

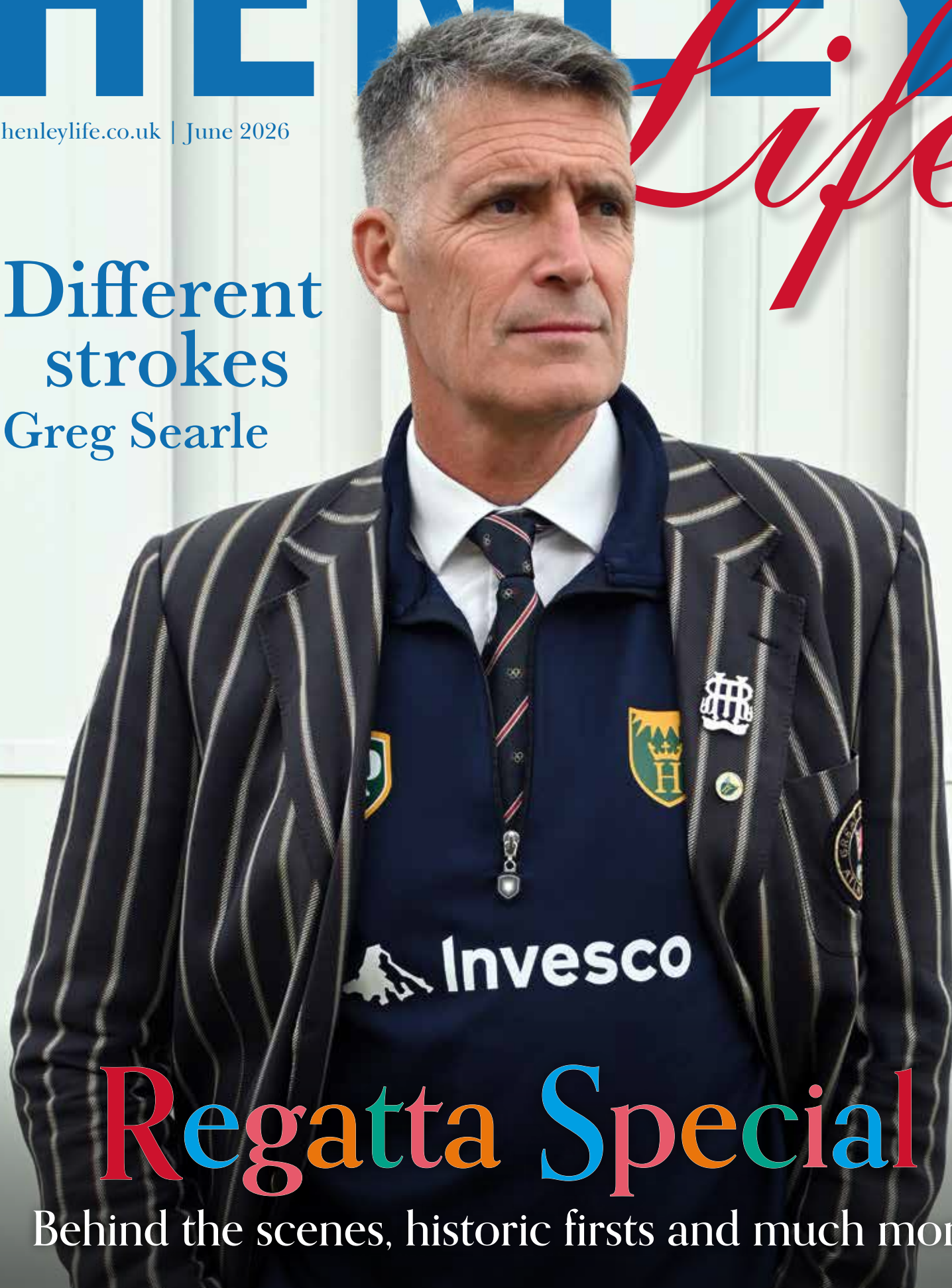
HENLEY

henleylife.co.uk | June 2026

Life

Different strokes

Greg Searle



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HENLEYLife Contents

June 2026



14 Historic first in gender equality



COVER PICTURE:
Greg Searle — It's just
not Cricket, page 8

5 FOOD & DRINK
New for Henley Regatta

6-7 DIARY DATES
What's on in June

8-9 COVER STORY
It's just not cricket

14-15 HENLEY ROYAL REGATTA
Ringing the changes

16-17 HENLEY ROYAL REGATTA
Blades of glory

20 FOOD & DRINK
June Kitchen recipe, and
WIN Henley Festival tickets

22-23 HEALTH
Menopause survival guide

30 MY HENLEY LIFE
Phil Rossi

HENLEY
Life

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Our professional distribution team delivers 11,000 copies each month, with a copy to every home in Henley. In addition *Henley Life* is distributed to households in Caversham, Sonning Common, Wargrave, Shiplake and Nettlebed.

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Out of area deliveries available on request.

For a full distribution list please visit: www.henleylife.co.uk

THE countdown to summer in Henley has begun and that means the return of the royal regatta.

But for one steward and former Olympic rowing champion, he will also be keeping his eye on strokes of a different kind. We are in the middle of the cricket season and Greg Searle is chairman of Henley's club. Lucie McHugh finds out how he divides his time.

We also tell how this year's regatta race schedule is on course for an historic first in gender equality and what makes a typical day for its chairman Richard Phelps.

We also meet John Hooper, a painter and decorator, who finds himself in big demand at this time of year. Over the last 20 years he has used his skills to ensure that rowing oars look immaculate in readiness for when crews take to the water.

Being successful in sport is about partnerships and working together and the same could be said in business. New for this year, during the regatta and Henley Festival season, a pop-up restaurant will appear beside the Thames. It is a collaboration between Orwells in Shiplake Row and Pavilion delicatessen and cookery school in Market Place, Henley.

Meanwhile, Paul Clerehugh at the Crooked Billet in Stoke Row shares his recipe for sea bass and octopus with a white wine butter sauce.

Our women's health columnist, Dr Shilpa McQuillan, gives advice on how to cope with symptoms of the menopause during the summer season and we have the usual dates for your diary. Phil Rossi, owner of Oaken Grove Vineyard, is the subject of My Henley Life.

We hope you enjoy.

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New for regatta and Henley Festival 2026

BY AMANDA STEWART

THAMESIDE Social is a collaboration between Orwells in Shiplake Row and the Pavilion delicatessen and cookery school in Market Place, Henley.

The two venues have joined forces from June 15 to July 12, Thameside Social will sit right on the Thames during Henley Women's Regatta, Henley Royal Regatta, and Henley Festival — bringing together relaxed dining, drinks, and elevated hospitality in a beautiful setting near the finish line, with a street food dining area and bar at Upper Thames Rowing Club in Remenham Lane.

