

The Hillingdon Herald

Produced by Brunel University students for your community

Free every month

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Summer 2026

Happy 60th Birthday to Brunel University

See coverage inside celebrating six decades of teaching and learning

🌸 Special edition to mark Hillingdon shining in the heatwave

Community reigns in the summer sun

by STAFF REPORTER

IT may have been one of the hottest periods in the UK's history, but Hillingdon residents remained cool enough to enjoy a wealth of major events.

Meanwhile Brunel University of London marked its 60th anniversary and England's footballers achieved an historic third place in the World Cup.

The borough hosted a number of popular celebrations during the summer, including the Hayes Canal Festival, Picnic in the Park and a Teddy bears picnic at Southlands Arts Centre.

Hillingdon Herald photographers went out and about around the area to capture images from these events for our special summer edition, and our reporters looked back on the history of Brunel since it opened in 1966.

Meanwhile, a Herald team compiled a World Cup diary by joining fans in local pubs to watch England's games.

Editor Rachel Sharp said: "It didn't quite come home for England's footballers this time, but our fantastic local community consistently showed us what a great home they have here in our borough."

■ See inside for pictures and stories capturing a summer to remember in Hillingdon



■ Fun in the sun: From left clockwise, Mayor of Hillingdon Reeta Chamdal at the Mayor's picnic held at the Closes Park; Patrons raising funds in style at a speakeasy-themed Casino night; Brunel students donning traditional mortar boards at summer graduation; Mother and son duo at Teddy bears' picnic; Crowd cheering for England at Bar Italia

Pictures by Herald team

Your guide to what's on in Hillingdon this summer: P9



Hillingdon residents attend screening of the People’s Emergency Briefing by Hillingdon Friends of the Earth

Picture: Jigyasa Singh



Berkshire Birds of Prey (CIC), delights Harmondsworth village with majestic Harris hawk

Picture: Jigyasa Singh

Summer fun in Hillingdon



Back to the roaring twenties: community members enjoy a speakeasy-themed charity event and casino night to raise funds for local cause

Picture: Jigyasa Singh



An evening of fashion and arts: Harrow, Richmond and Uxbridge college students show off their work at summer exhibition

Picture: Jigyasa Singh



■ **An afternoon to remember: Special guest performers celebrated the late Benjamin Zephaniah’s lasting influence on contemporary poetry and performance at Brunel University. From left: Joshua Castellino, Dean of College of Arts, Law and Social Sciences, novelist Monique Roffey, poet Ziba Karbassi, poet Henry Stone and Professor Daljit Nagra**

Picture: Deeya Kanabar



■ **We Will Rock You: Young rock musicians, above, entertained residents at Uxbridge Live Music Festival on July 18. Below: Dressed in vibrant Brazillian carnival style, the stilt walker, below, became an instant favourite with kids**

Picture: Jigyasa Singh



■ **Only Happy Faces at Hayes Canal Festival. From left: Bassam Mahfouz, Ros Daniels, Mayor of Hillingdon Cllr Reeta Chamdal and David Brough**

Picture: Deeya Kanabar

Music, painted faces and dance for canal festival

by DEEYA KANABAR

THE Hayes Canal Festival returned on Sunday, July 26. A fun family day out and an opportunity to bring the entire community together, the festival offered a variety of stalls, and activities such as singing, cultural dancing, face-painting, and learning about the importance of Hillingdon’s waterways.

As well as this, the festival also aimed to raise awareness about

health issues that are widely affecting Hillingdon residents, such as diabetes and heart disease, and how water-based activities on the canal, such as canoeing, kayaking, and even taking a walk, can help to improve people’s physical and mental health.

David Brough, Chairman of the Hillingdon Canals Partnership, said: “Hillingdon has more miles of canal than any other London borough, but it is an under-used asset.

“The Grand Union Canal passes through the centre of Hayes town, but

its function, history and potential are largely unknown by the local population. That is one of the main reasons why I started the Canal Festival in 2014.”

Hillingdon is one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse London boroughs, but the different communities have very little opportunity to mix together.

Mr Brough added: “The festival provides a welcoming environment for people to rub shoulders with others from different backgrounds.”



Views from the SHARP end

by RACHEL SHARP

CELEBRATING the 60th anniversary of Brunel University has got me thinking about when I first started work here as a lecturer, after a lifetime of being a working journalist.

I remember thinking that I could easily stand up and report back to a wall of all-male managers at a newspaper management meeting every week no problem. Could a roomful of students be any more difficult to handle?!

The other thing I distinctly remember thinking the night before my first lecture was that I might 'quite like' teaching. I didn't realise I would completely love it.

It has honestly turned out to be one of the most enjoyable and rewarding parts of my career. I genuinely love walking into a classroom, never quite knowing what questions will be thrown at me.

Sometimes they're brilliantly insightful, sometimes they're completely unexpected, and occasionally they leave me wondering if I need another coffee before answering.

The best part is watching students grow in confidence. Seeing someone who starts the term convinced they have nothing to say end up leading discussions or producing work they're genuinely proud of is incredibly satisfying.

Those moments remind me why I teach.

I also enjoy the fact that no two classes are ever the same. Every group has its own personality, sense of humour and way of looking at the world.

I might be the one standing at the front of the room, but I learn something new from my students every year. They keep me on my toes and occasionally introduce me to things that make me feel about a hundred years old.

When I swapped the newsroom for the lecture theatre, I thought it would be a fairly straightforward transition. After all, journalism is journalism, right? It turns out that teaching journalism is a completely different story.

In the newsroom, everything happens at lightning speed. If I shouted to my reporters: "I need your story in ten minutes!" they would never ask for an extension – they just do it. At university, I'd gone from chasing politicians for quotes to chasing students for assignments, and surprisingly, the

students were often harder to track down.

The biggest surprise has been discovering just how rewarding teaching can be. As a journalist, I loved telling stories. As a lecturer, I get to help other people find their own voices.

Watching a student go from nervously introducing themselves in week one to confidently interviewing strangers or producing a brilliant feature by the end of the term is a fantastic feeling.

Of course, students also keep me humble. I've been asked everything from "Will this be in the exam?" to "Can I quote Wikipedia?" They certainly know how to keep me entertained.

And of course I am old.

I imagine 60 years ago students arrived at lectures carrying three things: a notebook, a pen and an overwhelming fear of being asked a question.

Today they arrive with a laptop, a tablet, two phones, noise-cancelling headphones, a water bottle the size of a small canoe and enough charging cables to rewire the National Grid.

The notebook has disappeared. Students now take photos of my notes on the board in the classroom.

Then there's attendance. Once upon a time, students crept in late hoping not to be noticed.

Now they arrive 20 minutes after the start carrying coffee with the confidence of someone making a guest appearance on a chat show.

No explanation. No embarrassment. Just an assumption that time itself should have waited.

The classroom has changed too since my day. Lecturers and teachers used to compete with whispered conversations. I find I am competing with notifications.

Halfway through explaining the importance of impartiality in reporting, I can actually see someone's smartwatch vibrating from twenty feet away. Within seconds there's a ripple across the room. One student checks a phone. Another checks a laptop. A third has somehow opened an online shopping basket.

By the end of the sentence I've lost three people to TikTok, one to Deliveroo and another who's comparing flights to Barcelona.

Technology has brought wonderful things, of course. Students can fact-check me in seconds. Occasionally they do. Usually they're right. I



Team: Rachel with some of the reporters on the summer edition

dislike that.

There was once a glorious period when lecturers were assumed to know everything. Now we're simply Google's opening act.

And don't get me started on artificial intelligence. Students ask, "Can I use AI for this assignment?" That's a flat no.

But despite everything, students haven't really changed.

They're still nervous on the first day. Still convinced everyone else understands the assignment better than they do. Still discovering who they are.

And, still capable of surprising you with astonishing creativity and insight just when you've convinced yourself they're all asleep.

Every year they arrive speaking a language I barely understand.

Every year they teach me new slang, new technology and occasionally how to fix my own phone.

Every year I wonder if I'm getting too old for this.

Then someone produces a piece of work that's original, thoughtful and genuinely brilliant.

We run *The Hillingdon Herald* every Friday in our newsroom and it is honestly my favourite day of the week. Students come in excited, passionate, ready to work and full of ideas and mad chatter.

And I remember exactly why I do this.

So, thank you to Brunel University for giving me a chance to teach these wonderful human beings. And happy 60th anniversary. Here's to the next 60.



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Scouting for a home

THIS month, Scout the fun-loving Labrador Cross is searching for her forever family.

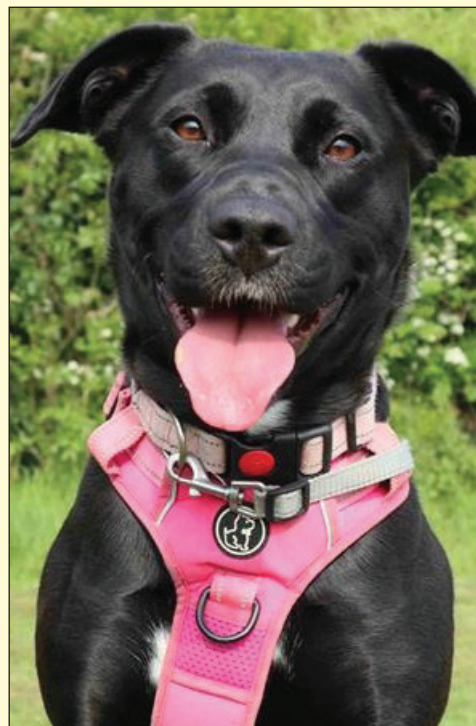
This lovable and loyal dog would adore an active home with a secure garden where she can run around and sniff to her heart's content. Her new home would ideally not have any dogs nearby.

Scout is a bouncy and bubbly girl who loves adventures and would make the perfect walking companion. She can live with older children but would do best as the only pet in the home.

Although she has made amazing progress with the Dogs Trust behaviour team, her new family will need to continue her dog socialisation. Her favourite pastimes are playing with her toys, engaging in training sessions with treats, and exploring on walks. If you can provide plenty of mental and physical stimulation for this gorgeous pooch, then Scout could be the dog for you.

Richard Moore, Rehoming Centre Manager of Dogs Trust Harefield, said: "Scout is a bundle of energy, very affectionate and fun. She needs an adopter who will give her plenty of walks and mental enrichment, but she is also happy to self-entertain with soft toys and hard chews. She is sure to bring a lot of joy to her new family."

For more information about Scout and the other dogs at Dogs Trust Harefield, please visit: www.dogstrust.org.uk/harefield



Bubbly: Scout needs a home

Picture: Dogs Trust

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Ready to break into journalism?

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What's included?

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A fast-track route to building the skills today's media employers are looking for.

Don't miss out – apply now for the NCTJ diploma in London open to external candidates.

For more details, contact journalism lecturer Kenn Toft at kenn.toft@brunel.ac.uk.

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Goods vehicle operator's licence

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Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Quarry House, Quarry Hill, Leeds, LS2 7UE, stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice.



■ Picnic in the Park : The Mayor of Hillingdon, Reeta Chamdal interacting with the volunteers
All pictures: Jigyasa Singh



■ Not so Frozen in the Park: A resident taking a selfie with the Disney princess, Elsa

It's picnic time in the park

by JIGYASA SINGH

RESIDENTS of all ages enjoyed an afternoon of music, entertainment and family fun at the Mayor's Picnic in the Park, hosted by the Mayor of Hillingdon, Cllr Reeta Chamdal, at The Closes Park in West Drayton on Saturday, July 11.

The popular annual event featured live performances from local schools and community groups, including bands from Hillingdon Music Service, the Queensmead School Band and Bishopshalt School Steel Pans, alongside dance performances, gymnastics and vintage classics from the Candy Girls.

