

Letters to the Editor



Letters to the Editor should be sent to letters@thetimes.co.uk or by post to 1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF



Harry and the King

Sir, The circumstances that envelop Prince Harry are a tragic waste of talent and opportunity at an inflection point in British history (news & leading article, May 3). The moral component of national defence is in dire need of regeneration and effective civic representation. The return of the prodigal son in a happier frame of mind and with a worthy career purpose in the service of a forgiving and empathic populace would be of huge value to the country. Harry should no longer think himself accursed — 610 years on from Agincourt, St Crispin's Day might be a good starting date for a re-imagination of reconciliation and national strategy.

**David Rew**  
Former colonel, Army Reserve; Southampton

Sir, Prince Harry feels that the UK is so unsafe that he would never bring his family back to this country. Yet he lives in the United States, where nearly every adult has access to a

The local election fallout for party leaders

Sir, Sir Keir Starmer has to deliver four things no more than 12 months before the next election ("Starmer: We hear voters' anger and Labour will deliver", May 3). A general sense of increased prosperity, improved performance by the NHS, sensible and realistic policies to deal with climate change, and actions that have reduced immigration, illegal and legal. If he does not achieve these things, Nigel Farage could easily walk into Downing Street.  
**Gary Rawlinson**  
Burbage, Leics

Sir, The poet Maya Angelou said: "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." Labour must take this to heart if they want to win back voters who have turned to Reform. Elections aren't won on logic alone — people vote on emotion too. Farage connected with voters on a visceral level by tapping into widespread voter malaise. Labour can't win again just by improving policy. They must figure out how to connect better with voters on an emotional level, by listening, by empathising, and by appealing to the better angels of their nature.

**Patrick O'Kane**  
London SE22

Sir, One thing that Paul Goodman (comment, May 3) appears to overlook in his otherwise excellent analysis of the Tories' dire position is the inability of their leader, Kemi Badenoch, to make any cut-through with the public. There is nothing to suggest that she can turn this situation around even with, as Mr Goodman demands, a relentless round of media appearances, policies and enthusiasm, if she hasn't got the X factor.  
**Charles Townley**  
Hove, E Sussex

Sir, The electors of Derbyshire, Durham, Kent, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Kent, Nottinghamshire and Staffordshire have entrusted local government to Reform UK, most of whose new councillors lack experience or understanding of the responsibilities involved. This is evident from their leader's intention to "get the auditors in" ("Reform promises Musk-style cuts and an end to working from home", news, May 3). All councils are statutorily required to have annual internal and external audits, detailed reports of which are publicly available. Yet again Nigel Farage doesn't seem to know what he's talking about.

**Andy Connell**  
Town and unitary authority

councillor; former district and county council chair, Appleby-in-Westmorland, Cumbria

Sir, Nigel Farage assured us that there would be no more working from home in councils run by Reform UK. I must have missed the bit where he explained how much it will cost to have more council employees working from offices.

**Robert Ritchie**  
Ayr, South Ayrshire

Sir, After President Trump's effect on the Canadian and Australian elections perhaps Sir Keir Starmer's best chance of re-election is to go to the country while Trump is still in office. Trump's likely endorsement of Farage and Reform should ensure victory. Probably worth a try.

**Kenneth Ross**  
Auchencairn, Dumfries and Galloway

Sir, The Reform Party candidate's win by six votes is not the smallest victory in a parliamentary contest. In the general election of 1966 Harmar Nicholls, the father of the actress Sue Nicholls, won in Peterborough with a majority of three votes. This must be one of the smallest margins recorded.

**John Marriott**  
North Hykeham, Lincs

Boomer bungalows

Sir, Not all baby boomers want a bungalow (letter, May 2). Some of us are happily upsizing in our seventies, the maintenance of a bigger house and the challenge of a new garden offering enjoyable ways to stay active. I was informed by a friend, recently a hospital outpatient after a knee injury, that "bungalow legs" is now a medical term, applied to people whose leg muscles atrophy because of the lack of stairs in their homes. Walking up steps and crucially down them, which is more demanding, throughout the day provides free, safe and healthy exercise for older people. Our mother lived to the age of 86 in her own home and always said the stairs were part of her fitness routine.  
**Clare Mundy**  
Orpington, Kent

Tears on VE Day

Sir, I too remember VE Day but from the other side of the fence (letter, May 3). My mother, brother and I were watching in Hamburg from the balcony of the room we had been allocated after our flat was bombed as the British Army marched in. My mother was crying. I can only imagine the emotions going through her mind: relief that the carnage and destruction were over but also apprehension for what would become of the Germans in the aftermath.