At the pre-launch event held recently, Liam and Ryan Simpson-Trotman, who run Orwells, and Micah Judah, owner of Pavilion, told of their combined concept at Thameside Social ahead of the launch of their new pop-up restaurant collaboration.

About 60 guests were invited for a first look at a new pop-up riverside restaurant. They also announced that TV chef James Martin would be joining them on the river and three-time Michelin star chef Pierre Kauffman will support the team by way of a visit.

The space will have two offerings, an 80-seater Orwells restaurant experience, alongside a "Hawkstone Enclosure", a more relaxed, social area serving street food and Hawkstone Brewery beer, designed for all-day drinks and dining by the river.

Sue Jolly will be leading a "Malaysian day" among an array of other themed events while Lynne Lambourne has designed the outdoor section and artist Warren Kerley has designed

various pieces with a watery theme. Other guests supporting the event included then mayor Tom Buckley, representatives from Danesfield House, the Creative Duck and Invesco.

The team at Orwells has previous experience from operating a riverside restaurant at Henley Festival in 2022. Liam told the Henley Standard that their latest venture will provide an opportunity to showcase both companies' culinary expertise to a wider audience.

"For us, we've always been on the outside of the town when it comes to the regatta.

"This is an amazing opportunity to showcase what we can do together as a collaboration.

"It's going to be an experience. As you're coming up to it on the boat or you're walking, you're going to see something that's never been seen before on the Thames.

"We want to get people for a nice fancy meal in the night-time, in the daytime for the street food picking up picnics from the deli side."

Thameside Social will be revealing a calendar of events during the pop-up which will include chef demonstrations, guest appearances and live music. Breakfast, coffees and riverside treats are also planned.

Mr Judah said: "We want it to be really accessible, we want people to come and visit us multiple times throughout that four-week period.

"We'll be doing hospitality during the regatta but it will be quite a relaxed, informal and approachable, accessible format."

'Thameside Social will be revealing a calendar of events during the pop-up which will include chef demonstrations, guest appearances and live music'



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Liam & Ryan Simpson-Trotman (Orwells) & Micah Judah (Pavilion), Warren Kerley, Sue Jolly & Chloe Lloyd, Lynne Lambourne.

Diary Dates

JUNE 2026

THURSDAY 4TH JUNE

Chinese Boxing

KENTON THEATRE



A solo play written and performed by Mark Kitto, this show involves a former British ambassador, a Qing dynasty rebellion and some unexpected roleplay. From 1900 to present day, the complicated relationship between China and the UK is explored. The show starts at 7.30pm and tickets cost £18.75 adults, £15 under-16s. The show is recommended for ages 14 and over.

For more information, call the box office on (01491) 525050 or visit thekenton.org.uk

THURSDAY 11TH JUNE

No One You Know: An Evening with Dave Rowntree from Blur

KENTON THEATRE

Lawyer, politician, composer and drummer for Blur, Dave Rowntree will be sharing candid stories and photographs from the band's early years in the Nineties, from teenage years in Colchester to Britpop and Blur versus Oasis. The show starts at 7.30pm and tickets cost £25.

For more information, call the box office on (01491) 525050 or visit thekenton.org.uk



SATURDAY 13TH JUNE

Henley Choral Society summer concert – Rossini's Petite Messe Solennelle

ST MARY'S CHURCH, HENLEY

Henley Choral Society will be joined by soloists, soprano Christine Cunnold, alto Rhonda Browne, tenor Stuart McDermott and baritone Samuel Snowden for its summer concert. Returning to play harmonium is Tamas Slater, London organist, pianist, conductor and composer, along with pianists David Smith and Anita D'Attellis, regular accompanists for the choir. The show starts at 7.30pm and tickets cost £22 adults, £5 under-25s and concessions.

For more information, visit henleychoralsociety.org.uk



SATURDAY 13TH JUNE TO SUNDAY 12TH JULY

Oxford Sculptors Group exhibition

GREYS COURT, ROTHERFIELD GREYS



Now in its 10th year, the annual sculpture show will feature more than 200 sculptures from 33 artists. They will be on display outside throughout the gardens and indoors through the Cromwellian building. To celebrate the partnership, the National Trust will feature a different sculpture every two months on the garden plinth in the apple orchard.

For more information, visit www.oxfordsculptors.org or www.nationaltrust.org.uk

SATURDAY 20TH JUNE

Free Neff Cooking Demo

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For more information call 0118 959 9919 or visit elementskitchens.co.uk

SUNDAY 21ST JUNE

Henley Symphony Orchestra summer concert

THE CONCERT HALL AT READING TOWN HALL

The orchestra will welcome Mexican cellist Miguel Ángel Villeda Cerón for its concert, conducted by Alexander Walker. The programme comprises Rossini's La Cenerentola Overture, Prokofiev's Sinfonia Concertante for Cello and Orchestra and Dvorak's Symphony No. 7. Miguel Ángel, who is associate principal of Mexico's National Symphony Orchestra, will be the soloist for Prokofiev's piece. Tickets cost £16.50, £20.50 or £24.50 with discounts available for orchestra Friends and members.

For more information, call 0118 960 6060 or visit www.whatsonreading.com/venues/town-hall



MONDAY 22ND JUNE

Nettlebed Folk Club presents Phil Beer and Edwina Hayes

THE VILLAGE CLUB, NETTLEBED



Nettlebed Folk Club patron and former Show of Hands frontman Phil Beer and singer-songwriter Edwina Hayes will perform together as well as doing a set each. Phil's professional career has been going for more than 35 years, including traditional tunes, covers, his own songs and those of his contemporaries. Edwina combines UK folk, Americana and the Northern singer-songwriter tradition. Tickets for

the show, which starts at 7.30pm, cost £22 in advance or £23 on the door.

For more information, call 01628 636620 (between 10am and 8pm only) or visit nettlebedfolkclub.co.uk

WEDNESDAY 24TH JUNE

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drums, guitar and double bass. The gig might take place outside if the weather is nice. Tickets cost £30 as part of a music cover charge.

For more information, call (01491) 681048 or visit thecrookedbillet.co.uk

ONGOING EVENTS

TO SUNDAY 14TH JUNE

Jack & Sarah

THE MILL AT
SONNING

Directed by Abigail Pickard Price, the story follows workaholic lawyer Jack, who is suddenly left to raise his baby daughter alone. When au pair Amy arrives, together with the support of an eccentric wider network of family and friends, their worlds collide in a life-affirming way.