Families also enjoyed a host of attractions, including face painting, Punch and Judy shows, a climbing wall, inflatable assault course, mobile petting farm, fire engine and appearances from popular characters including Elsa from Frozen, Optimus Prime and Captain Fantastic.



■ Feeling the heat: Cllr Steve Tuckwell ditched his suit and tie and kept it cool in cotton



■ Summertime and the living is Easy: Residents basked under the glorious sun with dance, music and lip-smacking food



■ His name is Optimus Prime: Herald reporter, Zara Ashraf, meeting the transformer

Hillingdon on the move: Transport Focus



Pictured at the opening of the new EV charging hub at Hatton Cross are (left to right): Tom Hurst, UK Director at Fastned; Sophie Eynon, Electric Vehicle Charging Hubs Programme Manager at Places for London; Andy Lord, London's Transport Commissioner; Mete Coban MBE, Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy; Michiel Langezaal, Fastned Co-founder and CEO; Seb Dance, Deputy Mayor for Transport; and Graeme Craig, Chief Executive of Places for London

Picture: Jigyasa Singh

'Landmark' launch boosts EV drivers

by JIGYASA SINGH

HATTON Cross has welcomed its first ultra-rapid EV charging hub, bringing what could be a major new boost for drivers near Heathrow.

The 12-bay site is the first of 25 planned across London. Open 24/7 and powered by renewable energy, it is designed for cars, taxis, commercial vehicles and private hire drivers needing fast charging close to the airport.

The site was opened earlier in the summer by Fastned, a company that operates a large network of EV charging stations, and Places for London, TfL's property company.

The hub was officially launched by Deputy Mayor for Transport Seb Dance, Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy Mete Coban and London's Transport Commissioner Andy Lord. To mark the opening, charging at the site was free for five days in June.

Built with accessibility in mind, the

hub includes extra-wide bays, two fully accessible charging spaces, CCTV coverage and 24/7 multilingual customer support. Fastned says the site can deliver up to 100 miles of range in just five minutes.

The location, near Heathrow and with easy access to the M25, M4 and A30, is expected to be especially useful for airport commuters, taxi drivers and fleet operators.

The launch is part of a wider programme to expand London's EV

charging network, with 25 ultra-rapid hubs planned in total. City leaders say the aim is to make charging faster, easier and more accessible as more drivers switch to electric vehicles.

Deputy Mayor Mete Coban said the new hub would help more Londoners cut emissions and improve air quality. Fastned called it a "landmark moment" for its partnership with Places for London, while Places for London said the site shows what collaboration can achieve.

Full mobile coverage for Tube travellers

by RYAN GURNETT

TUBE travellers are on track to benefit from complete mobile coverage by the end of 2026, with Transport for London (TfL) recently announcing 60 per cent of stations underground are now covered.

Engineering work undertaken by TfL and network provider Boldyn Networks has recently extended coverage to sections of the Bakerloo, Circle, and Metropolitan lines, the latter of which serves Hillingdon.

This should see mobile coverage extend into Underground tunnels, and several large stations in central London, including King's Cross St Pancras, Paddington, Vauxhall, and Victoria, with some of the introductions being phased due to the size of stations.

All four major mobile network operators (Three UK, EE, Vodafone, and Virgin Media O2) are part of this rollout, which will also host the new Emergency Services Network, which plans to give first responders immediate access to life-saving data, images and information in live situations and emergencies.

The plan is a part of a commitment made by Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, and TfL to bring mobile connectivity to the whole of London's transport network, which will allow TfL's users to access real-time service updates throughout their journey.

TfL plans to extend coverage to the vast majority of the Northern, Bakerloo and Metropolitan lines by the end of this summer, while also working to introduce mobile data coverage to underground sections of the Docklands Light Railway and the Overground's Windrush Line.

Rebecca Bissell, Director of Information Technology at TfL, said: "We remain focused on having 4G and 5G mobile data coverage across the whole Tube network by the end of the year, and more than 600 engineers work hard overnight during limited engineering hours to help deliver this."

Nick Hudson, Boldyn Networks' Chief Operating Officer for the UK, echoed this, saying: "Through this long-term public-private partnership, we're delivering on our commitment to bring 4G and 5G coverage to every part of the London Underground – helping make London one of the best-connected cities in the world."

Bus fares frozen

BUS and tram fares across London have been frozen at £1.75 until November 1, according to Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan.

This latest freeze, the seventh over the past decade, will see fares kept at the same level as March 2023, £1.75 for a single fare, which covers unlimited journeys within one hour, with a daily cap of £5.25.

Weekend savings on the buses

by LORNA MURPHY
Director of Buses
at Transport for London

MOST of us will have a memory revolving around buses: the first steps of freedom travelling to school, heading home with friends after a night out in London, or simply travelling to visit a grandparent who lived the other side of town.

After nearly 20 years in the bus and coach industry, I joined Transport for London (TfL) in 2024 as Director of Buses. Throughout my career, I have seen how buses help local communities thrive. Buses, and public transport as a whole, are there to help people make their journeys sustainably, accessibly and inclusively. It remains a privilege to make this happen with the phenomenal people working behind the scenes.

The scale of our network here in London is still hard to comprehend. Almost 700 routes serving 19,000 bus stops, with nearly 30,000 people working hard to deliver TfL's services. Every year, London's buses run the distance between the Earth and the Sun three times! Without this, Londoners simply can't get around.

At TfL, we are constantly working to make our buses safer, greener and more accessible. A third of our buses are now



Lorna Murphy, Director of Buses at TfL, announces new summer weekend fares

Picture: Transport for London

zero-emission – the largest zero-emission bus fleet in western Europe. Our newest buses have larger accessible areas, more comfortable seating and USB charging facilities reflecting how people travel today. While we have more to do, we are committed to continuously improving the safety of the whole London bus network, and our world-leading Bus Safety Standard is reducing risk not only for customers, but for everyone who uses London's roads.

We're constantly working to improve

bus performance, working closely with boroughs to manage roadworks, and investing in new bus lanes and technology to improve bus schedules. We're also trialling a new bus shelter design at Harlington High Street and Sipson Lane, offering a more comfortable and accessible waiting environment, as well as introducing new features specifically for bus customers in our free TfL Go app.

We regularly review routes to ensure that they are operating to their best potential. Recently, we increased

the frequency of the route 105 from a bus every 15 minutes to a bus every 12 minutes on weekday early mornings and on Sundays. Last year, we also introduced the route 695 which will allow for quicker journey times between West Drayton and schools on Long Lane. We also continue to expand our hugely successful Superloop network, and we have recently increased frequencies on route SL8 from a bus every ten minutes to one every eight minutes on Monday to Saturday, and to one every ten minutes during the evenings and on Sundays.

As we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Mayor's Hopper fare, we are also reminded how small innovations can make a big difference. By allowing unlimited bus journeys within an hour for the price of one fare, the Hopper has helped millions of Londoners travel more affordably and flexibly. This summer, we will be introducing a Weekend Hopper fare, allowing people to make unlimited journeys on a Saturday or Sunday for the price of a single journey – helping customers take advantage of all that London has to offer via bus.

As London continues to innovate and change, buses remain one of the most reliable forms of transport. We're committed to doing all we can to ensure they remain accessible, reliable and affordable for all.

Hillingdon on the move: Transport Focus

New Elizabeth Line trains ready to roll

by DEEYA KANABAR

A NEW set of faster and more spacious trains is set to be unveiled on London's Elizabeth Line, serving commuters at stations including West Drayton and Hayes & Harlington.

The first of ten new Aventra Class 345 trains left Alstom's production line in Derby in June, and will soon undergo final checks before being launched as an Elizabeth Line passenger train in London later this year.

As part of Transport for London's plans to meet growing demands, the launch of these new trains comes as the Elizabeth Line reaches 850 million passenger journeys, and will mean that it will have an overall seated capacity of 120,000 – more than London's Wembley Stadium.

Andy Butters, Managing Director of Litchurch Lane works, said of the 850 million journey figure: "The milestone reflects the skill, dedication and craftsmanship of our teams. It's a powerful example of how investment in London's transport system delivers real



economic benefits across the UK."

Transport bosses say one of the main benefits of the Elizabeth Line is that it is a rapid transit line, meaning journeys across the capital are faster and more efficient. New data from the exhibitions and conventions centre, Excel Lon-

don, reveals that the line is particularly useful for business tourism. Nearly half (49 per cent) of Excel London's visitors alight at the nearby Custom House station, and are even able to do so directly from Heathrow Airport.

Seb Dance, Deputy Mayor of

Transport for London, said: "The Mayor and I are excited to continue working hand in hand with TfL and the government to unleash the full potential of our transport network, as we continue building a more prosperous London for everyone."

Milestone for green bus policy

by SEHER SHEIKH

LONDON has reached a milestone in its drive towards cleaner public transport, with more than 3,000 zero-emission buses now operating across the capital.

Transport for London (TfL) announced that one in three buses in its fleet is now zero-emission at the tailpipe, marking a dramatic increase from just 30 electric buses in 2016.

The organisation says the achievement strengthens London's position as home to the largest zero-emission bus fleet in western Europe and represents another step towards greener transport network.

The 3,000th zero-emission bus, especially wrapped to mark the occasion, will operate on route 165 between Romford and Rainham from Stagecoach's Rainham depot.

It is part of a wider order of more than 120 zero-emission buses built by UK manufacturer Wrightbus, with several additional routes expected to transition to zero-emission vehicles over the coming year.

According to TfL, replacing the entire bus fleet with zero-emission vehicles could save an estimated five million tonnes of carbon over the next 20 years. The current fleet is already helping to reduce emissions while offering quieter journeys, USB charging points and enhanced safety features for passengers and road users.

The environmental improvements extend beyond the buses themselves. TfL has also completed the installation of energy-efficient LED lighting at around 12,000 bus shelters across London, a move expected to cut energy use by more than half while making shelters brighter and more welcoming.

Mayor Sadiq Khan described the milestone as a sign of London "leading the charge in sustainable transport", while TfL said the continued expansion of the zero-emission fleet will help deliver cleaner, more accessible and affordable journeys for Londoners.

Fare evasion checks recouping millions

by JIGYASA SINGH

NEW measures to crack down on fare evasion through increased ticket and payment checks across the capital are being introduced by Transport for London (TfL).

The latest figures show TfL enforcement officers checked almost seven million contactless payment cards between April 2025 and March 2026, more than 50 per cent higher than the previous year. More than 3.3 million passengers were also checked on London's buses.

As a result of the action, 69,001



■ Ticket checks have saved £5.4m in the past year

Picture: TfL

penalty fares were issued during the year, while more than 21,500 people were reported for possible prosecution.

TfL, a non-profit organisation, says

the tougher approach is aimed at protecting revenue that helps fund London's transport network and ensuring honest passengers are not paying the price for fare dodgers.

Alongside traditional ticket inspections, officers are increasingly using technology to identify people who misuse contactless payment cards or fail to complete their journeys. TfL says these checks recovered £5.4 million in unpaid fares over the past year.

The organization plans to recruit 50 additional Transport Support and Enforcement Officers to increase the number of inspections across buses,

the Tube, London Overground, the Elizabeth line and other TfL services.

Passengers travelling without a valid ticket or failing to pay the correct fare can be issued with a £100 penalty fare, reduced to £50 if paid within 21 days.

TfL says it hopes the increased enforcement will help reduce fare evasion to below 1.5 per cent by 2030, ensuring more money is available to invest in London's transport network.

The crackdown comes as TfL continues to remind passengers to make sure they touch in and out correctly and travel with a valid ticket or payment method on every journey.

Students support sustainable travel

by ABIGAIL CLEMENTS

AS part of the Global Challenges course at Brunel University of London, I carried out an enterprise project, which involved investigating students' travel habits and some more sustainable journeys that could reduce the university's carbon footprint.

