle’: lone children survive 40 days in Amazon jungle**

The four Indigenous children were the only survivors of a plane crash that killed their mother

*[Mat Youkee](#) in Bogotá, and [Emma Graham-Harrison](#)*

Sat 10 Jun 2023 14.45 EDTFirst published on Fri 9 Jun 2023 21.17 EDT

A few tantalising clues kept the rescuers going. The remains of fruit with bitemarks made by small human teeth, a pair of scissors and nappies in the rainforest mud. All offered hope that four children, who had miraculously survived a plane crash that killed their mother, the pilot and the only other adult on board, also survived the dangers of the Amazon.

The oldest was only 13 when the plane went down on 1 May in southern [Colombia](#). The youngest would mark his first birthday lost under the dense green canopy of trees and vegetation, alive with jaguars, poisonous snakes and other threats.

The children are Lesly Jacobo Bonnaire, 13; Solecni Ranoque Mucutuy, 9; Tien Noriel Ronoque Mucutuy, 4; and Cristian Neryman Ranoque Mucutuy, now one.

The remains of the Cessna light aircraft were found two weeks later, with the bodies of three adults still inside. But there was no sign of the children, who come from the Huitoto Indigenous community. A long search through the virgin, inhospitable forest began.



The wreckage of the Cessna was found two weeks after it disappeared but there was no sign of the children. Photograph: Colombian army/AFP/Getty Images

Helicopters hovered over the area around the crash, broadcasting messages from the children's grandmother, telling them they hadn't been forgotten, urging them to stay in one place, and dropping packets of food that may have helped them survive. In the middle of May, the children's father also joined the hunt.

The rescue effort, Operation Hope, ramped up rapidly, eventually encompassing 150 soldiers and 200 volunteers from local Indigenous communities and a team of 10 Belgian shepherd dogs, covering an area of more than 323 sq km (125 sq miles). The search continues for Wilson, one of the dogs who disappeared during the operation.

### [Map of southern Colombia](#)

As the days stretched into weeks, and the weeks into a second month, some in Colombia began to wonder if they were deluding themselves.

Some of the rescuers went home, a combined command headquarters was dismantled. But a little more than a week before their discovery, Brigadier General Pedro Sanchez said he was convinced the children were alive,

because bodies would be easier to find than a small group who were moving through the forest.

“This isn’t a search for a needle in a haystack, it’s a tiny flea in a vast carpet, because they keep moving,” [he told Colombian journalists](#). “Their bodies haven’t appeared, and I’m sure that we would have already found them if they were dead.”

Then on Friday, about 4pm local time, army radios crackled into life. “Miracle, miracle, miracle, miracle”. It was the army code for a child found alive; repeated four times it meant all four had survived, in a remarkable feat of resilience.

Although malnourished, and covered in insect bites, none were in a serious condition. The military tweeted pictures of a group of soldiers and volunteers posing with the children, who were wrapped in thermal blankets, surrounded by the team that found them, with Cristian cradled in the arms of a rescuer.



Colombian soldiers with the child survivors of a Cessna 206 plane that crashed on 1 May in the jungle. Photograph: /Reuters

“They’ve given us an example of total survival that will go down in history,” said Colombia’s president, Gustavo Petro, calling it “a joy for the whole country”.

The education the children got from their grandmother, a respected elder in the Araracuara indigenous territory, was almost certainly vital to their survival.

“This is a virgin forest, thick and dangerous,” John Moreno, an Indigenous leader from nearby Vaupés, told local media outlet [Cambio](#).

“They would have needed to draw on ancestral knowledge, in order to survive.”

In addition to evading jungle predators, the children had survived heavy storms, and the area also hosts armed groups.

Sanchez said rescue teams had covered more than 2,600km (1,600 miles) on foot in the search for the children, and described the challenging conditions of their mission.

“The men walked 10 metres apart. In virgin forest, with trees 40 or 50 metres high, where the sun barely reaches the forest floor, a man can lose himself within 20 or 30 metres. If someone is separated, the forest swallows them up,” Sanchez said.



A rescue dog is shown a pair of scissors found in the forest in Caquetá province on 17 May during the search for the children. Photograph: Colombian army/AFP/Getty Images

The children were found with rags wrapped around their feet, to protect them as they moved through the muddy forest floor, and rescuers had to winch them up to helicopters as the vegetation was too dense for aircraft to land.

After their initial helicopter evacuation to the town of San José del Guaviare, the children were taken on a military medical plane to Bogotá, where four ambulances were waiting to take them to hospital for specialist care. An uncle and their grandparents are among relatives now waiting to be reunited with the children.

“I thank the president for his help and the Indigenous people who collaborated in the search for our children. I don’t know how to thank them, because the word ‘thank you’ is not enough,” Narcizo Mucutuy, the children’s grandfather, told Caracol TV station.

Rumours initially emerged about the children’s whereabouts on 18 May, when Petro tweeted that the children had been found. He then deleted the message, claiming he had been misinformed by a government agency.

On Friday, after confirming the children had been rescued, the president said that for a while he had believed the children were rescued by one of the nomadic tribes that still roam the remote swathe of the jungle where the plane fell and have little contact with authorities.

But Petro added that the children were first found by one of the rescue dogs that soldiers took into the jungle. He said that he hoped to meet the children on Saturday.

“The jungle saved them,” Petro said. “They are children of the jungle, and now they are also children of Colombia.”

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Colombian military personnel help four children who survived 40 days in the Amazon jungle after their plane crashed. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[Colombia](#)

## **From months on a remote island to bear-infested mountains: four ‘miracle’ child survival stories**

Four young children surviving 40 days in the Amazonian jungle has attracted global headlines, as have other children who triumphed against the odds



Rafqa Touma

@At\_Raf

Sat 10 Jun 2023 03.50 EDT Last modified on Sat 10 Jun 2023 04.07 EDT

Forty days after their plane crashed into the Colombian Amazon jungle, four Indigenous children have been rescued – found malnourished, covered in insect bites, but alive.

The siblings from the Huioto Indigenous community – aged 13, nine, four and 11-months – survived one of the most uninhabitable parts of the country in a remarkable feat of resilience against heavy storms, predatory animals, and armed groups.

None of the children suffered serious harm, with the youngest surviving his first birthday in the jungle. They have been dubbed Columbian “miracle” children.

The education from their grandmother may have been vital to their survival, John Moreno, an Indigenous leader from nearby Vaupes, said.

Here is a selection of survival stories that grabbed the headlines because it involved children triumphing against the odds.

## The ‘real Lord of the Flies’

In 1965, [a group of six school boys were marooned](#) on a rocky island south of Tonga in the Pacific Ocean for more than a year.

Bored of school, they decided to take a fishing boat out one day. They packed two sacks of bananas, a few coconuts, an old knife and a small gas burner. But after falling asleep, the boys woke up to a windy storm and water crashing down over their heads. They drifted for eight days with no food, surviving on rainwater collected in hollowed-out coconut shells, until they drifted upon small island ‘Ata on the horizon.



Sione Filipe Totau, known as Mano, was one of six Tongan youths shipwrecked on Ata Island for 15 months in the mid 1960s. Photograph: David Kelly/The Guardian

By the time their rescuers arrived 15 months later, the boys – aged between 13 and 16 – had set up a commune with a food garden, hollowed-out tree trunks to collect rainwater, chicken pens and a permanent fire. They agreed to work in pairs according to a timetable of garden, kitchen and guard duties, and survived on fish, coconuts, tame birds and eggs.

While for many, the story sounds like a Boys' Own Adventure tale come to life, for Sione Filipe Totau, one of the six boys marooned, the memories of the months spent on the island are far more harrowing.

"We [were] not happy where we [were]," Totau, known as Mano, told the Guardian in 2020. "If you were on a place, you don't know where it is, and also you did not see any part of your family, I don't think you'd be happy to be there ... you won't be happy until you see your family."

## Thai cave rescue that gripped the world

The world held its breath for 18 days when 12 young footballers from Thailand were trapped inside a flooded cave with their coach in 2018.

The Wild Boars football team – whose players aged between 11 and 17 – survived on an elevated rock four kilometres from the cave mouth, with hardly any food but sustained by meditation led by the 25-year-old coach, Ekaphol Chantawong, a former monk. And by hopes of rescue.



A video grab from the Thai Navy SEALs shows some of the Wild Boars football team in a section of Tham Luang cave in Thailand. Photograph: Thai Navy SEALs/Getty Images

It took nine days for divers to locate the teenage boys inside the six-mile Tham Luang cave in the Doi Nang Non mountain range.

It took another nine days for the entire team to [make it out alive](#) and into the bright glare of daylight and the awaiting cameras to tell a story that inspired multiple films.

The three-day rescue effort involved 18 divers. Two rescuers died while trying to save the group. The rescue effort involved performing medical checks and administering anaesthetic to each child, while others guided them to safety through miles of flooded tunnel.

## **Alone in a Japanese woodland, with bears**

After misbehaving on a trip, [seven-year-old Yamato Tanooka was left on the side of the road in a Japanese forest](#) by his parents, with the intention it would be a brief period of punishment.

However, thinking he was abandoned for good, the boy ventured off, and ended up spending nearly a week in mountain woodland populated by brown bears.

He was found after six days by three soldiers seeking shelter from the rain, who entered a hut to find Yamato curled up on a mattress, five kilometres from the roadside where he had been left.



Yamato Tanooka, the Japanese boy who survived for a week in bear-infested mountain woodlands of Hokkaido. Photograph: None

The boy had managed to get inside a self-defence force training compound in Hokkaido, either by climbing over the fence, or going through the bush on either side, and found a hut that by chance had been left unlocked.

Wearing just a t-shirt and tracksuit pants, at night Yamato squeezed between two mattresses to stay warm. He told the soldiers who found him that he had not eaten for almost a week, though he did appear to have access to water.

The doctor who assessed him after his ordeal in Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island, said: "He was incredibly calm considering he had been missing for seven days. He didn't panic at all."

Ken Noguchi, a mountaineer who has climbed Mount Everest, tweeted: "If he survived by himself, it's a miracle."

## Toddlers trapped in outback Australia

In December 2022, a five-year-old girl was credited with an "[absolute miracle](#)" [feat of survival](#), saving the lives of her two brothers – aged one and

two – by helping them after they were trapped in the wreckage of a car crash that killed their parents in remote Western Australia.

Trapped inside an upturned Land Rover, the young girl freed the one-year-old brother from his seatbelt. But the two-year-old brother stayed trapped in his seat for more than two days after the accident. The three waited beside their dead parents for 55 hours in 30-degree heat until family friends found them by the remote road.

They were badly dehydrated and still inside the car when help arrived.



The crash scene in West Australia where three young children survived for days in scorching heat. Photograph: Nine News

Michael Read, a cousin of the father who died, said it was difficult to imagine what the children would have been going through inside that vehicle. He described the five-year-old girl as a “bright kid, smart, intelligent, [who] absolutely loves cooking and playdough”.

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**Ukraine war liveUkraine**

# Kyiv reports advances as UK says Russian lines breached in some areas – as it happened

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Matt Cook: ‘Free speech and academic freedom … are not partisan values. They are also fundamental to our civilisation.’ Photograph: Keiko Ikeuchi/University of Oxford/PA

[University of Oxford](#)

## **Government ‘fanning culture war’ over free speech, says UK’s first LGBTQ+ history professor**

Issue blown out of proportion, says Matt Cook, after appointment of ‘free speech tsar’ for higher education

*Sally Weale* Education correspondent

Sat 10 Jun 2023 02.00 EDT

Oxford University’s new professor of LGBTQ+ history has accused the government of “fanning a culture war” over freedom of speech, insisting it is alive and well in higher education.

[Matt Cook](#), who was this week named as the first Jonathan Cooper chair of the history of sexualities, a newly created post at Mansfield College, was speaking only days after the appointment of the government's first "[free speech tsar](#)" for higher education.

Cook said the issue had been blown out of proportion and there were only a "tiny fraction" of cases where speakers were cancelled. He pointed to the recent appearance of the gender-critical feminist Dr Kathleen Stock at the Oxford Union, which [went ahead despite protests by trans activists](#).

"I completely stand with the position that the university and the college takes on freedom of speech. And I also stand by the right to the freedom to protest. I think both things are important."

His comments, in an interview with the Guardian, were made only days after [Arif Ahmed](#), a Cambridge philosophy professor, was named as the government's new director for freedom of speech and academic freedom for higher education in England.

The role was created by the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act, which received royal assent last month, and will oversee a regime that could impose fines on higher education providers and student unions if they prevent speakers appearing without good reason.

"Free speech and academic freedom are vital to the core purpose of universities and colleges," Ahmed said. "They are not partisan values. They are also fundamental to our civilisation. As director, I will defend them using all means available."

Cook, a renowned cultural historian who has written extensively on queer urban life, the Aids crisis and queer domesticity, denied that free speech was under threat in higher education.

"Of course there's protests about certain people speaking and there has been historically, about figures as diverse as David Icke and Enoch Powell, and that's right," he said.

“But these people still spoke in university contexts, despite the protests and despite the calls for people not to speak in university forums. It’s only a tiny fraction of cases where people actually don’t speak.

“So my sense is that it’s not a huge problem. I think the issue has been blown out of proportion. I also think there’s some political expediency in this. It’s a way of fanning a culture war. I don’t think we need additional protections for free speech in the university. Free speech is pretty alive and well.”

Cook will take up his role as the UK’s first fully endowed professor of LGBTQ+ history in October after 18 years at Birkbeck College, University of London. On the trans debate, he said he hoped to bring together scholars and activists to look at it from a historical perspective.

“There’s a way of thinking historically about cycles of fear and phobias. So it’s very striking to me the way in which gay men in the 1950s and also the 1980s were vilified as a threat to children, as treacherous, as deceitful.

“We can see the same kind of recycling of fear at the moment, in very, very similar terms. So I think in a way history can help us think through, what is it about these particular moments of fear and why?

“The trans people I know currently are facing real daily prejudice that’s misogynistic, transphobic. And I think we need to think very seriously about how we allow everybody in this country to have a livable life, and that includes trans people. Part of that is understanding how people have found ways of living their lives in the past.

“I’m very hopeful that the kind of work that we’ll be doing in Oxford, and is going on in other places, in 10-15 years hence, people say, ‘Oh OK, so this is how trans people have lived their lives historically. And this is how they’ve been part of this cultural society.’

“It doesn’t solve the immediate febrile issue, but hopefully it gives some kind of grounding going forward, for thinking through these issues historically.”

Does he feel optimistic or pessimistic about how the culture war will play out in the run-up to the general election? “Thinking historically, the Thatcher government used very cynically the ‘threat of gay men and lesbians to children in schools and public life’ as an electoral move and it helped their re-election.

“The Conservative party know that you can mobilise fear in a way that can win you some votes. Whether it will succeed I don’t know. There’s certainly an attempt to stoke fear about trans people and that will be deployed towards the election unfairly.”

But, he went on: “I do feel hopeful because I think trans people and the LGBT community more broadly is being heard more and at the moment that’s deeply controversial, but in 10 years’ time, the fact those voices have been heard will have had its effect as well.

“The fact that Oxford and Mansfield have put their heft behind this role, and also committed further fundraising and possibly another post in the future, is a real sign that they’re keen to underpin debate and scholarship going forward.”

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‘This is the first time in my life I’ve been happy,’ says Elliot Page.  
Photograph: Catherine Opie

[Elliot Page](#)

[Interview](#)

# **Elliot Page on Juno, Hollywood's dark side and coming out twice: 'Living my life was more important than being in movies'**

[Simon Hattenstone](#)

When the feelgood movie made him an Oscar-nominated star, the strain of hiding who he was almost forced him to quit acting. He explains how opening up about being gay, then trans, saved his life



Sat 10 Jun 2023 02.00 EDT

Elliot Page's memoir is called *Pageboy*. At its heart is the story of his transitioning from an Oscar-nominated actress, best known for the [wonderful coming-of-age comedy drama Juno](#), to one of the world's most high profile trans men. He writes, rather beautifully, about gender dysphoria, [top surgery](#) and finally finding himself. But the book is so much more than a tale of transition.

Pageboy is a modern-day Hollywood Babylon, written by a sensitive soul rather than a scandalmonger. [Page](#) depicts a film industry even more rancid than we may have suspected. This is a world where it's not only the Harvey Weinstens at the top of the pyramid who get to abuse the young and powerless – just about everybody seems to have a go. It's a world where most people appear to be closeted in one way or another, a world where more acting is done off set than on.

It's also a love story, sometimes unrequited, usually closeted (of course) and occasionally full on. Throughout, Page is looking for love. There are a dizzying number of blink-and-you-miss-them relationships, often with famous people, some named, some anonymised. He's looking for love from women he's infatuated with, his parents and ultimately himself. For most of his life, the last has been the greatest struggle.

Page is now 36. He always looked young for his age. Today he is dressed all in black – cap, hoodie, glasses and cargo pants – and could pass for mid-20s. He's Zooming from home in Toronto and, unsurprisingly, is a little anxious about the book: "I'm nervous, but grateful for the opportunity to have written it." Unlike most celebrities' books, there is no ghost involved – these are all his words. And it's important to him that they are: "It was really healing getting a lot of stuff out. It's been very beneficial for my relationship with my mom. It has allowed us to talk about things for the first time in a meaningful, sincere way."

As an actor, it's your job to feel and connect as much as possible. I was feeling things through my characters without permitting myself to do so in my life

It has also allowed him to reflect on other relationships. When he wrote about former partners, he showed them the sections in advance. Again, he says, in many cases it has enabled them to talk in ways they never did at the time. But he admits there are some relationships that, for now at least, seem to be beyond repair. While most people in his life have embraced his coming out – [first as gay](#), then [as trans](#) – he no longer talks to his father and stepmother.

Page grew up as Ellen in Halifax, Nova Scotia, with a graphic designer father and schoolteacher mother. As a youngster, he was a talented footballer – though not good enough to turn professional, he says. By the age of 10 he was working as a professional actor in the TV movie *Pit Pony*, then the Canadian TV series of the same name and in a number of demanding roles in well-received independent films. Despite the success, he never felt right.

Even as a four-year-old, he used to try to pee standing up. “I would press on my vagina, holding it, pinching and squeezing it, hoping I could aim,” he writes in *Pageboy*. He knew girls weren’t supposed to do that, but he didn’t consider himself a girl. He didn’t quite know what he was. All he knew was that he felt a huge amount of discomfort and emotional pain. He self-harmed from a young age, smashing himself in the head with a hairbrush when getting ready for school, failing to recognise, or accept, the face staring back at him in the mirror. He cut himself, got wasted and stopped eating, but none of it did any good. He wanted to obliterate himself.



‘The decision to come out was scary and intense,’ says Elliot Page.  
Photograph: Catherine Opie

Acting gave him the opportunity to get lost in pretend worlds. While he wasn’t capable of untangling his own brambled emotions, he loved doing it on behalf of his characters. “There was an element of escape. You’re going

to a place where it's your job to feel and connect as much as possible, and we live in a world that encourages us on some level not to. I was feeling things through other characters without permitting myself to do so in my life."

He was 20 when he starred in [Juno](#) as the 16-year-old who found herself pregnant by her geeky-cool friend Paulie Bleeker, played by Michael Cera. Juno was a huge commercial hit (it cost around \$7m to make and took more than \$230m at the box office), won Page a best actress Oscar nomination. The coming-of-age comedy drama showed off Page's ability to play nuanced characters – Juno is a fabulous mix of precocious and naive, confident and vulnerable, gobby and withdrawn.

The same year Page played another 16-year-old with heartbreakingly conviction. *An American Crime* is the horrifying true story of Sylvia Likens, who was tortured to death by a woman she was left in the care of. Two years earlier, Page gave an extraordinary performance in [Hard Candy](#) as a 14-year-old vigilante avenging herself on a sexual predator.

I was attracted to intense, traumatic work. As a teenager who dealt with a lot of predatory behaviour, it was something I was interested in tackling

From the off, Page had a rare ease in front of the camera. There was nothing actorly about his acting – which might have been part of the problem. Unsurprisingly, these roles ended up traumatising him, not least because they echoed what was happening to him in real life. “I was attracted to that intense, traumatic work at the time,” he says. “As a teenager who dealt with a lot of shitty predatory behaviour, it was something I was interested in tackling.”

After moving to Toronto at 16, he was stalked by an older male fan he had befriended on social media to the extent that he feared for his life. When he told his parents, his father said: “I’m going to come to Toronto and kick your ass.” In the book, Page says his father’s response was even more traumatising than the stalking.

Then there was Hollywood. It's hard to know where to start with the abuse there. As a lonely kid in a new city, he was the perfect target for predators. And so it proved. Page says one director groomed him as a teenager. Eventually, the director took him to dinner, stroked his thigh under the table and told him: "You have to make the move, I can't." He also describes two disturbing incidents, just before he turned 18, with members of the Hard Candy production team. There was the funny, kind man who drove Page home, then forced himself on the actor. "His voice sweet, his hands on my shoulders, he guided me to the bedroom," Page writes. "I went stiff. Unsure what to do as he stood tall and removed his glasses. He laid me down on the bed. Starting to remove my pants, he said, 'I want to eat you out.' I froze. After it was over, he tried to stay in the bed with me. I had thawed marginally and told him he couldn't, to get out."

It sounds horrifying. "Apart from the power conversation and the toxicity that comes with that, it is just being a young person who's in a space with lots of adults and in situations where people took ... I don't even know the word. I was about to say 'advantage' or 'awful advantage', but that just feels gross," he says now. "I almost don't have the words for it because it's so fucking hard to wrap my head around why somebody wants to do that to some ..." He trails off.

I felt her grab me. She pressed her face into mine. The next thing I knew I was on the rug. I didn't say no or resist, I just stiffened

At the start of shooting Hard Candy, a female crew member offered to take Page house-hunting. "I was standing in the empty living room, in front of the couch, when I felt her grab me. She pressed her face into mine, some version of kissing," he writes. "That freezing coming over me again. The next thing I knew I was on the rug, the floor firm on my back. I didn't say no, I did not resist, I just stiffened."

At the time he never discussed the incidents with anybody. Somehow he'd conditioned himself, or been conditioned, to think it was the norm. "I didn't know how to talk to people about it. I thought you just get over it and move on." When did you realise it's not something you just move on from? "It took me a long time to be able to sit and fully talk about these experiences or

acknowledge that they were traumatic and had a significant impact on me.” He felt as if he would be making a fuss about nothing, so he brushed it off. “I’d sit in therapy and talk about these things, and my therapist would go: ‘That’s a *lot*, that’s traumatic,’ and I’d be like: ‘*What?* What are you *talking* about?’ I don’t know if that was a self-defence mechanism or just being made to feel it’s not a big deal.”

Years after Hard Candy, Page confided in an actor he was working with that he was gay. The actor told him he should never admit this in Hollywood and he didn’t want to hear about it again. After Page did finally come out as gay, a drunken actor told him: “I’m going to fuck you to make you realise you aren’t gay. I’m going to lick your asshole. It is going to taste like lime. You’re not gay.” He said it openly in front of some of Page’s closest friends. “Power works in funny ways,” Page writes. “He was, and still is, one of the most famous actors in the world.” Page is obviously aware that readers will play guessing games. You sense he would not be upset if the actor was exposed – so long as it’s not by Page himself.



‘This is the first time in my life I’ve been happy and able to just be on my own.’ Photograph: Catherine Opie

Page stresses that Hollywood is not solely inhabited by abusers. He has made good friends in the film industry who have helped him through his

toughest times. Who is the sanest person he has worked with? Page takes issue with the word. So we settle on balanced. “Someone like [Hugh Jackman](#) is lovely. He’s just so fucking cool.” Then there’s [Julianne Moore](#). “I feel so lucky to have worked with Julianne and to have her in my life. She’s been an incredible friend to me, and so supportive and caring. So I’ve been really fortunate to have mentors in my life who’ve helped me a lot at certain times.”

When Page was cast as Sylvia Likens in *An American Crime*, he was struggling particularly badly with his mental health. Catherine Keener, who played Sylvia’s murderer, kept him from going under. After draining days on set, he would crash at her home, drink tequila and dance the night away. Today, he has C KEENS, his nickname for Keener, tattooed on his right biceps. “She is one of the absolute greats,” he says.

Please tell me that making *Juno* was an enjoyable experience, I say – it’s such an uplifting film that I’d hate to think anything nasty occurred on that set. He laughs. “Yes, it was a great experience. It was one of the best experiences I’ve ever had making something. It was an incredible group of people and I had a tremendous time. I remember Michael Cera and I were like: ‘This seems it could be kinda cool’ – but nobody expected it to blow up to the degree that it did.”

One of the many revelations in his memoir is that Page had a relationship with Olivia Thirlby, who played Juno’s dippy friend Leah, while making the movie. What did Thirlby think when you showed her the book? “I think she was surprised that it was so intense for me. We didn’t have the same comfort in relation to our queerness. I don’t think she knew the impact that relationship had on me, and how important it was. I was inspired by her and her ability to be herself.”

Cis, trans, whatever: the actor being told not to be your authentic self was a constant, and it made me extremely unwell

Page also had a relationship with [Kate Mara](#), who was going out with the actor Max Minghella at the time and is now married to Jamie Bell. Again Page had never publicly discussed their relationship before the book. He

describes being infatuated with Mara and how he couldn't cope with having to share her with Minghella. Looking back, he says he didn't behave well at the time. How do you and Mara get on now? "Kate is one of my closest friends. She's moderating my book event in LA. She really loved the chapter and appreciated the honesty."

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Page's most closeted relationship was with an actor he refers to as Ryan. He met her while making a film, and they were together for almost two years. By then Page was in his mid-20s and, he says, most people in the industry assumed he was gay. But Ryan passed as straight and was terrified of being outed. The degree of secrecy sounds painfully dysfunctional. Page literally hid in a closet once when room service was delivered to Ryan's hotel room. At parties they ignored each other. Page says Ryan couldn't cope with the shame and lies, went on to have a relationship with a cis man, and broke Page's heart in the process. Is Ryan still closeted? "No, I wouldn't call it that. I gave it to Ryan to read, and it was another example of getting to talk about things in a real way for the first time, and now we're buddies again." Does Ryan worry that people will be trying to guess who she is? "I don't know how she feels about that deep down. I understand people will be curious. She can't care too much, because people do figure things out."

The book is punishingly honest in terms of his emotional needs and search for love. He nods. Are you a romantic? “Yeah, I think I am.” But he says there is more to it than that. For so much of his life, he says, love was a means of convincing himself things were OK or justifying to himself why he was unhappy. “Love was a way to escape, a way to feel less alone, a way to feel safe. I clearly didn’t love myself. I’d cling on and then end up in these co-dependent relationships – or getting completely lost in Kate and not staying centred on any level. I think it was a way of avoiding myself, going from one relationship to the next.” His voice wobbles. “This is the first time in my life I’ve been happy and able to just be on my own.”



Page at the Oscars in 2022. Photograph: Getty Images

The Hollywood that Page describes is frozen in time. It could be the 1950s – the same level of control, paranoia, abuse. The same homophobia. And the same blinkered argument: if the fans know you’re gay they won’t believe you when you play a heterosexual (though this is rarely the case when heterosexuals play gay characters). It’s hardly surprising in this culture that so few gay stars have come out. “I can obviously only speak to my experience, but yes, my experience is that there was intense pressure to be not only closeted but to act and appear and perform like someone I wasn’t and someone I’m not. Cis, trans, whatever – it doesn’t matter: the actor being told not to be your authentic self was a constant, and quite frankly it

made me extremely unwell. I think back to the degree of how closeted I was and I'm just like: wow. It's like watching a movie in my head. It was so extreme, and so were the feelings. I believed at certain points: 'This is what my entire life is going to be.'"

He had never held a partner's hand in public, never brought a girlfriend to an event, always got separate rooms. "There was this constant inherent anxiety when I was out at dinner. You become so profoundly isolated as a person, and also your relationship becomes very isolated. You're in this bubble together." Did it make you mentally unwell? "Yeah, mentally ill – depression and anxiety. But it also manifests itself physically, whether it's vicious panic attacks, stomach issues, difficulties eating, chronic fatigue, just feeling in certain moments of my life it was very hard to function and operate."

Did you want to walk away from it all? "Absolutely. Multiple times." And did you ever? "Yeah." By 2010, he was being cast in big-budget films such as Christopher Nolan's Inception, and he decided he'd had enough. The funny thing is, he says he had a great time making Inception. "But after I finished that movie I was in Los Angeles and I just started packing my apartment. I was like: 'I have to go back to Nova Scotia. I don't think I want to act any more.' I loved working with Chris Nolan and a great cast, but as a person I was just so not OK. I felt really guilty for feeling that. Here you are with all that dreams are made of – how the fuck could I possibly feel this way? I'm such an asshole – how can I be so ungrateful? I didn't understand why I was so profoundly uncomfortable and feeling like this with all this privilege allowing me to do what I thought I wanted to do. But how I was feeling in my body, and being closeted, was eating at me to a degree that I wasn't sure I wanted to do it any more."

Before coming out as queer in 2014, I'd made the decision that living my life was more important than being in movies

He took some time off and returned in 2012 with Woody Allen's To Rome With Love. A couple of years later, aged 26, he came out for the first time – as gay. "That decision was scary and intense." Did it change the way the film industry regarded you when it came to casting? "I mean, probably! I'm

not in the rooms where those people are having those conversations, but I would imagine so.”

Six years later, in 2020, he came out as trans and changed his name to Elliot (ET is one of his favourite films – as a youngster he wanted to look like the film’s protagonist, Elliot, and he has a tattoo on his biceps that says “EP phone home”). He had never stopped questioning how he identified, and this intensified in the years between coming out as gay and trans.

In the Netflix superhero series [The Umbrella Academy](#), Page plays a character who transitions from Vanya to Viktor and writes a warts-and-all memoir about his family. Is this a coincidence? He says the memoir element is (the character was created before he wrote Pageboy), but obviously the trans element is not. When Viktor tells his superhero siblings he has transitioned, they respond with approval verging on indifference: “Cool,” “I’m good with it,” “Yeah, me too,” they say, unfazed.

Was it as easy for you to tell friends and loved ones when you transitioned? “For people super-close to me it was definitely not shocking.” Because you’d been talking about it for so long? “Yes. I was hanging out with a friend the other day, and they were telling me something I said when I was 27 and we were working together. I realised just how much I had been talking about it. For years! And then proceeding to talk myself out of it.”



With Tom Hopper in the Netflix superhero series *The Umbrella Academy*.  
Photograph: Christos Kalohoridis/Netflix

Why did you talk yourself out of it? He pauses. “Erm ..... Gosh ... It came mostly from internalised shame, internalised transphobia. I was overwhelmed by the fact that I was a known actor, and what is that going to mean? I was trying to wrap my head around it.” In terms of how people reacted to you or in terms of your work? “Both. But before coming out as queer in 2014, I’d already made the decision that living my life, to me, was going to be more important than being in movies. I was like: ‘What am I doing? This is my one chance to be alive; like, this just isn’t fucking worth it. It’s just not.’ So I thought less about the work and more about what does it mean to transition publicly and felt overwhelmed by it.” He tried to convince himself he could make do by wearing tighter sports bras to flatten his chest and saying nothing publicly. Try as he might, he says, the issue wouldn’t go away. “It just kept coming up. It was not letting go.” In *Pageboy*, he says he doesn’t think he would be here today if he hadn’t transitioned.

While his relationship with his mother has never been better, he writes in the book with huge regret, and some anger, about his father and stepmother’s inability to accept him – to the extent, he says, that his father has supported transphobic comments about Page. I ask if they have seen the book. “If it’s

possible, I'd love not to talk about my dad and Linda," he says with endearing politeness. There's been no reconciliation? "No."

Do you think film-makers are less willing to cast you since your transition? "Again, it's so tricky because I'm not in the rooms where people are chatting." But, he says, he's got more than enough to be getting on with. He's just worked on an improvised film directed by Dominic Savage, creator of Channel 4's [I Am ... series](#): "That was a highlight of my life as an actor." He has started his own production company, dedicated to telling stories about and by marginalised people, and hopes to do more writing.

I'm trying to embrace the fact that I feel good on my own. But I'm definitely not against falling in love

A while ago, he said he fancied having children. Now, he says, that's not a priority. "I'm trying to embrace the fact that I feel good on my own, and that's very important for me." He suddenly giggles. "But I'm definitely not against falling in love. I think now I'm a little bit more mature and centred." He pauses. "I think."

We hear so much about gender dysphoria, I say – have you experienced any body euphoria since transitioning? His face creases into an ecstatic smile. "To be honest, Simon, I experience it every single day when I wake up in the morning. When I say that I was always consumed by discomfort, I mean it. So the fact that I get up in the morning and get out of bed and stretch like this [he extends his arms to their full length] – that to me is body euphoria." Soon after transitioning, he showed off his new six-pack. Does he still have it? "Yes," he says proudly. "Working out this morning without my shirt on, and just being sweaty and jumping in the shower, just being able to be present in my body and the joy of it ... When I say I *never* thought I'd feel this way I really, really mean that. I never thought I would just feel: 'Oh here I am and I'm going about my day.' So for me body euphoria is the most obvious stuff – getting out of the shower, seeing myself in the mirror, walking down the street with my shoulders back and just feeling like I can engage with the world in a present way."

It's great to see you in such a good place, I say. Listen, Page says, he knows there will be bad days – and plenty of them. "I'm a human being. Of course we all have our days. But they won't even be comparable to how I felt before." Another ecstatic smile. "Not. Even. Comparable," he says.

Pageboy: A Memoir by Elliot Page is published by Doubleday (£20). To support the Guardian and the Observer, buy a copy at [guardianbookshop.com](https://guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply.

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George Woodville: 'It's the thin layer of dirt on the soles that people want.'  
Photograph: David Yeo/The Guardian

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**'What I do is still taboo': the people who sell images of their unlikely body**

# parts online

From dirty feet to immaculate nails – and hairy armpits – there's a market for the most unusual photos

*[Deborah Linton](#)*

Sat 10 Jun 2023 05.00 EDT

## Dirty feet

**George Woodville, 20, UK**

“The dirt is a real thing,” says George Woodville, AKA The Barefoot Guy. “Most people don’t want to see wet and muddy dirt; it’s the thin layer of it on the soles of my feet that they want.” When he stopped wearing shoes in 2021 (he couldn’t come up with a reason to do so, so he took every pair he owned to a shoe bank), baring his feet online was a natural progression. “I’ve always found a creative side in everything, I’ve never gone along with the mainstream,” says the 20-year-old from Cambridge, who had previously tried his hand as a YouTuber. “There’s a golden era with every platform. YouTube was a while ago, now it’s OnlyFans and [TikTok](#).”

He posted videos on [TikTok](#) first, asking people in the street or at events what they thought of his bare feet – including one [featuring the YouTube sensation KSI](#) – and clocked up hundreds of thousands of likes a time. It remains the format for his posts there and on [Instagram](#). When followers began asking for feet pictures and messaging to see if he was on OnlyFans, “I thought it was quite funny. I love the human body; not in a fetish way, but I find beauty in everything. I’ve never given a shit about feet, but my whole life has been a mishmash of expressing myself, creatively, to this point now where I’m making pics and videos of my feet.”

Woodville had dropped out of sixth form and worked in a supermarket, a phone shop and as a waiter before looking for income online. He launched on OnlyFans last year and has 100 subscribers, charging \$4.99 (£4) a month

for basic access and \$10 (£8) a minute for custom videos, all foot content. It translates to about £1,000 a month. Early on, he had hoped to establish brand deals, like the well-worn influencer marketing model, but shoe companies who had expressed interest on more mainstream channels cried off when he began promoting OnlyFans. “That was fine,” he says. “I realised I could be 100% in control rather than having to do their bidding.”

Strangers in the offline world are either really curious about my feet or really angry about them

He uploads content daily, working with his girlfriend, an artist. “We’re building a business, a source of income and a platform for future creative endeavours. If I see a location that looks good, we’ll make some content.”

A lot of fans ask to see more than his feet: “I’m not mentally there yet, but I’m open to it. I can think of a time when I was closed off to things, even scared of life. It’s been a gradual process of becoming open.”

Woodville’s lifestyle has met with disapproval from family members – his grandfather, he says, threw him out of his house – but he describes the conversations he has with followers as energising: “A lot of people are really nice, not in a creepy way. They’re not even so heavily into the fetish side.” As for strangers in the offline world: “They’re either really curious about my feet or really angry about them. It both repels people and introduces them to me.”

Having gone barefoot at a time when he felt depressed, he says he enjoys the realness of his income stream now. “It’s probably the best thing I’ve got going in terms of this physical reality. Going barefoot opened me up to things that are perceived as weird, including selling pics online. It’s really been a journey of not giving a fuck.”

## Armpits and body hair

Candace, 33, Canada



Candace: ‘It was a journey of self-acceptance as well as business.’  
Photograph: Greta Rybus/The Guardian

Candace was a single mother unable to afford her weekly grocery shop before she started selling pictures of her armpits online. Initially, when she stopped buying razors and grew her underarm hair in 2018, it was to save money and time, but as a body confident artist she shared photos of herself – including her pits – to her private Instagram page. Then, after a conversation with a friend, she began monetising them.