Harry and the King

Sir, The circumstances that envelop Prince Harry are a tragic waste of talent and opportunity at an inflection point in British history (news & leading article, May 3). The moral component of national defence is in dire need of regeneration and effective civic representation. The return of the prodigal son in a happier frame of mind and with a worthy career purpose in the service of a forgiving and empathic populace would be of huge value to the country.

Harry should no longer think himself accursed — 610 years on from Agincourt, St Crispin's Day might be a good starting date for a re-imagination of reconciliation and national strategy.

**David Rew**

Former colonel, Army Reserve; Southampton



## **Background**

The trials and tribulations of Prince Harry and the Royal Family are widely exposed in the global press, and I have followed the saga with great sadness over the decades.

On 28<sup>th</sup> February 2008, I was mooching around the Transit Terminal at Khandahar military airfield in Afghanistan with a number of Royal Marines and other forces personnel. We were awaiting the Troop and Casualty Repatriation flight to Brize Norton on an RAF Tristar following my somewhat intense tour of duty as the sole Consultant General Surgeon at Camp Bastion Hospital in Helmand. The hours passed, and we were informed that we were awaiting the late arrival of one additional group of returnees.

I was somewhat bemused when a very despondent Prince Harry walked into the lounge with his personal Special Forces bodyguard and a close regimental friend. I had had no idea that he was in Theatre.

The principal focus of the flight was the welfare of a small group of severely wounded soldiers, who were being treated by the in flight anaesthetic and nursing team in the flying intensive care unit. We were on the way to a stop over at Birmingham Airport before debussing before the world's press and a special welcome from the Sun Page 3 Models at RAF Brize Norton.

Harry had considerable sympathy from everyone on the flight as the word got round as to the reason for his presence. His small group were left in peace in RAF Economy Class, pending the press frenzy on our disembarkation at Brize.

Miguel Head, who served as Press Secretary to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry and then as private secretary to Prince William from September 2008 to March 2018, takes up the narrative in an interview with Carmen Noble, which was published in “The Journalist’s Resource” on April 18<sup>th</sup> 2019, and from which I have précised the following extracts:

*“The Press deal (with the Palace and the Ministry of Defence) had been that there would be no mention at all of his deployment to Afghanistan until he was safely back. In exchange, Prince Harry would do interviews before deployment, during deployment and after deployment — but those interviews would be kept until he was safely back....”*

*The Media agreement came down to the argument that this wasn’t just about allowing Prince Harry going out and doing something that a young prince wanted to do; this was also about not endangering people around him.. .*

*Prince Harry was still very young and popular. It was only 10 years since Diana, Princess of Wales, had died. There was still a very strong sense in the country of the public, in effect, bringing the two young princes into their arms and saying, “We will look after them.”*

*That paternal sense that the public felt toward the two young princes held very true. To an extent, it still holds true to this day. And for the print press in particular, no newspaper wanted to be the one that repeated the excesses of the past and put Prince Harry in danger. And that form of reverse competition actually was what allowed it to last 10 weeks.”*

Had Harry been severely injured in service, the responsibility for keeping him alive would have devolved to the clinical team at Camp Bastion. I therefore shared that sense of paternal responsibility towards him, and that has always remained with me. The atmospherics on that Tristar flight were electric.