My project, Beat the Bus, focused on whether walking and cycling between the campus and nearby stations was a realistic alternative to getting the bus. The findings from this project provided valuable insights for how Brunel University can reduce its carbon footprint and encourage sustainable travel.

Transport is one of the biggest contributors to carbon emissions, with

many universities trying to encourage more sustainable travel. At Brunel, many students automatically get the bus from campus to either West Drayton or Uxbridge stations, as it is seen as the easiest option. However, my research showed that getting the bus is not always the most convenient or productive way to travel.

For example, the walk to Uxbridge station from campus takes roughly 20 to 25 minutes or a six-minute bike ride, which many students were unaware of.

Choosing to walk or cycle on many occasions will be quicker than getting the bus, because you must walk to the bus stop, wait for the bus, and deal with traffic, all of which can increase journey time.

More than half said they would consider cycling instead of taking the bus in order to shorten travel time and be more punctual. This shows that something as simple as raising awareness could make a real difference.

I conducted a survey to find out students' knowledge and understanding of the sustainable travel methods on offer. The survey highlighted several barriers that prevent students from choosing active travel, many of which are uncontrollable, such as weather, while others are controllable, such as confidence when cycling and affordability.

Some students were also unaware of existing university initiatives such as the Brunel Moves app or the university's bike hire schemes,

suggesting that these opportunities are not being promoted effectively.

To find out more, I compared Brunel with other UK universities. It was very clear that it is a strong focus for many universities, particularly Southampton, Sheffield and Exeter, which have invested in better cycling infrastructure, reward schemes, guided rides and partnered with local authorities to make active travel safer and normalise walking and cycling for journeys.

I believe Brunel has the potential to achieve similar success. Better promotion of sustainable travel, regular guided cycling and walking groups, and partnering with Hillingdon Council to make routes safer would encourage more students to choose active travel

rather than the bus for shorter journeys. Improving the Brunel Moves app and expanding rewards for sustainable travel will help ensure these habits become long-term.

My research showed that students are not against sustainable travel but simply need more information, greater confidence and stronger support. These small changes could reduce congestion, lower carbon emissions and improve student wellbeing. Encouraging more people to walk or cycle benefits the environment and enables Brunel to lead in sustainable travel.

● Abigail Clements is a final year Global Challenges undergraduate student at Brunel University.



‘Brunel has given us much to be proud of in 60 years’

To celebrate Brunel’s 60th anniversary, we asked four local politicians to tell us what the university means to them

LORD JOHN RANDALL OF UXBRIDGE

I CAN remember a time before Brunel University became the important and integral part of our Hillingdon community it is today. As a small child I used to wander through the disused nursery that ultimately became the university campus.

There was genuine excitement and perhaps a little nervousness as not many people had heard of Brunel. As the Brutalist buildings we know today gradually appeared, it divided opinion. I can well remember locals not being impressed with the tall chimney thinking that an institution purporting to be in the vanguard of technical innovation couldn’t come up with an alternative solution.

However increasingly Brunel was seen as an important if somewhat hidden part of the local area. Uxbridge never really felt like an old-fashioned university town and students were seemingly rather invisible. Commensurate with the expansion of the campus and facilities, Brunel’s place in our local life became more important – mostly positive, but there were issues with local housing that affect any area with a large student population.

The University began to recognise the lack of engagement with the local community and embarked on a series of proactive initiatives to remedy that issue, something that has been built on over the years. Concerts, lectures and poetry events as well as sports facilities being available for local people to enjoy have resulted in a greater awareness of the proximity of such a celebrated academic institution on our doorstep. Today, *The Hillingdon Herald*, produced by a cohort of talented budding journalists, is one of the best examples of Brunel’s impact locally.

In the wider Hillingdon community, Brunel has become very much a place for important events, a Royal visit and numerous election counts being held in the same sports hall where the famous Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt trained. The sports pitches are well used by local groups and the partnership with Ealing Trailfinders Rugby Club has also brought awareness of the University to a wider audience.

Brunel has and has had some famous academic staff, some of whom were and still are household names, Bernadine Evaristo, Will Self, Benjamin Zephaniah, Heinz Wolff, Daljit Nagra and Fay Weldon amongst many. This is an impressive list and perhaps not generally known for their connection to our university. Among former students there is an equally formidable list of those at the top of their chosen careers. I, for obvious reasons, am always coming across politicians of all parties who spent their formative years at Brunel. However, the list of alumni is also highly significant in other fields. Every year scores of students go out having enjoyed everything the university has to offer. Many stay in the local area, contributing to the life and work of the community.

So, after sixty years, what does Brunel mean for us? As with most neighbours there are occasional issues but all in all Brunel has become a very welcome part of our local community.

It has given us much to be proud of, although I think it could blow its own trumpet a little louder.



■ A Royal history: The late Queen at Brunel

Picture: Brunel

TORY COUNCIL LEADER CLLR STEVE TUCKWELL

AS Brunel University London marks its 60th anniversary, it offers an opportunity for the whole borough to reflect on a shared journey.

Since the mid-1960s, Brunel and the London Borough of Hillingdon have grown side by side, their histories closely intertwined from the very beginning. In many ways, they have come of age together, shaping and strengthening one another over six decades.

From its earliest days, Brunel’s presence in Uxbridge has been a cornerstone of the borough’s identity. It is far more than a campus within Hillingdon’s boundaries — it is an institution embedded in the life of the community. Generations of residents have lived, learned and worked alongside the university, and its evolution mirrors that of the borough itself: dynamic, diverse and forward-looking.

One of Brunel’s most significant contributions has been opening doors to higher education for local people. For many families in Hillingdon, it has provided a close-to-home pathway to opportunity — enabling students to pursue degrees, develop skills and build futures locally. At the same time, the university’s global reputation attracts students from around the world, enriching the borough with new perspectives and cultural diversity.

Over the years, Brunel has also become a vital partner in Hillingdon’s economic success, actively contributing to the borough’s growth. Through its focus on skills development, apprenticeships and employability pathways, it plays a crucial role in preparing residents for the jobs of today and the opportunities of tomorrow.

This partnership is mutual: Brunel students contribute across council services through placements and apprenticeships, with many progressing into full-time roles. In the past two years, students have joined the council’s digital and data teams on year-long placements before progressing to fixed-term contracts with the partnership creating a pipeline of future talent directly supporting local communities.

By equipping people with the skills they need to succeed, the university supports both individual futures and the resilience of the wider local economy. It has also provided valuable research and insight to help shape major initiatives, including the recent Uxbridge Vision and plans to revitalise Hayes, and Hillingdon officers have also been part of Brunel advisory boards.

LABOUR GROUP LEADER CLLR STUART MATHERS

GROWING up in Hillingdon, Brunel University has been part of the backdrop of my life.

Like many local people, I have memories of playing hockey on its pitches, attending school proms and spending time on a campus that has always felt like it belonged not just to students, but to the wider community.

As I’ve grown older, my appreciation for Brunel has only grown stronger.

In my role working at a local charity, I’ve seen first-hand the difference Brunel students make through volunteering. Time and again, students have brought their energy, compassion and skills to support local people of all ages. They gain valuable experience while our community benefits from fresh ideas, enthusiasm and a genuine desire to make a difference.

That relationship between the university and the voluntary sector is something we should be incredibly proud of.

Brunel has also opened its doors in other ways. Over the years I’ve attended public lectures on subjects including dementia and osteopathy. What struck me wasn’t academic superiority or complicated theory. It was the willingness to share knowledge in a way that offered hope, explained new research and demonstrated real care for people facing health challenges. Those events reminded me that universities are at their best when they don’t simply educate students, but help educate communities too.

Whether through networking opportunities, research partnerships, community events or volunteering, Brunel has shown what it means to be an anchor institution.

It isn’t simply located in Hillingdon; it is part of Hillingdon.

As we look ahead, I hope organisations like Brunel continue to work closely with the council, businesses, charities and residents to unlock even more of our borough’s potential. We have world-class institutions on our doorstep. By working together we can create opportunities that benefit everyone who calls Hillingdon home.

As Brunel celebrates 60 years of achievement, it reminds us what long-term success really looks like. Institutions earn their place in people’s hearts not simply through size or prestige, but through the positive difference they make every day.

That is a legacy worth celebrating, and one I hope will continue for generations to come.

BASSAM MAHFOUZ, LABOUR LONDON ASSEMBLY MEMBER

1966 was a remarkable year for England. We won the World Cup, Harold Wilson secured a landslide General Election victory, and Brunel University opened its doors for the first time.

Sixty years on, Brunel has become one of Hillingdon’s greatest assets, putting our borough on the map for innovation, research and opportunity. At a time when young people face the toughest graduate jobs market in a generation, its role in equipping the next generation with the skills, knowledge and opportunities to succeed has never been more important.

For six decades, Brunel has been a primary source of opportunity and ambition for our area. Generations of students have arrived in our borough from across the UK and around the world, drawn by the university’s reputation for excellence in teaching and research. Having grown up locally, I have many friends who are proud Brunel alumni. Brunel students have gone on, like the university’s namesake, to shape Britain in many ways including business, engineering, healthcare, technology and public service sectors, but Brunel’s true impact goes deeper. This is no more obvious than how the university has established itself as an important part of Hillingdon’s identity.

One of things that has always stood out to me from my various visits is how well it prepares its students for the real world. Its close links with employers help to develop the skills and experience they need to succeed after graduation. In an economy where it is no secret how much young people are struggling, that focus on practical learning and experience has never been more important.

These benefits are felt all over Hillingdon. Brunel has provided jobs and attracted investment through the thousands of students, staff and visitors it brings to our borough every year. Local businesses benefit from this massively, with the university itself being a major employer.

At City Hall, one of the issues I am committed to finding a citywide solution to is how we can give young people more access to opportunity. Brunel is a great example that we must learn from. For many local students, having a world-class university right on their doorstep opens doors that might otherwise feel out of reach. It stands as a powerful example of how local talent can flourish.

The university’s name also reminds us of the remarkable legacy of Isambard Kingdom Brunel himself, famous for his work in pioneering the creation of what we know today as Great Western Railway (GWR). All these years later, these railway lines still connect our communities and help people travel across the capital, all thanks to his vision. This has undeniably played a huge role in shaping Hillingdon as we know it today.

Many local residents will also be familiar with the impressive Wharncliffe Viaduct near Hanwell, one of Brunel’s earliest major railway structures. Nearly two centuries after it was built, it remains a striking symbol of engineering ambition and innovation. That spirit is something that lives on through the spirit of Brunel University.

As we celebrate Brunel University’s 60th anniversary, we are celebrating more than just an institution. We are celebrating a tradition of innovation and learning that extends from the engineer whose name it proudly carries down to the young minds it continues to foster. Brunel University remains one of Hillingdon’s greatest assets and I, for one, am proud to have it in our borough. I look forward to the next 60 years of greatness.

What's on summer 2026



■ **Triple anniversary: Music lovers were in for a treat as Vyners School hosted a special Triple Anniversary Concert on Saturday, July 11, celebrating three significant milestones in Hillingdon's musical community. The event, attended by the Mayor of Hillingdon, Cllr Reeta Chamdal, marked conductor Peter J Williams' 75th birthday, 40 years of the Hillingdon Philharmonic Orchestra and 45 years of the Hillingdon Choral Society.**

Picture: Jigyasa Singh

Denham Country Park

CRAFT IN THE PARK – BUTTERFLY FEEDERS

Bring your children to Denham Country Park this Summer to partake in nature-based crafting activities. Each session is 30-45 minutes long, and centres around family-friendly outdoor crafts. Denham Country Park, Denham Court Drive, Denham, UB9 5PG
Monday, August 3, sessions at 10:30am, 11:30am, 2pm and 3pm.
Price: £3.80.

Beck Theatre

REMEMBERING RAFI – DIL NE PHIR YAAD KIYA

Rafi Saab's most beloved songs performed on stage by Chirag Rao and a live five-piece band. An unmissable event for Bollywood lovers. The show will be performed in Hindi.
Beck Theatre, Grange Road, Hayes, Middlesex, UB3 2UE
Sunday, July 26, 7pm.
Tickets: £30.