For more information, call the box office on 0118 969 8000 or visit millatsonning.com





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It's just not cricket

BY LUCIE MCHUGH

ON the penultimate racing day at this year's Henley Royal Regatta, Greg Searle will be keeping close watch on a cricket match on the other side of the county.

The three-time Olympic medallist will be at the business end of his stewarding duties when Henley Cricket Club's first team plays away at Oxford Downs.

Searle, 54, was elected chair of the cricket club last year, inspired by his son, Adam, 23, who captained the first team last year before leaving for the cricket season in Manly, Australia.

Searle said: "You could certainly say I will be looking at both what's going on on the river, but also what's going on at Oxford Downs.

"I will be checking up on the score, but I can also follow it up on the website. Oxford Downs actually commentate on their live stream.

"We haven't got to that stage yet, but it would be an aspiration that we would get to that level."

In exchange for his son, the club has recruited two Australians for the new season which kicked off last month.

Toby Seward and Josh Lawson, both from Manly, are living at Searle's Marlow home while they're loaned for the season.

Searle said: "We went to Chelsea, so we went to Stamford Bridge so they could experience a Premier League game because Josh is a massive Chelsea fan and has been spending however many years getting up to watch them at 3o'clock in the morning.

"Now he can actually go and watch them at 3 o'clock in the afternoon which is quite refreshing."

Searle estimates he has attended 38 Henley regattas since first competing as part of the Hampton School first eight as a 16-year-old.

He said he is looking forward to this year's event as he will be juggling both commitments.

He said: "Certainly the Saturday before regatta, that's a fun day for me, because we'll have a home game going on here and then at 4 o'clock I'll go to Regatta HQ.

"I have to do a quick change into my white trousers and blazer, go into Regatta HQ while we do the planning for



regatta and then I will have to choose whether I then go for a drink on Temple Island or whether I come back here and watch the conclusion of the game.

"I will probably want to watch the conclusion of the game, as a small aside too, I think England are playing football that night in the World Cup, so then I'll be wanting to watch England play football that night."

Both Adam and his sister Josie had a front-row seat to the demands of professional sport when their father came out of retirement ahead of the 2012 London Olympic Games at the age of 40.

Then nine and 11, Searle said they saw him return to the lifestyle of a full-time athlete for three years in the lead up to the event having been spurred on by the "inspire a generation" motto.

Searle had retired from competitive rowing in 2001 after taking home gold in the coxed pair in Barcelona in 1992, bronze in the coxless four in Atlanta in 1996, and fourth place in Sydney in 2000.

He said: "When London got to host the Olympics in 2012, they had a purpose which was to inspire a generation. So, I wanted to come back and be part of those Olympics".

In this time, he had focused on his career as a consultant in leadership development, a focus he had maintained throughout his rowing career to help him stay in touch with reality.

He said: "Winning at the Olympics felt like winning other races, but other people's reaction to us winning was completely insane."

"Crossing the line and winning at the Olympics felt like crossing the line and

winning at Henley, but being in newspapers, TV game shows, walking into events and other people knowing who I was, it was all totally surreal but totally fantastic to be a part of".

He said returning to the sport as a father gave him a stronger appreciation for the opportunity to play a sport he loved every day.

He said: "I probably enjoyed it more as an older person because I valued how fortunate I was to be a full-time athlete."

"I think when you're younger sometimes you don't like it because it's really hard and grinding and difficult, but when I was older I really appreciated every day that I got to be an athlete."

"I think I also really appreciated what a good training environment felt like which links to trying to help this place, Henley Cricket Club, be a really good training environment."

In 2006, he was invited to join the body of about 60 volunteers, mostly former rowers, responsible for organising and overseeing the event.

Throughout the week this will see him umpiring, timing races, checking crews on and off the water, and making sure the right crews show up for each race.

Searle said: "It's an entirely voluntary thing being a Henley steward."

"It's funny because it feels like an honour that you get a phone call one day from the chair of the stewards who says

we would like to invite you to join this group and you go, 'oh that's great'.

"But then even though you feel honoured to be invited into this group, the truth is, for the rest of your life, you're giving a week of your life to run this event and basically facilitate the event for other people."

"But I feel very proud to do that and I think what people will experience about Henley Royal Regatta and the magic of it is that it's run by rowers and it's run for rowers and it feels like the rowing is as good as it could possibly be and then there is this massive party going on alongside it."

"But we stewards want to ensure it's more about the rowing than it is about anything else."

Over his 38 years of involvement with the event, he explains he has seen it make leaps towards inclusivity, attracting competitors from a diverse array of backgrounds.

He said: "In 1997 we had our first women racing at Henley Royal Regatta, so that's been almost a 30-year journey to get to gender parity."

"We are getting increasingly more state school involvement and more rowing clubs rather than schools and universities as we've seen the sport grow."

He said he hoped if the event continued to adapt with the growing sport, he hoped it would be part of setting the tone

for the sport globally, a feat he said it has claimed since its inception.

He said: "If you watch the Olympic Games, they row over 2,000 metres, and they've only been doing that for 100 years and we've been doing this for 200 years."

'If you watch the Olympic Games, they row over 2,000 metres, and they've only been doing that for 100 years and we've been doing this for 200 years'

"The reason they row 2,000 metres is because that's the distance between Temple Island and the bend in the river – 2,112 metres."

"We started in 1839 and so when people said, 'well, how do you run a good rowing race?'"

"Well, you do it over 2,000 metres because that's what they do at Henley."

After his first appearance at Henley as a 16-year-old, Searle went on the following year to win gold in the men's coxless four at the junior world championships in Hungary.

The next three years would see him make the senior national team and then win gold at his first Olympic Games.

Searle believes he can bring lessons from this experience to his new role at the helm of Henley Cricket Club.

He said: "The memories I have of that team that I was in when I was 16 are so strong and it was such a special experience to go on a campaign with people I went to school with and then racing and winning at Henley Royal Regatta that I got to understand how brilliant sport can be."

"What I have been able to experience, whether it's at a relatively junior level or it's at the Olympic games, it's about who you're with, how you're struggling together, how you're challenging yourself, how you're learning from setbacks and then having worked hard, then really enjoying the success you get."

HENLEY Royal Regatta

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Ringling the changes

Regatta race schedule on course for a historic first in gender equality

BY JOHN JACKLIN



THE chairman of Henley Royal Regatta Richard Phelps is making headway on his and the regatta team's mission to develop the event in a "thoughtful and sustainable" way.

Richard, 60, an Olympic rower who has been a competitor, umpire and steward at the regatta, aims to build on the event's heritage while keeping it "relevant and inspiring for future generations" as he enters his second year in the top role.