Miguel continued:

*“Four weeks after Prince Harry deployed to Afghanistan, the Australian magazine New Idea somehow found out that Prince Harry was in Afghanistan. They were not part of the UK media blackout agreement, and indeed they didn’t know that there was a reporting blackout. They published a very anodyne story on the front of their website saying Prince Harry was in Afghanistan.*

*We got to week 10 of the deployment, and the Drudge Report spotted the story on New Idea and so they re-published it. At that point, the Drudge Report was one of the few household names for online news sources in the U.K., there was no way we could hold the news back. The story went BOOM on their website.*

*Harry had been on a very remote base in Afghanistan. I was one of the people who greeted him when he arrived back. He was very upset and really down. He understood how and why it had happened. He was just very sad, as he had developed a close bond with his troop.*

*It was reportedly a job that he was very good at, and evidently passionate about. His deployment was suddenly cut short ... His commanding officer had tapped him on the shoulder and said, “I’m sorry, Lieutenant Wales, but this has happened” ... there’s a helicopter on its way now to pick you up ... Pack up your bag. You’re off.”*

We were welcomed back at Brize by the then Prince of Wales, Prince Charles, and by Prince William, who circulated and chatted to returnees and their families. We then scattered to the four winds. Still in desert combats, I detoured via Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham to check on the progress of one of my recent patients and his life-changing injuries.

Military loyalties are strong, and I believe that the sense of parental responsibility for Harry still remains strong across the UK despite the events and intense media coverage of his life and domestic circumstances since 2008. On Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2025, The Times published a series of articles over several pages on the latest breakdown in relationships between the King and Prince Harry, accompanied by the following leading article:

## **“The Prince of Wails**

The Duke of Sussex should find a more useful role than that of professional victim

While other men of 40 are approaching the height of their careers Prince Harry finds meaning in interminable litigation. Since the sundering of his official ties with the royal family in 2020 he has become a professional complainer, airing his grievances on camera (for a hefty fee) or in the Royal Courts of Justice in London, the nearest thing he has to a place of work. When pictures of him in this country appear he is usually dressed in a suit, emerging on to the Strand flanked by a phalanx of healthily-remunerated lawyers. The public has long ceased caring about these legal outings.

Yet on they sail, through a haze of indifference.

The fifth in line to the throne was at it again this week, asking the Court of Appeal to overturn a decision to deny him routine police protection while in this country. To be clear, Harry is not denied official protection per se, but the decision to supply it is considered case by case. Given that the prince long ago swapped royal duties for a life of ease in California financed partly by the proceeds of a ghostwritten demolition job on his family titled Spare, it might be imagined that he would quietly acquiesce in this proportionate arrangement.

But in a BBC interview yesterday Harry attacked the decision as an establishment “stitchup” and suggested, implausibly, that his lack of official protection stopped him from bringing his family to Britain. There was another tug at the nation’s heartstrings when he claimed to want “reconciliation” with his family, especially since his father’s life expectancy was uncertain due to his cancer diagnosis. Yet this supposed olive branch was accompanied by criticism of the King for not resolving the protection issue. Whatever the situation, and whoever else is hurting, Prince Harry can be depended upon to promote himself as the principal victim. True reconciliation requires the recognition that suffering is rarely exclusive.”

I felt that there was room for manoeuvre in this sorry tale if Harry could return to the UK rediscover and develop a senior representative role for the Armed Forces as a solid career decision, within which community he appeared to be happiest. This is at a time of growing international tension when the nation needed military advocacy at the highest level, given

events in Russia and elsewhere. This line of thought led me inevitably to the Shakespearean Speech of King Henry at Harfleur, which was once a staple of English literature education:

*"Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more;*

*Or close the wall up with our English dead.....*

*The game's afoot:*

*Follow your spirit, and upon this charge*

*Cry 'God for Harry, England, and Saint George!'*

I conflated this text with another of Henry's later speeches from that immortal theatre, in preparation for the battle of Agincourt:

*This day is called the feast of Crispian:*

*He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,*

*Will stand a tip-toe when the day is named...*

*From this day to the ending of the world,*

*But we in it shall be remember'd;*

*We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;*

*For he to-day that sheds his blood with me*

*Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,*

*This day shall gentle his condition:*

*And gentlemen in England now a-bed*

*Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,*

*And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks*

*That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.*

I was pleased to note that not long afterwards, the King's and Prince Harry's emissaries were photographed in public in a "private meeting", and it seemed as if a break in the bad weather might be on the horizon.

Sadly, St Crispin's Day on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2025 came and went with no public progress. We can still but hope that the winds of change will one day blow in a different direction.