THE ULTIMATE IRISH HOOLEY!

The Beck Theatre presents a celebration of Ireland's greatest music, including tributes to: The Pogues, U2, Van Morrison, The Cranberries and many more.

Beck Theatre, Grange Road, Hayes, Middlesex, UB3 2UE
Thursday, August 6, 7:30pm.
Tickets: £31.50.

Battle of Britain Bunker

SECRETS UNCOVERED TOUR

Discover the hidden secrets of the Battle of Britain Bunker in this special guided walking tour. Explore hidden rooms, corridors and objects that have been closed to the public for years.
Battle of Britain Bunker, Wren Avenue, Uxbridge, UB10 0BE
Sunday, August 29, 10am – 11:30am.
Price: Adults £15, Senior £12, Children free.

Southlands Arts Centre

CERAMIC DECORATION AND OBJECT PAINTING

Turn everyday objects into your own functional works of art in this relaxing ceramic painting workshop. You can select your object there, choose your paints and use your imagination to create your own custom objects.
Southlands Arts Centre, 75 The Green, West Drayton, Middlesex, UB7 7PW
Sunday, July 26, 2pm – 4:30pm.
Price: £40.

Manor Farm Library

COFFEE AND CRIME WITH MATT BAKER

Join television screenwriter, journalist and debut author: Matt Baker for a discussion of his novel. The novel is called *A Taste For Murder* and has been developed into a major ITV television series. This event is open to adults.
Manor Farm Library, Manor Farm Site, Bury Street, Ruislip, HA4 7SU.
Friday, July 31, 3pm – 4pm.
Price: £2.

Botwell Green Library

Running Your Own Race – Meet the Author

Join author Abena Eyeson for an inspiring event, as she introduces readers to her novel 'Running My Own Race', which has been included in the 2026 Summer Reading Challenge book list. This event is best suited for children ages eight to 11 years.
Botwell Green Library, East Avenue, Hayes, UB3 2HW
Tuesday, July 28, 11am – 12 noon.
Price: Free.

IMAGINATION STATION

This family friendly event is an opportunity to celebrate this year's Summer Reading Challenge with a range of creative activities. The event is

suitable for children ages four to 11 years and their families.

Friday, August 31, 11am – 4pm
Botwell Green Library, East Avenue, Hayes, UB3 2HW
Admission: Free

Compass Theatre

THE STAGE IS YOURS

A Summer musical theatre workshop for children aged seven to 16 years. Rehearse songs, drama scenes and dance routines to perform in two shows at the Compass Theatre.
Compass Theatre, Glebe Avenue, Ickenham, UB10 8PD
Monday, July 27 to Friday, July 31: Final show
Friday, July 31 at 1.30pm and 3pm.
Monday, August 17 to Friday, August 21: Final show
Friday, August 21 at 1.30pm and 3pm.
Price: £130, plus £7 for final show tickets.

CURTAIN UP!

Join Zoe from the Ruislip Dramatic Society for a monthly play reading session in April and May. If you enjoy acting or want to try something new, you can be actively involved by reading for a character. If you are not a performer yourself, you can still come and enjoy watching the group bring the play to life.
Compass Theatre, Glebe Avenue, Ickenham, UB10 8PD.
Tuesday, August 4, 1:30pm – 4:30pm.
Price: £3.

Organising an event? Tell us all about it

Please note that while every effort has been to ensure details were correct at the time of going to press, programmes may be subject to alteration at short notice. It is advisable to contact venues before heading out if you have not booked in advance.

ORGANISING a theatre production, music gig, comedy night or garden fete? *The Hillingdon Herald* wants to hear about it.

For all events in late October and November please contact us by Wednesday, October 14, with

details of the name of the show/band/performers/organisation, a short description of the event, the exact dates and times, admission prices plus a contact number and/or web address where people can book tickets or find out further information.

You must also include a contact number or email address so that we can check details if necessary. Anonymous contributions will not be considered.

Please email details of your event to: hillingtonherald@gmail.com.

Why you should back our blockers campaign

Hundreds have already signed petition to protect residents threatened by airport

OPINION

by RYAN GURNETT

WITH all the chaos in national politics right now, it's easy to forget that a much bigger crisis is unfolding right on our doorstep.

The Hillingdon Herald's Back the Blockers campaign has been slowly gaining traction, with our petition having hundreds of signatures now, so what better time to take a look at why this campaign is so important?

The Government's continued insistence on building a third runway at Heathrow airport – dubbed a "project of destruction" by former Hillingdon Council leader, Ian Edwards – is continuing to ignore the very basic needs of the people most affected.

With this latest attempted expansion being considered a review of existing policy, the Government has stated that the consultation will be "proportionate". However, what this means to Heathrow communities as of yet is unclear and this approach has been criticised by the No 3rd Runway Coalition. They argue that given it has been almost a decade since the last consultation on Heathrow expansion, and, therefore, much of the information will be out of date, meaning this could be an attempt to avoid proper scrutiny of the proposals by the communities that would be most impacted by the plans.

This is not the whole story, though, with even the Department for Transport and the Civil Aviation Authority releasing a study displaying the health impact of noise from Heathrow on local communities.

The study shows that 10 per cent of people would be annoyed at 43 decibels of noise, with almost a third annoyed at 55 decibels of aircraft noise.

This, combined with previous evi-

dence finding that an expanded Heathrow would see a further 2.2 million people impacted by the expanded noise bands. This comes at the same time that Heathrow has launched a mental health support service, with the stated intention of providing residents affected by its proposals with additional support.

The service will give residents access to a 24/7 helpline, personalised counselling, focused 1-to-1 therapy sessions and advanced therapies.

At the same time as announcing the launch of this support service, Heathrow reportedly went on to tell residents within the Compulsory Purchase Zone that if they fail to fill in a questionnaire about their property status, they will be subject to "home visits" from professionals from July 6.

John McDonnell, MP for Hayes and Harlington, whose constituency covers Heathrow airport, said: "The continuing blight that is being inflicted on our community is inevitably causing mounting stress amongst local residents leading to mental health problems.

"No community should be treated so callously like this. The solution is for the government to have the courage to say once and for all that there will be no 3rd runway."

Paul McGuinness, Chair of the No 3rd Runway Coalition, said: "It's nine years since the public were last consulted about Heathrow expansion, which the new Heathrow CEO Thomas Woldbye has likened to building a 'whole new airport'.

"It's simply too big and contentious for the public not to be properly consulted, particularly when most were under the impression that the plan had sensibly been ditched, long ago.

"Yet, contrary to the government's own consultation guidelines, the government has set the consultation period

to overlap the summer holidays season. Members of many communities are furious about this and are probably correct to assume that it's an attempt by the government to avoid, rather than facilitate, proper scrutiny of this extremely controversial project."

Rachel Sharp, Editor of the Hillingdon Herald, who leads the Back the Blockers campaign, said: "Unless something is done, thousands of people will lose their homes and communities, all for the sake of further expansion. We want to help protect our communities so we would be grateful if readers could continue to go online to support our petition."

■ Hundreds of readers have already signed the online petition on change.org to support the Herald's campaign to create a commissioner to protect the rights of residents whose homes are threatened by airport expansion.

We are calling for an independent commissioner to provide unbiased monitoring and to assess whether expansion plans meet all four requirements previously set for any project involving a third runway.

This is part of our Back The Blockers campaign which was launched at the end of last year following the Government's announcement vowing to back the builders rather than the 'blockers' at Heathrow.

Back the Blockers was launched in December outside Parliament with the support of local MPs David Simmonds and John McDonnell, as well as Lord Randall of Uxbridge.

To support our petition: Scan the QR code below or go to change.org and search Heathrow commissioner.

Alternatively, you can go to <https://c.org/sscfh7RZY> or follow the link at hillingdonherald.co.uk



■ High-level support: (From left) MP John McDonnell, Lord Randall and MP David Simmonds backed our campaign at its launch in December. Below, the QR code for readers

Picture: Beowulf Mayfield.



■ Vespa adventures: vital funds have been raised

Picture: Supplied by the Hillingdon Stroke Support Group

Rome via Florence

by JIGYASA SINGH

A MAN rode a Vespa to Rome in aid of the Hillingdon Stroke Support Group.

Ricky Mills, of Eastcote, a committee member and organiser for Hillingdon Stroke Support Group, attended the classic annual Vespa meeting in Rome, raising nearly £1000 for the Hillingdon Group.

Mr Mills flew to Pisa, collected a Vespa, and rode to Rome via Florence, and raised funds from attendees in Rome, which attracts thousands of enthusiasts each summer.

To help raise more money, a Just Giving Page was set up, along with a 'guess the mileage' competition.

After the Rome event at the Vespa Piaggio factory, Mr Mills and his friend rode on to Assisi and further north to Rimini on the Adriatic coast.

After a well deserved few days off, after riding through very high temperatures, the pair returned to the starting point of Pisa.

It is hoped the funds will be used to facilitate a subsidised Christmas meal out for around 40-50 stroke survivors, as well as an evening out to the Royal Albert Hall.

A spokesperson for Hillingdon Stroke Support Group said: "We are very grateful to Mr Mills for his intrepid travels and raising such vital funds and awareness of us.

"If you would like to support us, or know anyone recovering from a Stroke who would benefit being in our group, please make contact."

■ Hillingdon Stroke Support Group is self funded. They are supported by The Stroke Association. They offer support and companionship to individuals who have had a Stroke, families and carers meeting on a weekly basis. All are welcome.

Tories win in delayed West ward elections

by RYAN GURNETT

HILLINGDON Conservatives enjoyed a comfortable victory in the delayed election in the Hillingdon West ward to maintain a strong majority on the borough council.

Following the death of Reform UK candidate Shaun Cooling, the election was postponed to June 18, when the incumbent Conservative councillors, Adam Bennett, and newly-elected Mayor of Hillingdon, Reeta Chamdal defended their seats by sizable margins from third placed Tiff Beales of Labour, and fourth placed Margaret Forrest of Reform UK.

This result has helped maintain the overall clear majority for the Hillingdon Conservatives on the council with 31 seats on Hillingdon Council, compared to 16 for Labour, 4 for Reform UK, 1 for the Green Party, and one seat held by an independent.

The ruling Tory group is now led by Steve Tuckwell – South Ruislip councillor, and former Uxbridge and South Ruislip MP.

Waste site set to grow in Autumn

by RYAN GURNETT

THE first stage of an expansion to Harefield Civic Amenity Site is set to begin this Autumn.

Access to the site, which accepts almost all forms of domestic waste, should improve with a widening of New Years Green Lane.

While a section of New Years Green Lane immediately south of the site will be temporarily closed for the works, access will remain from the north on Harvil Road.

This should enable Hillingdon Council's next phase to begin, which would expand the site to new land, with existing unused buildings demolished to make room for new staff facilities, and education hub, and recycling bays for items such as furniture, small electricals, and bikes.

Councillor Wayne Bridges, Hillingdon Council's Cabinet Member for Residents Services, said: "These improvements will significantly enhance road safety and ease traffic flow in the area making access to the site easier for our residents."

"We have worked in partnership with the West London Waste Authority to fund the road improvement works which will, in turn, help to support better recycling in the borough, and we'd like to thank the authority for its support."

■ Do you have a story for the Hillingdon Herald?
Contact us at:
hillingdonherald@gmailcom



■ New gym equipment: Students and staff at the Willows Academy Trust in July

Picture: Harleen Banipal

School has field day as charity funds new outdoor gym

by HARLEEN BANIPAL

STUDENTS and staff celebrated the opening of a new outdoor gym after a charity stepped in to fund it.