One change is in the women's races. "Women will now be able to compete in 14 events," he says. "Since 2017, we have added 10 women's events, and the introduction

of three further races this year puts us on track to achieve full gender parity by event in 2027, when the regatta will feature an equal number of open and women's events for the first time in its history.

"The addition of these three events represents another important step towards delivering a racing programme that reflects the highest standards of competition while promoting inclusivity, equity and recognition across the sport."

Richard notes progress towards gender parity last year, when 16 course records were broken on finals day. "The atmosphere during the women's events was exceptional, with crowds every bit as passionate and vocal as for any other race. The Prince Philip Challenge Trophy semi-finals and final, particularly Headington School against Shiplake College, generated an incredible response from the enclosures. It was a reminder that women's rowing at Henley attracts the same level of excitement and support as any other event in the programme.

"The one race that particularly stands out was the final of the Stonor Challenge Cup, where the Greek crew Evangelia Anastasiadou and Zoi Fitsio took victory by the narrowest of margins, seizing the lead on the finish line. It was one of the most dramatic and memorable races I have seen at the regatta."

Among changes off the water, luxury glamping in the Riverside Meadows is being introduced this year, alongside a revised members' badge design, which will remain in use for the next decade. The previous design drew inspiration from artwork of the 1960s, while the new badge takes its cue from the style of the 1930s.



A DAY AT THE RACES

THE week of the regatta involves long hours for the chairman, with a typical day starting at 5.30am with a walk around the site to check everything is shipshape and Bristol fashion. From there, Richard Phelps visits the enclosures, meets members, speaks to competitors and welcomes incoming crews at the boat tents.

Lunchtimes are spent hosting guests including local MPs, international stakeholders, representatives from rowing clubs and other rowing dignitaries.

"These conversations are an important part of the regatta's wider relationship with its community," Richard says.

"In the afternoons, attention often turns to correspondence and decision-making, as by that point the inbox is usually full of queries that need to be addressed. I also spend a significant amount of time speaking to fellow stewards. With about 70 stewards involved in the governance of the regatta, those discussions are vital to understanding different perspectives and ensuring we make the right decisions."

By the end of the day there is usually a light dinner with the stewards before Richard returns home around 10pm.

The duties are a family affair because Richard's wife Annamarie, an Olympic rower, is also a steward at the regatta.

"Annamarie holds a number of senior roles across rowing and Olympic sport, including Vice President of World Rowing and Deputy Chair of the British Olympic Association," Richard says. "During the regatta, she will be on duty in her various capacities while also hosting guests from the organisations she is involved with."

For Richard, the demanding schedule leaves little time to watch the racing.

"I do get to see some of it in person when time allows, particularly when moving between engagements, but much of it is followed in passing rather than from a single vantage point," he says.

"There are a lot of moving parts during any given day of the regatta. Depending on the schedule, I may also squeeze in some umpiring."



Richard, who succeeded Sir Steve Redgrave last year, says: “It is a fitting tribute to the heritage and continuity of an event now in its 187th year.”

This year qualification races will be broadcast to one of the grandstands so spectators can follow crews from the start. Over the next five years, the regatta team aims to “further enhance our broadcast coverage, continue to invest in our enclosures, and expand what we offer to everybody who comes to Henley, whether as a competitor, member or visitor”.

Whatever changes are made, Richard, a steward since 1997 and management committee member since 2002, emphasises they must remain “true to the traditions and values that make Henley Royal Regatta such a special occasion”. He adds the priority is “not growth for its own sake”.

“The enduring appeal of the regatta lies in its unique blend of history, sporting excellence and atmosphere. There is nowhere in the world like it. Competitors race on one of the sport’s most iconic courses, while spectators get remarkably close to the action and share in the intensity and emotion.

“For athletes, winning at Henley remains one of rowing’s great achievements. I was struck last year when members of the Dutch Women’s Four, reigning Olympic champions, described Henley as the best regatta in the world.

“For spectators, Henley offers a timeless setting — a place of calm, elegance and charm, where tradition and sporting drama meet in a uniquely British way. It is a setting people return to year after year because it feels both familiar and unique.”

He adds: “Henley is also one of rowing’s great reunions. Every summer, former competitors and supporters travel from across the globe to reconnect with friends and teammates they may not have seen for decades.

“That sense of continuity is incredibly important. I want first-time visitors to walk into the stewards’ enclosure and be wowed by its elegance and history. Equally, I want returning visitors to feel they are coming back to a cherished place, and for those who have not visited for decades to feel Henley remains, in all the ways that matter, exactly as they remember it.”

The six days of racing are the pinnacle of the planning and behind-the-scenes work. Part of that involves promoting the sport. “There is always more to do to ensure rowing is as accessible as possible. Through the Henley Royal Regatta Charitable Trust, we have invested millions in grassroots initiatives and outreach programmes to widen participation and open up rowing to a broader and more diverse group of young people.

“One example is our support for Llandaff Rowing Club in Cardiff in developing its junior programme. After the 2023 rule change opening The Princess Elizabeth Challenge Cup to club crews, Llandaff became the first to contest the event. Achievements like this show the impact of investing in emerging talent beyond the Thames Valley.

“We are also broadening the pathways into Henley by attending events such as the Scottish Rowing Championships. This ensures qualifying is less of a geographic and demographic challenge, and more a reflection of sporting merit.

“Taken together, these measures reflect a clear commitment: to preserve the traditions and prestige of Henley Royal Regatta while continuing to open its doors ever wider to talent from all backgrounds.”

The hope now is for clement weather. “Last year we had amazing weather,” Richard says, “which always helps create an electric atmosphere along the river.”

ROYAL APPROVAL FOR NEW WOMEN’S RACES

TWO of three new women’s quadruple sculls events in the intermediate, club and student categories have received the royal seal of approval from Buckingham Palace.

The Princess of Wales Challenge Cup has been introduced as a women’s intermediate event, reflecting its Open equivalent, The Prince of Wales Challenge Cup. It aims to broaden opportunities for leading club and student female scullers below premier level, including senior national and Olympic standard athletes.

The Danesfield Challenge Cup will be the second women’s club event after The Wargrave Challenge Cup for Women’s Club eights, introduced in 2021. Danesfield House in Medmenham was a Second World War photographic intelligence hub where women played a leading role, and was also the home of the Garton family. John Garton served as chairman of the regatta in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Queen Victoria Challenge Cup is a new women’s student race alongside the Open equivalent, The Prince Albert Challenge Cup, giving universities the opportunity to compete in fours rather than eights.

“The Princess of Wales, Danesfield and Queen Victoria Challenge Cups will honour successful and powerful women throughout history and today,” said Jess Eddie, a regatta committee member and Olympic silver medallist in the women’s eight at Rio 2016.