“My friend had built a large following on social media and OnlyFans, and was starting to make an income,” says Candace, who suffers health complications, including narcolepsy. “I was a single mom on disability benefits. I had just enough to get by on social assistance and was trying to do the best I could with my circumstances and budget. I needed more money coming in.”

She started with images from the nose down. “At first, I wasn’t ready to share all of me with the whole world,” she says. “Initially, I let my armpit hair grow but shaved my legs. From armpit hair, people asked for leg hair pics. Then I went from growing leg hair to bush hair, areas that were accepted online but I still felt a lot of shame about. It was a journey of self-

acceptance as well as business – I wanted to find this attractive in myself before I shared it in pictures.

Once I got to the point where I was comfortable with what I was putting out there, I embraced it all and opened up my account.”

Candace was taking iPhone selfies in her duplex in New Brunswick, focusing on the underarms or [sharing pictures](#) in lingerie with her hairy legs on display, as well as her art (she sells embroidery at local markets and online). “I didn’t even have a laptop,” she says. When her Instagram followers surpassed 4,000 she channelled those who wanted more to OnlyFans, charging them then C\$14.99 (£8.90) and now C\$19.99 (£11.87) a month.

“People were asking to buy pictures, but I didn’t feel safe exchanging bank details or sending pictures with background data on Instagram.” Such platforms act as virtual shop windows for creators’ monetised channels such as OnlyFans.

A lot of people say, ‘What about your future prospects, having things searchable online?’ But they aren’t paying my bills

Candace has 100 fans now, [more than 37,000 TikTok followers](#) and 5,000 on Instagram, as well as a presence on Twitter, Tumblr and Reddit. On OnlyFans, pictures include hair closeups and screenshots from self-pleasure videos. “I have followers with different preferences. I try to offer a good split.” She posts images through the month, plus one pay-to-view video containing more adult content, and spends 10 to 20 hours a week creating content. She’s used some of her OnlyFans earnings, which total about C\$20,000 (£11,879) a year, to buy ring lights, a tripod and laptop.

There are other benefits, too: “Hair is an extension of the nervous system, so it became more sensual and stimulating to me on a personal level.” But her move to paid-for content wasn’t without reservations. “A lot of people say, ‘What about your future prospects, having things searchable online?’ I have religious, conservative family members who thought I was better where I

was, but that wasn't where I wanted to be. Whatever anyone else thought, they weren't paying my bills."

Her narcolepsy leaves Candace fatigued, so she puts boundaries in place: "I respond to fan messages by being kind and polite, but don't get into conversations. I protect my energy. I'm very much in control of the work I produce and how I put it out there. There are so many other jobs where people put in long hours and overtime that are harder on your body and mind. I can create on my own time and be present for my daughter, too." Her 15-year-old is accepting of her work, she says. "It's not something I keep hidden. I believe in telling the truth to your children to the extent of their maturity and understanding. My grandparents have some concerns, but it's a space they don't know.

"When I meet people, I introduce myself as an artist. I might assess how open they are to hearing I'm also an erotic artist. It has to be the right audience. This whole thing has been empowering," she adds. "I'm not making crazy money, but I can buy all the groceries I want. And I enjoy it.

Everyone else is spending money getting rid of their body hair, but I make money keeping mine."

## Fingernails

**Johana, 32, Middle East**



Johana: ‘Pictures like this are selling all around the world now.’ Photograph: [@johanas\\_nailz/Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/johanas_nailz/)

To her family and friends, Johana is someone who loves posting pictures on social media. What none of them knows is that she is also selling videos of her long, painted fingernails. Her online persona is the antithesis of her day job: “I’m an engineer, so the nails thing is just something I came by,” she says over direct message [on Instagram](https://www.instagram.com). She uses the platform to post and sell pictures of her brightly coloured, 1.5in square-tipped nails, and shares her videos on [TikTok](https://www.tiktok.com), too. In one, her aquamarine talons are seen handling a blister pack of Strepsils throat sweets, an exact colour match for her manicure, which she does herself, changing the colour every two to three days.

“My people don’t know I sell nail content,” she says, “they just know I love posting. My custom content starts at \$25 (£20), but videos doing or touching things can bring in up to \$100 (£81) each.” She takes requests over DM and payment via PayPal. “I’ve been posting for years, but last year I started to sell custom nail content, for those who see them as sexy.”

People are all different. Some demand extra length, some ask me to scratch objects or place my nails on body parts

People loved my pictures. Then a friend online asked me to do a custom video for him and said he'd pay. I said, 'Why not?'

Pictures like this are selling all around the world now. Every human has one or two things that make them feel 'it' and they're ready to spend money on. Not all nails look good enough to sell, though."

As making money goes, it's low maintenance: "It's nails. It's not hurting anyone's dignity to take photos or videos of them. I hear from boys and girls. I've found friends online, other creators or watchers, and we chat a lot. People are all different. Some demand extra length, some ask me to hold or scratch objects or place my nails on body parts. It's something I enjoy that brings in money at the same time."

## Bendy thumbs

Holly, 29, New Zealand



Holly: 'My first customer wanted pictures of my thumbs on steering wheels.' Photograph: [@bendythumbsNZ/Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/bendythumbsnz/)

"It's a side hustle I wanted to turn full-time," says Holly, who works in the construction industry and launched an OnlyFans profile last year after

spotting an opportunity to commodify her double-jointed thumbs. “I thought about it for months, then one day, after a bad day at work, I thought, ‘Let’s do it, someone out there must have a thing for hitchhiker thumbs.’ My husband and I both work in stressful jobs with high burnout. I wanted to try to build an income that would let us step away from that and get our lives back.”

Holly set up profiles on Instagram, Twitter and Reddit, and used a Linktree to tease subscribers on to her OnlyFans page – a tried-and-tested creator formula for gathering followers willing to pay. “One of the early pictures I posted, [on Twitter](#), was my hand pressing down on my desk at work, so buyers saw the bend.

I uploaded a few pictures over a couple of weeks, then this guy contacted me from Europe who wanted pictures of my thumbs resting on steering wheels. That was my first customer.”

He became her top spender and one of 80 subscribers to her pay-to-view content, where photos cost NZ\$20 (£10) and five-minute videos sell for NZ\$90 (£44). “We ended up speaking most days. Our conversations have been genuinely enjoyable. He talks about his life. It has crossed my mind what he’s doing with my content but I just shoot that thought away and get on with it.”

You’re always going to get filthy messages, but for the most part they’re quite sweet

The pictures on Holly’s social media feeds feature her thumbs [angled against everyday objects](#), including a shopping trolley, fruit and a festive bauble, or suggestively resting against her made-up lips. A few months in, she expanded her repertoire [to feature gloves](#): “Someone saw my hand pictures and said they’d love to see them in gloves. I thought, ‘Oh yes, that’s a thing,’ so I put some plastic disposable gloves in the supermarket trolley and gave that a try.”

Palms get a reaction, too: “I get messages saying, ‘I’d love to have that over my mouth.’ I’m like, ‘Sure.’ You’re always going to get filthy messages, but

for the most part they're quite sweet. I often get, 'I hope you don't mind me saying that your hands are really lovely.'”

Holly kept her identity secret, choosing to post as BendyThumbsNZ instead. She says: “I wanted to be faceless and not have my name attached. I have a unique job and it would be easy to track me down. People view it as a bit dirty or gross. I worry they would see me as unprofessional or odd, and I don't want someone telling me I should or shouldn't be doing this. Everyone is a consenting adult.” She chose to tell only her best friend and husband: “He isn't really into the hands thing. He just leaves me to it.”

A USP such as double-jointed digits stands out from the crowd, so has the potential to become prime money-making content. Holly's growth was part organic, part informed; she researched poses, learning which get the most likes, joined creator communities and advice threads online, and joined forces with others, promoting one another's work. But after less than a year she called time on the hustle, unable to make it pay, posting on her social channels: “This has been fun but I don't have anything left to give y'all so I'm taking an indefinite break.” Nonetheless, she reflects on her OnlyFans stint fondly: “I thought this whole endeavour would be purely business, but it's fun and rewarding when you put a picture out there. It's been a weird confidence boost having people calling me a goddess.”

*Some names have been changed.*

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Rev Richard Coles: 'My guiltiest pleasure? Top Gear.' Photograph: Eyevine

[The Q&ALife and style](#)

**Rev Richard Coles: 'The best kiss of my life? At school, in the boys' toilets. It**

# **made my knees tremble'**

The author and radio presenter on Ibiza 1990, the bad boys of Brexit and his infamous Strictly paso doble

Rosanna Greenstreet

Sat 10 Jun 2023 04.30 EDT Last modified on Sat 10 Jun 2023 16.53 EDT

Born in Northampton, the Rev Richard Coles, 61, was in 1980s pop duo the Communards, whose hits include Don't Leave Me This Way. He went on to study theology at King's College London and was ordained as an Anglican clergyman in 2005. From 2011 to 2023, he [co-presented Saturday Live](#) on BBC Radio 4. His books include [The Madness of Grief](#) about the loss of his partner, David, in 2019. His second novel, [A Death in the Parish](#), has just been published. Last year, he retired from his Northamptonshire parish and now lives in Sussex.

**When were you happiest?**

Technically, Ibiza 1990, because of the amount of ecstasy I'd taken.

**What was your most embarrassing moment?**

My paso doble on Strictly Come Dancing would be hard to beat.

**Describe yourself in three words**

Flibbertigibbet, will-o'-the-wisp, clown.

**What makes you unhappy?**

Halitosis.

**What is your most unappealing habit?**

When I'm playing the piano and concentrating, my mouth hangs open – it's like something from a horror film.

**What did you want to be when you were growing up?**

A great composer. I wrote to Benjamin Britten to tell him this and that he was my third favourite composer. For some reason he didn't feel moved to reply.

**What is the worst thing anyone's said to you?**

"I could never love you like that."

**Would you choose fame or anonymity?**

Fame.

**What was the last lie you told?**

Yesterday, I overstayed in a hospital car park. I pretended I was a bumbling old fool and they let me off.

**What is your guiltiest pleasure?**

Top Gear.

**What or who is the greatest love of your life?**

I'm not sure if I've had it yet.

**What does love feel like?**

The best thing in the world.

**What was the best kiss of your life?**

It was a boy at school and, out of the blue, he kissed me in the boys' toilets and it made my knees tremble.

**Which living person do you most despise, and why?**

I try not to do that, but I do struggle with the bad boys of Brexit, I'm afraid.

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**Which word or phrase do you most overuse?**

“I”.

**If you could edit your past, what would you change?**

My financial incompetence.

**When's the last time you changed your mind about something significant?**

I was a republican who is now a monarchist. I don't want to stand outside Sandringham and give a teddy bear to Prince George, but I've come to reluctantly think that constitutional monarchy might be quite a good way of doing things.

**How often do you have sex?**

Things are looking up, let me put it that way.

**Would you rather have more sex, money or fame?**

Sex.

**How would you like to be remembered?**

With an international holiday.

**What is the most important lesson life has taught you?**

Don't overcook pasta.

**What happens when we die?**

I've no idea, but I have the expectation that there's more coming.

**Tell us a secret**

I have a natural aptitude for the trampoline.

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Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

[Blind date](#)[Dating](#)

**Blind date: ‘I guessed she was Canadian – she’s from Glasgow’**

Alison, 29, a data scientist meets Emma, 29, a policy officer

Sat 10 Jun 2023 01.00 EDT



## **Alison on Emma**

### **What were you hoping for?**

A good story and to rack up a bill that would give me nightmares if I were paying myself. And potentially to meet the love of my life.

### **First impressions?**

Friendly, chatty and slightly nervous. She had studied the menu beforehand and had some recommendations ready (I'm veggie), which was impressive.

### **What did you talk about?**

The amount of sport she does. Favourite places to travel. The queer takeover of our households. The chutney collection on the table. And, in true lesbian fashion, The L Word.

## **Q&A**

### **Fancy a 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.

**Most awkward moment?**

She asked what flavour my cocktail was; I thought intensely about it for 10 seconds, but still couldn't answer. She informed me after taking a sip.

**Good table manners?**

Definitely. I appreciated that she threw in a couple of extras when ordering – including the infamous chutney.

**Best thing about Emma?**

How passionate she is: about her job, hobbies, her volunteering and – most importantly – how to order a small feast.

**Would you introduce Emma to your friends?**

Absolutely, one flatmate in particular ...

**Describe Emma in three words.**

Unorganised (her word, not mine), outgoing and active.

**What do you think Emma made of you?**

Hopefully that I was nice, even if I need to work on my cocktail identifying skills.

**Did you go on somewhere?**

Only to the tube but since my train was already there I had to sprint off rather abruptly.

**And ... did you kiss?**

No gossip to report.

**If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?**

I would've skipped lunch – my paneer was too good to be abandoned like that.

**Marks out of 10?**

A solid 8.

**Would you meet again?**

I'm not sure our paths will cross.



Alison (left) and Emma on their date



## **Emma on Alison**

**What were you hoping for?**

A romcom style meet-cute.

**First impressions?**

Attractive. Not someone I already knew.

**What did you talk about?**

Star signs – the restaurant had lesbian culture sorted, with custom cocktails based on our signs. The L Word and other terrible lesbian TV. Climbing and cycling. Whisky and ceilidhs.

**Most awkward moment?**

Guessing that she was Canadian when she's from Glasgow.

**Good table manners?**

Impeccable – she even cut her naan with a knife and fork.

**Best thing about Alison?**

Willingness to embrace after-dinner cocktails and letting me live vicariously via her cheese-filled menu choices.

**Would you introduce Alison to your friends?**

Yes, I can think of a few she'd get on well with.

**Describe Alison in three words.**

Friendly, balanced (a classic Virgo), gay.

**What do you think Alison made of you?**

Probably very chatty (too chatty?) and not quite right for her – but hopefully not one for the worst date list.

**Did you go on somewhere?**

We walked to the tube together – and split to go north and south.

**And ... did you kiss?**

I'd say a lady doesn't kiss and tell, but there's nothing to tell.

**If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?**  
It was nice but missing a spark.

**Marks out of 10?**

7.

**Would you meet again?**

I might bump into her bouldering.

*Alison and Emma ate at [Farzi](#), London SW1. Fancy a blind date? Email [blind.date@theguardian.com](mailto:blind.date@theguardian.com)*

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## 2023.06.10 - Opinion

- Boris Johnson's disheartening, shoddy honours list is an apt political epitaph
- It took me a long time, but I've finally fallen in love with being gay
- Labour's green pledge offers everything voters want: to delay it would be foolish
- The charges mount, but Trump's not worried. He's just the guy to make jail great again



Did the people Boris Johnson put forward for public honour serve him or serve the country? Photograph: Peter Nicholls/Reuters

[Opinion](#)[Boris Johnson](#)

## **Boris Johnson's disheartening, shoddy honours list is an apt political epitaph**

[Hugh Muir](#)



The ex-PM leaves parliament with a list evoking all that was wrong with his chaotic and damaging years in office

- [\*\*Boris Johnson resigns as MP with immediate effect over Partygate report\*\*](#)

Fri 9 Jun 2023 14.57 EDT Last modified on Sat 10 Jun 2023 01.47 EDT

If nothing became Boris Johnson more than the manner of his leaving No 10, nothing says more about the political rot he accelerated than [the honours list](#) that trails behind him and his announcement on Friday night that he will quit parliament having been told he faces ignominious suspension.

To scan [the list](#) that was perhaps his final act in frontline politics is to relive the era of cronyism and maladministration that he inflicted on the country. It redefined the very idea of honours as a reward for public service, replacing it with the sort of cheap favour you bestow on friends by buying them a seaside hat or a round in the pub.

Priti Patel, who took the Tory hostile environment badge of shame and wore it as a badge of honour, who as home secretary presided over a degradation of policing that has become [a crisis of public trust](#), becomes a dame. Jacob Rees-Mogg, chief apologist for the chaos and deficiencies of the Johnson years in government, gets a knighthood.

Amid the continuing search for answers as to why the response of his administration to Covid was so poor, Johnson unveils a list containing honours and preferment for some of his aides who allegedly joined him at No 10 in ignoring the safety rules they had imposed on the rest of the population. If they partied then, they will party even harder now.

A damehood for arch Brexiteer Andrea Marie Jenkyns, Tory MP, former assistant whip, under-secretary for skills and Johnson enthusiast. What exceptional form does her public service take in our democracy to see her singled out for an honour?

Last year as education minister, her response to a group exercising their right to protest outside No 10 was [to show them her middle finger](#). She [shed a tear](#) last summer as Johnson resigned from No 10. She'll feel better now as a dame, if a little teary for him again as he flounces away completely.

A knighthood for Michael Fabricant, another disciple of the Johnson religion, who served as the administration's equivalent of [Comical Ali](#), Saddam Hussein's much derided and deluded minister of information, who was always ready to challenge facts with alternative narratives.

Fabricant deserves his elevation solely for the effort he made [to save Johnson from Partygate disgrace](#). "These were people who had been working 18 hours a day and one thing about Boris, if he's got a fault, it's that he's too loyal to the people who work around him, and he understood how tense and tired they were," [he said at the time](#). Johnson is loyal, until he is not.

He was all rage while [announcing his resignation](#), braying at those who might hold him culpable for his behaviour. In the aftermath, many will examine his honours list and the question they should ask is this: did all of these people serve the public, or did too many serve the progress and

interests of Boris Johnson? Any cursory examination of his time in office will show that the two imperatives were not the same.

We may soon know why his father Stanley did not make the list, despite wide speculation that he might do so. And we can be relieved that Nadine Dorries, who rose high in Johnson's administration without anyone but him ever knowing what was her intrinsic value to public administration, was also omitted. Relieved that – with “immediate effect” – she has stepped down as an MP.

He joins her in exile, his epitaph a disheartening list, a shoddy list. But it is his list, and every bit him.

- Hugh Muir is a Guardian columnist
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I've always found that the tastes you have to acquire are the ones you become the most obsessed with.' Eleanor Margolis. Photograph: Eleanor Margolis

[Opinion](#)[Sexuality](#)

**It took me a long time, but I've finally fallen in love with being gay**

[Eleanor Margolis](#)



I owe my happiness to the queer friends I made. And to my younger self who hated being gay: all is forgiven

Sat 10 Jun 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 10 Jun 2023 07.20 EDT

I was lying awake the other night, thinking about death, when I realised something big. Of all the things I could be reincarnated as – a tapeworm, a dung beetle, a writer (again) – the thing I most fear is coming back as straight. Honestly, the idea sends a shiver down my spine. Because, no disrespect to my straight friends, but I don't know how they get through the day. Straight women, in particular. I don't understand how they go through life, dealing with the whole power dynamic in opposite-sex relationships, without even the option of dating other women. I don't think I could hack it, and they have my utmost respect.

It's not just the romantic side of things, though – over the years, being gay has shifted my entire worldview. It's made me think twice about every social norm, from the nuclear family to uncomfortable footwear. And I'm not saying that all straight people lack the imagination to challenge these things too, but being gay really helps. Recently, it dawned on me that I'm perfectly within my right to shop for clothes in the men's section, and that in itself has been a revelation. Again, I know straight women who do this. But when it

comes to wearing “men’s” clothes with any real ease and confidence, being a lesbian just *helps*.

Ultimately, what I realised as I lay in bed is that I’ve fallen in love with being gay. And this is something that’s taken me a long, long time. A lot like learning to appreciate blue cheese, it’s been a slow burn. But I’ve always found that the tastes you have to acquire are the ones you become the most obsessed with, and protective of.

When I was 21, 13 years ago, I hated being gay. I even [wrote an article](#) about the isolation and frustration I felt after coming out for this same publication. It came from a place of hurt, and I regret having written it. I’d just finished uni and, despite having lived in Brighton for three years, I had hardly any queer friends. My first relationship with a girl had lasted a couple of months and, although it was some of the best fun I’d ever had, it ended badly. I took my heartbreak and anger out on my sexuality. I was determined to “pass” as straight, and could only bring myself to wear my first of many pairs of DMs with a floral tea dress (thank you, 2010). Mentally, I was in no place to write about being gay. Not publicly, anyway.

Recently though, I got an email from someone telling me she identified with that article. She told me that, for her, being gay was still a struggle. Mid-culture wars; mid moral-panic in which we’re – just like during the bad old days of section 28 – being accused of “grooming” children, queer people are still struggling and that should come as no surprise. But to hate ourselves, rather than those who hate *us* for no good reason, is a tragedy.

The sender asked me how I’d managed to make being gay work for me, and – in my reply – I told her it was the people. In my early 20s, I moved back to London and discovered the lesbian scene there. It was the golden age of Dalston, in east London, and I went to club nights with names like “Twat Boutique”. I made a tonne of new, queer friends, and to every single one of them, I owe my happiness as a gay woman. Their confidence became mine. To every woman I dated (even the ones who dumped me), to every gender bender I danced badly with, and to every gorgeous butch elder who consoled me in a toilet queue when I was sad about a woman who dumped me, I thank you from the bottom of my gay little heart. At the risk of this sounding

like an acceptance speech for the “good for her, she’s wearing a tux” Oscar, I’d also like to thank the beautiful woman I’m engaged to, for obvious reasons.

I forgive the young woman who wrote that original article, and I hope you can too. That is, anyone who may have been upset or influenced by the writing of someone in so much pain. I only wish I could put my arm around her and tell her how happy she’s going to be.

- Eleanor Margolis is a columnist for the i newspaper and Diva
  - *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).*
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Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar, Labour leader Keir Starmer and shadow climate change secretary Ed Miliband visit the Beatrice wind farm in Scotland, 24 May 2023. Photograph: Paul Campbell/PA

[OpinionLabour](#)

## **Labour's green pledge offers everything voters want: to delay it would be foolish**

[Rebecca Newsom](#)



Swift investment would make any Labour government a climate and economic leader – so why the dithering?

Sat 10 Jun 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 10 Jun 2023 06.47 EDT

As [wildfire smoke engulfs](#) much of the east coast of the US and average global temperatures continue to rise, with the world imminently facing some of the [hottest years on record](#), it would be an error of judgment for the Labour party to delay [its green investment pledge](#). Doing so would not only be a mistake for our economy and the climate, but also threaten Labour's electoral prospects, given strong public demand for bold action on this issue.

Together with its world-leading promise to [end all new domestic oil and gas](#) developments, the Labour party's £28bn-a-year investment pledge to green industries marks the scale of climate ambition we need to see from a future British government. These commitments mark Labour out as a potential major climate leader and, like Joe Biden's landmark [Inflation Reduction Act \(IRA\)](#), the investment pledge clearly demonstrates that the party is in tune with the economic realities of today's world.

So it was concerning to hear of Labour's plans to delay the full rolling out of its green investment programme in the news on Friday morning. The party would do well to consider three important factors that show it would be nonsensical to dither on allocating the full £28bn-a-year investment in green infrastructure as soon as possible.

First, investing in the clean, green economy has huge public support and will be a vote-winner at next year's election. [Polling shows](#) that Labour's £28bn-a-year pledge is widely popular. Further [polls show](#) that 71% of Britons support greater investment in renewable energy, while, [across all voter groups](#), people want the government to do more on the climate crisis.

Voters understand that, given the trajectory of the climate crisis, global economics and technology, the way to grow the economy and create quality secure jobs of the future is through green investment.

Second, large-scale green infrastructure investment is an enormous economic opportunity that should be seized right now. The [global race to dominate green tech industries](#) is well under way, with the US, China and the EU leading the pack. But a lack of vision, ambition, policies and investment from the current government means [the UK isn't even off the starting blocks](#). Without the necessary immediate investment we won't catch up, and risk throwing in the towel on the prospect of [creating thousands of jobs](#) needed as we inevitably phase out fossil fuels.

While concerns around fiscal discipline are completely understandable, Labour also needs to remember that green infrastructure spending is now one of the [best economic growth generators](#) and therefore borrowing to fund such investment will pay for itself. In addition, there needs to be a greater appreciation of the fact that climate breakdown itself is a threat to fiscal stability – the [Bank of England has outlined the risks](#) posed to the financial stability of our country if dangers associated with the climate crisis are not incorporated into fiscal policymaking. Simply put, it would be bad economics to say that we can't afford this now.

Finally, there are many other ways to generate additional revenue to fund the scale of green investment needed now. Introducing taxes on big polluters –

such as an incineration tax, a [frequent flyer levy](#) and a [loophole-free oil and gas windfall tax](#) – could be used to help shift behaviour and make companies pay for the damage they're causing, both here in the UK and overseas. Redirecting fossil fuel subsidies, and investment from dirty infrastructure such as new road building, could free up billions of pounds. And introducing a new green wealth tax, since the [wealthiest 1% of humanity are responsible for twice as many emissions](#) as the poorest 50%, could also help tackle inequality, while generating yet more revenue for green and other vital public services investment.

The Labour party must stand by its £28bn-a-year green investment pledge without delay, and put forward a roadmap for how the money will be spent in the runup to the next election – so voters can be sure the party really means what it says.

This, alongside a clear and detailed plan for how the party will support all workers to access the secure, quality green jobs of the future that this investment will create, will help to build the party's credibility as a climate and economic leader and garner the support of the electorate ahead of next year's general election. Labour mustn't let this go.

- Rebecca Newsom is head of politics at Greenpeace
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‘It’s fashionable to say that anything that would represent a catastrophic setback for any other human being is exactly what Trump would have wanted.’ Photograph: Andrew Harnik/AP

[Opinion](#)[Donald Trump](#)

## **The charges mount, but Trump's not worried. He's just the guy to make jail great again**

[Marina Hyde](#)



There's no telling how many indictments he will collect before the election. And the sad fact is that his party doesn't seem to care

Fri 9 Jun 2023 08.30 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Jun 2023 11.50 EDT

Donald Trump [announced](#) his latest indictment last night in front of a painting of a guy literally twirling his moustache. “I am an innocent man,” the former president insisted, next to this cartoon shorthand for villainy. The oil painting in question is not so much an artwork as a lift-music version of an artwork, and seems to hang at Trump’s Bedminster golf club in New Jersey – which is the same place he [buried his former wife Ivana](#), as all admirers of both exquisite taste and private-cemetery tax breaks may already know. Either way, Ivana’s there, right near the first tee. It’s what she would have wanted.

As for her surviving ex-husband, it’s fashionable to say that anything that would represent a catastrophic setback for any other human being is exactly what Trump would have wanted. By this metric, his [indictment on federal charges](#) for the first time, including [under the Espionage Act](#), is an absolute gift and a triumph. He’ll use it to pull in fundraising, it’ll rally his base, it’ll make every Republican beta – which is to say, every Republican – feel they have to swear loyalty to him. Furthermore, it’s already got him right where

he most loves to be: with everyone talking about him. And these are all reasonable points – or at least reasonable in a through-the-looking-glass way, given that to many outside observers the United States passed reason two or three election cycles ago. If only they could invade themselves to bring democracy.

Even so, it must be said the Espionage Act is one of the not-great laws to allegedly break, rather like obstruction of justice, of which Trump also stands accused. Individuals convicted of those felonies can face long stretches in facilities that are often entirely oil painting-free, and have never even been offered the chance to host a golf major. They do, however, have “lively” canteens and communal areas, which could make Mr Clubhouse feel at home.

As always with this defendant, however, let’s not run ahead of ourselves. Trump has been indicted by the justice department on seven counts that are still under seal, but relate to his mishandling and retention of classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida. He is due in court on Tuesday in Miami. Following an incomplete search of his Palm Beach estate and club last year by members of his own legal team, then an [FBI raid](#) some months later, the documents saga constitutes something Trump keeps calling the “boxes hoax”. Quick note on vocab: down the rabbit hole we all descended some years ago now, “hoax” is the antidote to “-gate”: a sort of all-purpose bolt-on Trump can use to dismiss any scandal. Once he’s called it a hoax, the true scandal becomes the fact that anyone is trying to tar him with scandal. Trump himself becomes the poor local innocent who is being persecuted on account of his being mildly unconventional. See also: “witch-hunt”.

To Mar-a-Lago, then, where someone saw Goody Trump with a classified document about [Iran’s missile programme](#). And another about US intelligence work in China. And at least a hundred other mildly unconventional classified souvenirs of his time in office. Clearly, these are the sorts of keepsakes that any of us, had we ascended to the presidency, may afterwards wish to retain and transport to our home, which is also a members’ club thronging with hundreds of terrible people at any given time.

Anyone now taking the opportunity to chant “Lock him up!” is indulging in pure McCarthyism.

Unfortunately, that is not how Jack Smith, special counsel for the documents investigation, seems to have seen it. I am also confused that Mr Smith has not accepted Trump’s earlier suggestion that he [could declassify documents](#) merely by thinking about it. Last September, the former president told Fox News: “There doesn’t have to be a process, as I understand it.” Yet according to that old spoilsport “the law”, there apparently does. So here we are.

In terms of where Trump himself is, it’s complicated. He’s the hot favourite for the Republican nomination, and also the defendant or potential defendant in a number of ongoing legal actions. There simply isn’t the space to recap all of them, but the standouts are the charges of hush-money payments to Stormy Daniels, on which he has already been [indicted](#) by Manhattan state prosecutors, and the federal criminal [investigation](#) into his attempts to overturn the 2020 election results, which remains in train and for which Smith is also the special counsel.

Speaking of McCarthys, finally, the house speaker, Kevin McCarthy, reacted to news of the Trump indictment in that hyper-partisan, truth-free way that has become so commonplace that it should surely redefine “McCarthyism” for our own era. Having [begun with a false claim](#) (that Joe Biden indicted Trump), Kevin sought to delegitimise a legitimate process before kowtowing to Trump in entirely abject style. Even Trump’s not-very-arch rival for the Republican nomination, Ron DeSantis, was too weak to do anything other than obediently defend Trump – while elsewhere, a [new poll](#) found that 43% of Republicans believed Trump should be allowed to serve again even if he were convicted of a felony. However positive some may feel about the charges, the whole picture is – how to put this? – no oil painting. Ultimately, Trump will be easier to deal with than the culture he has created.

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist

- On Tuesday 13 June, Marina Hyde will join Gary Younge at a Guardian Live event in [Brighton](#). Readers can join this event in person
  - What Just Happened?! by Marina Hyde (Guardian Faber, £9.99). To support the Guardian and Observer, order your copy at [guardianbookshop.com](#). Delivery charges may apply
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Damas Gisimba, centre, sheltered more than 400 children and adults in his Kigali orphanage. Photograph: Gisimba Memorial Center Photograph: Gisimba Memorial Center

[Global development](#)

## **Hero who saved hundreds of children during Rwandan genocide dies aged 61**

Orphanage run by Damas Gisimba and his brother became refuge from militias during genocide that killed 800,000 Rwandans

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[Sarah Johnson](#)

Sat 10 Jun 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 10 Jun 2023 01.07 EDT

Damas Gisimba, who sheltered and saved the lives of hundreds of people during the [Rwandan genocide](#), has died. He was 61.

In 1994, Gisimba and his brother were running an orphanage founded by their parents in Kigali, the Rwandan capital.

On 6 April, the plane carrying the Rwandan president, Juvénal Habyarimana, was shot down and his death was blamed on Tutsi rebels. Within hours, Kigali was surrounded by roadblocks and [the slaughter of Tutsi](#) families by Hutu forces began. The following day, people started arriving at the orphanage seeking shelter.

His death is a loss for the Rwandan people. There are people who survived because of him

*Eustochie Sezibera, CorpsAfrica Rwanda*

Over the next three months, Gisimba, who was of mixed Hutu-Tutsi ethnicity but had a Hutu ID card, and his brother, Jean-Francois, sheltered

more than 400 children and adults who hid in the attic, the basement and in locked rooms.

“Damas is the reason why me and my family are alive today,” said Sonia Mugabo, a 33-year-old fashion designer, who was four when the genocide started. “In the 1994 genocide, we were living next to the orphanage. He welcomed our family – he saved our lives.”

Mugabo’s lawyer father, Pio, was a member of the opposition Liberal party and on a list of those to be murdered. After the genocide, in which an estimated 800,000 people were murdered, he served as social welfare minister in the transitional national government.

Gisimba hid the Mugabo family at great personal risk to himself and others in the orphanage. Had the militia found out they would have killed everyone.

“Gisimba is a hero and someone we’ll always remember,” said Mugabo. “He is someone I’m going to tell my child about.”



Damas Gisimba in 2019 with pictures of the children he saved during the Rwandan genocide. Photograph: Emmanuel Kwizera

Gisimba kept people alive for months with the help of Red Cross parcels. He negotiated with the militia for the orphanage’s survival.

“My brother would go for a beer with the killers,” Jean-Francois [said in 2011](#). “He would say: ‘Don’t come, don’t panic the kids’, but he was also protecting the adults inside. He was pretending to be with them.”

Patrick Gisimba Rutikanga, his eldest son, worked with his father at the orphanage, which is now called the [Gisimba Memorial Center](#) and provides after-school programmes. He said: “It is very hard to find words to describe him. He was so many things – he was kind and caring to so many children. His laugh was immense.”

He remembers his father telling him stories about the genocide when he was growing up. On one occasion, a militia turned up at the orphanage with machetes and threatened to kill Gisimba, his wife and Rutikanga, who was a baby at the time.

Standing between them and his family, Gisimba glared at the men and growled: “You want to kill my wife and son? Go ahead, but kill me first and stick the knife in my stomach.” The militiamen left.

“He told me he felt like he had the strength of God to be able to say that,” said Rutikanga.

On another occasion, at night, Gisimba pulled two women, barely alive, from a mass grave dug near the orphanage; one of them was so badly wounded he had to carry her on his back.

After the genocide, children who had lost their parents continued to turn up at the orphanage seeking help. Despite financial troubles, Gisimba cared for them and made sure they were all fed and going to school, according to Jonathan Salt, a teacher in the UK who is writing a book about Gisimba’s life.

“His death is a blow to humanity,” said Salt. “He was one of the bravest people I know.”

Gisimba was awarded the Presidential Order of *Umurinzi* (protector) in recognition of his actions during the genocide.

“His death is a loss for his family and for the Rwandan people in general,” said Eustochie Sezibera, country director of CorpsAfrica Rwanda, a volunteer development charity. “There are people who survived because of him. He’s a hero for many.”

Gisimba had been living with hypertension and kidney problems for the last years of his life. He died at his home in Kigali last Sunday. His funeral will be held in Kigali on Saturday.

He is survived by his wife, Beatrice, his sons Patrick, Cedrick and Bertrand, and daughter, Benita.

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In the poll, 72% of Germans said they ‘typically’ tip in restaurants, compared with 55% in the UK. Photograph: innovatedcaptures/Getty/iStockphoto

[Germany](#)

## **Germans best tippers in Europe, finds poll. Italians? Not so much**

Dutiful German generosity revealed in analysis of gratuity habits in six EU countries, the UK and US

*Jon Henley* Europe correspondent, *Philip Oltermann* in Berlin, and *Angela Giuffrida* in Rome

Sat 10 Jun 2023 03.00 EDT

In [Germany](#) it seems to be pretty much automatic, pretty much all the time. In France and Spain it all depends – presumably on social subtleties that you have to be French or Spanish to understand. In Italy, why would you even bother?

When, and how much, to tip is a question that has been vexing visitors to [Europe](#) for as long as people have been travelling around the continent. Outside their own country, it seems even Europeans don't know the answer.

According to new polling by YouGov in six EU countries, Britain and the US (where, as most visitors know but may be reluctant to acknowledge, gratuities may make up [more than half your waitperson's income](#)), Europeans are deeply divided on tipping.

In restaurants, for example, 72% of respondents in Germany told the pollster they “typically” tipped: almost the same as the US. In the UK, where an optional service charge of about 12.5% is usually included, 55% said they left a gratuity.

The figure in Spain, where service is often included in restaurant bills but diners can leave optional tips, was 46%, while in France, where every price on a restaurant menu already includes 15% for service, 34% of people said they generally tipped on top.

Even in Sweden, where [tips are generally not expected](#), the figure was 31%. But only 24% of Italians said they would typically leave a gratuity after a meal out – with a rather greater proportion (29%) admitting they never left a cent.

### [graphic on tipping in Europe](#)

The divide was equally plain where service charges, optional or otherwise, were less common. At the hairdresser's, for example, 56% of Germans said they usually tipped, against 32% of Britons, 25% of Spaniards, 21% of French people – and just 8% of Italians.

Hotels and taxis showed a similar pattern: 37% of Germans said they usually tipped concierges and 40% tipped taxi drivers – more, even, than Americans. For Italians, however, the figures were 14% and 3%, with other Europeans somewhere in between.

Bar staff in Germany, likewise, could expect half of their customers to be regular tippers, compared with 47%, 24% and 16% in the US, France and

Spain. Only 9% of Italians said they routinely left coins on the counter when paying for their drink.

In terms of amounts, Britons and Germans were most likely to leave 10%; Italians, Spaniards and French 5%; and Americans 20%. By far the most common reason for tipping was “to reward good service”, followed by “I feel I have to” – although other reasons, notably in Germany, included: “That’s just how it should be.”



Only 24% of Italians said they would typically leave a gratuity after a meal out. Photograph: JackF/Getty/iStockphoto

A startling 42% of respondents in the US, however, and 17% of Germans – by far the most in Europe – confessed they would tip sometimes or often even if the service was “terrible”, indicating that for some, tipping is not about quality of service at all.