On Monday July 6, The Willows School Academy Trust in Hayes officially opened the brand-new gym with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The equipment has been built in the

school field thanks to the funding of the READY charity.

The Headteacher, Malcolm Shaw, spoke about how the idea for the outdoor gym was suggested by the students who expressed their desire for more opportunities to stay active during playtimes.

He said their enthusiasm sparked the project, and he recognised the teamwork that made the installation

possible. The ceremony on July 6 was also joined by representatives from READY Charity, Chairperson Moira Morgan, Trustee Geraint Morgan, and Vinny Codrington.

School Improvement Consultant Charlotte Harrison praised the impact of the new equipment saying: "The new outdoor gym equipment is a fantastic addition to the school and will provide pupils with enjoyable

opportunities to be active, build their confidence and support their physical and emotional wellbeing.

"It is fantastic that the READY charity were willing to support in helping to create a resource that will benefit pupils for many years to come."

The equipment is now fully installed at The Willows Academy Trust in Hayes and is ready for pupils to enjoy during playtimes.

Post Office moves to a temporary new home

by ZARA ASHRAF

UXBRIDGE town centre's post office officially closed at the end of May 2026, but two temporary counters are now due to open on Thursday, August, 6 from 9am at The Civic Centre.

They will be located at the top of the stairs and ramp, near the Uxbridge Library's entrance, and will offer 95 per cent of the services available at any permanent location, says Hillingdon Council.

A permanent branch will be sought later in the year, according to post office bosses.

The opening hours will be: 9am to 5:30pm Monday to Friday, and 9am to 1pm on Saturdays.

As we reported in our last edition, the post office was due to be relocated after plans to redevelop the site location on Uxbridge High Street.

The facility was formerly located on the top floor of TG Jones on Uxbridge High Street.

An application to redevelop 148-154 Uxbridge High Street was approved in April 2025 by Hillingdon Council's cross-party Planning Committee.

Now, in an updated statement to The Hillingdon Herald, a Post Office Ltd spokesperson said: "A temporary Post Office for Uxbridge is due to open at



■ Site for sore feelings: The former Uxbridge Post Office location

Picture: Zara Ashraf

The Civic Centre, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW, on Thursday 6 August at 9am. This will restore service to the town centre. It will be based very close to Uxbridge library that also moved into Hillingdon Council's Civic Centre last year."

They added: "We are still working towards a permanent Uxbridge Post Office at a new location."

Councillor Steve Tuckwell, Leader of Hillingdon Council, said in a statement: "We know thousands of residents relied

on Uxbridge Post Office, so it was only right that we take decisive action."

He added: "As soon as we were informed that the Uxbridge Branch was closing, we contacted the Post Office and offered the Civic Centre as a temporary location."

Cllr Tuckwell said: "We've worked hard to secure a solution for residents and ensure minimal disruption."

Local Labour MP Danny Beales launched a petition earlier in the year

on his social media platforms to gather support and keep the post office open in town.

Mr Beales told Parliament on March 24: "I wish to present a petition about the imminent closure of the post office on Uxbridge High Street."

"With no plans for an alternative provision, this has left many of my constituents devastated, especially those vulnerable people in my constituency who rely on this vital service."

He said in a statement to the Herald in June: "I know how angry residents are over this decision, with over 1,000 signing my petition, which I then presented in the Houses of Parliament."

On July 31, 2026, Mr Beales posted a campaign update on his Facebook social media page.

He said: "A temporary Post Office is opening at the Civic Centre from 6th August."

He added: "It is good to see some services returning to Uxbridge but this is a temporary fix, not a permanent solution."

"As promised, I will continue to push for a permanent town centre location for residents."

■ Any changes relating to Post Office branches can be found here: <https://www.postofficeviews.co.uk/>

Still innovating six decades on

by PROFESSOR ANDREW JONES
Vice Chancellor,
Brunel University of London

WHEN Harold Wilson's government established the new generation of universities in the 1960s, the ambition was not simply to create more places for students. It was to create a different kind of university – one that would equip graduates with the skills, knowledge and practical experience needed for a rapidly changing society and economy. Brunel University was created in 1966 with precisely that mission, and 60 years later it remains one of the UK's most distinctive institutions because of its commitment to educational innovation and student success.

Throughout its history, Brunel has consistently challenged traditional assumptions about university education. While many institutions focused primarily on academic study, Brunel championed the idea that higher education should prepare students not only to understand the world but to shape it. Its founding ethos was rooted in technology, industry engagement and practical application, reflecting a belief that universities should help solve society's most pressing challenges and support economic growth.

No innovation better illustrates this philosophy than Brunel's pioneering role in placement education. The university helped popularise the "sandwich degree" model in the United Kingdom, combining academic learning with extended periods of employment in industry. Long before employability became a central concern across the higher education sector, Brunel recognised that students benefit enormously from experiencing professional environments while they study. This approach enables graduates to leave university with not only a degree but also practical experience, professional networks and a deeper understanding of the workplace. Today, Brunel remains one of the largest providers of placement education in the UK.

Brunel's student-centred approach has always been closely linked to its strong relationships with industry. Brunel's educational model has been shaped by collaboration with employers, ensuring that curricula remain relevant and responsive to changing economic and technological needs. Rather than viewing business and academia as separate worlds, Brunel has sought to bring them together, creating opportunities for students to learn from real-world challenges and engage with organisations ranging from multinational corporations to SMEs and innovative start-ups. This philosophy reflects the vision articulated by Wilson in his famous "white heat of technology" speech, which called for universities to play a more active role in supporting innovation and national prosperity.

The roots of this approach go back even further. Brunel's predecessor, Acton Technical College, was established to serve the growing industrial communities of West London, including Park Royal and the Great West Road corridor. The connection between education, skills and industry has therefore been present throughout the institution's history. While the nature of industry has transformed over the decades – from manufacturing and engineering to digital technologies, artificial intelligence and advanced healthcare – the principle has remained constant: education should enable students to contribute meaningfully to society and the economy.

Brunel's educational success has also been driven by its willingness to evolve alongside wider changes in society. During the past sixty years, higher education has expanded dramatically. Universities no longer serve a small elite but educate people from increasingly diverse backgrounds and life experiences. Brunel has embraced this change, building an inclusive learning environment that welcomes students from across the UK and around the world. The university's highly international community exposes students to different cultures, perspectives and ways of thinking, helping to prepare them for careers in an interconnected global economy.

The digital revolution has similarly transformed the student experience. When Brunel was founded, research and learning relied on paper records, physical libraries and face-to-face communication. Today, students access vast digital resources, collaborate across continents and use powerful technologies that were unimaginable in the 1960s. Brunel has adapted continuously to these changes, investing in digital learning environments and ensuring students gain the technological literacy required by modern employers. Brunel recognises that digital capability is no longer the preserve of specialist disciplines but an essential skill for graduates in almost every field.

Now, as Brunel celebrates its sixtieth anniversary, another technological transformation is underway. Artificial intelligence is beginning to reshape education in much the same way that digital technologies transformed learning a generation ago. Rather than resisting this change, Brunel is embracing the opportunity it presents. New AI tools can support students and researchers by undertaking routine tasks such as literature reviews, data analysis and proofreading. This enables learners to concentrate on higher-level activities such as critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving and the synthesis of new ideas. The ability to work effectively alongside intelligent technologies is becoming an essential graduate capability, and Brunel is taking the lead in preparing its students for this future.

Importantly, Brunel's educational innovation has never been driven by technology alone. The university's greatest achievement has been its ability to combine technological advancement with a strong



■ Professor Andrew Jones, Vice-Chancellor of Brunel University of London

Picture: Brunel University of London

focus on people. Whether through placement learning, industry collaboration, entrepreneurship support or the adoption of new teaching methods, the objective has always been to help students realise their potential and make a positive contribution to society.

As higher education enters a new era characterised by artificial intelligence, global connectivity and accelerating change, the challenges facing today's students may be very different from those encountered by Brunel's first cohort in 1966. Yet the qualities they need remain remarkably similar: adaptability, curiosity, creativity, technical competence and the confidence to apply knowledge in the real world.

For 60 years, Brunel University has sought to develop those qualities in its students. It has done so by challenging conventions, embracing innovation and maintaining a clear focus on the practical value of education. That commitment has shaped generations of graduates and helped establish Brunel's reputation as a university where learning extends beyond the classroom and where innovation is not simply studied but lived.

As it looks towards its next 60 years, Brunel remains true to its founding purpose: preparing students to thrive in a world shaped by technological change and enabling them to become the innovators, leaders and problem-solvers of tomorrow.



Graduates celebrate



■ Left: Herald reporter Jigyasa Singh; right: Herald features editor Sana Natalia; centre: Journalism students ready to receive their degree certificates

Pictures: Wulfie Mayfield and Rachel Sharp





John Bates sitting on a camera dolly on the set of ITV's *You and Me* in May 2022

Picture: John Bates

by EDWARD PURVIS

AS well as celebrating 60 years as a university institution this year, over the decades Brunel University campus has also cultivated an impressive record as a filming location for everything from Stanley Kubrick blockbusters to commercials for Haribo.

To learn more about Brunel's six decades of filming history, I sat down with the university's unofficial film archivist John Bates.

John's interest in film has spanned much of his life. From visiting Pinewood Studios with his dad as a child, to buying his first camera at 14 to film events at his school. It seemed only right that he was given the chance to work on *A Clockwork Orange* while he was employed at his first job at Brunel when Stanley Kubrick's crew came to campus in 1970.

Throughout an extensive career at Brunel John has always kept his love for film and since 2012 has made it his mission to chronicle every piece of professional filming ever done on Brunel's campus.

As well as being able to witness many filming crews at work on campus first hand during his time working at Brunel, John has also spent countless hours working with the archive team at Brunel, and even more countless hours sitting down and watching shows to

find in some cases just a few moments of campus screentime. John has so far been able to record 108 different films, TV shows, and commercials as being filmed on campus. Brunel has seen its fair share of famous faces on campus over the years, including Liverpool's own Stephen Graham in Sky's *Code 404*, and the legendary Ewan McGregor in *Zoe*.

As well as being able to bear witness to an extensive blooper reel, including seeing Steven Graham stall a car on set, or watching Gerard Butler's stunt double parachute into the wrong seat of an open top car, John's experience has also proved of vital importance to the students of Brunel University.

By filming or photographing crews at work on campus, with the permission of the production team, John is then able to use it as teaching material for students in order to show them real world examples of how films are made, including key lessons such as how lighting can be controlled on set, or how cameramen are positioned and moved while filming.

Brunel's history and continued use as a filming location remains not just a source of great interest for film aficionados like John, but is also immensely valuable to Brunel as an institution, allowing the university to offer students and staff a uniquely close proximity to filming events right on their doorstep.

Films and shows with a glimpse of the campus

Brunel University of London has been used as a filming location for decades, largely because of its distinctive Brutalist architecture. While many TV programmes, adverts and music videos have filmed there, the feature films and other notable productions known to have been shot at least partly on campus are:

The Rise and Rise of Michael Rimmer (1970)
A Clockwork Orange (1971)
Hollow Reed (1996)

Me Without You (2001)
Zoe (2018)
The Crown
Big Boys
Silent Witness
Cuckoo
Informer
Holby Blue
Inspector Morse (episode: *Fat Chance*)
The Comic Strip Presents... (episode: *Summer School*)
Truth Seekers
Trigger Point

Brunel and the big screen



Code 404 TV series, featuring Stephen Graham and Daniel Mays

Picture: John Bates



Brunel's Brutalist lecture centre building featured in *A Clockwork Orange*

Picture: Wulfie Mayfield



■ Main picture: an aerial photo of the Brunel University of London campus in the 21st century. Inset: inside one of the many glasshouses that stood on the site in the first half of the 20th century

Pictures: Brunel Archives

From fragrant flowers to Brutalist architecture

by RYAN GURNETT

LOOKING at the imposing concrete structures of Brunel's modern-day campus, you would be forgiven for thinking it's never changed.