“The introduction of three new women’s events represents a significant step forward in creating greater opportunities and pathways for female athletes and ensures our competitive programme is more inclusive and balanced than ever before.”

Richard Phelps, chairman of the regatta committee, said the approval “confirms the strong links between the British royal family and the regatta since we received royal patronage from Prince Albert in 1851”.

“How fitting that Prince Albert and Queen Victoria are back together on the hallowed waters of Henley Royal Regatta,” he added.

With 10 women’s events added since 2017, women can now compete in 14 regatta races, paving the way for an equal number of Open and Women’s events next year and full gender parity.

“Achieving parity is an exciting moment in a journey started over 30 years ago and accelerated under the leadership of Sir Steve Redgrave,” Richard said.

Henley Women’s Regatta chairwoman Naomi Ashcroft said the new events would broaden opportunities for female athletes and help drive the standard of women’s sculling even higher, in Britain’s most successful boat class.

Ivy League rowers toast Henley painter

BY JOHN JACKLIN

Painter and decorator John Hooper is in big demand from the US Ivy League universities when the crews fly across the pond for the Henley Royal Regatta. Brown, Cornell, Harvard, Princeton and Yale - they have all called on John's skills with a paint brush.

Demand for his time has grown over the past 20 years to the point that last year he lost count of how many oars he completed, but says it was well over 100. That adds up to a lot of man hours when, as he says, "one oar can take 30 to 45 minutes, sometimes longer, with preparation".

John, 81, says: "If it's a new oar I just like to give them a light rub neutralise it with white spirit because they're made with a different type of resin these days and it reacts against

paint, so that's the problem and it has happened for the past two years. Then you've got to tape up for the lines of course if it is a design, and it has to be exact measurements. Then it is an undercoat and a gloss finish, sometimes it has to be two gloss finishes. The worst one I ever had was five colours but you could do only one colour at a time and it was for a quad and that took ages. But it looked good in the end I must admit, really good. Obviously I do take pride in my work.

"It takes a steady hand believe you me and sometimes you know I've been down there from eight in the morning till nine at night."

At one stage, John says, the crews "used to bring their oars over with them, but then security measures restricted what they could bring across, so they would buy them in this country every year. Some stick vinyl covers on them but then word got around about me in the states and elsewhere and a lot of them now want their oars painted."

He says: "Sometimes I get asked to paint oars and say, okay fine, thinking it's an eight or four could be a pair but it's usually a four and eight or quad. Last year I thought I was doing an eight but in fact they had 24 oars and I ended up doing that lot for Princeton."

John, who although an oar painter, says his "actual trade was painter, decorator, paper hanger" but has been involved with the regatta and the boats in one form or another since he was 14 years old. The family boat hire and moorings business is on the river at the bottom of New Street in Henley — opposite the Leander Club, the crew tents and the regatta finishing line — and has been in the family for centuries.

He attended what is now Gillotts school, has been chairman of Henley Town Football Club and used to row for Henley Rowing Club and Upper Thames, but threw in the oars when he was 60.

"Rowing is in the blood, I used to go to all the world championships and all over the world watching rowing and that."

The regatta is his chance to catch up with old friends, although John says. "For a lot of them now it's getting too expensive and they have got accommodation to pay for as well. Some of the guys I know from the different universities sometimes I won't see them for three, four maybe five years.

"Some I see every year because even if they haven't got a crew here, Henley is kind of a pilgrimage for them, so we meet up every year and we spend a week together you know passing time and some of them drop in and give me a hand. It's like meeting old pals.

"Other times people that I have dealt with donkey's years ago will say 'oh nice to see you, you're still here John' and



— don't think that I am being rude — I haven't got a clue who they are because of the number of people I speak to and come through the tents like, I just can't always remember who everybody is."

As his talent and reputation have spread, he does not have a clue what his work load will be. "Word passed on to other colleges and universities and schools in America and of course it gets around and when they come over they know I'm here."

"I won't really know how many oars I will have to do, to tell you the truth, not until they get here. It has to do with the qualifying races, who gets through."

"I might get an email or something you know sometimes a phone call even from the states but mainly it's that they now know I'm here so they just take it for granted half the time that you know if they want them done I'm on hand."

"With the men's they don't usually come every year, every two years but some of the women they they can only come every three years yeah so it all depends really who's coming over it could be any of the crews."

John explains that one of the reasons that the crews prefer oars being painted is that the vinyls/decals [decorative stickers],

despite being quick and easy to apply, are "troublesome to work with to be honest". "Sometimes they go on very easy other times you get these blisters in some designs and then

you've got a hell of a job to get it out and a lot of the times it reacts with the oar — it might be this resin they use."

"So they go out on the river with these decals on and everything else and when they come in there's no decals. The water has got underneath them and took them off like. You're hoping they are going to stay there but a lot of times they do come off."

John smiles and says: "Then it's a case of 'oh John, look, you know it's not working, can you paint our oars?'"

More British crews have got cottoned on to his service, he says, partly as a result of his fame spreading via social media. "I had a lot of people come along and say 'oh yeah, I saw you on YouTube' or something, 'can we take a picture?' 'can we do this?' 'can we do that?'," says John.

Despite the hard work, the long hours and acting as boatman to some crews and the social media, John cherishes the regatta and what it stands for: "I just love it," he says.

'The family boat hire and moorings business is on the river at the bottom of New Street in Henley — opposite Leander Club — and has been in the family for centuries'

ADVERTORIAL

'The upcoming pension change nobody talks about at dinner parties'

PENSION conversations have never been considered scintillating dinner party fodder but the changes coming in April 2027 are likely to make them even less palatable.

Under rules announced by the Government in Autumn 2024, unused pension funds are due to become subject to Inheritance Tax (IHT) as part of your estate. With IHT charged at 40%, families who assumed pensions sat safely off the menu may find HMRC helping itself to a sizeable portion of the main course.

Government estimates suggest around 10,500 estates could be affected each year. You might assume this issue is reserved for the wealthiest diners at top table, however, rising property values and healthy market returns could see many families unexpectedly finding themselves invited.

For years, pensions have quietly been the darling of estate planning and have enjoyed favourable treatment. Often, the untouched dessert trolley, they've been carefully preserved for future generations. From April 2027 many will be pickled.

What makes this particularly awkward is that inclusion of pensions within an estate may erode existing allowances, potentially further increasing the IHT bill for beneficiaries.

The grandfather clock is ticking. While discussing pensions



over profiteroles may never catch on, reviewing arrangements before rules change could leave families with a far more satisfying after-dinner experience.