The findings of the survey will come as a surprise in Germany, a country that does not generally think of itself as a nation of happy distributors of *Trinkgeld* (the word, in a similar vein to *pourboire* in French, means “drinking money”).

Nor is Germany a country whose service staff are particularly customer friendly: in Berlin, a glass of beer or a plate of food is often served in a huff

rather than with a smile. Not for nothing is *Servicewüste Deutschland* (“Germany is a service desert”) a thing.

Yet the data reflects a clear trend: Germans tend to hand over a few extra coins, irrespective of how they have been treated. They are the nation in Europe least likely to not tip even for poor service, and the most willing to pay extra for average service.

A continuing fondness for cash may be a factor, with many taxi drivers and bars still refusing payment by card. A growing awareness of labour shortages in the catering sector could also explain a change in attitude.

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With many bars and cafes, even in big cities, reducing their opening hours due to a post-pandemic lack of staff, some barkeepers say their customers have recently become more generous tippers.

But if German tipping habits seem ingrained, they are not always observed. Adding 10% is a generally accepted rule, but not always followed. “Most customers pay me €2-3 extra,” said Mehmet Dogan, a Berlin taxi driver.

“But the 10% rule doesn’t apply to longer journeys. I don’t think I have been given a €5 tip in 20 years of doing my job. If someone slipped me a fiver, I’d

assume they made a mistake.”



Germans tend to hand over a few extra coins, irrespective of how they have been treated. Photograph: Graham Turner/The Guardian

Matthew Smith, YouGov’s head of data journalism, said some may be surprised by the revelation that “Germans are just as likely [as Americans] to tip service workers – not least because service attitudes in Germany have previously been so bad that the government felt the need to address it before the country hosted the 2006 World Cup.”

In Italy, Tiziana Nicolosi, who manages Quirino, a bar and restaurant in central Rome, said the country simply “doesn’t have a culture for tipping. We’re not like Americans or the British. We might do it occasionally, but it’s not something that is expected.”

It is rare to see a tip box by the till in a bar or restaurant in Italy, with some owners deeming such a display unbecoming. Instead, they appreciate the loyalty of regular clientele, who may occasionally leave a little extra after their drink or meal in recognition of quality and service, rather than out of obligation.

Many Italians, however, leave the change after paying a bill. “If a coffee costs 90 cents, then a customer will usually give €1 and let us keep the

change,” said Riccardo Conti, 34, a waiter in Rome. For some customers, leaving the small change is simply a matter of not wanting to hang around, he added.

Personally, Conti said, he bucks the trend of non-tipping Italians. “I always leave a tip, mainly in bars and restaurants,” he said, adding it was “very subjective”.

“It all depends on the individual. It’s a gesture you might see more from people in the south, who are generally more warm and generous than in the north.”

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The trove has a face value of at least \$10,000, but could be worth more than \$1m. Photograph: Image Source/Getty Images

[California](#)

## A million good lucks: California family finds over 1m copper pennies

John Reyes and his family were cleaning out his father-in-law's home when they made the surprise discovery

[Diana Ramirez-Simon](#)

Fri 9 Jun 2023 21.13 EDT Last modified on Sat 10 Jun 2023 09.38 EDT

Cleaning out a house for renovation can oftentimes produce some unsavory surprises, but a family in [Los Angeles](#) got lucky – a million times over – with one of their finds.

John Reyes, a realtor in the Inland Empire area, was helping his wife, Elizabeth, clean out her father's 1900s-era home last year when they

discovered more than 1m copper pennies in a cramped crawlspace in the basement, according to [KTLA news](#). The trove has a face value of at least \$10,000, but could be worth more than \$1m.

The family thinks the home belonging to Reyes's father-in-law, Fritz, was once used as a bed and breakfast. Fritz and his brother, both German immigrants, lived in the home for decades until Fritz died and his brother moved away.

Since then, the family has been cleaning out the home with plans to restore it for the next generation.

"They kept everything," Reyes told KTLA, adding that the home was filled with items of varying levels of importance.

The family's renovating adventure found them rummaging through the very back corner of the basement where they discovered loose pennies held together by disintegrating paper rolls, the [Los Angeles Times reported](#). Further inspection turned up dozens of bank bags filled with the copper coins.

"There are banks [named] on the bags I haven't even heard of or don't exist any more," Reyes said. Dozens of boxes and a few crates, all filled with pennies, followed.

Pennies were initially made of pure copper until the US Mint switched to zinc-covered steel in 1943 because copper was needed for the second world war. By 1982, pennies were primarily zinc.

Fritz most probably started collecting pennies once the US began switching over from copper to zinc, Reyes told the LA Times.

"You have German immigrants who came over very young and these were two great men who thought you should own things that are stored in value," Reyes said. "They don't believe in much besides the value of precious metals."

After confirming that the pennies were the copper version, the family did some rough calculations and estimate that the horde has a \$1m valuation.

But what to do with them?

Reyes spoke with the manager of his local bank, who was in disbelief.

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“I showed her a photo and she was like, ‘I’ve been working with Wells Fargo for forever and I’ve never seen anything like this. You can’t cash these in. There’s a chance you may have valuable pennies,’” he said.

He searched TikTok for penny hunters and eventually posted the coins – the family would prefer to sell the find as a whole – for sale on the resale website OfferUp, asking for \$25,000, but have only received offers from people asking for a fraction of the collection.

For now, the family have hauled the pennies out of the basement crawl space and transported them by truck to Ontario, [California](#), closer to Reyes’s home, and are awaiting more offers on the coins.

The local bank have urged the family to go through the collection and search for any rarities.

Reyes begrudgingly agreed. “You see all these stories of people finding pennies worth \$2m,” he told KTLA. With more than 1m chances, it’s highly

likely the family will get lucky.

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Scenography for the ballet Marionettes Gouache, 1951. Photograph: Tove Jansson Estate

[The Moomins](#)

## Tove Jansson's unseen Moomin sketches to go on show in Paris

Exhibition focuses on life and career of 'brave and uncompromising' Finnish artist and writer

[Kim Willsher](#) in Paris

Sat 10 Jun 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 10 Jun 2023 06.17 EDT

The Finnish artist and writer [Tove Jansson](#) wooed children the world over with her troll creations the Moomins, the central characters in a series of novels, short stories and comic strips.

A new exhibition in Paris is to reveal never publicly seen archive material from the late artist, including a number of Moomin sketches.

Houses of [Tove Jansson](#) will explore the personal life and prolific career of the artist and writer, who died in 2001 aged 86.

Jansson, who studied art and design in Sweden, [Finland](#) and Paris, began writing the Moomin series in 1945. The first book of adventures of the family of three white trolls with hippopotamus noses was not a success, but the second and third in the series brought her recognition. The characters were later turned into television series, featured in films and had their own theme parks.

She also wrote six novels, including *Sommarboken* ([The Summer Book](#)) and five books of short stories for adults as well as poems and plays for radio and theatre.



Tove Jansson: Landscape (picnic), 1930s, gouache. Photograph: Hannu Aaltonen/Tove Jansson Estate

Although known primarily as a writer and illustrator, Jansson painted throughout her life, producing impressionist works in her early years and abstract modern paintings in later life.

In 1966, she was awarded the Hans Christian Andersen medal for her body of work. Much of this was produced in her studio in Helsinki or her home on the small Finnish island of Klovharun.

Thomas Zambra, Jansson's great nephew and a director at [Moomin Characters](#), which manages her legacy, said the exhibition was unique in that it would take a comprehensive look at her personal life and career.

"She felt some of her work was overshadowed by the Moomins but in the last few years there has been renewed interest in her work as a painter, especially in the Nordic countries. This new interest in her artistry is fantastic to see and is something we are proud of," Zambra said.

Jansson had relationships with men and women before meeting the love of her life, the engraver and artist Tuulikki Pietilä at a time when homosexuality was illegal in Finland.

"Tove was a very brave and uncompromising woman in the way she wanted to live both in her work and her personal life. Even though it was illegal she chose to live her whole life with another woman and to dedicate that life to work and art, choosing not to have children and become a mother," Zambra said.



Tove Jansson: Girl smoking, 1940, oil. Photograph: Hannu Aaltonen/Tove Jansson Estate

"We see the values that she stood for in that art – especially the Moomins – and the values that she respected – tolerance, equality, pacifism – are as

relevant today as they were then. This is why her work remains popular with new generations.”

The exhibition will bring together works by other artists that influenced Jansson, as well as a selection of her paintings, drawings, illustrations and texts, some of which have never been seen before in public.



Tove and Moomins characters, undated and unnamed. Photograph: ©Moomin Characters

It will also feature contemporary artists chosen for work that can be directly or indirectly referenced to that of Jansson and a reading room with her work and her personal library.

“This exhibition is really Tove’s life story,” Zambra added.

Houses of Tove Jansson is at 16 Avenue Foch, 75016 Paris, from 29 September-28 October

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The gulf of Pozzuoli. Part of the region is rising because of pressure under the Earth's surface linked to earthquakes. Photograph: anbusiello TW/Alamy  
[Italy](#)

## Parts of Italian volcano ‘stretched nearly to breaking point’, study finds

Campi Flegrei (Phlegraean Fields) near Naples is now in ‘extremely dangerous’ state, say academic experts

*AFP in Rome*

Fri 9 Jun 2023 13.45 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Jun 2023 14.14 EDT

Half a million people live on a sprawling volcano in Italy – and [the risk of an eruption](#) has never been greater, according to a study.

The Campi Flegrei (Phlegraean Fields) volcano may be less well-known than Vesuvius, but is “extremely dangerous”, study co-author Stefano Carlino told AFP.

Vesuvius wiped Pompeii off the map almost two millennia ago, while the vast volcanic Campi Flegrei area near Naples last spewed lava, ashes and rocks in 1538. But the Campi Flegrei is not one to take lightly – the volcano's eruption 30,000 years ago is reported to have contributed to [the extinction of Neanderthal man](#).

It can seem less dangerous than it is because, instead of growing into a traditional mountain, the volcano has the shape of a gentle depression 7.5-8.5 miles (12-14km) across. A resurgence of activity in the early 1980s led to the evacuation of 40,000 inhabitants, but the volcano has been relatively quiet since then.

“We’re not saying there will be an eruption, we are saying that the conditions for an eruption are more favourable,” Christopher Kilburn from University College London told AFP.

The tens of thousands of small earthquakes that have taken place since the 1950s weakened the caldera, the basin at the top of the volcano.

And [the report](#) – published in Nature’s Communications Earth & Environment journal on Friday – found “parts of the volcano had been stretched nearly to breaking point”.

The quakes have been increasing in number since 2019, while the pressure below has been building. The coastal town of Pozzuoli has been lifted by nearly four metres (13ft) – roughly the height of a doubledecker bus – since the 1950s, it said. The tremors and ground uplift are cumulative, meaning volcanic activity does not need to intensify for an eruption to become more likely.

“An eventual eruption could be preceded by relatively weak signals, such as a smaller rate of ground uplift and fewer earthquakes,” the study’s authors said. They point to the eruption of the Rabaul caldera in Papua New Guinea in 1994, which was preceded by small earthquakes occurring at a 10th of the rate than had occurred during a crisis a decade before.

The probability of a big eruption occurring is “very low”, Carlino said. “What is more likely are small eruptions.”

And while the volcano is closer to rupture, that does not necessarily mean an eruption will take place, Kilburn said. Even if the crust cracks, “the magma needs to be pushing up at the right location for the eruption to occur”, he said.

The researchers used a model based on the physics of how rocks break and applied it in real time to the volcano, which is flat and mostly hidden – either under buildings or coastal waters.

They measured the tremors and ground movements and compared them with previous eruptions of other, similar volcanoes.

“We cannot say with certainty what will happen, what matters is being prepared for any eventuality,” Carlino said.

Five hundred thousand people live in what Italy’s civil protection agency has designated the red zone – the area at highest risk. Another 800,000 people live in the yellow zone.

Authorities have drawn up an evacuation plan, under which residents will be moved out using their own or public transport within three days. The risk level – green, yellow, orange and red – is reviewed monthly.

“The alert level in Pozzuoli is currently yellow,” council spokesperson Giordana Mobilio told AFP, adding that locals receive alerts for all tremors of a magnitude of 1.5 or greater.

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## Headlines friday 9 june 2023

- Live Labour says £28bn green prosperity plan in doubt due to Tory crashing of the economy
- Labour Party would have to delay £28bn green fund, Reeves says
- Windfall tax North Sea oil and gas industry offered ‘get-out’ clause on levy
- Fossil fuels £19.3bn imported by UK from authoritarian states in year since Ukraine war

[\*\*Politics live with Andrew Sparrow\*\*](#)[\*\*Politics\*\*](#)

# **Boris Johnson resigns as MP with immediate effect and says he is ‘bewildered and appalled’ at being ‘forced out’ – as it happened**

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Rachel Reeves said she would ‘never play fast and loose with the public finances’. Photograph: Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

[Labour](#)

## **Labour postpones £28bn green plan as it seeks to be trusted on public finances**

Rachel Reeves says fiscal rule is priority as she delays start of promised investment in eco-friendly industry

- [UK politics live – latest updates](#)

*Rowena Mason and Aubrey Allegretti*

Fri 9 Jun 2023 04.08 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Jun 2023 13.35 EDT

Labour has scaled back plans to borrow £28bn a year to invest in green jobs and industry as the party’s leadership looks to review its spending in an attempt to prove its fiscal credibility.

The shadow chancellor, [Rachel Reeves](#), delayed plans for a green prosperity fund to start in the first year of a Labour government, saying it would “ramp up” by the middle of a first parliament.

She said the decision had to be taken as a result of the poor economic backdrop and rising interest rates, after Liz Truss’s short premiership crashed the markets last autumn.

The Guardian understands Labour has also been looking closely at how to keep other areas of major spending within its fiscal rules. Insiders said the party had been looking to “make sacrifices” in areas it had already flagged as important to demonstrate its focus on economic credibility.

The decision on the £28bn is another sign of the spending discipline being enforced by Reeves, as the Conservatives increase their attacks on Labour before the general election, which is likely to come next year.

Reeves, who announced the delay to the prosperity fund on BBC Radio 4’s Today programme, said Labour would now build up to the annual £28bn plan by halfway through a first parliament.

The party had promised to spend £28bn a year on green investment until 2030 from the first year after coming to power.

However, Reeves said she could not have predicted the market crash caused by the former prime minister Liz Truss’s plans for unfunded borrowing for tax cuts last autumn, which created the difficult economic conditions including higher interests rates affecting the cost of debt repayment.

She said the priority was sticking to Labour’s fiscal rule, that debt must be falling as a share of national income after five years.

“No plan can be built that is not a rock of economic and fiscal responsibility ... I will never play fast and loose with the public finances,” Reeves said on Friday.

She said her fiscal rules would be non-negotiable, so Labour would move to the £28bn green investment gradually rather than immediately if the party won the next election.

Reeves said she was “on the same page” as Keir Starmer, the Labour leader, and Ed Miliband, the shadow energy secretary, regarding the need to scale back the ambition of the plan.

One senior Labour source said: “There’s been a recognition for some time given the change in interest rates from when Rachel made the original announcement to where we are today that a clarification was required. It seemed to make sense to get out there and say it explicitly.”

While Reeves stressed the fiscal discipline of the move, Miliband later told the BBC’s World at One that also it was partly a matter of practicality, as it could take some time to get supply chains ready for the £28bn of spending. The party is “100% not abandoning our plan”, he added.

The Guardian revealed this month that shadow cabinet ministers had asked Reeves to [expand the fund’s green mission](#) and use it to pay for a series of capital spending projects, such as housing or transport infrastructure.

Reeves had indicated to colleagues there would be no additional money to pay for major infrastructure spending, leaving shadow ministers battling to claim a share of the green fund for their own projects.

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However, other shadow cabinet sources stressed that Miliband had always made clear that the £28bn of spending on clean energy and decarbonisation would be spread across many sectors from housing to transport. They said Reeves's announcement showed a firm commitment to the party's goals on net zero, highlighting the commitment to no new oil and gas licences in the North Sea.

The Conservatives responded by claiming that shadow ministers had realised the policy would lead to "disaster" and sought to stress that Labour's ultimate goal remained to reach the £28bn figure, which they said would worsen the economy.

The Conservative party chair, Greg Hands, said: "Keir Starmer's main economic policy is in tatters, after even he and Rachel Reeves realised it would lead to disaster."

"It doesn't matter if they try and pretend otherwise, Labour's plan remains to stick £28bn of borrowing on the government credit card which will lead to higher inflation and higher interest rates."

But George Osborne, the Conservative former chancellor, suggested he thought Labour was being too "safe and boring".

Speaking to the Guardian, he said: "The good thing is that the shadow chancellor is getting a grip on the spending promises of the Labour party. The bad news is it's removed one of the few ideas that Labour actually have for being in government. And, you know, on the one hand, I would say the Labour opposition is being more reassuring that it's not going to take wild risks with the economy. But, on the other hand, it is not telling us really what it would do. It's telling us what it wouldn't do. And I think to win an election, it's not enough to be sort of safe and boring. You have to be a bit exciting, and you have to have something to offer the country about the future. I don't yet hear that."

Some experts suggested it had never been credible that Labour would find £28bn for green investment in the first year after entering office. Torsten Bell, the chief executive of the Resolution Foundation, said: “Bit too much excitement on ‘Labour waters down’ £28bn green investment plans. New phrasing is ‘£28bn/year in the second half of the parliament at the latest’. Anyone thinking a new government was going to be able to ramp up £28bn a year from day one hasn’t met the British state.”

Environmental groups responded with dismay to the delay. Rebecca Newsom, Greenpeace UK’s head of politics, said: “Any U-turn would be a huge mistake. Without the necessary immediate investment, we will lose out on the creation of thousands of jobs needed as we phase out fossil fuels, and we will lose out on the opportunity to put green tech industries at the centre of our economy.

“Rachel Reeves rightly cites the opportunities of green growth, but this prevarication on confirming the scale of investment needed from the start of a new Labour government risks throwing in the towel on the global race in green tech, with the US, China and the EU already far ahead.”

Others within Labour said the move underlined the case for more wealth taxes instead. Richard Burgon, a Labour MP and former shadow cabinet minister under Jeremy Corbyn, said: “It’s increasingly clear that a wealth tax has a key role to play in providing the resources needed to invest in our public services and to tackle climate change. An annual tax of 1.5% on wealth above £10m would raise £15bn per year.”

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Bumper profits at BP and Shell recently have prompted calls for a tougher windfall tax. Photograph: Reuters

[Energy industry](#)

## **North Sea oil and gas industry offered ‘get-out’ clause on windfall tax**

Jeremy Hunt hopes suspending energy profits levy if Brent crude falls below \$71.40 a barrel will aid investment

*[Jillian Ambrose](#) Energy correspondent*

Fri 9 Jun 2023 02.50 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Jun 2023 10.49 EDT

Jeremy Hunt has handed the North Sea oil and gas industry a “get-out” clause from the windfall tax on fossil fuel profits if wholesale energy market prices fall back to normal levels.

The Treasury set out the change before a meeting with oil companies including Equinor, BP, Shell and Total in Aberdeen on Friday afternoon,

after months of warnings from the North Sea industry that the windfall tax would threaten investment and jobs.

The chancellor hopes to boost investment in the North Sea by agreeing to suspend the windfall tax on oil profits if the market price for Brent crude falls below \$71.40 (£56.77) a barrel, and gas prices fall below 54p a therm, for a period of six months.

The global oil price is now about \$75 a barrel, and the UK's gas price is about 64 pence p/th. These prices are well below levels recorded last year after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but experts believe they are likely to remain at similar levels while the war continues.

As a result the change is unlikely to reduce the amount of tax collected from oil companies over the coming years – but the greater financial certainty is expected to help oil companies proceed with plans for new fossil fuel projects.

The Guardian understands the [controversial Rosebank oil project](#), planned by Equinor and the oil minnow Ithaca Energy, is expected to move ahead in the coming weeks in part because of the tweak in the windfall tax.

The Treasury has put forward the change to the windfall tax a little over six months after raising the energy profits levy from 25% to 35%, on top of the usual 40% rate of tax, and extending the regime by two years until 2028.

A No 10 spokesperson said: “You will remember that the energy profits levy was introduced last year to respond to exceptionally high prices that meant that oil and gas companies were benefiting from extraordinary profits.

“To protect domestic energy supply and safeguard thousands of jobs reliant on that sector, we've introduced the energy security investment mechanism, and that means that if oil and gas prices consistently fall back to normal levels before March 2028, which is when it would end anyway, the energy profits levy would be switched off.”

The levy has raised about £2.8bn to date, according to the government, and it is expected to raise tens of billions of pounds to help cover [the cost of the](#)

[government's support](#) for energy bills.

The levy attracted fierce criticism from the North Sea industry, which claimed it could discourage new investment in oil and gas projects at a time when the government hopes to increase domestic fossil fuel production.

Industry critics also said the levy had a disproportionate impact on smaller, UK-based oil and gas producers, which pay most of their tax in the UK, while larger companies including BP and Shell pay only a small part of the global tax bill to the UK.

Bumper profits at [BP](#) and [Shell](#) in recent months have prompted calls for a tougher windfall tax from Labour and campaign groups, who argue that oil and gas companies are benefiting from high energy prices when many households are struggling to pay their bills.

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Simon Francis, a coordinator of the End Fuel Poverty Coalition, said: “Any talk of reducing or ending the windfall tax while millions still struggle through the energy bills crisis is premature.”

The End Fuel Poverty Coalition and Greenpeace called for the windfall tax to remain in place long enough to “fix Britain’s broken energy system in the

long term” by investing in home insulation and green energy generation.

Georgia Whitaker, a climate campaigner at Greenpeace UK, said: “The UK has some of the lowest oil and gas tax rates in the world. Irrespective of what happens to the price of oil and gas, the tax these companies pay should be higher, permanently.”

Gareth Davies MP, the exchequer secretary to the Treasury, said: “It is right that we recover excess profits resulting from [Vladimir] Putin’s war and use the money to help people with their energy bills.”

Davies added it would be “beyond irresponsible to turn off the North Sea taps overnight”, and it was important to “secure investment in our own domestic supply, protecting the tens of thousands of British jobs” that came with it.

He said: “Without oil and gas from British waters, we would be forced to import even more from overseas, putting our security of supply at risk.”

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A Qatari liquid natural gas (LNG) tanker being loaded at Ras Laffan port, northern Qatar. Photograph: AP

### Fossil fuels

## **£19.3bn of fossil fuels imported by UK from authoritarian states in year since Ukraine war**

As Russian oil and gas imports fell petrostates including UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabia increased exports to UK

*Joey Grostern*

Fri 9 Jun 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Jun 2023 23.24 EDT

UK fossil fuel imports from authoritarian petrostates surged to £19.3bn in the year following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it can be revealed.

Efforts [to end the purchasing](#) of oil and gas from Russia appear to have resulted in a surge in imports from other authoritarian regimes, including Algeria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab

Emirates (UAE), according to [data from the Office for National Statistics](#) analysed by [DeSmog](#).

Last month the trade and business secretary, Kemi Badenoch, travelled to the Middle East to [“boost trade ties”](#) with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a six-country trade bloc comprising Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Trade between the UK and the GCC hit a record high of £61.3bn in 2022.

In [her speech](#) to the Conservative party conference in October 2022, the then prime minister, Liz Truss, said the UK had “become too complacent” and “too dependent on authoritarian regimes for cheap goods and energy”. However, it appears that the UK has diverted its spending from Russia to other states accused of human rights violations and engaged in brutal conflicts.

Fossil fuel imports from Russia fell from £600m in February 2022, the month Vladimir Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine, [to zero](#) in January 2023. However, this was compensated for by a more than 60% annual increase in fossil fuel imports from other authoritarian petrostates.

Last year the amount spent by the UK on energy imports [topped £100bn](#) for the first time on record, with DeSmog’s analysis indicating that the UK spent more than £125.7bn on fossil fuel imports in the year beginning February 2022.

The International Energy Agency [has stated that](#), in order to achieve net zero, the world must achieve “huge declines in the use of coal, oil and gas”, requiring “nothing short of the complete transformation of the global energy system”.

The UK imported £6.9bn of fossil fuels from [Qatar](#), £3.4bn from Saudi Arabia, £2.6bn from Kuwait, and £2.5bn from the UAE.



Storage tanks at an Aramco oil facility in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Photograph: Amr Nabil/AP

“While cutting our dependence on Russian fossil fuels is both necessary and laudable – albeit with little actual choice – it is a half-measure if only aimed at reducing fossil fuels from Russia,” said Dominic Kavakeb, of the human rights and environmental pressure group [Global Witness](#).

“Replacing Russian energy with fossil fuels from other authoritarian regimes, some of which are also engaged in brutal conflicts, is at best shortsighted, at worst a gross hypocrisy. [Fossil fuels](#) are the currency of dictators and warmongers everywhere. It’s time to build an energy system that benefits people and the planet, rather than polluters, petrostates and despots.”

This year’s Cop28 UN climate summit will be held in the UAE, a nation that has attracted criticism over its plans to [expand fossil fuel operations](#) and its appointment of Sultan Al Jaber, head of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, as summit president. Al Jaber recently [said that](#) fossil fuels should “continue to play a role in the foreseeable future” – a statement labelled as [“very dangerous”](#) by former UN climate chief Christiana Figueres.

The average monthly value of fossil fuel imports from the UAE to the UK increased from £84.4m in the year to February 2022 to £195m the year after.

The [UAE continues to](#) arrest and imprison activists, academics and lawyers who speak out against its monarchic rulers. UAE authorities also continue to discriminate against women, LGBTQ+ communities, and migrants.

Despite record high prices for oil and gas – a response to Russia’s invasion and loosened Covid restrictions – the volume of fossil fuels imported to the UK during 2022 remained stable, [according to data](#) from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (Desnz).

Saudi Arabia was an increasingly significant energy source for the UK, with monthly fossil fuel imports from the Kingdom quadrupling from £50.4m to £263.8m in the year ending February 2023.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office [has noted](#) the prevalence of arbitrary detention in Saudi Arabia – calling it “a hallmark of authoritarian regimes” – as well as reports of torture, neglect, lack of medical care and solitary confinement. Saudi Arabia also routinely executes political dissidents, having killed an [average of 129 people a year](#) since crown prince Mohammed bin Salman assumed de facto rule in 2015.

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Neighbouring Qatar has also profited from higher fossil fuel exports to the UK, jumping to £531.5m a month on average in the year following Russia's invasion of Ukraine from an average of £201.1m the year before.

Last year's football World Cup highlighted Qatar's poor record on human rights, particularly [in relation to migrant workers](#). A [Guardian analysis](#) in February 2021 found that over 6,500 migrants from South Asian countries had died in Qatar since it was awarded the World Cup in 2011.



An oil refinery in Omsk, Siberia. Global demand for Russian oil is now at its highest level since the invasion of Ukraine. Photograph: Alexey Malgavko/Reuters

Despite the UK government having incrementally banned the importation of Russian fossil fuels following Putin's invasion, Russian fossil fuels [are still entering the UK](#) indirectly via imports from India, which is a major importer alongside China. Global demand for Russian oil has now surged to [its highest level](#) since the invasion.

Dr David Wearing, a lecturer in international relations at Sussex University, said the UK's increased reliance on Gulf states for fossil fuels and investment was based "not on an economic calculation but a strategic political calculation".

Gulf states sent “a big chunk of their petrodollars into our financial system”, Wearing said. “Those capital flows help to square off the fact that Britain’s got a huge deficit on its current account [imports v exports], which becomes more important with Brexit … That’s the crux of the relationship.”

Gulf fossil fuels were “strategically important in terms of power politics too”, Wearing said, in terms of keeping these countries aligned with the west rather than China. “For all these different reasons, it’s [seen as] important to keep the Gulf states as they are and keep those ruling families in power – so that the UK can trust them to continue staying aligned with the western bloc and sending their petrodollars into our economic system.”

The UK’s continued reliance on fossil fuels is also costly for the British population. The average UK home will spend nearly £6,000 on foreign gas in the next 12 years, including £140 on Qatari gas every year, according to [a report](#) from the Energy and Climate Change Intelligence Unit (ECIU). This cost would be reduced to £1,400 spent on foreign gas by 2030 in a typical net zero home, the ECIU said. An [earlier report](#) from the ECIU also found that, without mitigation, the UK’s dependence on imported gas was set to increase by 75% by 2035.

A government spokesperson said: “We continue to work with international partners to maintain stability in global energy markets and boost our energy security. While we are accelerating renewables and nuclear as part of our plans to power up Britain, the transition to cleaner energy cannot happen overnight and we will continue to need oil and gas over the coming decades, as recognised by the independent Climate Change Committee.”

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## 2023.06.09 - Spotlight

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Legendary gig ... the Sex Pistols perform at the 100 Club, London, 1976.  
Photograph: Hulton Deutsch/Corbis/Getty Images

[Pop and rock](#)

**Anarchy in High Wycombe! The real story of the Sex Pistols' earliest gigs**

The punk band are famous for culture-changing gigs in Manchester and London, but what about ones in Keighley and Dunstable? Attendees at their first UK tour remember the protests, raw power – and cider-drinking hippies



Alexis Petridis

Fri 9 Jun 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Jun 2023 03.06 EDT

In late 1975, just after her 18th birthday, Shanne Bradley went to a party at St Albans School of Art in Hertfordshire. Unbeknown to her and her friends, there was musical entertainment: a band from London no one had heard of. She suspects the group had just phoned up and asked if they could play. “They were so bad,” she says. “We were dancing, having a good laugh. We thought they were a piss-take of a 60s band. Someone said they saw the drummer afterwards and he was crying because they were so terrible.”

Afterwards, the singer came over and asked Bradley about her clothes: “If I dressed like that all the time. I’d had a difficult childhood and I think I expressed that through my clothes. I’d butchered my hair: I’d tried to use henna and peroxide and it came out wrong – bright orange. I was wearing ripped fishnets and a holey jumper. I had 11 ear piercings. I asked him what his name was. ‘Johnny Rotten.’ I was like: ‘What?’”

Bradley had just seen one of the Sex Pistols' first gigs and was about to become one of their first fans. She liked them, terrible or not: "There was an energy, a sense of humour, a dissatisfaction with the world that fitted mine. I went to see them in Welwyn Garden City, but they'd had a row during soundcheck and didn't play. They used to give me lifts. It was all quite sweet. We were all teenagers. On Valentine's Day, I walked round St Albans with John, hand in hand, wearing a dustbin liner."

The story of the Sex Pistols tends to hinge around a handful of legendary gigs in major cities: the Screen on the Green and the 100 Club in London, their horrible last stand at the Winterland Ballroom in San Francisco, and especially their June 1976 show at Manchester's Lesser Free Trade Hall, famously the spark that ignited Joy Division, the Fall and the Smiths among others – *The Gig That Changed the World*, as one subsequent book put it, with very Mancunian self-confidence.



Johnny Rotten performing with the Sex Pistols in Dunstable. Photograph: Chris Morphet/Redferns

But the Sex Pistols played dozens of other shows, many in locations that now seem faintly improbable: way off the map of today's limited touring circuit and peculiar even by the more expansive standards of the time. It's hard not to look at their 70s gig listings and boggle: what happened when the

Sex Pistols played Cromer, Keighley or Dunstable? What was the impact of their appearances in Whitby, Runton and Northallerton? What might have happened had the infamous Anarchy tour been allowed to fetch up, as planned, in Paignton?

Depending on who you believe, the weirdness of the Sex Pistols' touring schedule was either a brilliant masterplan by manager Malcolm McLaren to reach disaffected youth across Britain or the result of a clueless manager's desperation to get a gig anywhere. "There was no strategy involved," John Lydon complained in his autobiography [Anger Is an Energy](#), "it was all happen-chance, fly by the seat of your pants."

Sometimes the results were tragicomic. [Peter Smith](#) was 19 in 1976, an inveterate gig-goer from Sunderland. His interest piqued by reading early articles on the Sex Pistols, he drove to Whitby to see them. But the staff at the Royal Ballroom had never heard of the band. "They suggested trying a little place around the back. There was a poster that said: 'Saturday night disco featuring top band the Sex Pistols.'" It was empty, bar the band in a corner. Rotten ordered chicken and chips at the bar. Then the disco fans filed in, dancing to Abba before the Pistols got on stage. "I think they started with Anarchy in the UK. John was wearing a tam and bondage gear, hanging off the microphone, sneering. Me and my girlfriend loved it – the energy, John's stance, the way he looked, the amateurishness of it, the raw power."

They were in the minority. "There were people with their hands over their ears, and after half an hour at most, the DJ turns their sound off and the disco back on. The Sex Pistols just stood there looking at each other then walked off. People started dancing and I drove home. I met John years later at a book signing and he said he didn't remember. He was adamant nobody had ever thrown him offstage, which was quite funny."

It's a characteristic story. In Pistols mythology, if these gigs are even mentioned, it's as provoking hatred, fury and violence. Shanne Bradley recalls a gig in High Wycombe that turned into "a bit of a bundle ... there was more of a laddish element. Rotten used to take the piss out of the audience. [The band] started getting a load of abuse, Rotten lent over the stage and somebody jumped on him and thumped him."

Yet everyone I speak to says the Pistols were met with widespread lack of interest: the most virulent reaction they provoked was confusion. Chris Sullivan had seen them in London, but when they played in his native Wales, at the Stowaway Club in Newport in September 1976, he says: “It was a Monday night, very under the radar. There were maybe 40 people – a load of hippies drinking cider and [future Visage frontman] Steve Strange in a ripped-up rubber T-shirt. People were just bemused.”



The Sex Pistols performing in 1977. Photograph: Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy

But at every gig, there was someone who would end up converted. Pauline Murray first encountered the band in Northallerton in May 1976, at “a small nightclub called Sayers at the end of a row of garages. It was the normal clientele, 30 people sat at tables, waiting for the turn. They were in a state of shock. But for me, the energy really hit, in every single way. It was so primitive compared to everything else I’d seen.”

Two nights later, Murray would see them supporting glam band Doctors of Madness in Middlesbrough town hall. “It was a real turning point, because they absolutely destroyed the Doctors of Madness. It was like they knew that something new had overtaken them. While they were on, the Sex Pistols went through their dressing room and nicked all their stuff.”

Murray was absolutely right: something new had overtaken glam. Talking to people who saw the Sex Pistols play, even in unlikely locations, you can plot their astonishing trajectory. Three months after the Newport gig, Chris Sullivan saw them again in Wales, at the Castle Cinema in Caerphilly, and everything had changed. It was two weeks after the band's infamous appearance on the Today show, where guitarist Steve Jones called interviewer Bill Grundy a "dirty fucker" and "a fucking rotter".

The mines were shutting. People were angry and they directed it at us.  
There was a running battle

Seventeen out of 24 gigs on the ensuing Anarchy tour were cancelled, or rather, banned by town councils and university chancellors. The Caerphilly show went ahead, but pubs and shops in the town shuttered early, and it was picketed by religious groups: huge crowds singing hymns, making speeches, trying to block entry. "When we drove past, we were like: 'Fucking hell, what's going on there?'" says Sullivan. "We had to go through a gauntlet of middle-aged women in raincoats with pointy glasses and curlers, singing Onward Christian Soldiers, who were trying to grab us and hit us."



"The audience was 10 bloody hippies and us lot, Steve Strange pogoing at the front" ... Sex Pistols performing in Caerphilly. Photograph: Courtesy

## Chris Sullivan

He laughs. “It’s quite uncomfortable when you’re a 6ft 2in teenager and you’re being manhandled by someone who looks like your granny – what do you do? The gig was great: they were much better than in Newport. But the audience was basically the same – 10 bloody hippies and us lot, Steve Strange pogoing at the front.”

It’s strange, he says: the people outside were angrier than the Sex Pistols, who were supposed to be overturning Britain’s moral order in a fit of nihilistic rage. Maybe the pickets were expressing a similar impotent fury in a very different way. “In Wales in the 70s, there was no work. The mines were shutting, it was really poor. People were angry and they directed it at us. It wasn’t just bible-bashers: it was thugs who specifically came to beat people up. When we left, there was a running battle. Somebody could have got killed.”

Perhaps no band could expect to last long under that kind of scrutiny and pressure, particularly one this combustible. By the time Simon Parker saw them in the Winter Gardens, Penzance, in summer 1977, he says: “They were nearly finished.” The end-of-the-line town had a thriving punk scene and had already hosted the Ramones, the Damned and the Adverts, but “the Pistols gig was almost the end of that, the close of a very brief era”.

By now, the band could only avoid having their gigs cancelled by playing under pseudonyms. But in Penzance, the show – by “A Mystery Band of International Repute” – was dangerously crowded. “The local council were the only people who didn’t know the secret,” says Parker. “They were mythic figures by that stage. There was a guy using the telephone box outside, and Sid Vicious knocked on the door because he wanted to use the phone. That seemed very exciting, that they did ordinary things.”

That was the most important thing about those Sex Pistols gigs. It gave you the strength to have a go

The “explosive” gig barely lasted 30 minutes. “Johnny Rotten came on stage and glared to get the DJ to stop the music. There was a lot of spitting, which

I don't remember at any other gig. A shower of it, really bloody awful. People further back had brought plastic spoons that they were spitting in and wanging it at the band. Maybe it wasn't the best gig ever, but it was the best event – there was so much excitement, people queueing up the street.”