This couldn't have been further from the case. A little over 60 years ago, this small corner of Uxbridge hosted none other than three-and-a-half acres of greenhouses, part of Uxbridge Nurseries.

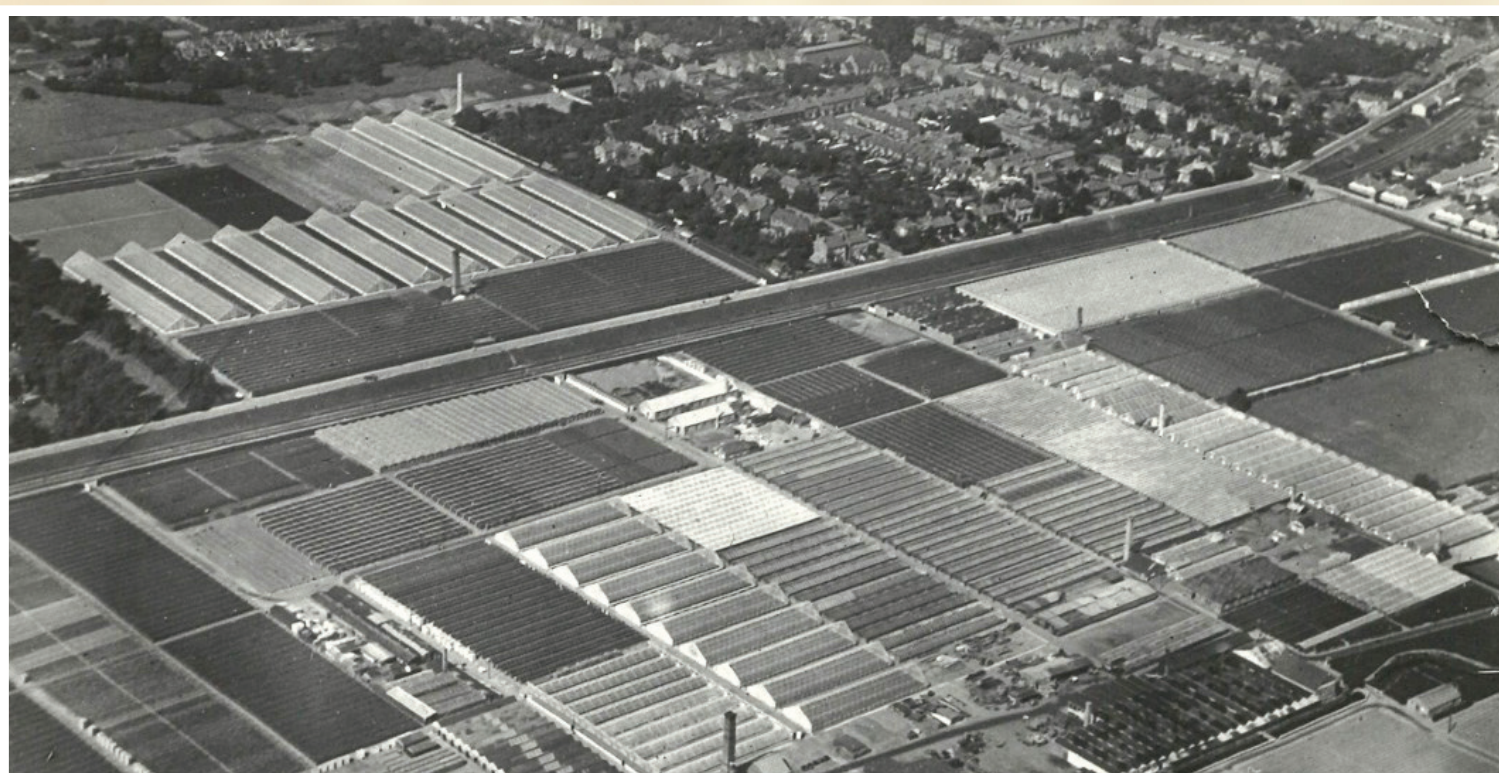
However, the post-war environment was harsh for the nurseries.

With better wages and working hours available in nearby factories, the nurseries were forced to sell much of the land by the late 1950s.

That land now houses the campus of Brunel University of London, a campus defined by its Brutalist architecture. According to Conservative peer, and lifelong Uxbridge resident, Lord Randall, these buildings divided opinion when they first went up, and it's safe to say that they still do among students.

However, from the original Grade-II listed lecture centre, to the modern Eastern Gateway building, with its innovative biomass boiler and rainwater collecting system, it's safe to say that Brunel has a thing for bold and contrasting architecture.

In any case, it's safe to say that 60 years has seen a lot of change in our little corner of Uxbridge – we can only wait and see what changes the next 60 years will bring.



■ An aerial photo of Uxbridge Nurseries

Picture: Brunel Archives



■ Borough Road College Rugby First XV from the 1929-30 season

Picture: Brunel Archives

His Kingdom outlived him

by RYAN GURNETT
and IZZI HORA

WHILE Brunel is often considered a university for engineering, its roots in education stretch back much further.

Back in 1798, Joseph Lancaster founded a school for poor boys in Borough Road, Southwark. Due to a lack of funds, this school used a monitoring system, with older boys, known as monitors, responsible for passing on knowledge to younger boys.

Ten years later, the British and Foreign Schools Society was set up from Lancaster's charity, the Royal Lancasterian Institution, with Borough Road College being set up nine years after that, in 1817.

Before the end of the 19th Century, the college had moved from Southwark to Osterley and gained national recognition for sports and athletics.

By this time, Maria Grey College had become established in Brondesbury.

Maria Grey, its founder, had been a proficient advocate for the establishment of education as a field of study, and the professional training of female teachers.

Suitably, the college pioneered the education of female teachers in England for both young children and secondary schools, setting up a Kindergarten teacher course following the closure of Tavistock Place College in 1883.

Following the end of the Second World War, it moved to the former Royal Naval School for Girls in Twickenham.

1976 saw Borough Road College, and Maria Grey College merged together, along with Acton and Chiswick Polytechnic, becoming the West London Institute for Higher Education.

In 1995, the Institute merged with Brunel University, adding a history of pioneering educational teaching to Brunel's offering.

● Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the namesake of Brunel University of London, was a civil and marine engineer, responsible for the design and construction of the Great Western Railway and a great number of landmarks across the UK.

Born on April 9, 1806, in Portsea, Hampshire, his father, civil engineer Marc Brunel, quickly noticed his son's aptitude for drawing and mechanics.

After completing his engineering studies in France, Brunel returned to work for his father, which kickstarted his career; at age 20, Brunel took over as resident engineer for the Thames Tunnel Project, and in 1829 began designing the Clifton Suspension Bridge, which would remain unfinished for the rest of his life.

In 1833, he was appointed line engineer for the proposed Great Western Railway, which opened to the public eight years later, and Brunel's efforts turned to the South Devon Railway, first opened in 1847.

His maritime career saw the construction of the SS Great Western, the first steamship purpose-built for crossing the Atlantic.

Following its success, Brunel designed the SS *Great Britain*, which was the largest ship in the world at the time of her creation; until the early 20th century, it was surpassed in size only by his later project the SS *Great Eastern*.

Brunel encountered numerous financial difficulties during his career, the stress of which he detailed in a private journal; he passed away on September 15, 1859, aged just 44, after suffering a stroke.

His projects, however, far outlive him; biographer Annabel Gillings writes that his work "altered the lives of every person in Britain, and millions abroad".

In a 2002 BBC public poll to select the 100 Greatest Britons, Brunel was voted second only to Winston Churchill.



■ A selection of silver badges used to denote school monitors at Borough Road School in the early 19th Century

Picture: Brunel Archives

‘Focusing on the real world helps students earn more’

STUDENTS from Brunel University of London earn 16.4 per cent more than the median salary five years after graduation.

That is one of the proud claims of the university which – as it celebrates its 60th year – set out a list of reasons why alumni flourish in the real world.

The university claims that its focus on a workplace-like environment sets graduates up to flourish in the workplace.

The university also focuses heavily on entrepreneurship schemes with 61 companies founded by graduates with the help of Brunel and 1100 students engaged in entrepreneurship programmes.

Geoffrey Rodgers, Pro Vice Chancellor of Enterprise and Employment at Brunel University, said: “Students’ backgrounds don’t define their potential. We help students open doors, create opportunities and achieve extraordinary things.

“Students graduate with more than a degree. They become career-ready from day one. We help them gain experience, contacts and confidence, plus skills that work in the real world.

“The world doesn’t stand still, and neither do our courses. We keep them up to date, so students graduate ready for the opportunities ahead. For example, AI is built into students’ learning experience, helping them develop practical skills, boost their employability and prepare for a rapidly-changing world.”

Professor Rodgers added: “Our facilities mirror real-life. Examples include the Newsroom, the Moot Court, where law students act out courtroom dramas, and advanced medicine, health and social care simulation facilities.”

A Student Professional Development Team provides students with expert support. This includes:



- Career guidance including workshops and 1:2:1 support
- The opportunity to learn a language for free
- Opportunities to meet potential employers at careers fairs
- A Jobs Board

The university provides career support for three years after graduation. More than 95 per cent of courses include a placement option which is a way for students to gain professional experience, make industry connections and stand out to employers.

The on-campus Job Shop helps students find part time work which fits around their studies, including opportunities at Brunel itself.

The university also partners with a leading city law firm to offer a seven-year national award-winning training scholarship which offers would-be lawyers from disadvantaged backgrounds vital financial and practical support, paid work experience and mentoring.

The Brunel Professional Career Mentoring Programme (PCMP) is a flagship initiative supporting students from underrepresented backgrounds to achieve strong graduate outcomes.

Targeting penultimate and final year undergraduates, the programme combines tailored support with meaningful employer engagement to help students build confidence, networks and career readiness.

Founded in 2003, the PCMP has grown from six participants to 146 students in 2024–25. Using an in-house, personalised matching process, students are paired with mentors and benefit from one-to-one mentoring, mock interviews and workplace visits that provide valuable insight into professional environments.

The programme delivers measurable impact. Participants are more likely to progress into highly skilled employment or study and less likely to be unemployed compared to their peers, says the university. Partnerships, including a collaboration with Goldman Sachs, further enhance opportunities.

Meanwhile, *The Hillingdon Herald* newspaper, founded five years ago, is an acclaimed initiative, allowing student journalists to work for a real-world local print newspaper. The Herald is produced by students as part of their studies but, uniquely, has become accepted by a large part of the community as the newspaper for the borough.

Editor Rachel Sharp, a senior lecturer in journalism, said: “The Herald is just one example of how this university attempts to apply workplace practices in the classroom. Students who work for the newspaper are able to apply for editorial jobs after university with a portfolio of cuttings of published work, which surely gives them a much better chance of finding employment.”

Start with Clearing

It's meant to be



Brunel graduates earn, on average, 16.4% more than the sector median five years after graduation

LEO 2026



Join Brunel this September!
Check out our courses or arrange a visit - we're ready when you are.
brunel.ac.uk/clearing

Brunel
University of London

Looking back at 1966

Student reporter HARLEEN BANIPAL takes a look at the state of the world and notable events that were going on when Brunel University was founded

IN 1966, the average house price in England was generally between £2,000 and £3,840, depending on the property type and regional index used.

For context, the average national wage at the time was roughly £798 per year, meaning a typical home cost about three to four times the average annual salary. Current day England is £291,000.

In 1966 England, prior to decimalisation in 1971, prices were dictated in pounds (£), shillings (s), and pence (d). For context, £1 equalled 20 shillings, and 1 shilling equalled 12 pence. Here are the typical food prices from that era:

- * Loaf of white bread: ~ 1s 5d (roughly £3 in today's terms)
- * Pint of milk: ~ 10d
- * Butter (per pound): ~ 3s 6d to 4s
- * Tea (quarter-pound): ~ 1s 6d to 2s
- * Eggs (per dozen): ~ 3s 6d to 4s
- * Potatoes (per pound): ~ 2.5d to 4d

The country was younger (1 million more under-15s), there were 10 times more immigrants from the Caribbean, India and Pakistan.