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Meet the Head Paula Reynolds



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WITH more than nineteen years' experience in Early Years Education, Paula

Reynolds brings a wealth of passion and expertise as Nursery Manager. "I love working with children because every day is different - one day you can be finding a safe habitat for a worm in the garden, and the next discovering the names of dwarf planets together!"

Paula is excited to be transforming the beautiful grounds and building of St Mary's Preparatory School into a brand-



new day nursery for Henley-on-Thames. "Designed to spark curiosity, build confidence and inspire a lifelong love of learning, Henley Day Nursery currently welcomes children aged 2-4, with plans to offer baby care from September."

The impressive plans for the new nursery include a dedicated baby suite with two rooms, a toddler room, and two spacious pre-school rooms, all with free-flow access to their own gardens. "The size of the facilities and grounds will allow us to provide the space and experiences to ensure a stimulating curriculum for all children, including PE in the sports hall, storytime in the library, hands-on learning in a cookery and art room, and imaginative exploration in a deconstructed role-play sensory room."

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MAMMA MIA!

It's WILD & CORNISH

Haven't fired up the barbecue yet, tasted gooseberries, put fruit & veg in a Pimm's or had a pork pre picnic so far this season. It's midsummer's day this month. Where's the summer?

Fantasing over a sunny scene from Mamma Mia! sitting with Pierce Brosnan & Julie Walters in Skopelos. Greek salad, grilled sea bass, bottle of Retsina, watching an old fisherman (flip-flops, string vest) landing his haul of octopus.

But with Regatta & Festival imminent there's no Mediterranean gallivant for Henley's hospitality superstars. Washer



uppers, waiting teams, chefs & bar staff will serve over half a million visitors to our town during Regatta & Henley Festival. Catch my Crooked Billet 'Pop Up' at The Henley Festival.

I'll join Pierce Brosnan at his Mamma Mia! taverna after the festivities — but as for the Greek salad & Skopelos fish, our local & British produce shines brighter. Forget Retsina, give me a flute of Henley's sparkling wine any day: Fairmile Vineyard. Hundred Hills. Chiltern Valley Winery. Oaken Grove. Wyfold Brut, Wyfold Rose are personal favourites; award winning English sparkling wine produced by Barbara Laithwaite. Wyfold neighbouring The Crooked Billet, Stoke Row.

Greek salad, Skopelos fish. Wild English sea bass — best on the planet. Greek salad! Isle of Wight heirloom tomato with Hildreds local PYO asparagus from Goring on Thames, delicious. That just picked taste, try it shaved & raw dressed with lemon & olive oil.

Octopus are giving Rick Stein grief eating all Cornwall's lobster. Rising sea temperatures, we're inundated. Invasion of the cephalopods. Eat it. Octopus & Bass from Machins, Falaise Square, Henley. Reading Quality Fish, West Street, Reading. Phil Bowditch Fish & meat, Little Marlow.

That old Skopelos fisherman tenderises octopus by beating it to submission with a baton. Freezing it for a day works better.

You can cook octopus a day or two before eating. Simmer a couple of legs for an hour in water, white wine, lemon juice & garlic, leave to cool in the pan, then marinade with olive oil, lemon & garlic. Scrumptious cold

or re-heat: BBQ, pan fry or chargrill.

I'll include bass & octopus on my Henley Festival Crooked Billet 'Pop Up' menu, if you fancy some Mamma Mia! accompaniment Björn Again will be smashing out Abba hits main stage Friday 10th July.

CROOKED BILLET

Mamma Mia!

Sea Bass, Octopus with White Wine Butter Sauce

Ingredients (serves 2)

- 4 spears asparagus. raw, shaved to ribbons, use a veg peeler to shave
- 2 delicious tomatoes cut to chunks
- Juice of half a lemon
- Olive oil
- Sea salt
- 2 marinated octopus legs. room temperature
- 2 bass fillets. room temperature
- 170 ml white wine, I'm using Henley's Wyfold Brut sparkling wine
- 100g unsalted butter, cut into 4 cubes, fridge cold

Method

- Fold tomato & asparagus together in a bowl, dress with lemon juice, olive oil and season with sea salt.
- Heat a heavy based non-stick frying pan, moderate heat.
- Wipe excess marinade oil off octopus legs, place in pan.
- Put a light film of olive oil on both sides of bass fillets & season with sea salt.
- Place bass fillets skin side down in pan.
- After 2 minutes turn bass & octopus & fry their opposite sides.
- After 2 minutes, using fish slice, remove bass fillets & rest on warmed plate.
- Turn octopus & cook for a further 1 minute then remove and rest on warmed plate.
- Add 170 ml wine to the pan. It will rapidly boil. Reduce by half its volume.
- Take pan off stove, add cold butter, shake until it completely melts – thickening the "white wine butter sauce".
- Divide asparagus tomato salad between 2 dinner plates. Present bass & octopus over each salad with white wine butter sauce, spooning it over the bass & octopus.

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WOMEN'S
HEALTH

By Dr Shilpa McQuillan,
accredited menopause
specialist, GP and
community gynaecologist

Summer, Sleep & Hot Flushes

Your menopause festival season survival guide

Summer is the season of long social evenings, festivals, holidays and regatta. But for many women in perimenopause and menopause, summer can also magnify symptoms already simmering beneath the surface.

Hot flushes feel hotter, sleep becomes lighter and more fragmented, and anxiety can creep in after busy social weekends. Even favourite summer clothes can suddenly feel uncomfortable or irritating.

Whilst awareness around menopause has improved hugely in recent years, many women are understandably tired of being told to simply “drink less”, “stress less” or “just keep cool”.

This month, I want to help you understand why symptoms often worsen during warmer months, and which strategies are genuinely evidence-based and can make a meaningful difference, without taking the joy out of summer.

WHY HEAT SUDDENLY FEELS UNBEARABLE

Our body temperature is controlled in an area of the brain called the hypothalamus. Here, hormones and signals work together to keep our temperature within a relatively narrow range (thermoregulation). Oestrogen plays an important role in this process.

As oestrogen levels fluctuate and decline during perimenopause and menopause, thermoregulation becomes disrupted. The brain interprets even small temperature changes as overheating, causing blood vessels to dilate (vasodilation), bringing heat to the skin surface which is why you may

experience increased skin flushing and warmth. Skin pores open and heart rate can increase, which explains why a hot flush can feel surprisingly intense and physically draining.

But this is not the end of the story. The body then launches a rapid cooling response, where sweat glands activate to remove heat, leading to perspiration and why many women experience sweats and sudden chills after flushes.

Add a heatwave, crowded festival, packed regatta marquee or poor sleep into the mix, and symptoms can escalate quickly.

COOL SMARTER, WITHOUT THE SPENDING SPREE

One of the biggest changes in the menopause space over recent years has been the explosion of products marketed to exhausted women looking for a quick fix — “menopause” cooling pillows, duvets, sprays and supplements, to name just a few.