These might not have been gigs that changed the world or spawned an era-defining scene, but they each had an impact on at least a handful of people. Peter Smith remained a long-haired hippy but says it opened his mind musically. Pauline Murray formed punk band Penetration; Shanne Bradley – who fell out with the Sex Pistols, and later discovered to her indignation that she was the subject of Satellite, the scathing B-side of Holidays in the Sun – formed the Nips with Shane MacGowan.

Chris Sullivan became a fixture of London clubland, the co-founder of the Wag Club, the capital's hippest 80s night spot. “Seeing the Sex Pistols and that DIY attitude gave me and Steve Strange the impetus to do what we did,” he says. “Because we saw that people like us could do it. I think that was the most important thing about those Sex Pistols gigs. It gave you the strength to have a go. You saw punk fail miserably after the Grundy thing, but then you think to yourself: ‘At least if you have a go, you don't go to bed at night saying: I wish I'd tried.’”

*PZ77 by Simon Parker is [out now](#).*

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Illustration: Joren Joshua/The Guardian

[You be the judge](#)[Life and style](#)

**You be the judge: should my flatmate leave his prized bicycle outside?**

Kojo is determined to keep his bike in the flat. Anaïs says she keeps bumping into it and wants it out. You decide who's right in this battle of wheels



[Georgina Lawton](#)  
[@georginalawton](#)

Fri 9 Jun 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Jun 2023 21.10 EDT

## The prosecution: Anaïs

*Having a bike in the corridor is annoying. I catch myself on it when running out the door*

I've lived with Kojo since 2018. We met at university and moved in together after graduating. It's been a good partnership – he's like a brother to me.

I don't cycle, but Kojo has always had some drama with his bikes in London. He never used to lock them up properly so I've accompanied him to the police station on more than one occasion to make a police report when they've been stolen. Then he got Nelson, this fancy bike through a cycle-to-work scheme, and decided to keep it inside. (I don't know why it's called Nelson).

I just find the concept of a bike constantly in the corridor quite annoying

I didn't have anything against this during Covid, because all rules seemed to go out the window and I didn't want Nelson to get stolen right after Kojo had bought "him". But now Nelson is pissing me off. Maybe because we've been in this flat for a while and I fancy a change, or maybe because I'm working from home more after changing jobs this year. But I just find the concept of a bike constantly in the corridor quite annoying.

Bikes are cumbersome and I often catch my elbow or handbag on Nelson when running out of the door. I have suggested that Kojo keep him in the new bike storage hangar at the end of our road. It looks pretty affordable – it's £60 a year – but Kojo says he can't afford it. He gets all dramatic and says, "poor Nelson, all the way out there", but the hangar is 30 seconds from our house. I think it's a small price to pay to have more space in our tiny flat, but Kojo isn't coming around to the idea.

I'd like to see some compromise. He recently suggested having a mounted bike rack in the kitchen so Nelson can hang up on the wall, but I am even less keen on the idea of a bike next to the space where I cook – that's unhygienic and a real eyesore.

Kojo and I get on well and this flat has been our home for a while, but it seems there's three of us living here and I didn't sign up to share my space with this housemate. Kojo says he and Nelson will be out of the flat more this summer if the weather is nice, but I know when winter comes, I'll be stuck catching my elbows on the bike again.

## The defence: Kojo

*I've already had two bikes stolen, and the thought of leaving this one outside at night makes me a bit sad*

In London, bike theft is a big issue. Anaïs doesn't really get that because she's never cycled. I've been cycling for 12 years now and I've had two bikes stolen, which is pretty good in the grand scheme of things.

I've got friends who stopped cycling because they can't afford to buy any more bikes, they've had so many stolen. During 2020 I got a new bike after my old one was stolen at the end of 2019. Then we went into lockdown and cycling was my release, so I was using my bike whenever I could. I got into the habit of bringing my bike into the flat because it's quite expensive.

Anaïs first asked me if I'd consider keeping Nelson outside, in the garden, but because he was new I said I'd rather keep him in the house to protect his lovely blue finish. She was cool with it for a long time but she's now asking me to take poor Nelson out into the street because we've recently had one of those pay-monthly bike storage sheds installed nearby.

I'm prepared to get a bike rack for the kitchen so it can hang vertically

She thinks Nelson will be safe there, and she's probably right, but I just don't want to do it. I would have to walk three minutes to get to the shed every time I need my bike, which is every day, and I also don't want to pay the monthly storage fee. Anaïs, Nelson and I have lived together in harmony for three years now and I don't see why we should disrupt it.

I allow Anaïs to keep five giant suitcases in our shared storage space and kitchen, so why can't I keep Nelson in the corridor of our flat? He doesn't take up too much space – less than her suitcases, in fact. I like the idea of a bike storage facility in theory, but leaving him so far away from me at night makes me a little bit sad.

I've told Anaïs I'm prepared to get a bike rack for the kitchen so Nelson can hang vertically from a rack there, but she wasn't a big fan of that idea, saying that bikes don't belong in kitchens.

What else can I say? Nelson is staying put then. Summer is here now so I'll be taking Nelson out most evenings and weekends. Anaïs won't even notice when he's here.

## The jury of Guardian readers

**Should Kojo park his fondness for Nelson and evict him from the flat?**

Nelson may be beautiful but he's in the way and potentially unhygienic when he's in the flat. However if Anaïs really wants the bike in storage, she should pay half the fees (at least!). Space is important in a home, but so is compromise.

### **Stephanie, 35**

Bike theft is a real worry, and while the hangar is affordable, it's reasonable to want to keep a treasured possession in the home. Store it covered in the garden or get creative with a bike rack, but let this one slide, Anaïs. A "brotherly" housemate is far more valuable.

### **Gautham, 37**

The new secure hangar just three minutes away sounds ideal for Kojo's bike. Why create an obstacle in the hallway if you don't need to? That said, Anaïs should store the suitcases in her own room. Shared space isn't for clutter.

### **Mary, 37**

Shared areas are sacred, none more so than the kitchen. So it's time for Nelson to either start sleeping in daddy's room or become an adult bike and move in with his roommates three minutes away.

### **Joey, 25**

Given that the bike has already been in residence for three years, there is no case to answer. If bike storage was an issue, it should have been raised at the time. But Kojo needs to ask himself if he is willing to put friendship above his bike.

### **Sarah, 50**

## **Now you be the judge**

In our online poll below, tell us: should Kojo take Nelson off his pedestal?

**The poll closes at 10am BST on Thursday 15 June**

## **Last week's result**

We asked whether [Tameka should change her wedding menu for Akane](#).

**79%** of you said no – Akane is guilty

**21%** of you said yes – Akane is innocent

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Tian Rui in Qingdao, China, with his replica of the Forbidden City's Hall of Supreme Harmony. Photograph: Yufan Lu/The Guardian

[Experience](#)[World records](#)

## **Experience: I built a house of cards 50 storeys high**

I've made replicas of buildings across the world, like the Eiffel Tower and Big Ben

*Tian Rui*

Fri 9 Jun 2023 05.00 EDT

I am 37 years old and live in Qingdao, China. I started studying magic as a teenager and worked as a magician as an adult. I mainly did tricks using cards, coins and everyday objects. In 2015, I was making magic props with a glass plate when it shattered. I fractured my little finger on my right hand, and the tendon on my index finger was severed. I lost dexterity in that hand and realised that my career as a magician could not continue.

That's when I started stacking cards, without glue, tape or tools, as therapy to recover movement in my hand. Even now my index and little finger can only bend halfway. At first this was just a way to rehabilitate my hand – but as time passed, I fell in love with it.

I love imagining a structure before I get to work. The quality of the end result depends on these early stages. It's like meditating. When it comes to stacking cards, the order to put them in, how much weight they can bear and the stability of the structure all follow rules. It's like building a house. I've learned the rules after thousands of failures.

I'm content when I'm building in the company of my two cats every day ... Card stacking brings me infinite joy

The most important skills are coordination, patience and keeping calm. I haven't met anyone else who practises card architecture in China – it's a niche interest. I learned the basic skills after coming across YouTube videos by the American architect and professional [card stacker Bryan Berg](#). I bought his book, and he has become one of my heroes. I was shocked when I first saw his work; I never thought I could do something so cool.

At first I practised in my bedroom. As the buildings I constructed became bigger and taller, I moved to a new house, where I also use a ladder. My new place is far from the hustle and bustle of the city, which helps me quieten my mind and focus on my work.

I've made replicas of buildings from all over the world, including the Hagia Sophia mosque in Istanbul, the Eiffel Tower and the Forbidden City in China. Also Big Ben, which took 18 hours and 10,000 cards. The architectural styles of each country are different, so I've learned a lot about these structures over the years.

I've also created my own designs, some based on fictional buildings, such as a castle in the movie Frozen, which took 40 hours and 12,000 cards, as well as some from video games.

I prefer to be alone, I'm not married and don't socialise much. Perhaps because of that, I don't have to care about other people's views – I can stick to my own interests and ideas, and keep going. I'm content when I'm building with cards in the company of my two cats every day. At first the cats were curious and often caused mischief. But the sound of falling cards scared them. Now they've settled down and don't dare make any trouble. They watch me silently while I work.

Currently, I cannot rely on my card stacking to make a living, and I don't want to. Maybe my passion for it will be lost if it becomes commercialised. For now, my living expenses are covered by my savings from my work as a magician. I'm not wealthy, but I have no problem supporting myself.

I enjoy my work. Constructing buildings keeps me composed and lets me reflect on many things. Besides cards, I'm learning how to shoot and edit videos on social media.

### The house that Tian Rui built

Last year, I built the [tallest house of cards in an hour](#), which took just under 42 minutes. Then I built the [tallest house of cards in 12 hours](#). It was 3.37m tall, with 50 storeys, and took just over five hours. The former 12-hour record holder was none other than Bryan Berg, who completed a 48-storey house of cards at 3.26m tall in 2016. He built that house on a fully loaded, running washing machine.

But I'm most satisfied when I knock a structure down. It motivates me to produce better work. My motto is: don't settle for achieving something once – keep seeking new challenges.

In the future, I plan to build the tallest house of cards in the world. For now, I show my work online and am encouraged by my 200,000 followers on social media, who give me support. Card stacking brings me infinite joy and lets me constantly challenge myself. I also hope my creations can bring a sense of joy and surprise to more and more people.

As told to Anna Derrig

Do you have an experience to share? Email [experience@theguardian.com](mailto:experience@theguardian.com)

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# ‘Protege! Would you use that word for a man?’ Claire Denis on rum, Africa and rethinking MeToo

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## 2023.06.09 - Opinion

- As Russia's armed forces fight among themselves, it's hard to know who's in control
- My irrational hatred of one Postman Pat character is a tribute to the genius of British children's TV
- The dismal story of modern football can be summed up in two words: Manchester City
- The global backlash against The Little Mermaid proves why we needed a Black Ariel



Face masks of Vladimir Putin, Yevgeny Prigozhin and Chechnya's regional leader Ramzan Kadyrov on sale at a souvenir shop in St Petersburg.  
Photograph: Dmitri Lovetsky/AP

[OpinionRussia](#)

## **As Russia's armed forces fight among themselves, it's hard to know who's in control**

[Samantha de Bendern](#)



Wagner group chief Yevgeny Prigozhin has launched another diatribe against the Russian army. Is he a loose cannon, or a Kremlin puppet?

Fri 9 Jun 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Jun 2023 02.23 EDT

Coming just a day before the world's media became submerged in the tragic aftermath of the explosion of the Kakhovka dam in Russian-controlled Ukraine, [Yevgeny Prigozhin](#)'s latest [invective](#) against the Russian army on 5 June slipped under the radar. It was his most explosive yet.

Dressed in a khaki sweatshirt and trousers, in the middle of a forest in a Wagner training camp, Prigozhin, the commander of an army of contract fighters known as the Wagner group, accuses the Russian army of lying about events in the [Belgorod](#) region – where anti-Putin Russian partisans have been conducting cross-border raids from Ukraine since late May – and warns of the risk of civil war. He calls for the Russian defence minister Sergei Shoigu to be put on trial for facilitating “the genocide of the Russian population” by being totally unprepared for the war in Ukraine, and more than once suggests that Shoigu and other senior military command should be shot. Prigozhin also claims that inhabitants of the Belgorod region have been writing to him, suggesting a Chile-type solution. “Chile means Pinochet,”

explains Prigozhin. “... The Russian elite [in a stadium](#) surrounded by armed men with machine guns.”

Prigozhin even plays the nuclear card, initially saying that it would be counterproductive to use it now and that “the button should have been pressed earlier ... even though it would have been the act of a fucked-up psychopath”. Later in the interview he suggests that Russians would be capable of using a nuclear weapon on their own territory. This comes with the comforting caveat that he’s unsure how well nuclear weapons would work if they are as badly maintained as the rest of Russia’s weaponry.

The hour-long interview follows Prigozhin’s tour of Russian cities during which he spoke of the need to open a “[second front](#)”, in the information sphere, to tell the population the truth about what is happening on the front lines and recommended the creation of a [territorial army](#) specifically to protect Russia. Even though he denies having any political ambitions, all these elements together look very much like a politician preparing either for an electoral campaign or an armed coup.

The question remains whether Prigozhin is controlled by the Kremlin, or is a loose cannon posing a serious threat to the regime. Since in Russia nothing is ever as it seems, this either/or question is probably far too simple. Some things however seem clearer than others.

Prigozhin would not be able to travel around Russia holding court without support and protection at the highest level. Moreover, as he vilifies what he calls the corrupt elites and calls with impunity for them to be executed, Russia’s most famous anti-corruption campaigner, [Alexei Navalny](#), is rotting away in a penal colony and faces a potential 30-year prison sentence. Those with protection in the right places can say what they want.

After taking Bakhmut, Prigozhin decided to [withdraw his forces](#), leaving the regular Russian army to hold the city. Was he allowed to do this in the knowledge that Russia’s grip on Bakhmut was threatened by the Ukrainian armed forces who have regained control of parts of the surrounding countryside? If in the coming weeks the Russians lose the city, the regular

army will be blamed, and Prigozhin's Bakhmut victory will be intact. Again, this points to patronage at the highest level allowing him to save face.

By suggesting the creation of a territorial defence and opening what he calls his second Wagner front domestically, Prigozhin appears to be positioning himself to play a mix of policing, security and information/propaganda roles inside Russia. This is vastly different from being a proxy foreign policy tool and private army operating abroad, particularly considering that Wagner, like most other private military companies (apart from those created to protect critical infrastructure), is still officially illegal. Without high-up support it seems hard to imagine how long this ambition will go unchallenged.

Another thing that is becoming clearer is intra-Russian chaos and animosity, if not outright armed conflict. In the last week, Wagner forces detained an officer of the Russian federal army whom they accused of mining their retreat and shooting at them while drunk; anti-Putin Russian partisans captured Russian regular forces and invited the governor of the Belgorod region to negotiate their freedom; and a high-ranking Chechen fighter openly criticised Yevgeny Prigozhin, highlighting the rivalry between the Chechen forces and Wagner. Without counting the mounting jealousies between the growing number of Russian private armies, the above describes at least four factions of armed Russians (including one fighting on the Ukrainian side) in conflict with each other.

If one accepts that Prigozhin is protected by the Kremlin, to what extent does the Kremlin actually mean Putin? So far Prigozhin has refrained from direct attacks on the president and has even said that he respects him. However, by mocking Russia's nuclear decision-making and capabilities in his recent harangue, he appears to be undermining the very concept of Russia's nuclear deterrent. It is hard not to see this as a criticism of Putin who is the ultimate arbiter of nuclear use. Double, triple bluff?

Prigozhin's latest rant looks more and more like the tip of an iceberg that betrays growing fractures inside Russia's top power structure. In a country that cannot even defend a small sliver of its border from incursions and allows drones to hit the centre of power, it is difficult to imagine a master in

the Kremlin who has the absolute control, foresight and planning capacity necessary to manage all this chaos and pull Prigozhin's puppet strings.

In February 2022, two days before the invasion of [Ukraine](#), senior members of Russia's security council cowered in submission before a seemingly omnipotent Putin. As the war grinds on, these same men may be the ones planning to take control from a president who seems increasingly divorced from the realities of the front line. They will need a scapegoat for the disastrous "special military operation". With his frequent diatribes against the regular army, Prigozhin is handing them the heads of the Russian armed forces on a plate. Perhaps he is also promising to be their front man and guarantor of immunity as he helps navigate the chaos to come. Whether or not this includes Putin is anyone's guess.

- Samantha de Bendern is an associate fellow at international affairs thinktank Chatham House
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).***

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Bill Thompson and Postman Pat. Photograph: Postman Pat Official/Youtube  
[Republic of Parenthood](#)[Children's TV](#)

## **My irrational hatred of one Postman Pat character is a tribute to the genius of British children's TV**

[Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett](#)



I may loathe poor Bill Thompson – but our joyful, creative children’s telly is one thing this country can still be proud of

Fri 9 Jun 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Jun 2023 10.14 EDT

There’s a character on Postman Pat that I hate, passionately. [Bill Thompson](#), the child of Alf and Dorothy, is a snarky little sod with an attitude problem. There’s a part in an episode about a treasure hunt, where he says “I’d be finished by now if I didn’t have to wait for you slowcoaches”, which invokes in me an almost physical loathing. Even the Postman Pat fandom page [describes him as “conceited”](#). I’ve spent so much time watching Postman Pat with my baby that I’ve conjured up Succession-worthy backstories to explain Bill’s flawed personality – is it the pressure of being promised his dad Alf’s farm from an early age?

This is what happens with children’s television, once you become a parent and suddenly find yourself watching it. You know you’re watching something created for children, but you cannot help but impose onto it an adult sensibility. For example, people often remark that Postman Pat is objectively a terrible postman – always losing the thing he is supposed to be delivering. I counter that since Royal Mail privatisation and the transformation of his role into “special delivery”, he is probably on a zero-

hours contract, not to mention constantly being asked to do things, such as flying a helicopter or catching a pony, that are well beyond a usual postman's duties. My father, when visiting, pointed out that Pat being constantly tracked on an app by Ben in the office is an accurate portrayal of the kind of surveillance capitalism many workers are now forced to contend with.

We may enjoy picking holes in what our children watch, but parents in Britain are immensely privileged to have such high quality children's television, especially the BBC, whose CBeebies channel and programmes are world leaders. It's one of the few things the UK can feel proud of on the global stage at the moment. That's not to say that other countries' offerings are poor – I grew up with Sesame Street (the US), and we love [Bluey](#) (Australia). TV adaptations of books such as Barbapapa (France) and the Moomins (Finland) are rightfully canonical. And of course work by people of many nationalities airs on CBeebies – one of our favourites, the hilarious animated series Small Potatoes, was created by American Sesame Street writer Josh Selig and also aired on Disney in the US.

So I'm open to the notion that I may be culturally biased in thinking that our programming is superlative. I'm not sure, however, that there are many nations in the world that have their finest stage actors delivering lines such as "[Hello Tombliboos!](#)" with the same gravitas as "Out, out, brief candle!" (Derek Jacobi), or juggling Wolf Hall with being the [voice of an animated rabbit](#) (Mark Rylance). And from a diversity perspective it feels radical: I have become quite emotional seeing how CBeebies includes children with disabilities.

British children's television is internationally exported, with programmes such as [Teletubbies](#) becoming an enduring international sensation, In the Night Garden relying heavily on global sales and even Quentin Tarantino [saying he loves Peppa Pig](#). I suppose that's the thing about children's television – whoever you are, if you're a parent, you're probably watching it.

Which is one of the reasons why it's surprising it doesn't have a thriving critical climate: it's as worthy of scrutiny as any gallery opening or work of

fiction, or indeed, adult TV. One of the few writers to turn their critical attention to it was [Charlie Brooker, whose Screenwipe series](#) was a characteristically intelligent and caustic examination, but that was 15 years ago, and a one-off. Perhaps it's not considered serious enough to be worthy of consideration, or there's a residual misogyny about it, as something children "watch with mother". Yet it shapes the identities, values, and interests of the next generation.

If anything, revelations about the darker side of children's television and the abusive crimes of some of its past stars show that the industry and its output should be subjected to a healthy amount of adult scrutiny as part of our wider cultural experience, rather than sequestered, dismissed or ignored. Perhaps there's an assumption that the readership isn't there for regular print reviews. Personally, I would gobble up a sarcastic essay on the hideous modern incarnation of Peter Rabbit, perhaps [placing Beatrix Potter in a colonial context](#). A [piece the Guardian ran on Bluey last year](#) was, in my opinion, a tour de force.

Last year, [the government pulled a £44m fund](#) designed to support the sector, and the BBC is facing budget cuts. The societal neglect of children's programming is partly behind why kids are deserting public service media [in favour of YouTube and TikTok](#), and there is a real risk that distinctly British programmes for young viewers could vanish from screens and be replaced with imported shows.

More investment in the industry so that it can foster diverse creative talent, and the big ideas to compete with the streaming platforms, is crucial. But also, I think, our cultural attitude to children's content needs to change. At the moment, I don't think as a nation we truly appreciate the joy and innovation that goes into the work that is beamed into our homes every single day.

I may hate Bill Thompson, but I'll put up with him to see how that programme makes my little boy laugh with delight. As a family, we'd be lost without Postman Pat, and I suspect we're not alone.

## **What's working**

I did a bumper Ikea order recently, and after asking people for their favourite products, fellow mother and writer Alex Lloyd's recommendation of their £3.50 [foldable “sick bowl”](#) (every family needs one!) has been the clear winner, earning its keep mere days after purchase when the whole household was hit with a bug, cat included. Having still not recovered from the [Mumsnet sick bowl controversy of 2019](#), I feel obliged to tell you that this will be its sole purpose.

## What's not

The paddling pool at Coram's Fields, or the baby pool at Parliament Hill Lido – both closed for repairs – and apparently we are in for a scorcher here in London. The unfairness of it makes me furious. Thankfully, Islington council has come to the rescue with sprinklers in one of their parks, so at least some local kids will be able to cool off.

- Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett is a Guardian columnist and author
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‘Since 2008, Man City have spent their near limitless petro-funds hoovering up many of the world’s best players, as well as the best coach.’ Photograph: Eddie Keogh/The FA/Getty Images

[Opinion](#)[Manchester City](#)

## **The dismal story of modern football can be summed up in two words: Manchester City**

[Phil Mongredien](#)



Champions League glory is within the grasp of this team of well-heeled superstars. But I remember when football was an actual competition

Fri 9 Jun 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Jun 2023 07.45 EDT

On Saturday 11 October 1975, my dad took me to my first ever football match: Aston Villa (hooray!) against Tottenham Hotspur (boo!). I would be lying if I were to claim that I could remember much of the game now. I was so captivated by the spectacle, and particularly the unimaginable noise of 40,000 people shouting vaguely in unison, that I spent much of the time looking anywhere but the pitch.

That day marked the start of a ritual for the two of us that would endure until I left home at 18. Every other Saturday Dad would drive us to the ground from our home in Nottingham, with the radio tuned to Birmingham's commercial station, BRMB, which always had a more partisan, Villa-centric take on sports reporting than the BBC.

Upon walking the final mile to Villa Park, we'd head first to the club car park, where the players and managers of both sides would each have to fight off an army of hangers-on, pre-teen autograph hunters and – once –

gangland enforcers apparently looking to collect a debt from a player. Andy Gray, Brian Little, Martin Peters, Alan Hudson, Bobby Robson ... reader, you may not know them, but I harassed them all, and still have the written evidence.

And what a time to become obsessed with football, and Villa in particular. Masterminded by unsmiling manager [Ron Saunders](#), they were just about to embark on a remarkable renaissance that within seven years would see them [win the league](#) for the first time since the Edwardian era and then top that by [winning the European Cup](#).

They were halcyon days; certainly they were more egalitarian. At the start of every season there would be seven or eight teams that could legitimately fancy their chances of winning the league. At the time, Liverpool were the best team in the country, but they were far from infallible. In 1975-76, they did [come out on top](#), but only by a single point from QPR, and they only won 55% of their fixtures.

Fifty years later, that element of unpredictability seems like a relic from a distant age. Now, Manchester City – who take on Inter Milan in Istanbul on Saturday in a bid to win the Champions League for the first time – are indisputably the best team in the country. Indeed, they have just won their fifth league title in six years. During those six seasons, they won an astonishing 76% of their league matches. Bookmakers are understandably offering very long odds on any other team usurping them next season. Fans of other clubs now spend their summers wistfully wondering whether they might dare to dream of finishing as runners-up.



‘Masterminded by Ron Saunders, Villa embarked on a remarkable renaissance that within seven years would see them win the league and then top that by winning the European Cup.’ Saunders greets fans at Villa Park, 1975. Photograph: Colorsport/REX/Shutterstock

Yes, each of City’s players is phenomenally talented. Yes, as a team they play absolutely beautiful football of a calibre that I couldn’t have imagined in the 1970s, as I watched Villa’s no-nonsense centre-half Ken McNaught boot the ball out of the ground one more time. But how has this happened? In a word: money. In 2008 the club was bought by a private equity fund owned by Abu Dhabi’s royal family. They proceeded to spend their near limitless petro-funds hoovering up many of the world’s best players, as well as the best coach.

Of course, the arrival on the scene of the Abu Dhabi United Group wasn’t the starting point for domestic football’s transition from race to parade. The Premier League was seemingly formed in 1992 as a means of concentrating wealth and power among the biggest clubs. But the gradual abandonment of any pretence of there being a level playing field happened rapidly after the takeover of, first, Chelsea ([by Roman Abramovich](#) in 2003) and then City. Ultimately such stifling dominance of the game by one team, such a yawn supremacy, is hardly healthy for a game that relies on some degree of competitiveness.

This thought came to mind as I watched City [demolish Real Madrid](#) in the Champions League semi-final last month and heard the commentators and pundits on BT Sport insist that “we all” would be hoping that they would go on to finally win club football’s biggest prize.

But just who is this “we”? Away from the TV studios, many football fans actively loathe the way that City’s financial muscle has distorted the English game over the past 15 years. Having succeeded in making the [Premier League](#) so boringly predictable, extending that chokehold to Europe by beating Inter on Saturday would hardly be something to celebrate.

And that’s before we even get to the more than 100 [financial doping](#) charges [brought against the club](#) by the Premier League earlier this year – which they vociferously deny. As long as this enormous question mark is hanging over whether they reached their position of dominance by [effectively cheating](#), why would any neutral want them to (further) prosper?

Hating other teams has always been as much a part of football fandom as supporting your own. These days my personal hierarchy of revulsion is determined by how morally bankrupt a club’s owners are, rather than more traditional factors such as local rivalries or whether or not Lee Bowyer was playing for them. Indeed, since Newcastle’s takeover by the sovereign wealth fund [belonging to Saudi Arabia](#) – a country that [dismembers dissenting journalists](#), although you’d be forgiven for thinking this is less important than Kieran Trippier’s free-kick prowess – they have seized the role of apex supervillains. (Clubs *can* be rehabilitated: throughout the Abramovich years, I despised Chelsea, [now they’re just funny](#).)

Cheering on foreign opposition against English sides is certainly not any kind of new phenomenon, either – after all, if you really loathe a club, why should that not extend beyond national boundaries? In the mid-1990s, Arsenal played a cynical, but successful, brand of anti-football, characterised by defensive tactics and gamesmanship. When they were defeated by Spain’s Real Zaragoza in the 1995 Cup Winners’ Cup final thanks to a [sublime last-minute Nayim goal](#), it wasn’t solely fans in Aragon and Tottenham who were celebrating. And if there was a funnier moment in the whole of 1975 than Dirty Leeds unluckily losing the European Cup final to two late Bayern Munich goals, well, I’ve forgotten it.

Nowadays, the continent's biggest clubs are effectively interchangeable, aggressively marketed, multinational brands. Almost all of the world's best players, whatever their nationality, belong to a small cabal of English, French, German, Italian and Spanish clubs. Whereas once an occasional glimpse of a top European side felt like an exotic treat, TV coverage has made the football world much smaller. This season, for instance, UK broadcasters have shown AC Milan more times than Villa. Is it any wonder that matches between English and international clubs have lost any element of "us v them"?

With such familiarity with the top continental leagues, there's not even English exceptionalism as a reason to cheer on City on Saturday. Indeed, in today's interconnected world it feels curiously parochial and old-fashioned – Brexity, even – for neutrals to insist on supporting English club sides in European competition.

"We all" want Manchester City to win the [Champions League](#)? Not in my name, sadly. Forza Inter!

- Phil Mongredien is a member of the Guardian Opinion desk's production team
- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).*

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Halle Bailey, in response to the racist backlash to her being cast as Ariel, said: ‘As a Black person, you just expect it and it’s not really a shock any more.’ Photograph: Lisa Maree Williams/Getty Images

[Opinion](#)[Race](#)

## **The global backlash against The Little Mermaid proves why we needed a Black Ariel**

[Tayo Bero](#)



Reaction to the film is crucial to understanding both why it's gotten so much hate, and why it's so important that it was made

Fri 9 Jun 2023 05.06 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Jun 2023 06.01 EDT

The Little Mermaid drama continues, as racist backlash about the movie [seems to have](#) led to abysmal box office numbers in China and South Korea.

Just like the hate campaign against the movie in the US (which included the infamous [#notmyariel](#) hashtag), Chinese and South Korean social media were inundated with bad, unverified reviews and [outrage](#) over the casting of a Black Ariel.

Overall, the reaction wasn't a surprise – Halle Bailey herself [told](#) the Face that “as a Black person, you just expect it and it's not really a shock any more”.

Why, though? *Why* was the fallout from this specific film so predictable? Yes, anti-Blackness is a common feature of American public life, but the

fury about a Black Ariel is about much more than disagreeable recasting of a beloved cartoon character.

Audiences are possessive of cultural properties like Disney classics because they serve, in many ways, to reinforce the US national narrative: that in white worlds, all heroes are white. (And when the heroes *aren't* white, they exist in their own worlds, where the extent of their influence is limited to characters who look like them.)

More than just fodder for nostalgia, these classic stories are part of US myth-building about itself. Making a Black woman the central figure in that myth disrupts the well-established hierarchies that have been embedded in that national narrative.

That the fallout reached China and South Korea shows not only the global reach of anti-Blackness, but just how much the US's own racial discourse permeates all of its cultural products, no matter where they are in the world. Disney films are uniquely American, yet Chinese audiences [were unhappy](#) because “the image of the mermaid princess in Hans Christian Andersen’s fairy tales has long been rooted in their hearts and it takes a leap of imagination to accept the new cast.”

For some white American parents, having a young Black woman at the helm of a story about identity and self-discovery is simply unacceptable

And for white American parents who are so committed to avoiding the work of anti-racism that they’ve simply opted to erase all references to Blackness from their lives altogether, having a young Black woman at the helm of a story about identity and self-discovery is simply unacceptable. Because God forbid a viewing of the film might lead to questions about Bailey’s race, or her locs or why she looks “different” than them.

The reaction to the film is crucial to understanding both why it’s gotten so much hate and why it’s so important that it was made. Much of the white supremacist pushback against the film is tied to the rightwing war against wokeness.

Ironically, though, the fact that some people can only imagine a Black girl playing Ariel as the end result of some nefarious plot to force children to see more Black people on screen is precisely why I'm glad that this Ariel is Black. White society is clinging on to these cultural staples for dear life because they're an easy way to reinforce their ideals around what society should look like, and colorblind casting of these iconic characters is a necessary subversion of that.

Even if we get nothing else out of these remakes, being racially nimble with how they are cast helps both old and young audiences reimagine what our cultural icons look like. Representation is important, but we also need to separate canon from whiteness and decolonize society's sense of who children should look up to.

As a piece of American film history, *The Little Mermaid* has always been subversive – its release and success single-handedly [helped save](#) the Disney corporation from collapse, and it also offered fresh commentary on topics like gender fluidity and patriarchal society. Casting a Black Ariel (though not an intentionally political move) is a continuation of that tradition, and audiences who don't get it have clearly been missing the point all along.

- Tayo Bero is a freelance writer
- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).*

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## 2023.06.09 - Around the world

- [France British child among French Alps stabbing victims, says foreign secretary](#)
- [Israel Five killed in shooting at car wash near Nazareth in new wave of violence](#)
- [West Bank Palestinian journalist hit in head by bullet during raid on terror suspect's home](#)



French police said two of the attacked children were in a critical condition. Two adults were also injured. Photograph: Jean-Christophe Bott/EPA

[France](#)

## **British child among French Alps stabbing victims, says foreign secretary**

Briton was one of four children aged between 22 months and three years attacked in Annecy playground

*[Alexandra Topping](#)*

Thu 8 Jun 2023 14.54 EDTFirst published on Thu 8 Jun 2023 10.56 EDT

A British child is among four children and two adults who have been injured in the town of Annecy in the French Alps, after a knifeman went on a rampage in a playground, the UK's foreign secretary has confirmed.

At least two of the children, both aged about three, were reported to be in a critical condition in hospital, while an adult also suffered life-threatening injuries, French national police said.

On Thursday afternoon the mayor of Annecy [told French broadcaster BFM TV](#) that the children who were injured were “out of the operating room” after the morning’s attack. François Astorg said: “For the moment, their condition seems stable.” The adult remained in surgery, he added.

The UK foreign secretary, James Cleverly, who was speaking at an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) ministerial council press conference in [France](#), called the attacks a “terrible act of violence” and said the British government was ready to support the French authorities in whatever way possible.

“We are also aware that one of the people, one of the children injured, was a British national,” he said. “We have already deployed British consular officials who are travelling to the area to make themselves available to support the family. And of course we stand in strong solidarity with the people of [France](#) at this terrible time.”

The UK prime minister called the incident an “unfathomable attack”. Speaking during a joint White House press conference with the US president, Joe Biden, Rishi Sunak told reporters: “All our thoughts are with those who were affected … I have been in touch with President Macron. We stand ready to offer any assistance that we can.”

Witnesses described the suspected knifeman running around in a frenzy, apparently attacking at random, before he was stopped by police near the banks of Lake Annecy.

The French prosecutor leading an investigation into the attack said the four children injured were aged between 22 months and three years, and that two adults were also injured.

According to reports, the attack happened at about 9.45am local time (0845 BST), when a man armed with a knife entered a children’s playground close to the lake. Video footage showed him prowling the play area and attacking a group of small children – including one in a pushchair – as they played. A video showed a man being chased in the immediate aftermath of the attack.

The former Liverpool footballer Anthony Le Tallec, who has also played for FC Annecy, witnessed part of the attack. He described seeing dozens of people running towards him and a mother shouting: “Run, someone is stabbing everyone, he’s stabbing children!”

The prosecutor said the suspect was a 31-year-old Syrian man, who had been detained by police. His motives were as yet unknown, but the attack did not appear to be terrorism-related, said the prosecutor.

The French prime minister, Élisabeth Borne, said the man had been granted refugee status in Sweden 10 years ago and was in France legally. She added that he had tried to apply for asylum in France, but was rejected as he already had asylum in Sweden. In his application, he said he was a Syrian Christian.

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Borne added: “He has one child, who is the same age as the children he attacked.” She also confirmed he had no known criminal or psychiatric record.

BFM TV reported the man had separated from his Swedish wife eight months ago, and that she said she had not heard from him for four months.

The British home secretary, Suella Braverman, said she was in touch with her French counterpart, Gérald Darmanin, adding that she was “appalled” by the attack.

Braverman [tweeted](#) that her thoughts were with “the children, their families and the local community who have been affected by this shocking act”.

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Israeli police at the scene of the shooting at a car wash in Yafa an-Naseriyye, near Nazareth. Five people were killed. Photograph: Mahmoud Illean/AP

[Israel](#)

## Five killed in shooting at car wash near Nazareth as Israel sees wave of violence

Police believe Yafa an-Naseriyye incident was connected to dispute between organised crime families

*Staff and agencies in Jerusalem*

Thu 8 Jun 2023 14.57 EDT Last modified on Fri 9 Jun 2023 11.35 EDT

Five people have been killed in a shooting at a car wash in an Arab town in northern [Israel](#), police said, the latest incident in a wave of criminal violence tearing through the minority community.

Police said they believed the shooting on Thursday in the town of Yafa an-Naseriyye, near the city of Nazareth, was connected to a dispute between organised crime families.

Speaking from the scene of the killings, police spokesperson Eli Levy told public broadcaster Kan that “one person or more” opened fire at a group of men at the car wash.

Maher Khaliliya, head of the Yafia local council, called the shooting a “massacre”, accusing police of responsibility due to lax enforcement.

Israel’s Palestinian minority has long suffered from poverty, discrimination, crime and neglect by the national government.



Israeli police talk to men at the scene of the shooting in Yafa an-Naseriyye.  
Photograph: Mahmoud Illean/AP

Israel’s far-right national security minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, promised to crack down on crime in Israel’s Palestinian sector when he took office late last year. But the violence has only worsened, and nearly 100 people have been killed this year.

In a statement at the crime scene, Ben-Gvir said years of neglect had turned Israel’s Arab sector into the “wild west”. He also blamed a manpower shortage in the national police force and, vowing to halt the crime wave, called for the establishment of [a controversial “national guard”](#).