Unemployment in London in 1966 was historically very low, sitting between one per cent and two per cent for much of the decade. The national rate was also very low, averaging about 2.47 per cent for the year. This era was a time of an economic boom with many jobs.

London's current unemployment rate is 6.6 per cent, which sits notably higher than the UK national average of 4.9 per cent. Youth unemployment is a major driver of this figure, with joblessness among 16 to 24-year-olds surging to nearly 25 per cent in the capital.

This season is notable for Liverpool winning the title – their



Brunel students could cash cheques at the university's branch of the Midland Bank

Picture: Brunel Archives

seventh overall – with only 14 squad players.

In 1966, the world was shaped by key figures. Major leaders included President Lyndon B. Johnson in the US, Premier Mao Zedong in China, and General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev in the USSR. In the UK, Harold Wilson served as Prime Minister, while Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister of India.

FA Charity Shield: Shared between Liverpool and Manchester United. The traditional season curtain-raiser ended in a 2-2 draw between the two.

The Rolling Stones released *Aftermath*, their first album to be composed solely of original Mick Jagger/Keith Richards compositions.

After nearly four years of non-stop touring The Beatles took the decision to focus exclusively on studio work. The band's last concert before a paying audience was at Candlestick Park, San

Francisco, on August 29.

David Hockney completed several of his famous swimming pool paintings, including *The Splash* and *Peter Getting Out of Nick's Pool*.

Henry Cooper fought Mohammed Ali (then known as Cassius Clay) for the world heavyweight boxing crown at Arsenal's Highbury Stadium, although the American won when the fight was stopped in the sixth round.

Pop culture in 1966

After the England team won the World Cup the trophy went missing. It was found in a South London hedge by a dog called Pickles.

Graham Hill won the Indianapolis 500.

Barclays launched the Barclaycard – the first all purpose credit card.

First Superdrug store opened in Putney.

Rick Astley, Gordon Ramsey, Helena Bonham Carter, Teddy Sherringham, Robin Wright, Janet Jackson, Mike Tyson, Adam Sandler were born.

Glasgow Airport opened.

Jack Brabham won the F1 World Drivers Championship.

Henry Cooper fought Cassius Clay (Muhammed Ali) at Highbury Stadium- fight was called off after six rounds.

BBC announced plans to broadcast in colour

Canada has its first ever colour broadcast

The M31 Opened

Hit songs

We Can Work It Out – The Beatles

These Boots Are Made For Walking – Nancy Sinatra

Paperback Writer – The Beatles

19th Nervous Breakdown – The Rolling Stones

A rocking roster of music at Brunel

by WILL FREEMAN

AS counterculture was in full swing in the 1960s, bands such as The Nice passed through Brunel University, laying the foundations for psychedelic and progressive rock. The university was young, but there was already an appetite for music on campus.

At the end of the 60s, Pink Floyd passed through Brunel showcasing their early psychedelic sound that would inspire many bands and open people's minds to what rock music can be.

Around this time, students also saw one of the earliest Genesis gigs before the band had Phil Collins on drums and became the progressive rock titans of the 80s. Progressive rock defined much of the counterculture of the early 70s, big bombastic tracks of opulence, with bands such as Emerson, Lake & Palmer, Yes, Uriah Heep, Genesis, Soft Machine, Renaissance, Caravan, Hawkwind, Van der Graaf Generator and ELO playing and helping to define music. ELO's early gig helped them to define their direction as a legendary band. Elton John also played during this time with his signature glam rock sound and plenty of flamboyant stage moves. Legendary acts such as The Kinks visited after already securing their place in music history.

The ever presentness of progressive rock came crashing down as punk came along. A back to basics approach to music with grit, speed and political defiance. The Jam played one of their earliest gigs at Brunel in 1976.

The Sex Pistols, who defined the public perception of punk, played Brunel when banned from most venues in the country due to their bombastic style and rowdy shows. The show at Brunel resulted in the band causing



Left: Charlie Dore's Back Pocket; right: The Blue Jays in performance at Brunel University

Picture: Brunel Archives

£300 worth of damage to the venue with many people trying to get in without tickets. The Stranglers played too with their high-energy shows.

Other notable punk acts who played include Wire, The Adverts, The Undertones, The Rezillos and Magazine. As punk started incorporating more synths and other influences, it gradually transformed into post punk with Joy Division, with their hypnotic bleak pulsing rhythms, leading the charge. Other notable acts such as The Human League helped to define the sound by playing Brunel. Metal even came to campus with early shows from Motorhead and Iron Maiden helping create the new wave

of British heavy metal. The politically charged ska movement came to Brunel through UB40 and The Specials. The University hosted bands that challenged what music could be, with cult classic prog punk legends Cardiacs playing some shows.

As the 80s got into full swing, many iconic acts visited, with indie legends The Housemartins playing. Synth-pop pioneers Erasure brought their upbeat, danceable tracks to an appreciative crowd. As grunge started in the later 80s, bands such as Pop Will Eat Itself, Mega City Four, Jesus Jones, Gaye Bykers On Acid and Ned's Atomic Dustbin played. The indie movement and start of Britpop came to Brunel

as The Stone Roses played just before they became one of the country's most legendary bands. The other notable band that helped see Britpop into the zeitgeist was Ocean Colour Scene, who brought their Brit rock sound to Brunel.

One of the most influential bands to ever come from Brunel is the indie legends The Libertines who formed the band at Brunel. Their sound went on to influence the indie sleaze sound of the 2000s whilst creating their own genre defining anthems. Live music at Brunel may be a thing of the past but it helped shaped music and helped show why grassroots venues are so important to music.



I came. I learned. I'm still here.

by RUBY ZELENICKY

STUDENTS from across the globe have graduated from Brunel, University of London since its opening in 1966.

The past 60 years have seen tens of thousands of students graduate from Brunel. I would know – I'm one of them.

My time at Brunel began in September 2020 at the height of the covid pandemic to study my BA(Hons) Music degree. It was an interesting time, as a pandemic was something the vast majority of us hadn't experienced before.

As I'm sure you can imagine, studying in lockdown with online lectures wasn't ideal. I was luckier than most, though – I was a part of a very small cohort, and we had larger theatre spaces in the Antonin Artaud building that could fit the entire music cohort inside with social distancing measures in place. Before the second lockdown hit, all three years in the music department had joint in-person performance and composition lectures in the Antonin Artaud building's theatre.

My flute lessons and the rest of my lectures were online. I'm sure my flute teacher will agree with me when I say this, but online lessons aren't it. Neither of us would recommend faffing with Zoom settings to prevent it from messing up sound from our instruments – a regular feature of our lessons, and we don't miss it.

My biggest challenge during other online classes though? Being persistently shouted at by my cat, then seeing her casually sleeping while I wasn't in class like she hadn't been demanding attention at an inconvenient time.

Apologising to others in anticipation for my cat's shenanigans became routine. Though what also became



I came here to do some colourful flute performances. Journalism found me in the process. Picture: Wulfie Mayfield

routine was seeing everyone else's pets during lectures. The lecturers enjoyed seeing our pets on camera too, with some even asking where our pets were because they wanted to see them.

During my second year, covid restrictions properly eased and the wider student body began emerging back on campus. The September 2022 freshers' week was the first time campus had been so busy since I'd started at Brunel. "Finally", I thought, "I can DO things now with people around and not be stuck at home!"

I was able to take on more student ambassador shifts. My favour-

ite memory from the role came in October 2021, when another ambassador dragged me across the bridge over the River Pinn in a trolley while we were setting up for the following day's Open Day. I also started volunteering with Brunel Volunteers as a student volunteer, PAL Leader, and Brunel Buddy.

Admittedly, I did go a bit mental with how much stuff I was doing. But spending 99 per cent of your first year at university online with not having much to do does have that effect on you.

On top of being able to be active on campus, it was also amazing to finally see everyone around and actually talk

to people from other subjects with a varied range of interests and hobbies.

The late great Benjamin Zephaniah was someone I had the opportunity to speak with, albeit briefly, during my second year. We started talking when he was heading to a lecture he was about to teach in Artaud, and I was in the building's foyer with my flute and some scores on the reception table. We started talking when he saw my flute and music.

Benjamin was one of the first lecturers outside of the music department I'd spoken with, and hearing him talk about his work and how he enjoyed incorporating the saxophone into it was fascinating to hear. I met Wulfie Mayfield (our Chief Subeditor) in a similar way.

Picture the scene. It's November 2021. I'm standing in the Artaud building foyer by the reception table and checking my emails on my phone.

Wulfie walks in and starts heading to what is now the old newsroom (which we lost with the Artaud's closure – thanks RAAC). Out of the corner of my eye, I see him stop and turn to look at me. I slowly look up at him, wondering what's going on.

"Are you the tuba player?", Wulfie asks, pointing to a picture of a tuba player on the wall next to me.

"No, I'm a flautist. But I do study music here!", I reply – to which Wulfie asks, "Do you know Colin Riley?". I did, as he was my composition lecturer. That got us talking, and we did continue chatting over the coming months.

Then one Wednesday in February 2022, he asked if I'd be interested in being the Music Editor for this paper.

Considering I spent three years in the role (though with a different surname), and that I'm writing this article, I'm sure you've already guessed what my answer

was. I rolled up to the newsroom that Friday for my first shift with the paper.

Since then, Rachel Sharp (the Editor) and Steve Cohen (Head of News) have always said I "turned up to the newsroom one day out of the middle of nowhere and stayed with us since", which I've always found quite funny.

I eventually graduated from my BA(Hons) Music degree in July 2023, and I then went on to do a gap year at Brunel. I was asked if I would like to do the NCTJ Level 5 Diploma in Journalism while I was Music Editor, and completed it in September 2024 a few days before starting my MMus at Royal Holloway.

You'd think a Masters at another university and no longer being Music Editor for this paper would mean I stopped coming to Brunel. Not quite – I'm still here.

I'm now what you could call a 'Newsroom Squatter'. I've continued coming into the newsroom every Friday, perhaps made easier by the fact I took on another part time/fixed term job at Brunel to do alongside my Masters. For a laugh, I even printed out a cardboard cutout of myself, which now lives in the newsroom. However, it's the banter we have that I keep coming in for.

It's been nearly six years since I started my undergrad here, and three years since I graduated.

The fact that I've kept coming back to Brunel for various things is proof that once you study at Brunel, you never truly leave.

If someone was to tell me six years ago that I'd still be here, I really wouldn't believe you.

But my time at Brunel has been great, and the experiences I've had remain unmatched. I'm sure the other alumni on this page can say the same.

Views from the SHARP alumni end

Alumni spoke to *The Hillingdon Herald* to speak about their student years at Brunel University



ARIANA ABABE

London-based journalist from Afghanistan, founder of Ariana Magazine

Journalism with NCTJ Level 5 Diploma in Journalism (2020)

Picture: @biographce on Instagram

"MY EXPERIENCE at Brunel was amazing.

I was the President of the Brunel Afghan Society from 2018 to 2019, and together with my committee, I organised various events throughout the year and raised funds to help build a water pump in Kabul, Afghanistan. The aim of the Afghan Society was to educate both Afghan and non-Afghan students about Afghanistan, its culture, history, and current issues. We hosted a range of

events including game nights, Nowruz (Afghan New Year) celebrations featuring Afghan music and traditional Attan dance, and fashion shows showcasing traditional Afghan clothing. It was incredibly rewarding to see students from different backgrounds attend and learn about the Afghan culture.