Some are harmless, many overpriced, and only a small number have genuinely solid evidence behind them.

The most effective cooling strategies are usually far simpler and make complete sense once you understand how the body responds to heat.

Rather than trying to cool the entire body, focus on areas rich in surface blood vessels such as the hands, feet, scalp, neck, and underarms. Cooling these areas helps dissipate heat more efficiently. Cold water on the feet or wrists, reusable cool packs, portable fans and water sprays can all help interrupt a flush before it escalates.

Interestingly, research also suggests that breathable natural fabrics genuinely matter. Bamboo and moisture-wicking clothing can reduce heat retention and skin irritation. This is particularly relevant for underwear and nightwear, as many women experience vulvovaginal irritation, urinary symptoms or increased skin sensitivity during menopause. Breathable fabrics help reduce moisture, friction and overheating, creating a less favourable environment for irritation and bacteria to thrive.

We often focus purely on external heat, but many hot flush triggers are internal too. Spicy foods, alcohol and caffeine

can all trigger vasodilation, increasing flushing and sweating. Stress has a similar physiological effect, increasing heart rate and activating heat and sweat receptors.

Even digestion itself generates heat. Large meals high in sugar and processed carbohydrates require more metabolic energy to process, producing additional internal heat. Lighter meals with protein, fibre and hydration can help stabilise energy and reduce overheating.

Smoking is another important but often overlooked trigger, as it



accelerates oestrogen reduction and is strongly associated with more severe vasomotor symptoms.

You may find it helpful to keep a symptom diary and notice whether particular foods, drinks or situations trigger your symptoms.

Whilst lifestyle adjustments can absolutely help, persistent symptoms still deserve proper specialist support. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) remains the most effective treatment for hot flushes and night sweats because it addresses the underlying oestrogen depletion affecting thermoregulation.

For women who cannot or do not wish to take HRT, there are also non-hormonal options available, sleep-focused strategies and newer evidence-based approaches.

The key is individualised care rather than one-size-fits-all advice.

STAYING SUN SAFE

Sunlight can also be beneficial during perimenopause and menopause particularly for mood, sleep regulation and vitamin D production. Vitamin D plays an important role in bone health, muscle function and immune support, all of which become increasingly important as oestrogen declines. Safe daylight exposure can also help regulate our sleep-wake cycle, supporting better sleep at night.

However, skin protection matters too. As we age and oestrogen levels fall, skin naturally loses collagen, elastin and hydration, becoming thinner and more sensitive to sun damage. Using a high SPF daily (even in the UK) is one of the simplest evidence-based ways to protect long-term skin health and reduce premature ageing.

Lightweight breathable clothing, hats and loose cover-ups can also help prevent overheating, sunburn and dehydration during long days outdoors, whilst still allowing you to enjoy summer comfortably.

POOR SLEEP — THE NEGATIVE DOMINO EFFECT ON ALL SYMPTOMS

Summer can create the perfect storm for sleep disruption. In both men and women, lighter evenings suppress melatonin and warmer bedrooms impair the body's ability to regulate temperature. During perimenopause and menopause,

fluctuating and declining oestrogen levels further increase night waking and reduce sleep quality.

Oestrogen also interacts closely with other hormones involved in sleep, mood and anxiety, including melatonin, serotonin and cortisol.

When levels fluctuate, it can create a frustrating domino effect: poor sleep worsens anxiety, anxiety worsens flushing, flushing worsens sleep, and the cycle continues.

What and when we eat and drink can also have a surprisingly impact. Eating large or heavily processed meals late at night requires more energy to digest, generating additional internal heat. It can also disrupt gut health, leaving us feeling bloated, unsettled and sluggish, all of which can affect mood, energy and making restful sleep more difficult.

‘Early specialist support can help enormously, allowing you to explore treatment options tailored to your individual needs’

You may be tempted to reach for energy drinks during hot weather to replace electrolytes lost through sweat, but these often contain large amounts of sugar and caffeine, both of which can increase heat production and worsen palpitations, anxiety and disrupted sleep.

And contrary to popular belief, alcohol does not improve sleep quality. Even if it initially helps you fall asleep by acting as a sedative, it later disrupts restorative sleep and increases night waking. Alcohol also acts as a diuretic, increasing overnight trips to the bathroom, whilst simultaneously worsening vasodilation, meaning more overheating, flushing and sweating.

This doesn't mean you should be told to avoid every glass of rosé during regatta season, but it can help to understand what's going on in your body so you can make choices that work for you.

Simple adjustments can make a meaningful difference. Alternating alcohol with water; limiting very sugary cocktails, caffeine and energy drinks; drinking fluids earlier in the evening rather than immediately before bed;

keeping bedrooms genuinely cool; and reducing heavy late-night meals can all help improve sleep quality.

DON'T IGNORE YOUR BLADDER THIS SUMMER

One symptom area still not talked about enough is bladder health during perimenopause and menopause, particularly in warmer weather.

As oestrogen levels fall, the bladder, urethra and genital tissues can become more sensitive, which can lead to irritation and a higher risk of recurrent urinary tract infections (UTIs).

Summer habits can unintentionally make symptoms worse. Dehydration concentrates urine, which can irritate the bladder lining and create the sensation of constantly needing the toilet, even when the bladder is not full.

Many women then drink less in an attempt to avoid frequent trips to the bathroom but this can actually make urinary tract infections more likely.

Alcohol and caffeine can also irritate an already sensitive bladder, as both act as diuretics, increasing urine production and leaving the bladder feeling overactive and uncomfortable.

Staying well hydrated, avoiding excessive bladder irritants and addressing underlying hormonal changes, for example with hormone replacement therapy, can make a substantial difference. For many women, genital oestrogen can be transformative for these symptoms and remains one of the most underused yet effective treatments available.

MY TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Don't let symptoms take the enjoyment from your summer.

Early specialist support can help enormously, allowing you to explore treatment options tailored to your individual needs.

Wishing you all a very happy — and hopefully sunny — regatta season.

Dr Shilpa McQuillan leads the Berkshire Menopause Clinic in Henley and is an accredited menopause specialist, community gynaecologist and women's health GP.

For more information, email info@berkshiremenopauseclinic.com or visit www.berkshiremenopauseclinic.com

School of the month

PANGBOURNE

— Independent, co-educational day and boarding school, ages 11–18 —

AS Henley Royal Regatta once again captures the imagination of the rowing world, Pangbourne College is entering an exciting new chapter, one that combines a proud heritage with bold ambitions for the future. Building on a legacy that began in 1963 with the first of four Princess Elizabeth Challenge Trophy victories, the College is investing significantly in coaching, facilities and opportunities for aspiring rowers. Situated on one of the finest 6km stretches of rowing water in the country on the River Thames, alongside a newly dedicated rowing land training facility, students benefit from an exceptional environment in which to learn, train and thrive.