Ben-Gvir said the force was meant to fill in gaps in areas where police are spread thin, including in crime-ridden Arab communities. Critics say that Ben-Gvir, an ultranationalist with a history of violent rhetoric against Palestinians, will use the force as a personal militia.

In a separate incident on Thursday, a shooting in a nearby Arab town left a 30-year-old man and a three-year-old girl seriously wounded, police said. The circumstances of that shooting and the identities of the two wounded were not immediately known.

The Israeli prime minister, [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), said he was “shocked” by Thursday’s killings. “We are determined to stop this chain of murders,” he said. He vowed to enlist Israel’s Shin Bet internal security agency – whose main task is to monitor the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip – in the effort.

Mansour Abbas, leader of the Arab party Ra’am, accused the government – and especially Ben-Gvir – of failing the country’s Palestinians. “To bring into the ministry of national security [of] Itamar Ben-Gvir, who doesn’t know what his powers are, in no normal country would they allow such a minister to continue,” he told Israel’s army radio station.

Merav Michaeli, leader of the opposition Labor party, also blamed Ben-Gvir for the growing violence. “This is exactly the opposite of what the boss promised,” she said. “The worst police minister in history. A disgraceful government. Go home.”

Thursday’s shooting is separate from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has seen more than a year-long surge of violence in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. That fighting has intensified since Israel’s new far-right government took office in late December.

Nearly 120 Palestinians have been killed in the two areas this year, nearly half of whom were members of armed militant groups, according to an estimate by AP. The military says the number of militants is much higher. Meanwhile, Palestinian attacks targeting Israelis have killed at least 21 people.

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Palestinian police and civil defence inspect the damage to the house after it was demolished by Israeli Defence Forces in Ramallah. Photograph: Ahmad Gharabli/AFP/Getty

### [Palestinian territories](#)

## **Palestinian journalist hit in head by bullet during raid on terror suspect's home**

News photographer Moamen Sumreen, 22, had been covering the demolition of the apartment in Ramallah

*[Bethan McKernan in Jerusalem](#)*

Thu 8 Jun 2023 12.41 EDT Last modified on Thu 8 Jun 2023 13.05 EDT

A Palestinian news photographer is in a serious condition in hospital after being hit in the head by a rubber bullet during a rare Israeli raid in Ramallah, the Palestinian administrative capital in the occupied West Bank.

A convoy of Israel Defence Forces (IDF) vehicles entered the city late on Wednesday night in order to demolish the home of a terrorism suspect who had been accused of planting [two bombs targeting rush-hour commuters in Jerusalem last November](#) that killed two people and injured another 21.

At least six people were hospitalised overnight, three with gunshot wounds, Palestinian medical officials said, after hundreds of people gathered to protest against the army's presence. The IDF said soldiers responded with "riot dispersal means" to young men throwing rocks.

Moamen Sumreen, 22, a journalist covering the operation, was seriously wounded after being hit in the head by a rubber bullet, his family said.

His uncle Mohammed Sumreen, also a journalist, told Agence-France Presse they had been part of a group of reporters and photographers watching events from the roof of a nearby building, and that Moamen had been wearing a jacket clearly marked "press" when he was fired at.

The Israeli army said in a statement that the incident was "under review".

Photographer Rabih Al-Munir was also injured by rubber-coated metal bullets that hit him in the abdomen, the Palestinian Press Syndicate said. The wounding of the journalists drew immediate parallels with last year's high-profile killing of Al-Jazeera journalist [Shireen Abu Akleh](#).

A May report from the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) found that Israel had not charged or found any soldier accountable for the killings of 20 journalists, 18 of whom were Palestinian, since 2001.

Court-approved house demolitions are a common tactic used by Israel, which says they deter Palestinians from resorting to violence, and are sometimes carried out in coordination with the semi-autonomous Palestinian Authority. Human rights groups have long maintained that they amount to collective punishment.

The use of explosives to destroy the first floor apartment where 26-year-old suspect Aslam Faroukh lived before his arrest in December was unusual – as

was the location, Ramallah, a major Palestinian city in which Israel supposedly has no jurisdiction.

The demolition went ahead after “an appeal to the supreme court against [it] was rejected”, the army said in a statement.

Tensions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have soared over the last 18 months, leading to fears that a return to full-scale fighting is on the horizon: in 2023 so far, at least 156 Palestinians and 21 Israelis have been killed.

November’s twin explosions near a bus stop and a busy junction in the occupied eastern half of Jerusalem, both of which were detonated remotely, were the first bombings targeting Israeli civilians in the city in years.

Faroukh was arrested in connection with the attack a month later. He is believed to have acted alone, and to identify with Islamic State, rather than Palestinian factions.

Attacks on Israeli buses and public spaces, most of them carried out by suicide bombers, were a hallmark of the 2000-05 intifada, or Palestinian uprising, but have been rare since.

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## Headlines monday 5 june 2023

- Live Moscow claims to have repelled ‘major’ Donetsk attack, claiming 250 Ukrainian troops killed
- Ukraine Significant escalation in fighting reported in Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia
- Live Sunak to claim he is tackling illegal migration in speech
- David Lammy PM has ‘little England mentality’ over UK foreign policy

## [Ukraine war liveUkraine](#)

# **Ukraine deputy defence minister says forces moving to ‘offensive actions’ in some areas – as it happened**

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Russia releases drone footage it claims shows Ukrainian military equipment being destroyed – video

## [Ukraine](#)

# **Ukraine: significant escalation in fighting reported in Donetsk region**

Russia claims to have fought off ‘major offensive’ and killed hundreds of Ukrainian troops in attack

- [Russia-Ukraine war live: latest updates](#)

*[Julian Borger](#) and [Dan Sabbagh](#) in Kyiv*

Mon 5 Jun 2023 06.58 EDTFirst published on Sun 4 Jun 2023 22.38 EDT

A significant escalation in fighting along the frontlines in the Donetsk region of [Ukraine](#) has been reported overnight, but there was no confirmation from Kyiv officials that it marked the start of their long-planned counteroffensive.

Russia claimed to have repelled a “major offensive” in the Donetsk region and to have killed hundreds of Ukrainian troops, but the claims could not be independently verified. A Moscow-backed militia leader, the head of the Wagner mercenary group and Russian military bloggers said Ukrainian forces had achieved breakthroughs at some points.

The only comment from a senior Ukrainian official on Monday was a cryptic one from the head of the presidential office, Andriy Yermak, [who tweeted](#): “True wisdom is to be able to convince the enemies they have already lost.

“Victory or defeat, it is born in heads first,” he added, suggesting that winning or losing started as a state of mind.

Asked about the reports of major offensive operations, a spokesperson for the Ukrainian armed forces' general staff told Reuters news agency: "We do not have such information and we do not comment on any kind of fake."

Over the weekend, Ukrainian leaders emphasised the need for secrecy about operations in recent days as anticipation grew for a major counteroffensive. Ukrainian military officers have predicted that any such counteroffensive would be preceded and accompanied by feints and diversionary attacks to "shape the battlefield" and cause as much confusion as possible in Russian ranks.

The defence ministry in Moscow said Ukraine had attacked with six mechanised and two tank battalions from two brigades in five sectors of the front in Donetsk.



Ukrainian forces destroying Russian positions near Klischiivka, Donetsk oblast. Photograph: 3rd Assault Brigade/Ukrainian Armed Forces Press Service/Reuters

"The enemy's goal was to break through our defences in the most vulnerable, in its opinion, sector of the front," it said. "The enemy did not achieve its tasks, it had no success."

The ministry claimed 250 Ukrainian troops had been killed, and 16 tanks, three infantry fighting vehicles and 21 armoured personnel carriers destroyed. It also claimed that Valery Gerasimov, the Russian chief of general staff, had been near the frontlines when the attack was repelled. The Russian defence ministry has consistently made exaggerated claims about the casualties its forces have inflicted.

The ministry statement named the Ukrainian units involved as the 23rd and 31st mechanised brigades in the attack, neither of which are listed as among the 12 western equipped units in the leaked Pentagon Papers. A two-brigade deployment would represent a significant attack, but is not itself a full-sized breakthrough force.

Videos posted online showed what were purported to be Ukrainian armoured cars blowing up in fields near Velyka Novosilka, 60 miles west of Donetsk city, but it was impossible to tell from the videos when they were taken and what the outcome of the battle was.

The daily update from the Ukrainian general staff on Sunday made no mention of a major offensive in Donetsk but did report 29 clashes in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and 15 airstrikes on enemy troops across the country.

The Institute for the Study of War in Washington, which monitors signs of troop movements, said: “Ukrainian forces conducted local ground attacks and reportedly made limited tactical gains in western Donetsk oblast and eastern Zaporizhzhia oblast.”

Alexander Khodakovsky, the head of the pro-Moscow Vostok Battalion in the Donbas, said there had been Ukrainian military gains south of the town of Velyka Novosilka in western Donetsk.

“The enemy is trying to break through. Having grouped their forces into a fist, they were able to achieve tactical success,” Khodakovsky said on Telegram. “They took one position from us, but suffered tangible losses.”

Later on Monday, Khodakovsky reported that German-made Leopard tanks had been spotted among the attacking forces, as Ukraine's army pressed its advantage

"The enemy, having felt our weak points, is stepping up his efforts. For the first time we saw Leopards in our tactical area," he said. "As I predicted yesterday, smelling the scent of success, the enemy will throw additional forces into the battle."

Russian military bloggers also said Ukraine had breached Russian lines in Velykonovosilkivskyi. The military journalist and propagandist Semyon Pegov wrote on his Wargonzo blog: "This time the news is much more disturbing."

"This is not about panic but about the need for well-coordinated work," Pegov wrote. "Good luck to the guys at the front, today will obviously not be an easy day."

Farther north-west along the Donetsk front, the head of the Wagner group mercenary organisation, Yevgeny Prigozhin, complained that Berkhivka, a settlement north of Bakhmut, had fallen to Ukrainian forces.

"Now part of the settlement of Berkhivka has already been lost, the troops are quietly running away. Disgrace," Prigozhin said in an audio message published by his own press outlet. He challenged Gerasimov and Russia's defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, to come to the frontlines themselves.

"Come on, you can do it," Prigozhin taunted. "And if you can't, you'll die as heroes."

Igor Girkin, a Russian nationalist critic of the Kremlin and former "defence minister" in the Russian-installed authority in Donetsk, said it was clear Ukraine "has not yet made full use of his main forces".

He added: "If the enemy's offensive has really begun, and is not a 'test of strength', the intensity of the battles will only increase in the coming days. The outcome of the battle is not yet completely predetermined – it is just beginning."

On Monday, the commander of Ukraine's ground forces, Oleksandr Syrskyi, said his troops continued "moving forward" near Bakhmut but he made no comment on the counteroffensive.

Ukraine-backed Russian rebels kept up their offensive inside the Russian region of Belgorod. The incursion launched on Thursday by the Freedom of Russia Legion and the Russian Volunteer Corps was aimed at the town of Shebekino, and on Monday the rebels claimed to have destroyed Russian armoured vehicles on the outskirts of town.



Smoke rising above the town of Shebekino, in Belgorod region, on Sunday.  
Photograph: Pavlo Pakhomenko/EPA

Ukraine's defence minister, Oleksii Reznikov, posted a message on Twitter on Sunday, quoting from the Depeche Mode song Enjoy the Silence. "Words are very unnecessary They can only do harm," the tweet said.

Also on Sunday, Ukraine's armed forces published a video on social media of soldiers facing the camera and putting their finger to their lips, underlining the need for secrecy. In an interview published the same day in the Wall Street Journal, Ukraine's president, [Volodymyr Zelenskiy](#), said preparations for the counteroffensive had been completed.

Ukraine made striking gains in liberating occupied territory late last year, but Russian forces have had several months since to prepare defensive positions. There is widespread apprehension among Ukrainian forces over the human cost of a counteroffensive, but also awareness that the cost could grow the longer Kyiv waits.

Zelenskiy said Ukraine did not have all the western weapons it had wanted to start the counteroffensive but could no longer wait. He warned that “a large number of soldiers will die”.

Ukraine has readied 12 brigades, an estimated 60,000 troops, to spearhead an attack it hopes will show it can force the Russian invaders, who total about 300,000, from its territory, some of which has been occupied since 2014.

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**Politics live with Andrew Sparrow****Politics**

# **Lawyers, not politicians, will decide what should held back from Covid inquiry, MPs told – as it happened**

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David Lammy said cuts to overseas aid, the British Council and BBC World Service were hampering UK's soft power and making it more insular.  
Photograph: Tayfun Salci/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

Labour

## **Sunak has ‘little England mentality’ over UK foreign policy, says Lammy**

Shadow foreign secretary says Britain risks isolation in global debates on China, AI and climate crisis

*Peter Walker Deputy political editor  
@peterwalker99*

Mon 5 Jun 2023 04.54 EDT Last modified on Mon 5 Jun 2023 11.16 EDT

Rishi Sunak has demonstrated a “little England mentality” in foreign relations, David Lammy has argued, warning the UK risks marginalising itself in vital global debates on China, AI and the climate emergency.

Speaking shortly before Sunak heads to Washington for a meeting with Joe Biden, the shadow foreign secretary said cuts to areas such as overseas aid, the British Council and BBC World Service were further hampering the UK's soft power and making it appear even more insular.

"Sunak finds himself constantly on the fringe of the debates and never leading, never at the centre," Lammy told the Guardian from a defence and security conference in Singapore.

"I think that there are two traditions, effectively, in our country. One is a Great Britain that's outward-looking and open. The other is a little England. We've seen a lot of the little England mentality under this government."

The Tottenham MP, who has held the foreign affairs brief under Keir Starmer for the past 18 months, has previously set out his hope to better reconnect the UK with other nations if Labour wins power.

Such an approach, Lammy argued, also includes China, whose new defence minister, Li Shangfu, spoke at the Singapore gathering, as did Li's US's equivalent, Lloyd Austin.

As well as challenging Beijing, notably over rights abuses in places including Hong Kong and Xinjiang, Lammy said the UK had to accept the necessity of cooperation, notably over climate issues.

The Conservatives, he said, had shown "massive inconsistency" over China, ranging from the self-styled "golden era" of relations under David Cameron to the hostility of Liz Truss, who made a speech last month in Taiwan, which is threatened by potential invasion by China.

Truss's intervention could have been harmful if people saw her as a more consequential figure, Lammy argued: "I don't think any serious commentator that I've seen thought it was a sensible thing for a former UK prime minister to arrive in Taiwan sabre-rattling. But I didn't see write-ups of that speech taking it very seriously."

All this epitomised a chaotic embrace of foreign relations under Sunak and his predecessors, Lammy said, which had managed to alienate allies such as

the EU and the US.

“We had this incomprehensible approach to Northern Ireland, the UK government apparently prepared to tear up an international agreement we had signed up to just two years previously. That undermined our relationship with Washington,” he said.

“We’ve had a very sclerotic approach to climate, vastly different to the Biden administration, with their inflation reduction act.

“All of this has put Britain on the fringe. It’s on the fringe of Europe, not at the centre of discussions on artificial intelligence, on climate, on defence cooperation beyond the Nato framework.”

One immediate task for a [Labour](#) government if it wins an election expected next year would be to begin negotiations on a revised post-Brexit trading deal, with Lammy saying he would hope to improve ties in areas including the movement of food, and getting EU students back into UK universities.

While Lammy and his party have close ties with Biden’s team, they also face the prospect of a near-parallel US election cycle delivering a Republican president – potentially even Donald Trump – into the White House.

“While I spend time with good Democrat friends who are currently in the administration, and on the Hill, it’s also important to meet with Republicans and talk to Republicans and understand their worldview,” said Lammy, who previously studied and worked in the US.

“That relationship goes beyond whomever is in No 10 or the White House.”

While Labour has said it will restore the UK’s aid budget to 0.7% of GDP only if economically possible, Lammy argued this was a vital element of a more connected foreign policy.

“Our soft power is also the BBC World Service. It’s the British Council. It’s higher education and getting back into the [EU’s] Horizon scheme.

“Of course, I want to see us get back to the global outside reputation that we had on international development, as soon as the fiscal climate will allow.”

This was, he said, another example of the foreign policy slippage under Sunak: “Our economy is weaker, our soft power is less. And our relationship with our allies is not as strong as you would expect it to be, given that there is war in Europe. So on all of those fronts, there is a lot for the next government to do.”

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## 2023.06.05 - Spotlight

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‘Living with the fear of cancer is really hard’ ... Beeny in Sarah Beeny vs Cancer.

Photograph: Nicky Johnston

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# **Sarah Beeny on cancer, love and survival: ‘I always assumed I would die at 39. So I was very impatient’**

[Zoe Williams](#)

When the TV star and property expert found out she had cancer, her seemingly idyllic life turned upside down. Now given the all-clear, she discusses the diagnosis, the early death of her mother and the power of escapism



[@zoesqwilliams](#)

Mon 5 Jun 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 5 Jun 2023 11.38 EDT

If you’ve seen Sarah Beeny’s [New Life in the Country](#), you will know exactly what her house is like: unimaginably vast, unsettlingly new, modelled on a stately home but manifestly not one, like a fairytale you’re slightly too old for. But even knowing it inside out, I was still surprised to find that it actually existed, that anyone lives like that. You enter through a porch into a massive boot room, where everyone in the family has a floor-to-ceiling locker, stencilled with their name, which is what, I guess, contributes to the incredible sense of order, the un-stately-home tidiness. The rolling

view from the dining room windows is enough to make you drop to your knees in quasi-religious thanksgiving. “Sometimes I have the doors open and think: ‘This is actually not real,’” she says. “This is like a holiday camp.” Even her dogs, who caper into the high-ceilinged drawing room, oblivious to how charming sitting on that Chesterfield is going to make them look, are perfect.

Beeny has adapted seamlessly to the dress code of The Simple Life (the title of her book about this escapade, published this August); she’s a jeans and shirt and (probably, when she’s going outdoors) wellies person now, after more than two decades of her distinctive, rock-chick-goes-to-a-meeting-with-the-bank-manager style. The main difference is that her hair is still very short, after treatment for breast cancer, which she was diagnosed with last August.

This is the subject of her other documentary, [Sarah Beeny](#) vs Cancer, which shows that gruelling journey close up and with remarkable honesty. “I thought, if I’m going to tell a story, I might as well tell a true one,” she says. A video diary she makes in her car, as her hair first starts to fall out in her fingertips, is such a poignant and forceful portrait of the realities of cancer treatment – denaturing, remorseless – that this might sound like a radical departure, a plummet, even, from her life’s work, which has been to take a can-do attitude and turn it brick by brick into one perfect thing after another.



Beeny with her husband Graham Swift and their four sons in *New Life In The Country*. Photograph: Nicky Johnston/ Outline Productions

But Beeny has always been a little more complicated than just a happy-go-lucky person to whom good things happen: a mix of disarming openness, casual self-effacement and the sense that she genuinely wants to help. Her husband and business partner, Graham Swift, thinks there are two types of people, she says: “The ‘why?’ people and the ‘why not?’ people. If you’re a ‘why not?’ person, your life is better.” Her own version is: “The people who’ll see someone carrying a box, and go: ‘Do you want me to take the other side?’ And those kinds of people, weirdly, they’re luckier. And that isn’t a random coincidence. That’s because things come along for those people.” It tells you plenty about the person Beeny is: one who would prefer to connect than not, who never needs to roll her sleeves up as she arrives with them pre-rolled. So whether her news is good or bad, whether she has cancer or a 32-bedroom, at-risk listed building in Yorkshire, her brand is always the same: you like her because you like her. You’d be crazy not to.

Born in 1972, Beeny grew up in Hampshire; although her dad was an architect, she describes her early life as semi off-grid and non-materialistic. “I think the hippy family bit just made me realise that self-sufficiency is really hard work. It’s easier to just earn a living.” Alongside that drive to earn, though – she was on her way to becoming a property developer by the

age of 19, when she bought her first flat with Swift – there remains a devil-may-care attitude. “You have to dare to risk and be prepared to lose. As long as the worst-case scenario leaves you with your family ... I’m really lucky to have Graham, because he gives me security. I think Graham and me in a caravan would be quite fun.”

When she was 10, her mother died of breast cancer: probably the most painful part of the documentary is when she unearths her mother’s medical records, and discusses with an oncologist how different the treatment would have been today; her mother would still be alive. “I suppose, if I’m honest, I wanted to get her records to go: ‘She had that treatment and it didn’t work. But I’m having this treatment, and therefore it will work because now it’s better.’ I wanted to prove that I was going to get better, to myself. I was quite shocked by how they talked about her, because we’ve come a long way. Loads of things they didn’t tell her. Misogyny, alive and kicking. The chemotherapy she had would have made her infertile, but they didn’t bother telling her.”



On Property Ladder, 2006. Photograph: Contract Number (Programme)/Channel 4

Beeny is a relentless quester after the silver lining; it's almost a superpower. “I feel quite grateful. I wouldn’t change anything. Life has its weird ways of

being what it is. If my mother hadn't died, I probably wouldn't have met Graham, because I'd probably have gone to a different school. I met him because my brother [Diccon] met his sister." There are so many dream-life elements to Beeny's family: four sons ranging in age from 13 to 19, who all get on so well they're in a band together; she's married to the childhood sweetheart she'd still be happy to live in a caravan with; but I always think the most enviable bit is that Beeny's brother, who's two years older, is married to Swift's sister. They moved to Somerset partly because Diccon and Caroline had already gone ahead of them. Their kids all get on really well; the family's like a lovely commune, except they don't have to share a house, and even if they did, it would be so huge they wouldn't notice.

I think I've always assumed that I would die at 39, so I've always been very impatient

If these relationships have unfolded like destiny over 30 years, it is nevertheless – and she admits this readily – quite weird to buy a flat aged 19 with your 18-year-old boyfriend. "My 19-year-old son asks: 'What do you press again, on the washing machine?' And I think: 'Wow, by your age I had my own washing machine, in my own flat, with my own council tax that I paid, and I got my own deposit, and my own mortgage.' I just was early, I started early." She got a head start because she didn't go to university, she says, and this was the early 90s, when even doing random jobs (she was a window cleaner, sold vacuums door-to-door) meant you could still save for a deposit. But much more than that, it was what so many people who are bereaved in childhood describe: the sense that her life would be short. "I've always been in a hurry. My mum died when she was 39; I think I've always assumed that I would die at 39, so I've always been very impatient, trying to fit loads of stuff in."

By the time Beeny and Swift were in their mid 20s, they'd bought Rise Hall in East Riding, originally intending to live there, later turning it into a wedding venue. Her TV career started at around the same time, in 2001, with *Property Ladder*, in which she tracked other people's "challenging" buildings and watched in horror as everything took four times as long, and was 10 times more expensive than expected. I'd call it a descent into hell, but she was really into it. "I was really interested in the concept of home. So

I'm interested in my home, other people's homes. I'm interested in how people live in their homes. I really like people. I love the things that make people different and the same." A huge part of the charm of that show, which ran for six years and was very much at the vanguard of the home-improvement genre, was that sense – which endured through her later shows, Property Snakes and Ladders, and How to Live Mortgage Free with Sarah Beeny – that nothing could go that wrong with her around. There would always be someone to help you with a box. That was very much the impression of her personal life, too: that nothing could go that wrong, since she was in it. "Don't think shit hasn't happened," she says, "because loads of stuff has, over the years; there's no such thing as a person who hasn't had failure. You couldn't be successful if you hadn't had failures."



'I think secrets are really toxic' ... Beeny in her bedroom in *Sarah Beeny vs Cancer*.

Photograph: Nicky Johnston

Inevitably, her career has thrown up detractors, particularly when *Life in the Country* first landed, in November 2020. This was arguably the low point of Covid, the UK gripped by unending lockdowns, untold loss and hardship, and it really wasn't the time. I probably wouldn't have raised that, though, since it would seem a bit rude, particularly when you're sitting in the dream palace, patting a dog. She says all this unprompted: "I do know the show is

... in the nicest possible way, a little bit nauseating. Building a great big house in the countryside and having a lovely time. I do recognise that. I'm not a total idiot."

Because the house itself took longer than anticipated, the show ended up more fly-on-the-wall, with her tumble of boys playing lockdown guitar and helping out with gravel. She said once that four boys were easier to cope with than four girls would be, but adjusts that. "You probably want the children you get; I'm sure if I had four girls, I'd go: 'Oh my God, it'd be awful having four boys, so ghastly.' It wouldn't matter what I had, I'd think that was better. While they're chaotic, boys, they're very loving, very forgiving, they don't hold grudges, they can't be bothered, they're on with the next thing."

The boys' band is called the Entitled Sons; they won the Pilton stage competition last year, which means they play Glastonbury this year, and they've written a single released coincidentally with the cancer documentary, and plan to give the proceeds to Cancer Research UK. Gilded but self-aware, making things look effortless but also grafting, socially minded, cooperative: I'm not sure it is because they're boys; they sound a lot like their mother.

There's no such thing as a person who hasn't had failure. You couldn't be successful if you hadn't had failures

Beeny has hardly been insulated from criticism. There are plenty of people on social media who will tell her she's "showing off, or whatever. But there was a nurse who said: 'I've just done a 14-hour shift in a hospital. Thank you for making this show. It's just lovely escapism and it makes me smile.' It's meant to be escapism. There's loads of horrible stuff you can watch, you can see hideous, horrible things online if you want to see them. I don't want to see that, I don't want to put it in my eyes, I don't want it, I don't need it."

Less than a year into the project, she got her diagnosis. "They say: 'You've got cancer.' And you hear: 'What kind of coffin do you want?'" she says. "I was slightly hysterical about not dying, with everyone going: 'You're not going to die.' And me saying: 'I can't die, I can't die.' 'No, you're not!' It

takes ages for you to hear it.” She didn’t even know the difference between chemotherapy and radiotherapy, “it was just all therapy for cancer stuff”, and she approaches the topic like a game layperson, getting her head round it so you can too.

The documentary came about because she thought, at the start, she’d tell no one: but then she realised this would put a burden of secrecy on her sons, too, “and I wanted them to be able to talk to anyone they wanted to. As a basic principle, I think secrets are really toxic.” So she chose radical openness instead, an article at first and now the documentary, thinking: “If I told this story, there might be loads of people who wouldn’t be so scared. Because living with the fear of cancer is really hard. It’s disproportionate to the risk. I’m not going to say that all cancer is the same, breast cancer is completely different. But I do know that with all cancer treatment, we can base our fears largely on something that happened 10 or 20 or 30 years ago, to someone we loved.” Thankfully, Beeny was [given the all-clear in April](#).

The face of escapism was forced to confront the inescapable, but she doesn’t want to put a gloss on it: “I suppose the last year has tested our resilience as a family. I think it’s been hard on all the children and Graham. If you’re lucky enough to have people who love you, they go through cancer, too. In a way, at least you’re going through the treatment; they’re impotent. You go through the cancer, but everyone else is bleeding at the same time.” Sarah Beeny remains, though, completely indomitable, a force of nature, and I’m sure it’s that, more than the gigantic windows, that everyone aspires to.

*Sarah Beeny’s New Country Lives is on Channel 4 at 5pm every weekday.  
Sarah Beeny vs Cancer is on Channel 4 at 9pm on Monday 12 June.*

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Guaraní people and human rights activists attend a vigil in São Paulo, Brazil, on 23 June 2022 for Dom Phillips and Bruno Pereira. Photograph: André Penner/AP

[The Bruno and Dom project](#)[Indigenous peoples](#)

## **'Journalism mustn't be silenced': colleagues to complete slain reporter's book**

How to Save the Amazon will be published so Dom Phillips' work telling the stories of rainforest defenders does not die with him

*[Constance Malleret](#) in Rio de Janeiro*

Mon 5 Jun 2023 05.30 EDT Last modified on Mon 5 Jun 2023 07.06 EDT

One year after Dom Phillips was [killed in the Brazilian Amazon](#), friends and colleagues have come together in a show of journalistic solidarity to keep his legacy alive and finish the book the British journalist was working on at the time of his death.

Phillips and his Brazilian companion, the Indigenous expert Bruno Pereira, were killed while returning from the remote Javari valley in the western Amazon last June. [Three men have been charged with murder](#) and are being held in high-security prisons while awaiting a decision on whether they will face trial.

Phillips, a respected correspondent and longtime Guardian collaborator, had been working on a book called How to Save the Amazon: Ask the People Who Know. [His fatal expedition last year](#) to interview Indigenous defenders fighting criminal activity in the Javari valley was to have been one of his final reporting trips.

In a tribute to the deep admiration Phillips elicited as both a person and journalist, his friends and colleagues are now striving to ensure that his work telling the stories of Amazon defenders does not die with him.

His widow, Alessandra Sampaio, asked a group of writers from [Brazil](#), the US and the UK to finish the book Phillips started, which he had pitched as a “character-driven, deeply researched, campaigning, environmental travel book that aims to entertain, inform and, most importantly, mobilise readers” about the fate of the Amazon.

“Amid the horror that followed the news of Bruno and Dom’s death, we wanted to focus on something positive, and the most important thing we could think of was to complete the work that Dom had started,” said [Jonathan Watts](#), one of the journalists coordinating the book’s route to publication. “Good journalism mustn’t be silenced.”

As well as Watts, who is global environment writer for the Guardian and co-founder of the Amazon-based news site Sumaúma, the team of experienced Amazon writers includes Eliane Brum (author and co-founder of Sumaúma), Tom Phillips (Latin America correspondent for the Guardian), Jon Lee Anderson (staff writer for the New Yorker), Katia Brasil (founder of Amazônia Real) and Andrew Fishman (president and co-founder of the Intercept Brasil).

They will carry out trips retracing Phillips' steps to write the book's remaining chapters, working with the partly completed manuscript and Phillips' extensive notes and research.

"Dom was murdered while telling the story of Amazon defenders getting killed. Leaving his book unfinished would mean letting the destroyers of the Amazon win without a fight. It would be a disservice to his legacy and everything we believe in as journalists," said Fishman.

A number of other journalists who knew and admired Phillips have offered to help with proofreading and factchecking.

The team of writers secured initial funds to start the project and has now partnered with Phillips' family [to raise a final £16,000 to pay for reporting trips](#) to the Amazon and other work needed to complete the manuscript, they said in a statement.

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"The book is particularly important right now because the Amazon is a battleground of ideas within Brazil and at the centre of [many of the big disputes that are threatening the new government](#) of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva," said Watts.

Phillips' sister, Sian Phillips, said the project was not only a lasting tribute to her brother's life's work, but also a crucially important resource to continue raising awareness about the threats facing the [Amazon rainforest](#) and the Indigenous people who protect it.

"If Dom and Bruno had not been murdered, the book would have been important for the conservation of the Amazon. But now, due to the international outcry after the murders, the potential of the book is greater because many more people will read it," she said.

"It's a great responsibility on my family, on Dom's family and friends, to ensure that the book is finished."

*- If you want to help finish Dom Phillips' book on the Amazon you can contribute [here](#).*

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# Rethink, reform, rebuild: 7 steps to save the Amazon

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Organic, unfiltered ACV is probiotic as long as it contains 'the mother'.  
Composite: Getty Images

[Health & wellbeing](#)

## **Apple cider vinegar: the ultimate panacea – or wildly overhyped?**

It has been said to kill E coli, reduce cholesterol, lower blood sugar and aid weight loss. But not all health experts are convinced of its powers



[Amy Fleming](#)

Mon 5 Jun 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 5 Jun 2023 15.04 EDT

Feeling peckish one day in 2017, Darshna Yagnik, an immunologist and lecturer in biomedical science at Middlesex University, took a punt on something that had been lurking at the back of the fridge. She soon regretted it and started feeling queasy. Desperate to avoid food poisoning, she racked her brains for something that might help – and remembered the bottle of [apple cider vinegar](#) (ACV) in the cupboard. She decided to glug a diluted shot. “Immediately, I felt like there was something going on, combating the bacteria,” she says. “My stomach was gurgling and after about 10 minutes it started feeling soothed. After about half an hour or an hour, I felt much better.”

At that moment, she realised she was using her own body for research. “I was thinking: what is going on with this apple cider vinegar? This is possibly having an effect on *E coli*. Let me test it in the laboratory.” She went on to do “a multitude of experiments” throughout the pandemic, resulting in [a 2021 paper](#) demonstrating that ACV kills [\*E coli\*](#) and [MRSA](#) in

petri dishes almost as effectively as common antibiotics. However, it is not clear how this would translate to the human body.

Nonetheless, this is one of the many promising results in recent studies into the benefits of ACV, once the preserve of health-food-shop aficionados. It is said to help normalise blood-sugar levels, reduce inflammation, aid weight loss and improve cholesterol levels. Even before the research, its popularity as a folk cure-all was growing quietly, but it is now being touted by health influencers as a quick fix for gut health.



ACV has a reputation for aiding digestion, but ‘there is no evidence supporting that’, says the dietitian Nichola Ludlam-Raine. Photograph: Stephanie Frey/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Deep down, of course, we all know that there are no quick fixes when it comes to health. A few swigs of vinegar can’t counter a sedentary lifestyle spent munching [ultra-processed foods](#).

Nevertheless, research into some of the health claims made for the fermented apple juice is promising, but without large, robust clinical trials, medical staff can’t countenance recommending the stuff. Nichola [Ludlam-Raine](#), a registered dietitian, says that while ACV has a reputation for aiding digestion, “there is no evidence supporting that”. However, organic,

unfiltered ACV is probiotic, she points out, as long as there is a brown, blobby fog called “the mother” floating around in it. This, she says, “includes different proteins, enzymes and bacteria. Some people believe that this is responsible for the health benefits of consuming apple cider vinegar, although there are no studies documenting this.”

ACV also contains 5% to 6% acetic acid, says Ludlam-Raine. “Some believe this plays a key part in the health claims. Acetic acid is found in most fruits, which are also key sources of vitamins, minerals and fibre – unlike apple cider vinegar.”

With Yagnik’s work, too, much more research is needed before the vinegar can be recommended officially for fighting pathogens, but what she has found so far is compelling. “I started researching different ways the vinegar might be acting on the bacteria,” she says. “I wasn’t surprised at the results, but it was amazing how it was working – it just destroyed them. Even my microbiologist friends were amazed.”

Handily, so far, it seems only to kill nasty bugs. “It has different effects on different microbes,” she says. “The effects seem to vary according to the microbe type, whether it is *E coli* or candida.”

A 2021 paper showed that ACV kills *E coli* and MRSA almost as effectively as common antibiotics

Yagnik also doused white blood cells in ACV. Lo and behold, they were able to clear infections much more quickly than normal, “so it seems to be working on immunity as well”, she says. Her hypothesis may explain why so many people claim anecdotally that ACV makes them feel better in general (although this could be the placebo effect): “Vinegar that contains the mother has enzymes and antioxidants that support cell metabolism and function ... It’s high in flavonoids and beneficial bacteria, which contribute to the human microbiome – vital for cellular immunity and defence.”

In a nutshell, she is suggesting that ACV has a two-pronged approach to fighting bugs: killing the bugs and strengthening our cellular defences. That

said, the effects always depend on the individual, she says: “Everyone’s got a different immunity.”

While studying the effects on cells, she saw signs that ACV could help reduce inflammation, too. Again, Yagnik suspects this is due to many components working together, from the enzymes to the flavonoids. “All of these in combination would optimise cells, boosting their function, and bring immune balance.”

The evidence on ACV controlling blood sugar is also intriguing. A [2019 meta-analysis](#) of six small studies found that taking it daily resulted in lower fasting blood-glucose levels, as well as reduced cholesterol. A [study](#) in 2004 of people with insulin resistance or type 2 diabetes found that taking ACV after a high-carb meal reduced blood-sugar spikes (regular blood-sugar spikes and subsequent crashes are associated with chronic disease).



If you want to keep your appetite at bay, ‘you’re better off eating an apple’, says Ludlam-Raine. Photograph: Mike Powles/Getty Images

This means that it could be helpful, alongside medication, in controlling blood sugar for people with type 2 diabetes. At present, however, it is not medically recommended and could cause problems in blood-sugar control for people with type 1 diabetes.

The cholesterol finding from one of the blood-sugar studies is backed up by a [meta-analysis](#) of nine trials, which concludes that taking one tablespoon of ACV daily is most effective after doing so for eight weeks or more.

While the weight-loss studies are small and inconsistent, and give only a short-term picture, one found that, with two groups on a calorie-controlled diet for 12 weeks, the half that also took 30ml of vinegar every day [lost on average 1.5kg more](#). Another found that overweight participants [lost 1kg to 2kg over 12 weeks](#) with no dietary restrictions. But all of these results should be interpreted with caution.

“Drinking apple cider vinegar should not replace medicines for diabetes management and could be bad news for teeth health,” says Ludlam-Raine. “Apple cider vinegar is strongly acidic, so there are risks of enamel erosion – and reflux [heartburn], too.”

Without large, robust clinical trials, medical staff can’t countenance recommending the stuff

There have also been warnings that people with kidney disease or ulcers should avoid such acidity. Ludlam-Raine says: “Evidence is minimal at present regarding appetite suppression and improving blood-sugar levels following a high-carb meal. You’re better off eating an apple (there’s more fibre, to keep gut bacteria happy, and it contains antioxidants, too).

“However, if you want to include AVC in your diet, use it in a salad dressing – alongside olive oil and black pepper – rather than drinking it.”