Studying Journalism was a very positive experience for me. I was supported by amazing lecturers and staff, and I developed valuable skills, including shorthand. Although it was challenging, it was a highly rewarding accomplishment. Starting my first year at Brunel was challenging, as it was a big transition from high school to university. I didn't know anyone on the course, so I had to make new friends and start fresh. However, Brunel helped me build new connections and grow in confidence, particularly through my role as the President of the Brunel Afghan Society.

My father was a radio journalist in Afghanistan, which was one of the main inspirations for me to study Journalism at university. I also remember receiving advice and motivation from Steve Cohen, who encouraged me to stick to my niche, in relation to Afghanistan. My mother has also been a great support to me, her motivation has played an important role in my work. My parents would often share stories from Afghanistan, which helped me stay connected to my heritage.

Studying Journalism inspired me to create a magazine about Afghanistan that would showcase both its beauty and its important social issues. During a magazine module at university, we were given the opportunity to choose our own topic, and I chose Afghanistan.

This led me to realise there was no English-language magazine dedicated to the country. From that moment, I developed the idea of launching a platform that would present Afghanistan beyond the headlines, highlighting its culture, history, and the lived experiences of Afghan people around the world.

My advice for those studying Journalism, or any subject, is to have a purpose for your studies. Choose something you are passionate about, something that can make a positive difference and help others.

For those who are graduating, don't give up. Finding a job or achieving your goals can sometimes feel difficult, but this comes one step at a time. Stay patient, keep working hard, and remain committed to your goals. If you're unsure about what to do next, there is still time. Don't think it's the end if things don't go according to plan. You can explore different paths, try new opportunities, and discover interests you may not have considered before. Keep moving forward and stay open to new possibilities."

● Since graduating, Ariana has worked

for publications including MyLondon and the BBC. She was awarded the Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award by West London Business 2022, Outstanding Young Person of the Year 2022 by Harrow's Heroes, and Young Entrepreneur of the Year finalist by Sisters in Business in 2023.

LAURENCE RICKARD

Actor, perhaps best known for his roles in 'Horrible Histories'

BA Drama & Film and Television Studies (1999) Honorary Doctorate of Humanities (2024)

"I STUDIED at the Twickenham Campus, which has since been turned into flats, so it's place that now exists only in my memory (though I'm told that the flats are very nice). It was a tiny campus, just the faculty of arts and the Rambert Dance School – so all drama students, artists and ballerinas.

Suffice to say there were very few fights in the student union, though the Karaoke sometimes got a bit spicy. The admin block was an old stately home right on the river – it was the most beautiful building, which took some of the sting out of going to beg for coursework extensions. Mainly though I remember the feeling of being with so many people into the same things – people as ex-

cited by cameras and editing and messing around as I was.

The Film & TV component of my degree has been hugely useful through my career. There are fundamentals I learnt in my video production modules that I still employ to this day.

And it has meant I've been able to throw around terms like 'diegesis' and 'kuleshov effect' in way that has made me seem far smarter than I really am.

I got into television with a friend I met at Brunel and many of my year have remained in various parts of the industry. We all met up recently to go and see a former Brunelian in the West End.

I even came back to Brunel to help tutor those modules, so there's probably an entire generation of filmmakers who still think of me of a magical sage to whom they owe everything.

"That's certainly how I like to be thought of."

Speaking of his time during his undergraduate studies at Brunel during his honorary doctorate award speech, Larry said 'buy a mug' while showing the mug he bought at his first graduation.

"I still have both the original 1999 vintage and the 2024 one that I was given on the day of my doctorate.

They sit side-by-side in my cupboard. I reserve them for Oxbridge visitors whose mugs have long since cracked and faded."

FOOTBALL'S COMING BACK

Here is a list of upcoming fixtures for the new season for the next two months two of our main local clubs:

Wealdstone FC

August 2026

- Saturday 8 – 15:00 – AFC Fylde (A)
- Saturday 15 – 15:00 – Harrogate Town (H)
- Tuesday 18 – 19:00 – Wolverhampton Wanderers (H) – NLC
- Saturday 22 – 12:30 – Worthing (A)
- Friday 28 – 19:45 – Carlisle United (H)
- Monday 31 – 15:00 – Sutton United (A)

September 2026

- Saturday 5 – 15:00 – Kidderminster Harriers (H)
- Saturday 12 – 15:00 – Boston United (A)
- Tuesday 15 – 19:45 – FC Halifax Town (H)
- Saturday 19 – 12:30 – Tamworth (A)
- Saturday 26 – 15:00 – Gateshead (H)
- Tuesday 29 – 19:45 – Forest Green Rovers (A)

Uxbridge FC

August 2026

- Saturday 8 – Chippenham Town (H)
- Tuesday 11 – Havant and Waterlooville (A)
- Saturday 15 – Gosport Borough (A)
- Saturday 22 – Taunton Town (H)
- Saturday 29 – Bath City (A)
- Monday 31 – Wimborne Town (H)

September 26

- Saturday 5 – Emirates FA Cup 1Q
- Saturday 12 – Chichester City (H)
- Saturday 19 – Emirates FA Cup 2Q
- Tuesday 22 – Hanwell Town (A)
- Saturday 26 – Isuzu FA Trophy 3Q
- Tuesday 29 – Basingstoke Town (H)

Dear Diary... how World Cup 2026 came to Hillingdon

by HARLEEN BANIPAL
JASLEEN BANIPAL
& RUBY RYDQUIST

The World Cup opened in dramatic fashion way back on June 11 with ten-man Mexico beating nine-man South Africa but for many fans back home, the tournament didn't really start until England took to the field. So it was the job of our Three Cub Reporters to follow the Three Lions as they burst onto our screens and consciousness in Hillingdon...

June 17: England v Croatia

We have been going to pubs and bars to follow England's World Cup journey. The bar of choice is Bar Italia in Uxbridge town centre. Despite the late starts, England fans in Uxbridge are very keen to cheer on the Three Lions as they look to win their second world cup after 60 years.

Even before we entered the pub we could see England flags hung up on houses, cars and shop windows, people were obviously very excited. When we got in and it got closer to kick off, many fans came in with their England jerseys on safe to say they were match ready.

England's first game against Croatia saw four goals scored and two conceded. With England playing well, hopes and spirits were lifted creating a great atmosphere. Bar Italia staff contributed greatly to the lively atmosphere, with Max excitedly watching the game from the bar while pouring a pint, to Andrew, who referred to himself as 'The Ref' blowing his whistle at the first penalty.

To really solidify his role, he held up a yellow card. The bar laughed and enjoyed the sight.

Throughout the entire night the bar was full of groans, cheers and then a great celebration at the end of the match. England's game against Croatia was thoroughly engaging and ending on a Pickford save was an amazing finish to tonight's game.

June 23: England v Ghana

While Jasleen and Harleen stayed home for this game, I (Ruby) decided to head out to The Fig Tree to watch this game. The place was packed and there was nowhere to sit. Two ladies who work in Bar Italia, also supporting England, accompanied me. The sweltering heat did not help with the busy pub. In all honesty, England played terribly but. Ghana's defensive play was brilliant against us. Watching us fail to score and win eventually made the game very boring.

July 1: England v DR Congo

After experiencing the heat of The Fig Tree, Ruby decided to watch the England v Congo game in Bar Italia again.



■Three cubs: Jasleen and Harleen Banipal are on the ball with Ruby Rydquist, centre

Picture: Beowulf Mayfield

The AC helped watching this intense game. The DRC played very well, giving England a stiff challenge. The lively bar was on the edge of their seats to see whether we would lose to them. It was a genuine fear. Cipenga scoring in only the seventh minute created much anxiety. However, Anthony Gordon assisting Harry Kane's two goals in the last 25 minutes filled the bar with relief and excitement. "It's coming home" was chanted loudly throughout Uxbridge, and walking past The Fig Tree, we found the crowd singing Sweet Caroline.

July 6: Mexico V England

The game was in the early hours of the morning, and Ruby decided to go. It was the most stressful match to watch so far as an England fan. The game was end to end, with attacking opportunities being taken at every chance. Despite having more possession and more expected goals, Mexico went against expectations and ultimately lost to England with Kane's penalty being the deciding goal. The Metropolitan Tavern (commonly referred to as 'The Met') was full of excitement, shouting and lively conversations. The bartenders were even watching in anticipation through the rush of people busy buying drinks. All of us truly believed we would lose this match. England's team was immediately put at a disadvantage with the Azteca stadium, 1,114 Dan Burn's (7,352 feet) above sea level.

I (Ruby) have never heard a pub so loud and elated when we eventually won the match after around 20 minutes of the ball being so close to our goal. A thoroughly enjoyable game to watch with amazing vibes. The game ended bizarrely and quite sadly with Jordan

Henderson stretchered off, masked and given a yellow card without touching the ball. We wish him a speedy recovery, and reckon this will be the subject of a Trivial Pursuit question in a few years' time (i.e Who was the player booked at a World Cup and stretchered off without actually coming onto the field?) Remember when this comes up as you are playing Triv in a few years' time, you read it here first.

July 11: England v Norway

This was a fabulous but typically nervy 2-1 win for England with Jude Bellingham proving again the superstar and surprising some by outdoing the great Erling Haaland.

The rise of Norway has been the talk of the competition with the media, with Haaland emerging as a sensation.

Many people who do not even watch football have become aware of Haaland's presence because of the memes — so it was to the general joy of England fans that their boy outdid him in the quarter finals.

Just to go off on a tangent, it was interesting to note that France forward Michael Olise went to two local schools, Dr Triplett's Primary School, the Douay Martyrs School, and at age 6 played for Hayes and Yeading before joining Arsenal briefly, and decided to represent the French national team.

Semi Finals-July 14&15

This was the moment that all the hopes and dreams of England fans were cruelly dashed — as they have been for the last 60 years. How many of you thought it was 'coming home' for us, particularly after Gordon made it 1-0 against Argentina in the second half?

Ruby made it to Bar Italia in the sec-

ond half accompanied by her partner. Side-eyeing the TV the entire time, she experienced pure anxiety.

"I was never one to engage in football," she said. Yet found herself entirely engrossed in it.

We wonder how many other non-football fans were in the same boat and will suspend their love of the game for another four years when, inevitably, there will be another frenzy of hope and optimism that is bound to be dashed. Yes it brings the town and the country together — but in despair and frustration when England go so close and yet are so far to winning a trophy. It's sobering to think that the last time they won something was in the very year Brunel, our university, opened.

In other surprising news, France got knocked out by Spain in the other semi final leaving Argentina and Spain to battle it out on July 19 in New York, with Spain winning it in extra time.

There was a little bit of happy news for England, though, as they beat France in the play-off for third place in a sensational game on July 18. The Three Lions won 6-4 with Saka — a favourite player of the twins — scoring a wonderful hat-trick.

But as ever with England, it left more questions than it answered: what if the manager had picked a more aggressive attacking team for the second half against Argentina? What if Saka and Rashford had come on in that game instead of Dan Burn? What if Maradona's goal had been disallowed due to handball in 1986? Oops — we've slipped in a time tunnel and better stop now.

So no, it didn't come home, but it was fun while it lasted. See you in a pub somewhere in Uxbridge for the Euros in two years' time.

Dear Diary: How football came home to Hillingdon

■ Special report on another agonising roller coaster summer for England fans in the borough



■ Hillingdon residents celebrated each of England's goals as the Lions progressed through the competition

Pictures, above and below: Ruby Rydquist, Harleen Banipal, Jasleen Banipal. Picture, directly right: Hillingdon Council



Mbappé, Kane, Messi, Rodri and Haaland may have taken centre stage at the World Cup. But back home in Hillingdon, *The Hillingdon Herald* had its own out-of-this-world team tracking the finals and seeing how football impacted daily life in the borough over the summer.

RUBY RYDQUIST, JASLEEN BANIPAL, and HARLEEN BANIPAL, kept score in July with a special World Cup diary – see page 19.