Leading the programme are Director of Rowing, Ed Green and Assistant Director, Harry Brightmore. Green joined Pangbourne following success at Kingston Grammar School, where he developed national medal-winning crews and international rowers. "The aim of the programme is



to develop outstanding student-athletes who are responsible and independent," he says, believing every student should have the opportunity to discover rowing and grow within the sport. Brightmore brings world-

class experience, having won six Henley Royal Regatta titles and Olympic gold in the Men's Eight at Paris 2024. For students pursuing rowing competitively, success becomes the by-product of becoming an excellent, athletically minded student. Further strengthening this vision, the College's boathouse on the River Thames by Whitchurch Weir will undergo a complete refurbishment, creating some of the finest rowing facilities in the UK.

Pangbourne College is an independent day and boarding school for girls and boys aged 11–18.

To learn more, come and visit the College. The next Open Morning is on Saturday 26 September 2026.

www.pangbourne.com/visit

PANGBOURNE

— Independent, co-educational day and boarding school, ages 11–18 —



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The Renters' Rights Act 2025: Introduction of major changes for Landlords and Tenants

A significant Part of the Renters' Rights Act 2025 has now come into force (1 May 2026), introducing wide-ranging reform to the private rented sector in England. The changes significantly strengthen tenant protections while placing new and clearer obligations on landlords.

END OF "NO-FAULT" EVICTIONS

Section 21 Notices have now been abolished. They cannot be used and landlords that use a Section 21 Notice in future could be fined up to £7,000.

Landlords can no longer evict tenants without providing a valid legal reason, that is, they must show that one of the

grounds for possession set out in Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1988 apply to the circumstances.

Two new grounds have been added by the Renters' Rights Act 2025 that will allow landlords to recover possession if they intend to sell the property or move in themselves (or family members).

PERIODIC TENANCIES NOW STANDARD

Fixed-term assured shorthold tenancies have been replaced by periodic tenancies.

If you are a landlord or tenant with an assured shorthold tenancy for a fixed period that ends after 1 May 2026, the tenancy continues but the fixed term will not apply. The tenancy will continue on a rolling periodic basis, typically monthly until brought to an end by one of the parties. The tenant can serve a notice to quit giving two months' notice. The Landlord can give notice but only if they have evidence for one of the grounds for possession.

RENT INCREASES

Landlords will need to serve a Section 13 Notice to increase the rent rather than increasing the rent at the point of renewing the fixed term tenancy.

Tenants can challenge a rent increase via the First Tier Tribunal. Any rent increases in excess of the market rent will not be allowed. Although this is not new, it is likely to become more common as tenants will not be put off, as previously, by the threat of a Section 21 notice.

If you would like guidance on how the new law affects you, our team at Mercers is here to help.

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Phil Rossi

OWNER OF OAKEN GROVE VINEYARD

PHIL Rossi is the owner of Oaken Grove Vineyard, a boutique English vineyard near Henley-on-Thames known for its award-winning wines, vineyard experiences, and live music events. Passionate about nature, the outdoors, and creating spaces where people can connect and unwind, Phil has helped shape Oaken Grove into a unique countryside destination in the Chiltern Hills. Through initiatives such as Jazz in the Vines, the vineyard combines English wine, music, food, and relaxed hospitality, offering visitors an experience that celebrates both the landscape and the growing culture of English wine.



1 What brought you to the Henley area and why do you stay?

I was born and bred in the area. I went to school in Marlow, college in Henley (interspersed with some time studying viticulture in Australia). I feel really connected to the area, the vineyard is in a special location, which isn't easy to move! My family is settled here and my daughter now goes to my old school.

2 What would you change about Henley?

The traffic! I'm not saying that Henley's perfect, but there isn't a huge amount that I would want to see changed, it's a lovely place to be and spend time.

3 How do you spend your leisure time locally?

Have you ever run a vineyard? What leisure time? I'm lucky enough that over the years we've had a fantastic range of musical acts perform at the vineyard, so even when I'm working, I get to share the enjoyment with our guests. When I have the odd day off, I love being by the riverside and visiting the variety of pubs around Henley.

4 What are your top three local haunts?

A visit to the Stag and Huntsman in Hambleden is always a pleasure. My family have enjoyed a number of trips to

the Kenton Theatre, with a pre-theatre meal at Hotel du Vin. In July, I've always loved attending the Trad Boat Festival in Fawley Meadows. It's such a shame it's not happening this year, but I understand that Lady McAlpine and the committee are pulling out the stops to have an alternative.

5 Do you have a favourite song?

Too many to choose, all before my time. I love a bit of Led Zeppelin, with Kashmir probably my favourite.

6 Which film or play has inspired or moved you the most?

The Life of Brian, as I learnt that we're all individuals.

7 What do you treasure most about life in the UK?

I love that the UK is a truly multicultural society. Very few places on earth can you experience such a deep variety of arts, literature and cuisines.

8 If you could live anywhere else in the world, where would it be?

I spent quite a bit of time in Italy visiting family when I was younger and my mother moved to Puglia when she retired (before being drawn back to Henley). I could see myself spending more time in Italy, but as long as I'm surrounded by natural beauty and wildlife I'd be happy.

9 Is there anyone, or anything in the area that you particularly admire, would recommend or think deserves a mention?

There's a regular gathering called 'Brew with a View' run by an amazing local lady. Its sole purpose is to give people an opportunity to meet and chat over that most British of things, a cup of tea and cake, whilst enjoying the countryside. It's truly inspiring, as is the lady who runs it.

10 What did you want to be when you were a child?

I spent many years in a corporate job, but I had always known that I was happiest when working in nature and creating something that others enjoy.

11 Which things do you wish you had known when you were younger?

That the journey is as important to enjoy as the destination.

12 Which three people would you choose to have dinner with, if you could?

I admire Barack Obama, and would have him and Michelle as one of my guests. Professor Hannah Fry makes complex science approachable which I love. Finally one of the Pythons, probably Michael Palin so he can share his travel stories and warm humour.

13 Where do you like to travel to on holiday?

Somewhere with a combination of relaxation and adventure. I have spent some wonderful time visiting vineyards all over the world, sharing experiences, knowledge and learning. New Zealand is the next destination when time allows.

14 What are your ambitions?

To continue sharing what we've created at the vineyard and carry on making great wine.

15 Do you have any regrets?

Life's not too short for mistakes, but it is too short for regrets

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