Of course, it is up to individuals whether they want to experiment on themselves with ACV. The key is to know the risks, to keep exercising and to eat a varied diet.

Yagnik – along with many others – now swears by a daily dose of ACV. “I carry it around with me in a small bottle,” she says, in case she feels suddenly as though she is coming down with an infection. “I just feel better with it. I think it’s really important to have the right nutrition and to boost

your immunity, because of what we've seen with the pandemic – it has affected a lot of people's immunity.”

She dilutes it one to one with water or juice and takes it after a meal, “so I’m not absorbing it on an empty stomach. Because some people might feel a little bit sick.”

Since her first study, Yagnik has started testing ACV’s impact on healthy people and those with infections; she says her findings show that “it does help clear infections, with no side-effects” – unless you count not enjoying the strong taste.

Informally, too, since her lab experiments, friends, family and colleagues have started taking it. “And they haven’t stopped. They just take it routinely, like a supplement, every day, because they feel the health benefits,” she says.

She concedes that much more research needs to be done; her own work continues. “There are so many different pathways that it’s acting on and it’s very exciting,” she says. “I think we’ve only scratched the surface.”

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## 2023.06.05 - Opinion

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A newly wed couple in Hefei, China, on 20 May, 2023. This popular wedding date is ‘520 I Love You’ day – the pronunciation of 520 in Chinese sounds very similar to ‘I love you’. Photograph: VCG/Getty Images

### [Opinion](#)[Marriage](#)

## **For better or for worse: is the decline in marriage actually good for relationships?**

[Devorah Baum](#)



While some countries turn marriage into a patriotic act, it might just give us a radical new way to live our lives

Mon 5 Jun 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 5 Jun 2023 12.17 EDT

One of the curious things about marriage is the role it's played in embedding commonly held views about normality. Married people are generally considered normal people. As such, they have possessed inordinate power to dictate the terms of normality in a way that single people rarely can. And yet marriage, clearly, isn't for everyone. Plenty of people have no desire to do it. Plenty of others have done it and haven't liked it. The stats only corroborate this. Fewer people over the years have been getting married, while the stresses and strains of lockdown in 2020 (along with the temporary closure of venues) saw divorces in England and Wales [overtake weddings](#) for the first time.

Not everyone, however, is taking marriage's declining popularity lying down. At the recent [National Conservatism conference](#), delegates were promised a national revival founded on "faith, family and flag". Likewise, China has just [proposed a list of measures](#) to actively encourage its young women to marry and have children (and not just one child any more: three, ideally). This is a national policy, but it's one with global benefits: to stem

the threat of economic stagnation, growing the population is supposed to ensure the continuity of a [huge, and therefore cheap, labour force](#). In other words, unless more Chinese women have more children, we'll all have to pay more for our merch – with matrimony here (never mind that not everyone who marries has children and not everyone who has children gets married) still framed by national governments as the gateway to maternity first of all. Other countries may well follow China's lead. In [Japan](#), where they've just recorded a seventh consecutive year of declining birthrates, and fewer couplings, the government is accused of failing to act quickly enough to mitigate the effects of a rapidly ageing population.

Meanwhile, the US has its own history of turning marriage into a patriotic act, sometimes on economic grounds, at other times on racial ones. [Paul Popenoe](#), for instance, founder of the American Institute of Family Relations and a big fan of Hitler and “applied eugenics”, opened his marriage counselling clinic in 1930 with the stated aim of saving the marriages of the “biologically superior” so as to save the race.

Sheesh. None of it sounds very romantic. Little wonder Chinese women, even when lured by financial incentives, don't especially fancy saving global capitalism by means of marriage. Looking at the various ends to which marriage has been recruited, it's tempting to conclude that marriage itself is nothing but a front for powerful interests that largely contradict those of marrying people themselves. Should we take it, then, that that's all marriage was ever really about?

Marriage may not be for everyone, but, as a currently married person, I've been trying to make it suit me. That doesn't mean I've found it easy (I haven't), although I have found it gets easier over time. Still, I do occasionally wonder if it is marriage's very success as an institution that has proven injurious to the lived experience of so many marriages. For if the norms marriage has helped to reproduce have been particularly pernicious for single people, they have not been too kind to couples either. As any psychoanalyst could tell you, when it comes to relationships, the invocation of the ideal tends to summon its own shadow. This is no less true of the spousal relation than it is of the parental one, where the ideal that none of us

can live up to has the effect, very often, of inspiring cruel and abusive behaviour under that idealised cover.

So, could marriage's fall from favour turn out to be a good thing for people who marry? When marriage ceases to be the cultural norm, new marriages – or new ways of being married – might be possible. Shorn of patriarchal expectations, marrying people could find they're better able to talk about what it is they really want out of marriage, for example. And unmarrying people should be better able to unshackle themselves from the sense that everyone from their mother to HMRC disapproves of their relationship status. The marriage contract, when no longer functioning as a fig leaf for the wider social contract, could become the testing ground for other possibilities – such as different ideas about how to inhabit a shared planet.

After all, if marriage is currently being made essential to the international market of cheap goods across the world, that isn't very good for the world. The economic system being “saved” here is one that exploits marriage's lifelong promise and commitment to create a culture that's short-termist in every other way. Taken at its own word, marriage's time signature is incompatible with many of the systems to have hitched their rides to it. Whereas, if you de-normalise marriage, something more experimental emerges.

Arguably, this has been going on since at least the late 18th century. The rise of the love match, if you think about it even for a moment, is nothing if not radical. You meet someone – whether through family or friends, or on holiday, or on a bus, or online – and hey, before you know it, you're promising to spend the rest of your lives together. How on earth is that normal? It's hardly surprising so many marriages don't work. What's remarkable is that so many do – some of them even happily. How?

Tolstoy famously found happy families alike and only the miserable ones interesting. And it does seem that he and Sofia Tolstoy had perfected the art of being deeply unhappy together *in their own way*. Yet unhappy marriages, as I see it, are more likely to give their game away than the happy ones, which always retain an aura of mystery. What I usually suspect of the happily married couple is that they've donned a cover of marital normality

as a licence to withdraw from the very world that urged them into it. And I also suspect of the happy couple that, when they do step into their marriage, it isn't merely to reproduce that world – it's to reimagine it. However unfashionable it may be, therefore, the long term of marriage is likely to remain forever topical because marriage is one possible model (one – not the only one) for the sort of creativity and tenacious solidarity that's surely required if we're to face our unknown future together – for richer or for poorer, for better or for worse.

- Devorah Baum is associate professor of English literature at the University of Southampton and the author of [On Marriage](#)
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Not everyone enjoys endless days of sunshine and high temperatures.  
Photograph: Marcelo del Pozo/Reuters

[Opinion](#)[Health & wellbeing](#)

## You can get Sad in summer – as I know only too well

[Emma Beddington](#)



Half the country might be waiting for the heat to turn up, but for the rest of us, it's a time of foreboding and dread

Mon 5 Jun 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 5 Jun 2023 17.02 EDT

I don't really understand why I'm still on Twitter, a mouse hopefully pressing the button that used to dispense treats, but which now only dispenses electric shocks. One reason is that I like the helpful reminders people give – that the clocks are changing, say, or there are only three days left for Christmas postage. Given staring at the internet has eaten 94% of my brain, I am grateful to outsource this basic life admin to civic-minded souls. I especially appreciate it when someone issues a heads-up for hay fever sufferers at the end of winter – when the trees are hatching their plot to kill me but haven't acted on it yet – to start taking antihistamines.

So consider this my contribution: summer haters, it might not be particularly warm yet, but the season is here and that's why you're feeling bad. Baffled by the sudden onset of foreboding and formless dread? Mired in blank inertia? Wondering what's wrong with you, because someone said it was "beautiful weather" and you upset them by retorting something angry about the desperate lack of rain, starving blue tit chicks and various other seasonal

downers? I've been there, too, and you're not losing your mind: it's seasonal affective disorder (Sad).

You can get Sad in summer: [the NHS says so](#), so it must be true. I realised my brain goes into summer meltdown a decade ago after spending weeks stuck at my desk, unable to work, hyperventilating. It has worsened as the climate crisis deepens, my once grey and pleasant northern home baking in terrifying 40C heat, like it did last year.

But at least I know what's happening now, and that means I can tell you. Of course, there's no antihistamine for summer dysphoria. All I can counsel is getting a fan and a season ticket to your nearest icily air-conditioned cinema, and practising acceptance. You will be the shade to everyone's else's light; the trailing goth in the happy, pastel-clad family group, the wasp at the picnic. And that's OK. As each year sizzles less forgivingly, I suspect our misunderstood band of summer misanthropes will only grow.

- Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist
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'I realise how, like so many of us, I was prey to the insidious myth of perseverance.'

Photograph: monkeybusinessimages/Getty Images/iStockphoto

[Why I quit US education](#)

## **I was overwhelmed by shame when I quit grad school. Now I'm a quitting guru**

[Julia Keller](#)



I thought that dropping out made me a failure, but it was the making of me as a journalist and writer

Mon 5 Jun 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 7 Jun 2023 06.06 EDT

First came the sobbing – a great gust of tears that successively overwhelmed my shirt sleeve, an entire box of tissues and an extra-large bath towel. Next came a prolonged period of sitting cross-legged on the floor and staring blankly into space while a single question – infused with equal parts sorrow and self-pity – tolled in my head: “What will become of me?” At last came the desperation-fuelled gesture I dreaded beyond all others: I quit.

I was certain that dropping out of graduate school, and giving up the teaching appointment that funded it, would ruin me. Surely it would mark me as a snivelling loser, a lazy bum, a spineless coward. But I had no choice because my misery was so acute. (And I was running out of towels.)

I had started the programme with optimistic brio – I was destined to become the world’s greatest [Virginia Woolf](#) scholar, wasn’t I? – even though, at 19, I was younger than the typical grad student. In fact, I was younger than most

of my students. Barely a month in, however, I was bereft. Everything – the school, the apartment, the town, the timing – seemed catastrophically wrong.

Looking back, I believe that what ailed me was a combination of emotional immaturity and a crippling shyness that prevented me from reaching out to anyone at the university who might have helped. By the time I quit, I was at the end of my emotional tether. Cringing with shame, I fled to my parents' home.

Things eventually worked out. I lurched and bumbled my way into journalism, although I'd never taken a journalism course. (As an English major, I knew more about Absalom and Achitophel than Woodward and Bernstein.) I ended up at the Chicago Tribune, where my work won a Pulitzer prize. Along the way I returned to grad school as a side hustle, earning a doctoral degree in English from Ohio State University, with a dissertation on – you guessed it – my old pal Virginia Woolf, who had waited patiently for me to get myself together.

What sticks in my mind, though, and what inspired me to write my latest book, is the terror and panic I felt at the prospect of withdrawing from school. The negative connotation associated with giving up was, I realise now, a more dastardly foe than anything else I was battling, from loneliness to fear.

I had fallen prey to the insidious myth of perseverance. Like so many of us, I believed that grit is always golden, that hanging in is always superior to dropping out, and that when you quit, you lose.

Nowadays, I don't think any of those things are true. Having conducted more than 150 interviews with people who quit something – a job, say, or a relationship – and culling the insights of neuroscientists and evolutionary biologists, I know that quitting is a valuable tool for survival, and that quitting is like aerobics for our brains. It keeps them limber and flexible.

Yet we still berate ourselves when we give up and choose another path. We nod automatically when we hear slogans such as "Quitters never win and winners never quit!"

Where did the belief that grit is an unalloyed good come from? Ideas have origin stories, just as superheroes do. And the notion that perseverance is crucial for success and wellbeing really took off in mid-19th-century London, when a Scot named Samuel Smiles published *Self-Help; With Illustrations of Character and Conduct*, the first of a series of books chronicling the lives of great men who toughed it out. Smiles is the father of the self-help movement – the dubious institution that's stronger than ever today, and insists that your destiny is in your own hands, as long as you don't quit. Never mind factors such as being born into intergenerational poverty, or with profound physical, emotional or intellectual challenges, or on the receiving end of ordinary bad luck.

No: it's all down to whether you gave up or persevered. Such a cockeyed philosophy aids and abets those in power, encouraging the demonisation of struggling people as “quitters” – ie unworthy of help. Yet we don't question the special breaks afforded to wealthy people. And we chalk up their success to “hard work”.

Granted, some kinds of quitting – such as ditching cigarettes or carbs – are applauded. But most are reviled. To leave a job or a relationship before you have another one lined up is to court scorn and incredulity: “You did *what?*”

Having written a book that praises throwing in the towel, I've become a sort of connoisseur of quitting, a guru of giving up. Yet I often have to clarify that quitting doesn't always work out. Sometimes, in fact, it's a disaster, because nothing in life is guaranteed. Nonetheless, no matter how things turn out, quitting is one of the most creative, dynamic and optimistic gestures we perform.

I wouldn't have believed that back in grad school as I sat on a cold floor and sobbed. I was certain that quitting would destroy my life.

In the end, it created it.

- Dr Julia Keller is a journalist and the author of [Quitting: A Life Strategy](#)
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A little more screen time ... Jonah Hauer-King as Prince Eric in the live-action remake of *The Little Mermaid*. Photograph: Photo Credit: Giles Keyte/Giles Keyte

[Movies](#)

## Royal but redundant: why the Disney prince is an endangered species

Guy Bigel

The new *Little Mermaid* film reinforces the sense that the Disney princesses' significant others are doomed to non-existence

Mon 5 Jun 2023 04.51 EDT Last modified on Wed 7 Jun 2023 13.57 EDT

Much has been said over the years about the Disney princesses – some are bad role models, some good, they set impossible expectations for young girls, they're predominantly white, and so on. But what about their male counterparts? Just like the princesses have evolved as characters, so have the roles of the Disney princes; yet, we rarely hear about their cultural impact (or lack thereof).

So who are the Disney princes? The latest iteration of the character is Prince Eric in the live-action remake of [The Little Mermaid](#). Although he has more screen time than in the original, he's arguably even more redundant this time around. The film follows the same story beats, but it overhauls Ariel from a naive and reckless figure into a mature protagonist who doesn't fall for the first human pretty boy she lays her eyes on. The Little Mermaid wants to keep Eric, but it doesn't want to need him.

In historical terms, the princes are, functionally, significant others. Unlike the princesses, they are not part of a billions-worth, standalone multimedia franchise that's been going strong for decades. A common criticism of the early princesses – Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora from Sleeping Beauty – focuses on their passivity. They're the titular characters, yet they lack agency, and others must solve all of their problems for them. But this passivity doesn't translate to prominence from the royal blokes either. The real heroes of those films are the dwarves, the mice and the fairies. Meanwhile, the princes from Snow White and Cinderella are just nameless minor characters with very little screen time, and they purely exist to give the princess protagonist her happy-ever-after ending.

The next two princes, Philip and Eric (from Sleeping Beauty and The Little Mermaid respectively), fare a tad better. Unlike their predecessors, they do have names, they have a bit more screen time, and, most notably, they slay the antagonists of their films. But the first major evolution manifests in the 1990s. No longer do the princesses wait for others to solve their problems, and no longer is love their main ambition. In Beauty and the Beast, Belle yearns for adventure, Aladdin's Jasmine wishes to make her own choices, and Mulan wants to protect her father. As for the prince Beast is the first of his kind to undergo a character arc as he changes both figuratively and literally throughout the film. Ironically enough, like the first two princes, the film never gives Beast a real name.

The biggest outlier of the canon has to be Aladdin. This is the only princess film to date where its titular star is its prince character. So it's interesting that the princess of his desires, the headstrong Jasmine, has eclipsed Aladdin in popularity, thanks to the marketing success of Disney princess branding. That said, Aladdin is arguably the first of the princely bunch to demonstrate

heroic qualities that might appeal to the boy demographic; these qualities carry over to subsequent love interests like Mulan's soldierly Li Shang and the swashbuckling Flynn Rider in Tangled. Tangled – and to a lesser extent, The Princess and the Frog – shook things up by breaking an invisible barrier that had existed between the previous couples, and allowed Rapunzel and Flynn to go on the same adventure, grow as characters together, and spend more screen time together.

Frozen signified a paradigm shift in Disney storytelling, and its self-subversive elements rely on the viewers' preconceived notions and familiarity with prior princess films. The movie incorporates not one prince archetype, but two: Prince Hans, who's noble-born and aesthetically similar to the earliest princes, but who is ultimately revealed to be the villain, and Kristoff, who's closer to the more modern prince variant like Flynn Rider. Kristoff and Princess Anna do end up together, but their relationship is inconsequential because the true thematic core is Anna and Elsa's sisterhood. In Frozen 2, Kristoff more or less vanishes from the second half of the film, and when he does have screen time, he's stuck in a marriage proposal side-plot while Anna and Elsa are busy saving the land. So in a rather twisted way, we've circled all the way back to the beginning: the prince is a minor character existing for marriage, but only now the princess's main goal outweighs her love life.

The prince reaches his final evolution in Moana, to the point of utter non-existence. For the first time in Disney animation history, a princess film contained not even a semblance of romance, and Moana was allowed to go on an exciting adventure without having to fall for a boy. Lo and behold, the absence of a prince didn't detract from the film's success, and to this day, it's consistently one of the most streamed movies on Disney+. The continued lack of male love interests in recent female-led films – Raya and the Last Dragon and Encanto – shows that Disney has absorbed the idea that the end-destination of a female protagonist doesn't have to involve a guy or heterosexual marriage. So perhaps the real impact of the Disney prince is our collective understanding that he was just never all that necessary in the first place.

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Smoke billowing behind buildings in Khartoum on Monday as fighting continued between Sudan's regular army and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

[Sudan](#)

## **Sudan officials fear for historical artefacts threatened by fighting**

Warring factions urged to preserve heritage after video clip appears to show fighters raiding Khartoum museum

*[Zeinab Mohammed Salih](#) in Khartoum and [Jason Burke](#)*

Mon 5 Jun 2023 05.08 EDT Last modified on Tue 6 Jun 2023 00.09 EDT

Heritage officials in Sudan have pleaded with warring factions to preserve tens of thousands of historical artefacts threatened by fighting in the capital, Khartoum, that is [in its eighth week](#).

A video clip circulating on social media on Friday appeared to show fighters from the Rapid Support Forces entering the bioarchaeology lab of the

National Museum in Khartoum and opening storage containers containing mummies and other remains.

The director of the National Museum, Dr Ghalia Gharelnabi, told the Guardian staff were “in a state of shock”.

“To start with, I did not believe what I was seeing. Now I am worried about where else they might have gone in the museum that no one filmed, and what else they are going to do,” said Gharelnabi, who fled to the Netherlands after an artillery shell hit her house in Khartoum on the first day of the war.

She said she was worried about the potential for clashes between RSF fighters and the army at the museum, which is regarded by experts as one of the most important such institutions in [Africa](#).

The museum’s collection of more than 100,000 items includes embalmed mummies dating from 2,500BC, making them among the oldest and archaeologically most important in the world, as well as statues, pottery and ancient murals, with artefacts from the stone age through to the Christian and Islamic eras.

Staff were forced to abandon the National Museum, which is in central Khartoum and very close to frontlines between the warring factions, after fighting erupted on 15 April, forcing police guarding the facility to leave. One worker at the museum who lived nearby was checking the premises but was recently forced out of his home by the RSF.

The bioarchaeology lab was recently constructed with aid from the British Museum, and was Sudan’s first laboratory with the technology necessary to analyse bones found in excavations, Gharelnabi said.

On Saturday, the RSF issued a filmed statement denying its fighters had entered the museum and inviting any individuals or organisations to visit it to check.

Roxanne Trioux, part of a French archaeological team that was working in Sudan, said they had been monitoring satellite pictures of the museum and

had already seen potential evidence of damage there before Friday, with signs of burning. “We don’t know the extent of damage inside,” she said.

Dr Rennan Lemos, an archaeologist at the University of Cambridge, said recent reports of damage to the Egyptian temple of Buhen, rebuilt in the museum’s courtyard, were very worrying.

“The Sudan National Museum houses collections attesting to human experience from the deep prehistorical past to the Kushite civilisations of Kerma, Napata and Meroe, and the ancient Egyptian presence in north Sudan,” said Lemos, who had been working at the museum when fighting broke out and was trapped for 10 days amid fierce clashes before escaping. “It is vital that the building, its research facilities and its collections are protected for the people of Sudan and for the whole world.”

There are also concerns for the tomb of the Muhammad Ahmad, better known as the Mahdi, who led a rebellion and established a state in Sudan in the 19th century, and a [new museum](#) that opened recently in Omdurman in the former home of Khalifa Abdullahi ibn Muhammad, who ruled Sudan before being defeated by the British in 1898.

Both have been occupied by the RSF and are being used as bases. This could attract devastating airstrikes or bombardment, it is feared.

Last week, a social science library at the University of Omdurman al-Ahlia was reportedly burned down, with the loss of thousands of books and some rare documents. There has also been fighting in and around Merowe, a well-known tourist attraction and historic site of enormous archaeological value about 270 miles north of Khartoum.

Gharelnabi said she was concerned Sudan’s rich archaeological heritage could share the same fate as that of Iraq and Syria after conflicts there. Both countries suffered widespread looting and loss.

“I call those who care about heritage and the organisations [to] come together and put pressure [on the warring sides],” she said.

Concerns have previously been raised about the collections at the Natural History Museum in Khartoum, which include live animals such as Nile crocodiles. Feeding of the animals stopped at the outbreak of the war and it is unclear if it has resumed. Many animals are thought to have died.

The conflict pits the paramilitary RSF, loyal to the warlord Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, against the regular army commanded by Sudan's de facto military ruler, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan.

Efforts to impose a durable ceasefire to allow humanitarian aid to reach millions of desperate civilians have failed and talks in Saudi Arabia have been suspended.

The end of the most recent truce on Saturday evening was preceded by reported clashes including air and artillery strikes in and around Khartoum.

On Friday, the [UN security council](#) called on the warring factions to cease hostilities to allow access to humanitarian organisations.

“The army is shelling us and the RSF are spread out in the streets, and the citizen is paying the price for war,” said Sami el-Tayeb, a 47-year-old resident of Omdurman.

The war has already displaced 1.2 million people inside the country and forced a further 400,000 to flee into neighbouring states, pushing Sudan to the [brink of disaster](#) and raising fears of a wider conflict.

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Smoke billows behind buildings in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, on Sunday. Fighting has reportedly intensified after the latest ceasefire came to an end. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

[Sudan](#)

## **Sudan fighting escalates after breakdown in ceasefire talks**

The latest shaky truce between country's army and RSF paramilitary came to an end on Saturday evening and has not been extended

*Reuters*

Sun 4 Jun 2023 20.58 EDT

Fighting has intensified in several areas of Khartoum after a ceasefire deal expired, residents of Sudan's capital reported, as activists said a new outburst of violence in North Darfur state had left at least 40 people dead.

The ceasefire between Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) began on 22 May and expired on Saturday evening.

Brokered by Saudi Arabia and the United States, the temporary truce calmed the fighting slightly and allowed limited humanitarian access, but like previous ceasefires was repeatedly violated. Talks to extend it [broke down on Friday](#).

Sudan's deadly power struggle, [which erupted on 15 April](#), has triggered a major humanitarian crisis in which more than 1.2 million people have been displaced within the country, with another 400,000 forced to flee into neighbouring countries.

Live footage on Sunday showed black smoke billowing above the capital.

"In southern Khartoum we are living in terror of violent bombardment, the sound of anti-aircraft guns and power cuts," resident Sara Hassan said by phone. "We are in real hell."

Among the other areas where fighting was reported were central and southern Khartoum, and Bahri, across the Blue Nile to the north.

Witnesses said a military plane had crashed in Omdurman, one of three cities around the confluence of the Nile that make up the greater capital region. There was no comment from the army, which has been using war planes to target the RSF fighters spread out across the capital.

Beyond Khartoum, deadly fighting has also broken out in Darfur, in the far west of Sudan, [already grappling with long-running unrest](#) and huge humanitarian challenges.

Witnesses reported that heavy fighting on Friday and Saturday had brought chaos to Kutum, one of the main towns and a commercial hub in North Darfur.

At least 40 people were killed and dozens more wounded, including residents of the Kassab camp, which housed people displaced by earlier

unrest, said the Darfur Bar Association, which monitors rights in the region.

The army denied claims that the RSF, which developed out of Darfur militias and has its power base in the region, had taken over Kutum.

Separately, Sudanese antiquities authorities said RSF fighters had withdrawn from the national museum in central Khartoum. On Saturday, the RSF released a video filmed inside the grounds of the museum, which houses ancient mummies and other precious artefacts, denying they had harmed the collection.

Fighting in the capital has led to widespread damage and looting, dwindling food supplies and a collapse in health services, power and water facilities.

In recent days the first rains of the year have fallen, heralding the start of a rainy season that runs until about October and brings flooding and a heightened risk of water-borne diseases.

The rains could complicate a relief effort already hampered by bureaucratic delays and logistical challenges. Aid workers have warned that dead bodies have been left in the streets and uncollected rubbish has been piling up.

Saudi Arabia and the US said they were continuing to engage daily with delegations from the army and the RSF, which had remained in Jeddah even though talks to extend the ceasefire were suspended last week.

The two countries said in a statement: “Those discussions are focused on facilitating humanitarian assistance and reaching agreement on near-term steps the parties must take before the Jeddah talks resume.”

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Justice Anthony Besanko in his full defamation case verdict says Ben Roberts-Smith and four key witnesses were not ‘honest and reliable’.  
Photograph: Dan Hembrechts/AAP

[Ben Roberts-Smith](#)

## **Ben Roberts-Smith and four key witnesses were not honest or reliable, judge says in full verdict**

Justice Anthony Besanko’s 736-page judgment has been released after judge last week dismissed defamation case in favour of Nine newspapers and reporters

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[Ben Doherty](#) and [Elias Visontay](#)

Mon 5 Jun 2023 01.24 EDT Last modified on Mon 5 Jun 2023 08.27 EDT

Ben Roberts-Smith and four key witnesses he called were not honest or reliable when it came to their evidence, a federal court justice has found in the full judgment of the war veteran's defamation case.

Justice Anthony Besanko's complete judgment – 736 pages long – was published on Monday afternoon after he delivered an initial summary decision in court on Thursday.

Only a summary judgment was released last week because of a last-minute request from the commonwealth to inspect the full judgment for national security concerns.

In Monday's full judgment, Besanko said Roberts-Smith, and the four witnesses he called were dishonest in their evidence about two alleged murders at a compound called Whiskey 108 in the village of Kakarak in 2009.

The mission to Whiskey 108 was a critical allegation published by the newspapers against Roberts-Smith.

Two men were found hiding in a secret tunnel inside the bombed-out Whiskey 108 compound: one an elderly man, the other a younger man with a prosthetic leg. The men allegedly came out of the tunnel unarmed and surrendered.

Roberts-Smith ordered a junior soldier on his patrol to execute the old man, before manhandling the man with the prosthetic leg outside the compound, where he threw him to the ground and fired his para minimi machine gun into his prone body, the judge found.

The man's leg was later souvenired by another soldier and used by Australian SAS troops as a macabre celebratory drinking vessel at their on-base bar the Fat Ladies' Arms.

Roberts-Smith gave evidence to the court about the mission and called four other soldier witnesses to support his evidence. The judge rejected them all as dishonest.

“I do not accept the applicant and Persons 5, 29, 35 and 38 as honest and reliable witnesses,” Besanko’s judgment states.

Robert-Smith’s witnesses said no men were found in the tunnel at Whiskey 108. Besanko found they were lying.

“There were two insurgents in the tunnel and when they came out they were obviously very frightened,” he found.

One of the insurgents had a distinctive limp and that was the insurgent with the prosthetic leg. As he was coming out of the tunnel, he was lifting his trouser leg and pointing to the prosthetic leg “expecting some sort of sympathy”.

Roberts-Smith sued three Australian newspapers claiming they defamed him by falsely portraying him as a “criminal” who “broke the moral and legal rules of military engagement”.

But the judge was scathing of Roberts-Smith’s evidence overall: “I have difficulty accepting the applicant’s evidence on any disputed issue.”

The judge found Roberts-Smith had motives to lie to the court.

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“The applicant has motives to lie, being a financial motive to support his claim for damages in these proceedings, a motive to restore his reputation which he contends has been destroyed by the publication of the articles and significantly, a motive to resist findings against him which may affect whether further action is taken against him.”

Besanko found Roberts-Smith lied about burying USBs containing sensitive and classified Defence material in his backyard – and that he knew the documents were relevant to the case and kept them hidden.

“I do not accept the applicant’s case that the failure to discover the USBs was due to inadvertence. The applicant lied about not burying the USBs in the backyard of the matrimonial home. He must have known they were relevant. He had sworn three affidavits of discovery and each time has not discovered them. I find that he decided not to discover them.”

The defamation trial heard Roberts-Smith’s ex-wife and a family friend dug up six USB storage sticks, buried in a child’s lunchbox in the Roberts-Smith family backyard, before handing the classified files to police.

Besanko found the war veteran lied about details of a key incident to explain evidence from witnesses which might otherwise have seemed unfavourable to him.

At trial, the newspapers sought to prove it was “substantially true” that Roberts-Smith, on a mission to the southern Afghan village of Darwan in 2012, marched a handcuffed man named Ali Jan to stand above a 10-metre-high cliff that dropped to a dry riverbed below. The court heard Roberts-Smith then “walked forward and kicked the individual in the chest”.

The court heard the man survived the fall but was significantly injured. Roberts-Smith then allegedly ordered a subordinate soldier to shoot Ali Jan dead before the body was dragged into a cornfield.

In his full judgment released on Monday, Besanko said “the applicant’s evidence as to the path he took from the compound to the creek bed was unsatisfactory”.

Besanko said: “Further, I consider that he has lied about the height of any embankment on the side of the creek bed abutting the fields and he has lied about using his foot to move the insurgent near the Helmand River with a view to possibly explaining evidence from witnesses which might otherwise seem unfavourable to him.”

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Ben Roberts-Smith leaving court in July last year during his defamation action against the Age, the Sydney Morning Herald and the Canberra Times.  
Photograph: Dean Lewins/AAP

[Ben Roberts-Smith](#)

## **Murders, hidden evidence and threats: judge releases scathing full judgment on Ben Roberts-Smith**

Justice Anthony Besanko's complete findings, released today, found the Victoria Cross recipient lied about murdering civilians, deliberately hid evidence from court and threatened potential witnesses

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[Ben Doherty](#) and [Elias Visontay](#)

Mon 5 Jun 2023 04.31 EDT Last modified on Mon 5 Jun 2023 16.53 EDT

Ben Roberts-Smith lied about murdering civilians in Afghanistan, deliberately hid potentially damaging evidence from a court, colluded with witnesses who supported him and threatened those who might give evidence against him, a federal court judge has found in an excoriating judgment to conclude the ex-soldier's [failed defamation case against three newspapers](#).

Justice Anthony Besanko found Roberts-Smith, a recipient of the Victoria Cross and Australia's most decorated living soldier, murdered civilians while on deployment with the SAS in [Afghanistan](#) and lied in his evidence, under oath, before court.

"I have difficulty accepting the applicant's [Roberts-Smith's] evidence on any disputed issue," the judge said.

Roberts-Smith had brought the defamation action against the Age, the Sydney Morning Herald, and the Canberra Times, claiming they had falsely portrayed him as a war criminal, a murderer and a bully.

The newspaper successfully defended their reporting as true, with the judge [dismissing Roberts-Smith's claims in their entirety](#). The case could cost Roberts-Smith and his benefactor and backer, Kerry Stokes, up to \$35m.

An appeal by Roberts-Smith to the full bench of the federal court is expected. Despite attending every day of the court hearing, Roberts-Smith was not in Australia to hear the judgment delivered last Thursday.

Besanko said Roberts-Smith was motivated to – and did – lie to the court.

"The applicant has motives to lie, being a financial motive to support his claim for damages in these proceedings, a motive to restore his reputation which he contends has been destroyed by the publication of the articles and significantly, a motive to resist findings against him which may affect whether further action is taken against him."

The allusion to "further action" is an apparent reference to the fact that Roberts-Smith is currently the subject of an AFP inquiry into alleged war

crimes committed in Afghanistan. He may face criminal charges over his actions in Afghanistan.

Two of the most [high-profile allegations of murder against Roberts-Smith](#) were both found proven by the judge in the defamation case to the civil standard of the “balance of probabilities”.

In 2009, Australian SAS troops found two men hiding in a secret tunnel in a bombed-out compound known as “Whiskey 108”, in a village called Kakarak. The men – one elderly, the other a younger man with a prosthetic leg – emerged from the tunnel unarmed and surrendered.

Roberts-Smith ordered a junior soldier on his patrol to execute the old man, before manhandling the man with the prosthetic leg outside the compound, throwing him to the ground and machine-gunning him dead.

The disabled man’s leg was later souvenired by another soldier and used by Australian SAS troops as a macabre celebratory drinking vessel at their on-base bar, the Fat Ladies’ Arms.

Roberts-Smith gave evidence to the court about the mission, saying he shot the disabled man because he was running and carrying a weapon and that another Australian soldier, unknown to him, had shot the disabled man, saving his life. Roberts-Smith called four other soldiers as witnesses to support his evidence. The judge rejected them all as dishonest.

“I do not accept the applicant [Roberts-Smith] and Persons 5, 29, 35 and 38 [Roberts-Smith’s soldier witnesses] as honest and reliable witnesses,” Besanko said.

The other major allegation against Roberts-Smith concerned a mission to the southern Afghan village of Darwan in 2012, where, the court found, he marched a handcuffed man named Ali Jan to stand above a 10-metre-high cliff that dropped down to a dry riverbed.

Ali Jan was held by the shoulder by another Australian soldier, known before the court as Person 11.

“[Roberts-Smith] kicked Ali Jan off the small cliff or steep slope into the dry creek bed below.”

Ali Jan was badly injured but alive at the bottom of the cliff. He was carried to a cornfield by Australian soldiers, where he was killed by a subordinate soldier at Roberts-Smith’s direction.

“Person 11 shot Ali Jan who at that point was standing and still handcuffed,” the judge found.

“Roberts-Smith was party to an agreement with Person 11 to murder Ali Jan.”

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Roberts-Smith told court the man was a legitimate target because he was a scout for enemy insurgents, known as a “spotter”. However, Besanko found Roberts-Smith knew this was false and that he “was conscious that the killing of Ali Jan was unlawful”.

The judge also found Roberts-Smith lied about burying USBs containing sensitive, classified defence material in his backyard, the judge has found.

His defamation trial heard his ex-wife, Emma Roberts, and a family friend dug up six USB storage sticks buried in a child's lunchbox in the family backyard, before handing the classified files to police.

Included on the USBs was classified information including operational reports from SAS missions in southern [Afghanistan](#), drone footage of military operations and classified photographs.

The judge said Roberts-Smith knew the documents were relevant to the case and kept them hidden.

"I do not accept the applicant's case that the failure to discover the USBs was due to inadvertence. The applicant lied about not burying the USBs in the backyard of the matrimonial home. He must have known they were relevant. He had sworn three affidavits of discovery and each time has not discovered them. I find that he decided not to discover them."

Roberts-Smith also sent two anonymous threatening letters to an SAS comrade, known before the court as Person 18. The letters warned Person 18 to recant his evidence to the inspector general of the ADF's inquiry into war crimes, or face being accused of murder himself.

Despite his denials, the judge found Roberts-Smith wrote the letters and gave them to former policeman-turned-private eye John McLeod to post.

Emma Roberts also gave evidence Roberts-Smith admitted to sending the letters and said she saw him at home with a grey shopping bag filled with a packet of Reflex paper, a packet of envelopes and a packet of gloves.

In court, Roberts-Smith denied sending the letters. But Besanko said he was "satisfied on the evidence that the applicant [Roberts-Smith], through Mr McLeod, arranged for two threatening letters to be sent to Person 18. I accept the evidence of Mr McLeod and Ms Roberts and I reject the evidence of the applicant [Roberts-Smith]."

Besanko also found Roberts-Smith colluded with a witness he called to provide "a false account".

Significant parts of Roberts-Smith's defamation trial concerned allegations he assaulted a woman with whom he was having an affair, known before court as Person 17.

The judge found the newspapers' allegation Roberts-Smith punched her in a Canberra hotel room in 2018 was not proven, saying while he "preferred" Person 17's evidence to Roberts-Smith's, her evidence was not "sufficiently reliable to form the basis of a finding that the assault occurred".

The judge found that Roberts-Smith's behaviour was "intimidatory, threatening and controlling". Roberts-Smith had the woman followed and surveilled on film by McLeod, and took photographs of her naked while she was asleep.

"He said to her that if she did anything stupid or turned on the applicant, he would burn her house down and 'it might not be you that gets hurt, but people you love and care about'."

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- [Sue Gray Ex-civil servant cleared to take up Labour job this autumn](#)

**Prince Harry**

# **Prince Harry tells phone-hacking trial an article about him and William was sort that ‘seeds distrust between brothers’ – as it happened**

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The ultra-low emission zone is to be expanded to all London boroughs in August. The move is being challenged in court by five Conservative councils. Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

### Air pollution

## **Sunak urged to distance himself from Tories who dismiss air pollution risks**

Leading scientists write to PM amid campaign against expansion of clean air zone in London

*[Sandra Laville](#) Environment correspondent*

Tue 6 Jun 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 6 Jun 2023 05.50 EDT

World-leading air pollution scientists have called on [Rishi Sunak](#) to distance himself from Conservative colleagues who are dismissing the facts on the serious health risks of toxic air.

[In a letter](#), Prof Frank Kelly and 35 other prominent air pollution scientists call on the prime minister to tell his colleagues not to endorse “merchants of

doubt” who “undermine the factual and truth foundations of life.”

Conservative MPs including [Sunak](#) and the former prime minister [Boris Johnson](#) have backed an increasingly high-profile campaign against the expansion of the ultra-low emission zone to all London boroughs in August. Some have questioned the need for the clean air zone to be expanded, saying there is no problem with air pollution in their areas.

In the letter to Sunak, Kelly said the evidence-based facts on the contribution of poor air quality to asthma, strokes, heart attacks, cancer and dementia had been uncovered by UK scientists.

But [Conservatives](#) have questioned and discredited those facts “in an attack on the very essence of our scientific community”.

“A collapse in trust in the scientific process would be a disaster,” the open letter to Sunak said. “We urge you to disassociate from the merchants of doubt and, in no uncertain terms, to tell your party colleagues to not endorse them or emulate their pervasive claims that sow cynicism and undermine the factual and truth foundations of life.”

The [London](#) mayor, Sadiq Khan, argues the city cannot afford to not stop people “breathing in poison”, with 4,000 premature deaths a year from toxic air in the capital.

The Ulez will be expanded on 29 August to take in outer London boroughs. Its extension is being challenged in court by five Conservative councils: the boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Harrow and Hillingdon, and Surrey.

The rollout of the scheme comes with a £110m fund from Khan’s City Hall to help the poorest scrap older, polluting cars, which will attract a fee of £12.50 each day for travel in outer London.

Kelly pointed out that the government had not provided any funding to subsidise the poorest to scrap their vehicles.

UK scientists have led the field on exposing the dangers of toxic air pollution. In 2016, a joint report from the Royal College of Physicians and

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health estimated that the equivalent of 40,000 deaths was attributable to outdoor air pollution every year in the UK.

In December 2020, after the inquest into the death of nine-year-old Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah, air pollution exposure was listed as a [cause of death](#) for the first time in the UK.

Philip Barlow, the inner south London coroner, said the schoolgirl was exposed to nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter (PM) pollution in excess of World Health Organization guidelines, the principal source of which were traffic emissions.

In his prevention of death report, the coroner warned more people would die of toxic air if no action was taken. “There was no dispute at the inquest that atmospheric air pollution is the cause of many thousand premature deaths every year in the UK. Delay in reducing the levels of atmospheric air pollution is the cause of avoidable deaths,” he said.

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Barlow said WHO guidance levels for particulate matter – PM pollution – should become the legal limits in the UK to reduce the number of air pollution deaths but warned there was no safe limit for particulate pollution.

Despite the evidence of harm, Sunak has endorsed campaigning from his MPs, London councillors and assembly members against the expansion of the Ulez to cut air pollution in London. He said the Tories should not stop the campaign against the expansion of the clean air zone to the outer London boroughs. At prime minister's questions he urged the mayor of London to scrap the expansion.

The letter to Sunak is signed by world-leading experts on the dangers of air pollution, including Prof Sir Stephen Holgate, [whose research led to a new inquest into Ella's death](#), Dr Gary Fuller of Imperial College London and Dr Martin Clift of Swansea University.

The first expansion of the Ulez in 2021 to an area 18 times the size of the original zone cut the numbers of polluting vehicles by 60% – from 124,000 to 50,000 a day. According to a City Hall report [in February](#), harmful pollution levels in central London have reduced by 46% compared against a scenario without the Ulez. The scheme brought a 56% reduction in nitrogen dioxide levels in central London, 47% in inner London, and 37% in outer London, compared with levels in 2017.

Kelly said if the Ulez was not expanded into outer boroughs it would put the fight to clean up London's air back by 10 years.

“There are obviously challenges in terms of helping people who need to replace their vehicles,” he said. “The fact is the government has not provided any funding to help Londoners in that respect.”

Neil Garratt, leader of the City Hall Conservatives, said: “We have been clear in our commitment to reducing air pollution and tackling climate change. The authors of the letter ask us to disavow false claims and the individuals making them, but they do not tell us which individuals or claims. The Ulez expansion would produce only a small change in air quality according to the Mayor’s own independent analysis, which we must balance against the severe financial impact for those hit by the mayor’s charge. It is irresponsible for anyone to conflate opposition to the Ulez expansion with science denial.”

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**Politics live with Andrew Sparrow**  
**Politics**

# Labour and SNP face byelection battle after Margaret Ferrier suspension – as it happened

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Sue Gray led the investigation into Partygate last year and is to become Keir Starmer's chief of staff. Photograph: Aaron Chown/PA

[Labour](#)

## **Sue Gray cleared to take up Labour job this autumn**

Watchdog says former civil servant must wait six months to start job rather than the maximum delay of two years

*[Ben Quinn](#) and [Pippa Crerar](#)*

Tue 6 Jun 2023 04.22 EDTFirst published on Tue 6 Jun 2023 03.52 EDT

The former civil servant Sue Gray has been cleared to take up her new role as Keir Starmer's chief of staff in the autumn after a vetting board rejected calls for her to have a much longer period of gardening leave.

Gray, who led the investigation into [Partygate](#) last year, took ministers by surprise with her plan to quit the civil service and work for Labour. The

announcement triggered an inquiry and an expectation that restrictions would be placed on when she could take up the role and what she could do.

However, the Guardian understands that the government's appointments watchdog will say she should wait for six months, rather than the maximum two years it can recommend for senior officials.

Senior government officials, as Gray's former bosses, had allegedly pushed for the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (Acoba) to delay her starting the new job for more than six months.

According to the Times, Acoba raised concerns about the strength of a Cabinet Office report on Gray's departure and the length of the ban.

A restriction of up to 18 months would have hampered the [Labour](#) leader's preparations for the general election, which is expected to take place in the autumn of next year.

Gray will now be in place to help on transition arrangements for a possible Labour government, which typically take place between senior Whitehall officials and opposition parties about six months before an election.

The Acoba finding is a recommendation and the government is not bound by it, but ignoring the advice would undermine Rishi Sunak's insistence that he will always follow due process.

Some ministers and Conservative MPs are concerned about Gray's sensitive previous role at the Cabinet Office, and there was renewed criticism on Tuesday as the Acoba finding emerged.

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“Absolutely shocking, but sadly part of a wider pattern,” tweeted the Tory MP Brendan Clarke-Smith.

“You know it’s chaired by a Conservative peer?” Chris Bryant, the Labour MP and chair of the Commons standards committee, replied to him, referring to the role of the former minister Eric Pickles as Acoba’s chair.

A report last month had suggested that Gray’s first discussions with Starmer were in October last year, long after her inquiry into Boris Johnson and Covid rule-breaking parties was completed, but while the Commons privileges committee was gathering evidence on the same subject.

Starmer initiated the contact, [according to Sky News](#), and Gray had multiple conversations afterwards with him and his team.

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## 2023.06.06 - Spotlight

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- Festivals now feel like a cross between a spa and a gastropub – what about the music?
- How we survive At 12, I was in Auschwitz. My parents and seven siblings were murdered. Here is how I built a life
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‘I made people laugh straight away’ ... Henry Morris. Photograph: Joann Randles/The Guardian

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# The Secret Tory unmasked: ‘My one objective? To destroy the Tories!’

[Zoe Williams](#)

Henry Morris couldn’t be further from the Westminster bubble, but for years he has lampooned MPs online. He describes running rings around members of the House of Lords and using satire to bring down the government



[@zoesqwilliams](#)

Tue 6 Jun 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 6 Jun 2023 07.02 EDT

Henry Morris should look a lot more stressed than he does, though it’s true that this is the first time I’ve met him (over Zoom), and he has such confident hair that it would be hard to see uncertainty beneath it. “Everyone seems to be preoccupied with my mullet,” he agrees. His wife, Ellie, is two days past her due date so their second child could show up at any minute. Into that happy but high-stakes scene, Morris dropped a hand grenade last Wednesday: a video revealing that the Secret Tory, a Twitter account lampooning [Conservatives](#) from a thousand directions, has been him all along.

Since its inception in 2019, the account – which now has nearly 200,000 followers – has been the focus of magnetised speculation: “Retired anonymous Conservative MP, part-time arms dealer” was how he described himself, though everyone knew that wasn’t *real-real*. He would tweet [imagined WhatsApp messages between ministers](#), Alice in Wonderland fantasias that disappeared into the wilds of Liz Truss’s ignorance and Jacob Rees-Mogg’s creepiness. Or he would write [accounts of Conservative chaos](#) in the style of Swift or Chaucer. Nobody was in any doubt that it was parody, but somehow, between the dense and granular detail, and the playful, insidery tone, people thought he was very close to the action; a special adviser, maybe? At the very least, Westminster-bubble-based. Lots of Conservative MPs were following him on Twitter; people started to slide into his DMs to congratulate him on a point well landed, or make suggestions.

Initially, he just enjoyed the popularity. “I’d read a few books on how to write sitcoms, and there were loads of caveats, such as: ‘If you’re that person who thinks you’re really funny in the pub, just be wary that you might not be that person who’s funny to everyone else.’ I just assumed I was that guy. But then I just made people laugh straight away.” Over the next year or so, though, the [adage of master satirist Chris Morris](#) started to weigh on him. “‘If the people you’re taking the piss out of are enjoying it, you’re not doing it right.’ I’d definitely been seduced by these high-status people laughing at it. After that, I started doing it properly, which is much more satisfying,” he says.

Morris started masquerading, too, as the [Papua New Guinea Courier’s UK correspondent](#), and those columns – an outsider’s dry amusement cut with the howling indignation of the real UK citizen having to live through this clown show – are some of my favourite chronicles of our dark times.



‘We had these baronesses, lords and millionaires coming in to the gym where I was a personal trainer. I was just so underwhelmed’ ... Morris in his home gym. Photograph: Joann Randles/The Guardian

Finally, though, he decided that remaining anonymous was contributing to a fake news environment and he should out himself. “We made this video to say who I was and we messed around with it for ages,” he says. A school friend, [Benjamin Harvey](#), collaborates on the videos “and ended up tweeting it on Ellie’s due date.” He didn’t think it would make any impact, “and instead it’s gone mental”.

He was interviewed on the BBC in what is a telling snapshot of the state of our media. The anchor didn’t really know what to make of him – what is this regular person doing inside the commentariat? Maybe I’m being unfair, but she looks at him as if he is sort of unpredictable and unsanitary, like a bird in an airport. A journalist from the Daily Mail doorstepped him. From the outside, it’s quite funny, a journalist driving six hours from London to come back with [a lot of wrong details and some quotes from neighbours about how nice Morris is](#). But it can’t be fun from the inside, when your wife is about to go into labour.

Morris, 40, grew up in Yorkshire, his mother a teacher, his father an archaeologist. “My dad is very clever, he has a lot of varied interests, both

my parents have, which they seem to have passed on to me.” His father persuaded him to play Fleance in Macbeth when he was 12 with Abbey Shakespeare Players, technically an am-dram company but more of a hyper-literary cult, which introduced him to St Dogmaels Abbey in Wales, where the company stages its annual performance. He now lives in a Welsh valley that, according to folklore, is the entrance to the underworld. “It’s paradise,” he says.

The 2019 Conservative MPs are mean-spirited, largely stupid and, as far as I can tell, firing up the shredders before they get booted out at the next election

It was through Abbey Shakespeare Players that he met his wife in his early 20s, but “I was a bit wild at the time, getting into all sorts of scrapes, so she wasn’t having anything to do with me then.” Before that, he’d gone to a “not very good comprehensive school, which I hated”, then became an auxiliary nurse, “which is the hardest amount of work you can do for the least amount of money. Everything I’ve ever done since I’ve felt lucky to do, because that was proper graft. That taught me to grow up quite fast,” he says, though stresses not *that* fast. “When I wasn’t nursing, I was out getting hammered.” He went to the University of Manchester to study comparative religion, moving to London in his late 20s, “because Ellie was there”. He had recently decided to “stop being a dickhead and start doing some exercise”. He arrived in London as a guy who could run 110 miles without stopping, “over the Cleveland hills as well; there’s more ascent in it than Everest”, and became a personal trainer. (His other notable big run was to every site where a hen harrier had been poisoned or otherwise destroyed, to preserve grouse shoots; that was for Chris Packham’s charity, Wild Justice.)

“I chose a gym in north London, picked up a load of clients straight away and suddenly I was mixing with all these illustrious people. I went to London completely braced, thinking, ‘Everyone is really switched on and really fast and sharp,’ and I got there and thought, ‘Everyone’s just the same as the people I know back home, maybe not as funny, but they’re doing much more interesting stuff.’ All my mates back home were really clever and sharp, and working behind a till; all they’d need to do is move to London and they would be earning six figures.” I know exactly what he

means: there is a perception of media and political elites as operating on a higher plane, and it's absolutely warped, but I'm not sure it's about London – isn't it about class? "But I'm middle-class. This is a different confidence, isn't it?" (Well, yes, but I think the confidence comes from private education so it's still about class.)

Meanwhile Ellie was working on dance music shows for BBC Radio 1, and Morris "got to know loads of people in the music industry who had two or three pretty lame anecdotes about the time they did something wacky. I'd be thinking: 'Is that all you've got? This is completely commonplace behaviour.'" He and Ellie started [Field Maneuvers](#), a no-frills rave spanning a weekend, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year.



'Everyone seems to be preoccupied with my mullet' ... Morris at his home in Wales. Photograph: Joann Randles/The Guardian

As his personal training business grew, he was working at a gym with two friends who "were also reformed characters; they'd been in even more scrapes than I had when I was younger. And we had these baronesses, lords and millionaires coming in and out, really getting off on talking to people with accents. I kept thinking: 'You're sitting in the House of Lords and I can run rings around you in an argument if I have to.' I was just so underwhelmed."

That sense intensified after he first started his [Twitter](#) account, a parody of the Conservative MP Mark Francois, which he did “desperately hoping that some of these Tories have got more about them, but they’re really not very bright”. Encouraged by the Times columnist and author Caitlin Moran, who was one of his gym clients, he turned his next Twitter persona into a book, *The Diary of a Secret Tory MP: (Almost!) True Stories from the Heart of British Politics*, which is really sprightly, droll and powered by deep disillusionment. “I’d always thought [about politicians]: ‘There are some bad apples but largely they are trying to make the world a better place.’ The more I’ve become immersed in it, the more I’ve thought: ‘These people are proper wrong ’uns.’ The 2019 Conservative MPs are self-interested, they’re corrupt, they’re mean-spirited, largely stupid and, as far as I can tell, filling their helicopters and firing up the shredders before they get booted out at the next election.”

Morris has now gone “wildly out to the left”, he says, and is working on another book. He is still personal training (remotely), chopping logs, learning Welsh and working on a sitcom idea. He thinks a lot about the role of parody in the age of disinformation, the point at which exaggeration for moral effect just feeds into nobody knowing what is and isn’t true. “The one objective is to destroy the Tories; amplify their ludicrous behaviour and turn it into comedy by making it grotesque.” The Secret Tory reached the end of its natural life, but there is more to come, I feel certain; Morris is not a man who goes home before he has achieved his objective.

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‘Tailored to a certain kind of middle-class lifestyle’ ... the Big Feastival.  
Photograph: Andrew Whitton

## Festivals

# **Festivals now feel like a cross between a spa and a gastropub – what about the music?**

[Daniel Dylan Wray](#)

With fancy food, political talks and curated experiences becoming the norm, music – and working class fans – could become an afterthought. It’s time to go back to basics

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There are few things as special as those genuine lost-in-the-moment experiences at a music festival. The woozy rush from icy beers creeping up in the afternoon sun, the giddy delirium a sleep-deprived brain somehow manages to pump out, those blissful moments when you truly forget the

outside world. From boozy teenage rites of passage using your sunken tent as a sleeping bag to 5am raves in mud pits, festivals supply key life experiences and have become ingrained in British culture. They can be wild, filthy, hilarious, sodden, blissful things to be enjoyed and endured alike.

However, looking at a number of 2023 UK festivals, there's a creeping sense of uniformity. Not only are many of the medium-to-large festivals – the likes of [Kendal Calling](#), [Standon Calling](#), [Y Not](#), [Truck](#), [Tramlines](#) – offering only minor variations on one another's lineups, but elsewhere music is beginning to look like an increasingly secondary, or perfunctory, addition. With fancy food and drink, talks, wellness, and a host of other curated experiences becoming the norm, many music festivals are feeling more akin to a lifestyle retreat, large-scale street food market, academic conference, or neighbourhood street party in a leafy affluent suburb.

[Kite](#) festival's mix of music and ideas means you may bump into a post-debate Michael Gove or John Major on your way to Suede or Hot Chip. [How the Light Gets In](#) offers philosophy breakfasts, debates and talks alongside cabaret and performances from Groove Armada and Belle and Sebastian. At festivals such as [Pub in the Park](#) and Alex James's [Big Feastival](#), you can check out everyone from Judge Jules to Toploader and Craig David while you sample food, wines and cooking demos from the Hairy Bikers, Ainsley Harriott and DJ BBQ who has apparently coined the term "Catertainment", "bringing food, fun and energy to his live cooking appearances."



Wild swimming at Latitude 2022. Photograph: Nils Jorgensen/REX/Shutterstock

At [Latitude](#) this year you will find on-site sit-down restaurants with guest chefs that require reservations, along with morning paddleboard yoga sessions, while [Lost Village](#) offers up wood-fired hot tubs and Finnish saunas in their Energy Garden. Countless festival websites all now have sections called “experiences” or “extras” that, at places such as [Wilderness](#) festival, include wine tasting, cocktail masterclasses, outdoor pursuits and a “brand new bespoke show: The Cat’s Whiskers Cocktail and Cabaret Club.” Plus all of them offer countless VIP upgrades such as pamper stations or fancy camping that can cost a grand-plus for the weekend.

Many of these festivals seem tailored to a certain kind of middle-class lifestyle, to which music is merely the soundtrack. Whereas festivals once seemed to exist as a place to experience a sense of release from everyday life via music, many now appear intent on providing all the comforts, luxuries and indulgences of a very comfy home life. Even the rising focus on debates feels like bringing Twitter discourse to the stage rather than switching it off and leaving it behind.

The ultimate irony of this shift towards an all-encompassing lifestyle event is that it ends up mimicking what already exists everywhere else at the cost

of a unique musical identity. Festival culture has already seeped into every crevice of our day-to-day lives. Towns and cities are inundated with overpriced street food and pop-ups – always complete with accompanying DJ or live act. Sitting on one of those cheap ubiquitous orange beer-garden tables and eating a couple of tacos and a pint of a major brewery pale ale masquerading as an independent for £20 has become increasingly standard, predictable fare. The vibe of an Instagram-friendly casual dinner party backed with a 6 Music-friendly playlist is not a once-a-year unique experience, it's omnipresent.

The persistence of these events suggests a demand for festivals that look a bit like Sunday Brunch moved to a field. And it's not all bad. Culture isn't just music alone and the death of bad lager and greasy slop from a burger van being the only options for nutrition is dearly welcome. Offering more variety, some selective indulgences and creating a genuinely family-friendly environment makes sense – and many festivals do it superbly – but in an attempt to fancify, broaden and vary festivals, the music is starting to feel like an afterthought. You might reasonably respond: ignore the extra pomp, ditch the chanting circles, swerve the prosecco bar, and forget you might bump into Jonathan Pie, and just focus on the music all weekend. But what kind of vibe is there, both for punters and performers, when the crowd in attendance is as much there for debating with strangers or sharpening their recipe knowledge? These aren't the foundations for life-shattering musical experiences.

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Every year we discuss gender splits on lineups. But it's just as important to discuss the other gulf created by festivals: class

More importantly, festivals curated for middle-class, usually middle-aged, people with disposable income come with a price tag. Ticket prices, to be fair to festivals, are usually pretty reasonable in relation to what's on offer. But with pints edging dangerously close to a tenner and food already locked in at restaurant prices, even going just to savour the basics can be prohibitively expensive. Every year we have the same discussions around gender splits on lineups. But it's just as important to discuss the other ever-extending gulf created by festivals: class. Many festivals are being shaped to accommodate only certain people – which only adds to the inescapable feeling of sameness.

Of course I'm not advocating some kind of Camra-esque Campaign for Real Music Festivals – that would be as insufferable as anything Alex James could muster up. Maybe lifestyle festivals simply mirror the reality of the ageing music fan and ageing musical festival maturing in sync, and perhaps this is also reflective of something I wrote about last year: a strange indifference towards music that creeps up on many people on the cusp of midlife. But surely in between the music-focused festivals for teenagers to get clattered at (Parklife, Reading/Leeds, Wireless etc) and the increasingly standardised ones that seem squarely marketed at coined up Gen Xrs and their kids, there's room for something else? A more stripped-back, music-centred festival where you can still have decent food and drink but that doesn't feel like a cross between a spa and a gastropub?



Tirikilatops performing at Supersonic festival in Birmingham, 2018.  
Photograph: Katja Ogrin/Redferns

The tide is already turning [at the specialist end](#). [Field Maneuvers](#) offers a back-to-basics mini-rave festival; Sea Power run the no-frills [Krakenhaus](#) in the Lake District; while [Supersonic](#) in Birmingham has a perfectly good food court the size of a terrace house backyard, its focus is on a genuinely singular weekend of experimental music. Mainstays such as [End of the Road](#) and [Green Man](#) have perfected the balance of feeling music-first while also in beautiful settings with comfy offerings – but they're starting to feel like an anomaly.

Just as there's demand for the Question Time-on-the-farm type of festival, there's clearly also appetite for these music-first events: just look at how many people flock overseas for them. [Primavera](#) may have the added draw of sunny Barcelona but it's still just four days of artists and DJs without a celeb podcaster or Michelin star chef in sight. The eclectic [Le Guess Who](#) in Utrecht has also shaped up as a worthy replacement to the old All Tomorrow's Parties weekenders. When staring down a summer of British events that feel like the pages of a weekend broadsheet supplement brought to life, it's hard not to crave that kind of dazzlingly curated festival.

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# At 12, I was in Auschwitz. My parents and seven siblings were murdered. Here is how I built a life

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Turning over a new Leith ... the tram linking the port area to Edinburgh opens on 7 June. Photograph: SST/Alamy Live News

[Edinburgh holidays](#)

**‘More tram-spotting than  
Trainspotting’: the new tram linking**

# Leith to Edinburgh

The tramline to the old port means its Michelin-starred restaurants, seafront and cool venues are now just a few stops away from Edinburgh city centre

*Robin McKelvie*

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‘Leith is changing. Bars are becoming bistros, and barbers are opening with bars in them,’ says walking guide [Paul Stewart](#), founder of Edinburgh Street Tours. He points to the new tram station atop Leith Walk and says, ‘It feels more tram-spotting than *Trainspotting*,’ a reference to the drug-addled 90s black comedy written by Leith-born Irvine Welsh. Stewart is not complaining as he used to survive on the streets of this old port where, in the 1980s, half the unemployed had been jobless for over a year. It was no accident that Leithers the Proclaimers used Leith as the video backdrop for their damning riposte to Thatcherite Scotland, [Letter from America](#).

[New map](#)

I’ve come to explore this [Edinburgh](#) district ahead of the new tramline launching on Wednesday. Trams opened connecting the city centre to Edinburgh airport back in 2014, with the last stop at York Place. It’s taken the best part of a decade for the line to forge down Leith Walk into Leith proper and on to the waterfront at Newhaven. It’s a run of just 2.91 miles and eight new stops – but its arrival brings palpable hope.

Leithers are determined not to lose any of our heart, any of Leith’s soul

Trams were lost to Edinburgh in 1956; the last to run were on Leith Walk on 16 November that year. Leith was always the outlier: horse-drawn trams came to Edinburgh in 1871 on a line down to Leith, and the city’s first electric trams were run in 1905 by the pioneering Leith Corporation Tramways. Symbolically, Leith Walk’s old Shrubhill tram depot – where that last service terminated 67 years ago – has today been transformed into the Engine Yard development, with a proportion of affordable accommodation.

“I’m proud our motto in Leith is ‘persevere’. You can see all of the changes coming with the trams, but Leithers are determined not to lose any of our heart, any of Leith’s soul,” beams Stewart. It’s a place known for its independent, cosmopolitan spirit: in 1920, Leithers voted by 26,810 to 4,340 against amalgamating with Edinburgh (but were ignored) and the area had one of the highest remain votes in the EU referendum.



Leith's atmospheric harbour. Photograph: Kenny Lam/VisitScotland

At the top of Leith Walk I find immediate new blood. [Spry](#), a wine bar serving only natural wines, has just added an artisan bakery below. Next door [Laila](#), a pink flower-decked cafe, was totally revamped in November 2022. The parallel street Easter Road, now drily nicknamed “Feaster Road” by local people, has Foodstory, a “sustainable cafe”, swish patisserie [Écosse Éclair](#) and vegan cafe [Plant Bae](#), alongside the [Edinburgh Honey Company](#) and [Polentoni](#), a proper Italian deli. Ailidh Forlan, AKA food blogger Plate Expectations, tells me: “With the coming of the trams Leith is becoming a real foodie haven.” As I tuck into the best nduja and gorgonzola focaccia this side of Bologna, I’m inclined to agree.



Polentoni. Photograph: Robin McKelvie

At Easter Road's cult fashion boutique [It Started in the North](#), box-fresh owner Brett Rowden swirls mod, casual and skinhead subcultures together, and feels change: "The tram has given small businesses the confidence to invest after a tough few years."

Leith Walk could be Edinburgh's La Rambla. It's becoming a bustling boulevard that soars down to the sea

One growing sector is craft breweries, with [Pilot](#) and its Leith Lager joined by the likes of [Campervan](#) and [Newbarns](#). Taprooms and fruit beers now flow through streets where more than 80 bonded whisky warehouses used to reign (whisky would be stored prior to being shipped out or sold on in Scotland, with some warehouses used for whisky maturation, too). Old Leith is not risking being drowned by the new, though. I'm reassured to find the [Sicilian Pastry Shop](#) still here. Since 1979. You can snare three cakes here for what one costs in Leith's new boutique bakeries.

I head back to "the Walk". Daniel Defoe found it "a very handsome Gravel-walk" in 1725. Longtime Leith resident BBC Radio DJ Vic Galloway goes a step further: "Leith Walk could be Edinburgh's La Rambla. The pavement

has already been widened and it's becoming a bustling boulevard that soars down to the sea. This is now *the* place to go out in Edinburgh.”



Vic Galloway at Leith Depot. Photograph: Robin McKelvie

We have lunch in [Leith Depot](#), a cultural hub, restaurant and gig space earmarked for flats until the community intervened. Galloway is on the decks at new monthly residency Vitamin C, but he's not alone. “Leith is bursting with musical creativity,” he says. “[Young Fathers](#) live here and their new album was recorded in Leith. Edinburgh’s Hamish Hawk just recorded his new album at Leith’s Post Electric Studio, where hot new tips Redolent recently finished their first album. Another superb new talent is multi-instrumentalist Callum Easter.”

As we stroll down Leith Walk, past the new second branch (after Easter Road) of fine booze emporium [Cornelius](#), I ask if there is a danger Leith could lose its soul. “I don’t think anyone wants Leith to change to the point that local people can’t afford to live here,” says Galloway. “Take Leith Depot – you can get a decent pint and good food without bankrupting yourself. I hope Leith has learned the lessons of East Berlin and Montreal, which changed too quickly and lost something. Here, people haven’t been forced out. In my stairwell there is a real mix of people: new creatives alongside lifelong Leithers.”

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Spry serves only natural wines. Photograph: Robin McKelvie

I leave Galloway and trace the tram line, following the squawking gulls to The Shore (the name of the stop and area by the water). The old harbour was once alive with Hanseatic traders, and Flemish gables still linger. It feels an age since the first Malmaison boutique hotel opened in 1994, meant to kickstart Leith's renaissance. I find [Heron](#), where casual fine dining upstarts

Tomás Gormley and Sam Yorke are challenging the Michelin-starred Leith legends Martin Wishart and Tom Kitchin, snaring their own star in April.

Visible from The Shore is the new [Port of Leith Distillery](#), the UK's first vertical distillery, a sleek black tower overlooking the Forth. It soars above the Royal Yacht Britannia, the royal family's former nautical plaything. "Britannia is more spaceship than a ship," smiles co-owner Paddy Fletcher. "It plonked down in 1998 promising to help Leith's regeneration but, in reality, tourists just parachute in. We want to draw people to drink, eat and use the tram to explore." Judging by the success of their existing Lind & Lime gin distillery, Leith is in innovative hands.



Leith theatre. Photograph: Robin McKelvie

My last port of call, like Leith, is at a crossroads. [Leith theatre](#) has the potential: a glorious 1930s balconied dame that survived second world war bombing to host AC/DC in the 1970s. Today, it holds a smattering of limited-capacity concerts, but chief executive Lynn Morrison is ambitious: "Leith theatre *will* become Edinburgh's Barrowland."

Leith theatre, like Leith itself, needs further investment as it steps into the future. The tram's tortuous construction has finished, but the routes it opens are just emerging. As a thick haar settles across the Forth, I recall Paul

Stewart at the top of Leith Walk: “The trams have done their bit. It’s where Leith travels now that no one knows yet.”

*Robin worked with [Forever Edinburgh](#) to put together elements of his research trips to Leith and Leith Walk*

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## 2023.06.06 - Opinion

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The central criminal court of England and Wales in London. Photograph: Anthony Brown/Alamy

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## **So this is British justice: Boris Johnson gets legal aid and a mother of three on the breadline doesn't**

[Owen Jones](#)



Our universal right to legal representation has been cut to shreds by Tory austerity – and women are the worst affected

Tue 6 Jun 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 6 Jun 2023 12.28 EDT

Boris Johnson is a very rich man, even though he suffers from a self-pitying syndrome that afflicts many of the well-off: believing himself to be poorer than he actually is. Although he once described his £250,000-a-year newspaper column salary as “[chicken feed](#)”, and reportedly complained that his prime ministerial annual pay packet of more than £150,000 [wasn’t enough to live on](#), he was already in the top 1% of earners when he lived in No 10.

And he has only prospered since, having moved into a [£3.8m Oxfordshire mansion](#) –with nine bedrooms and a moat on three sides – and earned well over £5 million since resigning from the prime ministerial office in disgrace.

Yet this enormously wealthy man, who as prime minister presided over the illegality that saw [government officials partying](#) while ordinary citizens could not hold the hand of a dying relative – while also [being fined himself](#) for violating the rules – somehow benefits from a taxpayer-funded legal

defence in the Partygate inquiry, already to the tune of a [quarter of a million pounds](#).

Now consider the difference between [Boris Johnson](#) and a woman I spoke with recently, who, for the sake of her anonymity, I'll call Sally. Sally is a single mother of three children who was paid a modest salary as a health professional. Although she can only give limited details, she was dragged through the court by an abusive, controlling former partner. She has spent about £40,000 on legal fees, was driven into so much debt that she had to sell her house and was forced to use food banks to feed her children.



Criminal barristers protest for a rise in legal aid fees outside the supreme court, 6 September 2022. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

But here's the kicker. "I wasn't entitled to legal aid as I had too much equity in my family home," she tells me. So there she is, on universal credit, languishing on the breadline, having been taken to court multiple times and left too ill to work by the trauma of it all. "Boris Johnson and his millionaire friends have their legal bills paid when they are rich ... it's another injustice in an already unjust, broken system," she said.

"In England, justice is open to all – like the Ritz Hotel!" quipped the Irish judge James Mathew in the 19th century. It was a succinct takedown of the

perversities of class-bound societies, where supposedly universal rights in fact depend on your bank balance. It's tempting to mourn how little has changed since then but, actually, things did change, if only temporarily. The postwar Labour government first introduced legal aid as one of the central pillars of a new welfare state in 1949, allowing eight out of 10 Britons to access free or affordable legal assistance.

But a tragic historical lesson that needs to be learned over and over again is that, however permanent victories may seem, unless they are continually fought for, they can and will be reversed. Even before the Tories assumed power in 2010, only 27% had access to legal aid, and from 2013, David Cameron's administration lopped off £751m from the £2.2bn legal aid fund.

The primary victims? Women, low earners and those from minority backgrounds. On the eve of Tory rule, there were about a million legal aid cases to get early advice; that number has now dropped to 130,000, and ordinary citizens are unable to get support for problems ranging from family to housing to debt. In the half a decade after the Tory onslaught against legal aid, half of all law centres and not-for-profit legal advice services in England and Wales vanished.

Ours is a country where a rich, powerful man like Johnson receives state support for his legal problems, despite his obvious wrongdoing in office. After all, he didn't resign for nothing. But often traumatised women are left with nothing. Another women I spoke with, Sarah – again, not her name – said that, even though her former partner was violent and her children fear him, working 16 hours a week took her over the threshold for legal aid. "No legal aid for us common people who aren't former prime ministers," is her caustic summary. She's right to be furious. As our disgraced former ruler milks the state, despite being awash with millions, think of the struggling people his party has condemned to misery and hardship.

- Owen Jones is a Guardian columnist

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Mizzy, whose real name is Bacari-Bronze O'Garro, outside Thames magistrates' court, where he was charged with failing to comply with a community protection notice on 24 May 2023. Photograph: Lucy North/PA

[Opinion](#)[Social media](#)

## The disturbing rise of Mizzy: this is what happens when culture values nothing but attention

[Jason Okundaye](#)

The 18-year-old former TikToker has been gaming a system created by his supposed elders and betters

Tue 6 Jun 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 6 Jun 2023 06.05 EDT

When I first came across [Mizzy](#), now infamous as the “TikTok Terror”, it was in videos of him being chased by security after breaking into Alton Towers or riding an electric bike into a Sainsbury’s. He seemed annoying in a “kids these days!” kind of way, and I didn’t think much of it. But fast-

forward a few months and Mizzy's videos – his real name is Bacari-Bronze O'Garro – went to a very dark place indeed. The 18-year-old has provoked outrage for his abhorrent TikTok videos, which have seen him abduct an elderly woman's dog, attempt to leapfrog over an Orthodox Jewish man, [enter a stranger's home](#) without permission, and walk up to young people at night and ask if they "want to die". He has since apologised, but you can only imagine the shocking and disturbing effect this "content" must have had on those involved.

Looking back on it, it almost seems as if this escalation in videos was built into the system: illicit bike rides aren't enough to sustain the internet's attention, you have to up your prank game and really force people to watch. Now bewildered and angry people across Britain have been understandably left with a series of questions. Namely: who is Mizzy and what does he want?

The reactions have tended to fall into two camps. There seems to be a new story about him every day – each an excuse for people on the internet to shout about how he has not faced enough consequences. But there are also a few welfare-minded folks on social media who view Mizzy as someone more in need of a social worker than a judge.

It's true that Mizzy is an adult but he is very young, which is worth bearing in mind. At the same time, we should be wary of how we portray him. What both responses fail to take into account is that Mizzy has recognised that, in a competitive market, there is a high demand for content that really aggravates other people – the kids call it "[cloutrage](#)". By pursuing this – in an amoral, algorithmic universe that rewards anything that garners attention – he is engaging in a twisted form of online entrepreneurship. One that could return serious profits through the development of a cult following and core audience.

To be a successful video content creator, particularly one who trades in pranks and aggravation, you have to be willing to push yourself to extremes. In the past, this has typically involved self-humiliation content – think the [cinnamon challenge](#) or those [disgusting mukbangs](#) (a content genre that originated in South Korea and featured people eating strange foods). Jake

Paul, whose net worth is estimated at around \$310m (£250m), began his career on Vine, staging juvenile but broadly inoffensive pranks and skits.

What Mizzy has also done is exploit the distinctly British irritation and discomfort with any type of antisocial behaviour by teenagers – he knows exactly what it is that riles British people.

Take his [interview with Piers Morgan](#) (it was the most obvious platform for someone seeking the greatest return in the form of attention, opposite a man whose profile is also built off bullish divisiveness). The showdown itself was not exactly great television but I was most struck by the moment Mizzy said to Morgan: “You’re trying to get on to me because I’m black.” Unsurprisingly, it became the most viral clip from the interview.

Does Mizzy really believe he’s receiving this backlash because he’s black? (It isn’t a baseless idea, there is a kind of pervasive “know your place” racism directed against black youth that is inescapable.) What Mizzy surely does know is that “playing the race card” is something that angers the kind of people who watch [Piers Morgan](#) like nothing else. In the interview, Mizzy also teases the public about how British laws aren’t strong enough to contain him – a contrarian line that must have both enraged and been music to the ears of Tory authoritarians.

So what can be done about Mizzy? Not a lot, really (as much as everyone on the internet thinks they can change someone’s mind with one firm conversation). But it helps to properly understand him in context: as a cultural figure who has been responding to the incentive structures of a system that many people – adults, that is – have helped build and legitimise.

The fury of the nation might seem a high price to pay, but for Mizzy it’s clearly worth it: as he told Morgan, “Hate brings likes, hate brings views.” I wouldn’t be surprised if he joins the increasing pool of [influencers-turned-boxers](#) – I’m sure you’ll soon be able to pay good money to watch him get knocked out, if you really hate him that much. But here’s the catch-22: so long as your eyes are on him, he’ll have won.

- Jason Okundaye is a London-based writer and researcher

- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).*
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‘Edward Snowden, like so many whistleblowers, has paid a heavy personal price for what he considered as an act of public service.’ Snowden in Hong Kong, June 2013. Photograph: Glenn Greenwald and Laura Poitras/AP

[Opinion](#)[Edward Snowden](#)

## **Ten years ago, Edward Snowden warned us about state spying. Spare a thought for him, and worry about the future**

[Alan Rusbridger](#)



The abuses the Guardian helped him bring to worldwide attention go on: the authorities have merely made it harder to expose them

- Alan Rusbridger was editor of the Guardian from 1995-2015

Tue 6 Jun 2023 05.09 EDT Last modified on Tue 6 Jun 2023 13.49 EDT

Even amid the cacophony of social media, most journalism is met with a shrug or a murmur. But one story the Guardian published 10 years ago today exploded with the force of an earthquake.

The [article revealed](#) that the US National Security Agency (NSA) was collecting the phone records of millions of Verizon customers. In case anyone doubted the veracity of the claims, we were able to publish the [top secret court order](#) handed down by the foreign intelligence surveillance court (Fisa), which granted the US government the right to hold and scrutinise the metadata of millions of phone calls by American citizens.

The document was marked TOP SECRET//SI//NOFORN – an extremely high level of classification which meant that it was not to be shared with any

foreign governments, far less Guardian journalists or, God forbid, Guardian readers. Who knows the degree of panic that spread through the upper echelons of the US intelligence system as they tried to work out how such a sensitive document had found its way into the public domain. But that will have been nothing to the dawning realisation – in the UK as well as the US – that this was but the tip of a [very large and ominous iceberg](#).

Over the following weeks, the Guardian (joined by the Washington Post, New York Times and ProPublica) led the way in publishing dozens more documents disclosing the extent to which US, UK, Australian and other allied governments were building the apparatus for a system of mass surveillance that George Orwell could hardly have dared imagine when he wrote his dystopic novel Nineteen Eighty-Four.

Within a few days, the source of the documents, Edward Snowden, [unmasked himself](#) on the Guardian website and for weeks thereafter the stories dominated the news around the world. It has since been memorialised in at least three films, stage dramas, books, numerous academic papers ... and [even an album](#).

It led to [multiple court actions](#) in which governments were found to have been in breach of their constitutional and/or legal obligations. It led to a scramble by governments to [retrospectively pass legislation](#) sanctioning the activities they had been covertly undertaking. And it has led to a number of [stable-door attempts](#) to make sure journalists could never again do what the Guardian and others did 10 years ago.

Even now the British government, in hastily revising the laws [around official secrecy](#), is trying to ensure that any editor who behaved as I did 10 years ago would face up to 14 years in prison. Lamentably, the Labour party is not joining a cross-party coalition that would allow whistleblowers and journalists the right to mount a [public interest defence](#).

So do not hold your breath for future Edward Snowdens in this country. The British media is, by and large, not known for holding its security services rigorously to account, if at all.

The British government believed that, by [ordering the destruction](#) of the Guardian computers, they would effectively silence us. In fact, we simply transferred the centre of publications to New York, under the paper's then US editor, Janine Gibson. And there has been little more than a whisper of protest over the new national security bill or the [threatened extradition of Julian Assange](#).

This is curious. The notion that the state has no right to enter a home and seize papers was established in English law in the famous case of [Entick v Carrington](#) (1765), which later became the basis for the US fourth amendment. In a famous passage, Lord Camden declared: "By the laws of England, every invasion of private property, be it ever so minute, is a trespass."

When I went out to talk about the Snowden case to assorted audiences (including, after a suitable gap, at MI5 itself), I would begin by asking who in the audience would be happy to hand over all their papers to a police officer knocking on their front door, even if they assured them they would only examine them if there was sufficient cause.

Never, in any of these talks, did a single member of any audience raise a hand. Yes, people valued their security and were open to persuasion that, with due process and proper oversight, there would be occasions when the state and its agencies should be granted intrusive powers in specific circumstances. But the idea of blanket, suspicionless surveillance – give us the entire haystack and we'll search for the needle if and when it suits us – was repellent to most people.

When it came down to it, people didn't much like the idea of a government smashing up newspaper computers to (unsuccessfully) silence the truth coming out. It felt somehow unBritish. The [question I was asked](#) by the home affairs select committee – "Do you love this country?" – grated. Why was it unpatriotic to hold the state to account in this way?

Numerous editors from around the world – seeing a determined and prolonged [police investigation](#) into this newspaper – wrote in support of the right of a press to scrutinise its government's security apparatus. And,

eventually, the Guardian and Washington Post shared the ultimate journalistic accolade of the [2014 Pulitzer prize](#).

So, a decade later, there are things to celebrate and reasons to worry. Please spare a thought for Snowden, who, like so many whistleblowers, has paid a heavy personal price for what he (and many others around the world) considered an act of public service.

And, in the afterglow of the HBO series Succession, spare a moment to celebrate a form of newspaper ownership that is as resistant to government interference as any. When a group of parliamentarians demanded that the Scott Trust (owners of the Guardian) stop publishing this material, the trust could honestly reply that it had no such power.

For what it's worth, I'm as certain as I can be that the threat of 14 years in prison wouldn't have stopped me either. "The press," as the editor of the Times wrote in 1852, "lives by disclosure ... The statesman's duty is precisely the reverse." Amen.

- Alan Rusbridger was editor of the Guardian from 1995-2015. He now edits Prospect Magazine.
  - *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).*
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‘A party of zillionaires campaigning against a tax that only the likes of them need to pay looks like clueless insouciance.’ Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

[OpinionConservatives](#)

## A campaign against inheritance tax led by a multimillionaire? These really are desperate times for the Tories

[Polly Toynbee](#)



While ministers look to the Telegraph for policies and Nadhim Zahawi fights for the status quo, Labour has a bold, serious vision

Tue 6 Jun 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 6 Jun 2023 06.41 EDT

Governing parties in their death throes thrash about, grasping for life rafts and hunting through old lists to recapture the tried-and-tested vote-winners of yesteryear. The campaign by more than 50 Tory MPs and the Telegraph to abolish inheritance tax is a prime example. Didn't it work its magic once before, when George Osborne spooked Gordon Brown out of calling an election in 2007 by promising a £1m threshold? Surely, that means it will work again in the Conservatives' hour of desperate need?

This time, Labour is not spooked. Far from it. Nothing could be more comic than the multimillionaire Nadhim Zahawi leading this campaign, the man whose only memorable moment in his brief chancellorship was [being sacked](#) for failing to declare an ongoing investigation into his personal tax affairs. A party of zillionaires campaigning against a tax that only the likes of them need to pay looks like clueless insouciance. It shows how far their feet have drifted from terra firma. Yet again, their trusty Telegraph has led them madly astray – as it always does.

True, [people think](#) inheritance tax is the second most unreasonably high tax after council tax, according to research by More in Common. Both arrive as bills, making them visible in a way that other taxes are not. Even though a tiny percentage of estates pay the tax – in 2019-20, it was [fewer than 4%](#) – there is a deep and irrational sense of injustice about “taxing the dead” and “double taxation”, even though much of the money accumulated in a property that has multiplied many times in value will never have been taxed in the first place. So will this abolition plan fly? If Rishi Sunak does seize this idea masterminded by Zahawi, Rees-Mogg and the Telegraph, this government will be walking into a death trap of its own making.

What’s more, the myth that Osborne’s plan was a win for the Tories in 2010 is deeply questionable, according to Labour’s pollsters. Prof Tim Bale, an expert Tory party analyst, agrees that the ploy in 2007 didn’t “do as much for George Osborne as everyone seems to think”. Prof Rob Ford, a political analyst, adds: “That’s not what caused the shift in the polls at that time.” He tells me that people hate the tax. But the optics of Tories sheltering their wealth would see “Labour’s campaign ads writing themselves”, Ford says.

Labour will shrug this off – as it has done with many of the government’s desperate gestures and culture war diversions. The current system could be reformed in all kinds of ways: loopholes could be closed for the Duke of Westminster, get-outs ended for farm land. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has suggested replacing inheritance tax with a lifetime gift tax. Alternatively, the tax could be levied on recipients. Or it could be abolished in favour of wealth taxes (though when the Telegraph campaign points out that Sweden abolished inheritance tax, it forgets to mention that the Swedish top tax rate is 57%). Labour’s sternly disciplined messaging has prevented the party from being tempted off-piste; it is relentlessly focused on the cost of living, the NHS, public services and its “fairer, greener” plans.

While the current government tinkers and fidgets, Labour seems more like a serious party of government. “‘Stop the boats’ has got them nowhere,” says Ford, as immigration falls further down the public’s list of concerns. When even xenophobia fails to deliver, the Tories really have lost their last refuge.

Meanwhile, in the serious world, Keir Starmer [addresses the GMB conference](#) on Tuesday. The union, rightly interested in protecting its

members, was alarmed at Labour's commitment to block all new oil and gas development in the North Sea. Starmer needs to persuade the GMB that his pledge of £28bn a year to be spent on the party's green prosperity plan will create far more good jobs, suitable for those same workers in Scotland. This will be the start of a huge off-shore and on-shore wind expansion, with new nuclear plants and factories making the turbines that are currently built abroad. It needs green steel and giga battery sites, as well as home insulation in a dash for clean energy by 2030.

Labour's promised fair pay agreements across every sector will boost earnings, just as the minimum wage did in the government of Blair and Brown. A union such as the GMB, admirably confronting the [likes of Amazon](#), will find organising far easier under a Labour government, which will oblige every employer to allow union recruiters into every workplace. You can expect a steep rise in union membership. Jonathan Reynolds, the shadow business secretary, makes a strong case for blocking any further oil and gas development. There will be no repeat of Thatcher's brutal programme of deindustrialisation. Labour is reindustrialising – and it's all green.

The Tories have tried to claim the £1.5m donated to Labour by Dale Vince, the green campaigning founder of Ecotricity, has shaped its anti-oil policy. Vince is a funder of Just Stop Oil – and why not? A tussle within the shadow cabinet over the sharing out of this £28bn is inevitable. Though the Times claims "Starmer may pull the plug" on the green agenda, those close to him say he has never been more adamant about green investment, inspired anew by Joe Biden's epic green investment fund that will power the US economy. They insist there is no sliver of distinction between Ed Miliband's net zero climate programme and Starmer's pledge that all borrowing for investment will be green.

The Tories have meanwhile vacated the green arena, badly misled again by Telegraph phobias into thinking that it is unpopular as they strive to appeal to their vanishing "red wall" seats. Their instinctive ideological aversion to all things green is a major error: Ford says he's surprised by "how well green plays right across the board", from Green party local election successes in Tory seats, to strong support for green industrial investment. By focusing so

much on the prejudices of old people, the Tories risk forgetting at their peril that millennials are the biggest age cohort in more than half of all constituencies – and young people want green investment.

The contrast between Labour's policy seriousness and the Tories' endless chasing of quick populist wins could hardly be stronger. Bring on Zahawi's comic attempt to avoid inheritance tax for all his cohort. Labour isn't worried, nor diverted from its plans for government.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist
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## 2023.06.06 - Around the world

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Relatives and friends mark the anniversary of the murder of the British journalist Dom Phillips and Brazilian activist Bruno Pereira, on Copacabana beach, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Photograph: António Lacerda/EPA

[Dom Phillips and Bruno Pereira](#)

## **Tributes paid to Dom Phillips and Bruno Pereira a year on from their deaths**

Hundreds gather in Rio and Belém to remember two men who worked to defend the Amazon and its Indigenous inhabitants

[Tom Phillips in Rio de Janeiro](#)

Mon 5 Jun 2023 17.30 EDTFirst published on Mon 5 Jun 2023 12.53 EDT

Indigenous leaders, politicians and friends and relatives of [Dom Phillips and Bruno Pereira](#) have paid tribute to the two men on the anniversary of their murders in the Brazilian Amazon.

The British journalist and Brazilian Indigenous expert were ambushed and killed on 5 June 2022 while travelling by boat through the remote Javari valley region.

On Monday, hundreds of supporters gathered in cities including Rio, Belém in the Amazon, and the capital Brasília to remember their lives and the causes they cherished.

“The best way to honour them is to ensure their struggle wasn’t in vain,” the Brazilian president, [Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva](#), declared as his government announced details of its plans to halt Amazon deforestation by 2030.

Phillips’s widow, Alessandra Sampaio, fought back tears as she spoke of her bereavement during an event on Copacabana beach.

“The truth is I lost the love of my life. I wish I wasn’t here giving interviews. I don’t want any of this. I’d like to go back to the simple life I had with Dom. We wanted to grow old together and this was stolen from me, it was stolen from my family and my friends – all because of greed and the previous government’s deliberate lack of control [in the Amazon],” she said.

Ex-president Jair Bolsonaro’s dismantling of Indigenous and environmental protections was widely blamed for soaring deforestation and creating the lawless backdrop against which last year’s murders occurred.



Alessandra Sampaio, the widow of British journalist Dom Phillips, at the event in Rio. Photograph: Bruna Prado/AP

But Sampaio – who is preparing to launch the Dom Phillips Institute focused on the defence of Indigenous communities and the environment – said she was determined to continue her husband's fight for the Amazon.

"I feel so angry but I try not to focus on this. I'm trying to move forwards and do what's possible in Dom's name to promote conservation," she said, calling for greater government efforts to protect the Indigenous activists battling to protect their ancestral lands from illegal miners, poachers and drug traffickers.

"It's intolerable that Indigenous people are still under threat and are still being killed. When will this stop? Wasn't the death of Dom and Bruno enough?" Sampaio said.

More than 3,500 miles away in the Amazon, Indigenous activists travelled to the spot on the Itaquáí River where Phillips and Pereira were killed to erect two white crosses paying tribute to the men.

"The idea is to mark ... the place where they were murdered ... to ensure it's never forgotten," Carlos Travassos, an Indigenous specialist who is helping carry on Pereira's work, [said in a recent interview](#).

At the presidential palace in Brasília, top politicians and diplomats paid tribute to Phillips and Pereira at an event marking World Environment Day attended by Lula.

Lula said he was determined to change the impression the world had been given of the Amazon after last year's crimes as "a lawless land on the brink of destruction which posed a huge threat to the battle against the climate emergency".

The environment minister, Marina Silva, remembered how the men were "barbarously murdered ... defending a cause that the state should have been defending" during Bolsonaro's environmentally devastating administration.

"Exactly one year ago, this crime shocked the world and exposed the fragility of an Amazon that had been surrendered to organised crime [groups] that tear down the forest and kill anyone who crosses their path to defend the forest and its native peoples," Silva said.

Silva remembered how one of Lula's first acts after taking over from Bolsonaro in January was to create the ministry of [Indigenous peoples](#), in order to halt "the atrocities" committed against Brazil's native peoples.

Beto Marubo, a prominent Javari leader who is among those who has received death threats, attended the Rio memorial and said he was encouraged to see people around the world championing the causes Pereira and Phillips have come to represent.

But Marubo voiced disappointment that the Javari valley had yet to witness an emphatic intervention from Lula's new leftwing government.

A floating federal police base has been installed in Atalaia do Norte, the port town nearest to the entrance of the Javari valley Indigenous territory, but activists say little else has been done.

"We thought that by now we'd have the army, the federal police and the navy working together in the region ... but we don't. And the same issues ... that caused the deaths of Dom and Bruno persist," said Marubo, who worked with Pereira for more than a decade.

“Indigenous leaders are still being threatened … outsiders continue to invade the Indigenous territory. Absolutely nothing has changed,” Marubo said, adding: “We aren’t interested in [the government’s] good intentions. We want to see things happen.”

On the eve of Monday’s commemorations, it emerged that federal police had charged the alleged leader of a “transnational criminal organisation” with masterminding last year’s murders. Ruben Dario da Silva Villar is accused of being the boss of an illegal poaching network that pillaged the waterways and forests of the Javari valley territory – and whose activities Pereira was trying to thwart by training Indigenous patrol teams.

The indictment said evidence gathered by police suggested “the steps of Bruno and Dom were being monitored by the criminal organisation” in the days leading up to the crime.

Speaking on Copacabana beach, Marubo vowed Indigenous activists would continue struggling in Pereira’s name. “It’s matter of honour, of ethics and commitment to the cause,” he said, urging journalists to do the same by travelling to the Amazon to cover Indigenous issues.

“Dom gave his life for this,” Marubo said.

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Brooklyn's federal district court in New York has heard testimony about China's 'Operation Fox Hunt', which seeks to forcibly repatriate people the Communist party deems fugitives. Photograph: Eduardo Muñoz/Reuters

[China](#)

## **My life was turned upside down by Beijing threats, wife of Chinese ex-official tells US court**

Liu Fang tells how her family lived privately in the US for eight years, until two men turned up at their door in first US trial arising from China's 'Operation Fox Hunt'

*Associated Press*

Mon 5 Jun 2023 21.19 EDT

The wife of a Chinese former official has described in court the moment their life in the US was "turned upside down" by Chinese government threats aimed at forcing her family to return to their homeland.

Liu Fang told how two strangers pounded on her New Jersey front door and twisted the handle, in what is the first trial to come out of US claims that Beijing has tried to harass and intimidate dissidents and others into returning home.

When the men left, Liu said she opened the door and found a note telling her husband: “If you are willing to go back to the mainland and spend 10 years in prison, your wife and children will be all right.”

“What happens if they were able to come in?” Liu asked aloud, through a court interpreter, at the criminal trial of a man accused of helping post the note and two co-defendants.

In home-security video shown at the trial, two men walk up a path toward the couple’s front door, then appear on a back deck and look in the glass doors to a sunroom, and then traipse up the front path again. Liu said she and her husband went to look at the video after they heard pounding on their door.

The couple subsequently installed new locks and additional security cameras, replaced sheer curtains with opaque ones and got a baseball bat for protection, she told jurors.

An American police sergeant-turned-private investigator called Michael McMahon, and expatriates Zheng Congying and Zhu Yong are charged with being part of a conspiracy to hound Liu, her adult daughter and her husband – former Chinese city official Xu Jin – to get him to go back to his homeland, where the government alleges he took bribes.



Retired NYPD sergeant Michael McMahon (C) leaves Brooklyn federal court on 31 May. He has been charged with being part of a conspiracy to hound former Chinese city official Xu Jin and his family to get him to go back to his homeland. Photograph: Yuki Iwamura/AFP/Getty Images

According to prosecutors and Liu's testimony, the pressure campaign for her husband's return took various forms: spreading damning articles about them to their adult daughter's Facebook friends, sending letters in relatives' names to Liu's sister in New Jersey, and flying in Xu's father, against his will, in 2017 to beseech his son to return to [China](#).

"My life was turned upside down, at 180 degrees, overnight," Liu told a Brooklyn federal court jury.

Prosecutors say the intimidating overtures at Beijing's behest are part of a repatriation initiative called "Operation Fox Hunt", which China describes as a plan to pursue and repatriate nationals Beijing considers fugitives. However, those on the wanted list also include people at political or cultural odds with China's ruling Communist party.

"The victim and his family endured years of harassment," assistant US attorney Irisa Chen said earlier in an opening statement. "It's part of a public

Chinese government initiative to force people living abroad to return to China against their will.”

Xu, once a city official in Wuhan, and his wife left China in 2010. Chinese officials then issued international alerts that he was wanted on allegations of embezzlement and bribe-taking and that she was also wanted for allegedly accepting bribes.

Liu told jurors the government went after her husband “because he is upright, and he believes in justice … and he upset those in power.” She said she was targeted simply for being his wife.

The Chinese expatriates are charged with acting as illegal agents for China. Their lawyers say the three thought they were helping collect a debt or do some other task for private entities, not the Chinese government.

Defence attorneys say the men were variously told they were helping a Chinese construction company that had been defrauded of millions of dollars, aiding a Chinese acquaintance who was owed \$400,000, doing something related to important people in Macau, or other explanations.

China can’t legally compel suspects to return from the US, since the countries have no extradition treaty. Beijing has denied issuing threats to induce people to return “voluntarily.”

The defence raised questions about the couple’s source of income in the US. Liu said she was self-employed, before the judge blocked further inquiries on the issue. Defence lawyers also sought to suggest that she was testifying to get help with investor visa approval for her family.

Liu said she hadn’t been promised any immigration help, though she said that she didn’t think the US government would force the couple to return to China. Regardless, she said immigration matters didn’t influence her testimony.

“All I’m telling is the truth,” she told jurors. “I’m testifying to let people know the truth of what happened to me.”

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Mike Pence, accompanied by his wife Karen, speaks in Des Moines, Iowa, on 3 June 2023. Photograph: Dave Kaup/Reuters

[Mike Pence](#)

## **Mike Pence, Trump's former vice-president, announces White House run**

Republican who narrowly escaped harm at hands of January 6 rioters jumps into nomination race

*[Martin Pengelly](#) in New York  
[@MartinPengelly](#)*

Wed 7 Jun 2023 07.37 EDTFirst published on Mon 5 Jun 2023 12.11 EDT

Mike Pence, who as Donald Trump's vice-president narrowly escaped harm at the hands of the January 6 rioters, launched his run for the Republican presidential nomination next year, pitting him against his former boss.

[Pence](#) filed paperwork with the Federal Election Commission on Tuesday afternoon and released his official campaign launch video early on

Wednesday. His formal launch event was planned to take place in Des Moines, Iowa, on Wednesday – his 64th birthday.

He posted the video on Twitter on Wednesday, writing: “I believe in the American people, and I have faith God is not done with America yet. Together, we can bring this Country back, and the best days for the Greatest Nation on Earth are yet to come!”

I believe in the American people, and I have faith God is not done with America yet. Together, we can bring this Country back, and the best days for the Greatest Nation on Earth are yet to come! ☰ #Pence2024  
[pic.twitter.com/A8EkqgCDAm](https://pic.twitter.com/A8EkqgCDAm)

— Mike Pence (@Mike\_Pence) [June 7, 2023](#)

The video includes patriotic images and shots of a pensive Pence. He declares: “My family and I have been blessed beyond measure with opportunities to serve this nation and it would be easy to stand on the sidelines, but that’s now how I was raised and that’s why, before God and my family, I’m announcing that I’m running for president of the United State. We can bring this country back.”

He attacked the Democratic administration of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, showing clips of the president and vice president and warning about the “radical left” that “recession is looming”, the US-Mexico border is “under siege” and “the American dream is being crushed under runaway inflation”, lamenting a “weakened America” at home and abroad.

The former congressman and Indiana governor, an evangelical [conservative](#), enters a primary dominated by Trump, who enjoys [commanding polling leads](#), well clear of his nearest challenger, the rightwing Florida governor, Ron DeSantis.

A Pence run has [long been expected](#) but he has not registered significantly in polling, generally contesting third place with the former South Carolina governor Nikki Haley.

Other declared candidates include the South Carolina senator Tim Scott, the former Arkansas governor Asa Hutchinson and Vivek Ramaswamy, a biotech entrepreneur.



Donald Trump and Mike Pence on 2 November 2020, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Photograph: Evan Vucci/AP

Pence was governor of Indiana when Trump [picked him](#) as his running mate in 2016, a move widely seen as an attempt to reassure evangelical and socially conservative voters alarmed by the brash New York business mogul.

Trump's controversies and vulgarities soon tested the bond. Pence [reportedly](#) considering leaving the ticket – or replacing Trump at the top of it – amid the Access Hollywood scandal, in which Trump was recorded [boasting about assaulting women](#).

But Pence did not quit and through Trump's four years in power he maintained an unflaggingly loyal – many said obsequious – stance at his president's side.

Reports of plots to [replace Pence in 2020](#) were common, however, and whatever bond existed between the two men was finally broken by Trump's refusal to accept his conclusive defeat by Joe Biden.

Pence resisted attempts to have him refuse to certify electoral college results on 6 January 2021, while fulfilling a ceremonial role in Congress.

When the mob Trump sent to the Capitol broke in, some chanting “[Hang Mike Pence](#)” while a makeshift gallows was erected outside, Pence was whisked to safety by his Secret Service detail.

Trump did nothing to call off the mob but Pence did not leave the Capitol. Eventually, the vice-president presided over certification.

In a series of public hearings and a published final report, the House January 6 committee presented Pence as a hero of its tale while making four criminal referrals of Trump to the justice department.

In the investigation of Trump’s attempted election subversion by the special counsel Jack Smith, Pence first fought then [acquiesced](#) to demands for testimony to a grand jury.

According to [witnesses](#), Trump said the mob might have been right to chant for Pence to be hanged. Two and a half years on, Trump still [blames](#) Pence for January 6, which is now linked to nine deaths, more than a thousand arrests and hundreds of convictions, some for seditious conspiracy.

Pence has [said](#): “President Trump was wrong. I had no right to overturn the election, and his reckless words endangered my family and everyone at the Capitol that day, and I know that history will hold Donald Trump accountable.”

Like Trump, Pence has been the subject of an investigation into classified documents [found in his possession](#) after he left power. Unlike with Trump, the Pence investigation, of a vastly smaller scale, closed with no charges filed.

Pence has charted a painful path away from the man he served. But many observers question the depth of his independence.

Last July, Miles Taylor, a former homeland security official who turned against Trump, [told CNN](#): “If you want to know what the Mike Pence vice-

presidency was like, Mike Pence is a guy with an erect posture and flaccid conscience.

“He stood up tall but he did not stand up to Donald Trump.”

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The headset will show users' eyes on the front screen when they are in AR mode, simulating a transparent screen. Photograph: Apple  
[Apple](#)

## Apple reveals Vision Pro AR headset at its worldwide developers conference

Headset priced at \$3,500 allows users to 'browse the system simply by looking' and tapping their fingers to select, says Apple

[Alex Hern](#)  
[@alexhern](#)

Mon 5 Jun 2023 14.58 EDTFirst published on Mon 5 Jun 2023 14.48 EDT

Apple has lifted the lid on the worst kept secret in Silicon Valley and revealed the Vision Pro, a \$3,499 VR headset.

"With Vision Pro, you're no longer limited by a display. Your surroundings become an infinite canvas," the Apple chief executive, Tim Cook, said.

“Vision Pro blends digital content into the space around us. It will introduce us to Spatial [Computing](#). ”

The headset allows users to interact with “apps and experiences”, the Apple vice-president of human interface design, Alan Dye, said, in an augmented reality (AR) version of their own surroundings or in a fully immersive virtual reality (VR) space.

“Apple Vision Pro relies solely on your eyes, hands and voice,” Dye said. “You browse the system simply by looking. App icons come to life when you look at them; simply tap your fingers together to select, and gently flick to scroll.”

A feature called “EyeSight” will show users’ eyes on the front screen when they are in an AR mode, simulating a transparent screen and letting them more naturally interact with those around them, but will show a blurred version of a VR experience to indicate to others when they are not present in the room.

“Because you can see the world clearly when wearing Vision Pro, you remain present in your space,” Apple said. “You can review your to-do list and notes, review your next trip in safari, and play music while you type. It works seamlessly with familiar Bluetooth accessories, and you can even bring your Mac wirelessly into Apple Vision Pro just by looking at it.”

As well as applications built from the ground up for the device, Vision Pro will also run apps built for iOS, appearing as a floating screen in front of the user. The company is pitching the device as a powerful but compact replacement or augmentation for a user’s existing devices.



Vision Pro is displayed at the conference on Monday. Photograph: Jeff Chiu/AP

One demonstration, for instance, showed a user having a FaceTime conversation in AR with their contacts appearing in screens floating around them. For that experience, Vision Pro creates a representation of you using machine learning, Apple said, to make a digital face that “dynamically matches your facial and hand movements”.

As an entertainment device, Apple is keen to highlight the device’s “3D camera”, which users can use to take “spatial photos”, as well as more conventional VR experiences such as the ability to watch a movie in a virtual cinema or play Apple Arcade video games. “There is no other device in the world that can deliver this quality of 3D experience,” the company said.

“Apple Vision Pro will change the way we communicate, collaborate, work and enjoy entertainment,” Cook added. The company compared the device to a new TV, surround sound system, powerful laptop, and games console all in one – before revealing its price, an eye-watering \$3,499, \$500 more than the already high pricetag rumoured in the run-up to the event. The device will ship “early next year” in the US, Apple said. No dates or prices were given for other regions.

The Disney chief executive, Bob Iger, said the company would be building new experiences specifically for the device, showing examples such as Star Wars-themed virtual cinemas, AR replays for sports and a Marvel VR experience. “We believe Apple Vision Pro is a revolutionary new platform that can make our vision a reality,” Iger said. “The thing that struck me most was how it will allow us to create deeply personal experiences that bring our fans closer to the characters they love.”

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On a tech level, the device has the equivalent of a 4k screen for each eye, using pixels 64 times smaller than those in an iPhone, with the same M2 processor as in the company’s MacBook laptops, paired with an “R1” chip purpose built for the headset.

Even before the device was officially announced at its worldwide developers conference, Apple’s rivals were competing to react to its entry into the space.

Mark Zuckerberg went on the offensive, [announcing the Meta Quest 3](#), a \$499 follow-up to its flagship VR device, in [an Instagram post](#) the week before Apple’s event – an announcement clearly pulled forward from the company’s 27 September Connect event.

HTC, which produces the Vive, took a more conciliatory approach, with its cofounder Cher Wang putting out a pre-emptive statement saying she was “thrilled to extend a warm welcome to Apple as they venture into the vibrant XR [extended reality] community”.

Apple may be late to the market with a VR headset, but no one wants to emulate Ed Colligan, the chief executive of the then leading PDA maker Palm, who [responded to the launch of the iPhone in 2006](#) by telling reporters: “We’ve struggled for a few years here, figuring out how to make a decent phone. The PC guys are not going to just, you know, knock this out. I guarantee it.”

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Apple unveiled various software updates for a range of its new and old devices at its world wide developer conference. Photograph: Apple  
[Apple](#)

# Apple unveils 15in MacBook Air, iOS 17 and revamped watchOS 10

Alongside Vision Pro headset, firm revealed new Mac Pro, Mac Studio, macOS Sonoma and iPadOS 17

- [Apple reveals Vision Pro AR headset at its worldwide developers conference](#)

*Samuel Gibbs* Consumer technology editor

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Apple has announced a range of new updates to its [iPhone](#), iPad and smartwatch software alongside a new larger 15in MacBook Air laptop, M2 Ultra Mac Pro and upgraded Mac Studio desktop computers.

During the opening presentation of the company's annual developer conference in Cupertino, California, Apple launched features for new and existing devices, alongside its much-rumoured [Vision Pro mixed-reality headset](#).

## 15in MacBook Air, M2 Ultra Mac Pro and Mac Studio



The 15in MacBook Air brings a larger screen to Apple's consumer laptop.  
Photograph: Apple

Apple took the wraps off an also-anticipated MacBook Air with a larger 15.3in screen. It has a similar design to its [smaller 13in sibling](#) – using the same M2 chips and two Thunderbolt ports, making it the world's thinnest 15in laptop, according to Apple. The MacBook Air has become Apple's consumer laptop with [the Pro line sitting above it](#) with many more ports and capabilities at a considerably higher price.

The 15in MacBook Air costs from £1,399 in the UK and \$1,299 in the US and is aimed at consumers who want a larger screen. It sits in between the 14in and 16in MacBook Pros in size and competes with a variety of PC laptops of a similar size.

The Mac Studio mini power desktop also got an upgrade with new, more powerful M2 Max and Ultra chips. They are a direct replacement for the M1-series chips in the [machines launched last year](#), aimed at developers and

creative professionals. The Mac Studio will cost £2,099 in the UK and \$1,999 in the US.



The long-awaited Mac Pro with M2 Ultra chip completes Apple's transition from Intel to its own processors. Photograph: Apple

Apple also finally launched its most powerful Mac Pro desktop with [Apple](#) Silicon chips. The new tower or rack-mounted computer ships with the M2 Ultra chip, but has traditional PCI expansion-card support for adding the various cards needed by video producers and other professional users. The Mac Pro will start at £7,199 in the UK and \$6,999 in the US.

Ben Wood, chief analyst for CCS Insight, said: “The new Mac computers underline that the investments made in Apple Silicon are delivering valuable returns. Apple’s vertically integrated approach across semiconductors, software and hardware continues to give it an advantage over rivals. It’s a daunting situation for other chipmakers, most notably Intel, and for rival PC makers.”

## iOS 17



The iOS 17 update adds a variety of new features for existing iPhones.  
Photograph: Apple

The next version of the iPhone's software will include a variety of new features, including accessibility tools such as Personal Voice, which allows users to create a synthetic replica of their own voice.

Other features include new contact posters, which include your photo, text and customisable colours that show up on recipients' phones and in their contacts app when you make a call.

Apple has added the ability to automatically transcribe voicemail messages in real time so that you can see who is calling and what it's about before picking up the call. FaceTime callers can also now leave video voicemails if the recipient isn't available.

Check In is a new safety feature that allows you to share your location with friends or family, which automatically detects when you get home and lets them know. If the system sees you are delayed it can then send information to your contact such as your location, battery life and other bits so they can help.

The keyboard has also been improved allowing in-line sentence prediction as you type, similar to the system offered by Google in its Gmail app. The

keyboard will also learn from your phrases and words to customise autocorrect suggestions.

The new Standby mode can turn the iPhone into a small smart display when it is turned in landscape while charging, showing the time, widgets, photos and other information at a glance, including Siri interactions.

Apple also made changes to its AirDrop sharing system so that you can send files or your contact details by just bringing two iPhones or an [Apple Watch](#) near each other. The transfer can continue over the internet if you go out of range of each other. Apple also added offline maps to Apple Maps, and announced a new, AI-assisted mood-tracking Journal app – available later in the year – which automatically suggests the activities you might want to record.

Apple added new features for its AirPods Pro including adaptive noise cancelling that adjusts to levels of background noise, automatic conversation detection and a personalised volume system.

FaceTime will also be available on the Apple TV for the first time, using the iPhone or [iPad](#) camera for the video call.

The software will be available in public beta in July with a full release for compatible iPhones in September.

## iPadOS 17



Apple software head Craig Federighi showing off the new features of iPadOS 17. Photograph: Apple

Apple's tablets gain most of the new features from iOS 17, including the enhancements to the keyboard and FaceTime. But for iPadOS 17 Apple has brought across some of the most interesting features introduced with [iOS 16 last year](#), including widgets, lockscreen customisation, live events and multiple timers.

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It also added the Health app to the iPad, which will aid the tablet's use in healthcare settings, and enhanced its pdf support designed to ease form filling, including signatures. Apple also improved its Stage Manager multitasking system, including the ability to use webcams in external displays.

The software will also be available in public beta in July with a full release for compatible iPads likely in October.

## macOS Sonoma



The macOS Sonoma update adds many of the features popular on iPhones and iPads. Photograph: Apple

Mac computers will gain many of the new features from iPad and iPhone, but one of the biggest additions is the introduction of advanced widgets to the desktop. Any widget can now be placed straight on the desktop including those from apps installed on the iPhone.

Apple is also adding the stunning slow-motion video screensavers that have proved popular on the Apple TV, including matching desktop wallpaper. Video calls are getting a boost with the ability to overlay a view of your face on your shared screen, including in third-party apps, plus smart, gesture-

triggered reactions such as a firework simulation when you put both thumbs up.

MacOS also has a new dedicated gaming mode, which prioritises games on the computer's CPU and GPU for smoother frame rates. It will also lower the audio latency with AirPods and input latency with Xbox and PlayStation controllers. The new mode forms part of Apple's push to get high-profile games on the Mac, including a new game-porting toolkit for developers and the announcement that marquee-game Death Stranding Director's Cut is coming to the Mac later this year.

An update to the Safari browser will add profiles, similar to features available on rivals, with different collections of favourites, cookies and extensions for each profile, such as one for work and one for personal use. Safari can also now install websites as separate web apps, much like Chrome, allowing them to send notifications and appearing as an icon on the dock.

A public beta for macOS Sonoma will be available in July with a full release in the autumn.

## watchOS 10



WatchOS 10 revamps the Apple Watch with widgets, more animated and full-view apps and new faces. Photograph: Apple

The Apple Watch is now [eight years old](#) and watchOS is getting its biggest update in some time.

The new software will bring widgets front and centre. Turning the digital crown from the watch face brings up a scrolling smart stack of widgets for things such as the weather, calendar and activity tracking, as well as active events such as timers. Two new watch faces have been added, including the colourful Palette and an animated Snoopy and Woodstock face.

Apps are now more animated and with fuller views designed to take advantage of the bigger screens on recent watches, such as dynamic background colours for time zones in the clock app or full-screen views of each metric in the activity app.

Apple is also adding support for Bluetooth sensors for cycling, such as cadence and power meters, and new features for hiking such as topographic maps. The Mindfulness app can now log your emotions and moods.

CCS Insight's Wood said: "The updated Cycling app is further evidence of Apple's determination to erode Garmin's share of sports watches, allowing cycling enthusiasts to measure their functional threshold power and monitor power output, automatically transferring them to the screen on an iPhone."

The software update will be available in public beta in July with a full release later this year.

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