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RISHI PUTS HIS FAITH IN ST JUDE*

***THAT'S BELLINGHAM, NOT THE PATRON SAINT OF LOST CAUSES...**

ANDY SILVESTER AND
JESSICA FRANK-KEYES

RISHI SUNAK and Tory candidates across England will be praying for a national morale boost when England play Serbia in the opening match of Euro 2024 this weekend.

The Prime Minister sits around 20 points back in most polls but some in his party believe a few England wins could put the country in a better mood - and perhaps a more forgiving one.

Sam Holland, the Tory candidate in Dagenham and Rainham, told *City A.M.* that "if people feel we're winning and

doing well, it creates a sense of euphoria - and that might start to have an impact on the campaign."

Evidence however is mixed that football results affect elections. Some in the Labour party blamed Harold Wilson's defeat in 1970 on England's catastrophic World Cup defeat to West Germany, complete with a series of howlers from goalkeeper Peter Bonetti, a few days beforehand. Though Wilson pooh-poohed the idea, one minister wrote that "the moment Bonetti made his third and final hash of it on Sunday, everything simultaneous began to go wrong for Labour for the following Thursday."

Philip Cowley, Professor of Politics at Queen Mary University of London, told *City A.M.* that the evidence is "very mixed" and while "it seems possible there was a late swing against Labour there were lots of other potential causes."

England will play Serbia, Denmark and Slovenia before the election, as well as a second round match if we get that far. A quarter final would be played just a day or two after the July 4 poll.

"If presumably, the hope is for a feel good factor to kick in and propel them to victory, we have to factor in that the election takes place before the quarter finals have taken place. England or

Scotland are going to have performed quite spectacularly well in any group or Round of 16 games for there to be any sort of feel good factor," Cowley continued.

Another Tory candidate, channelling his inner football pundit, told *City A.M.* that "the manager's career hangs in the balance" when asked about Rishi Sunak - and under pressure England boss Gareth Southgate.

"The next few weeks are going to be vital as we build some momentum and convince the fans to stick with the long term plan that is working," they said.

Labour will hope to avoid too many own goals with its manifesto released today.

Revolut heads for heart of Canary Wharf

LARS MUCKLEJOHN

REVOLUT has struck a deal to move its global headquarters to one of Canary Wharf's most prominent buildings, as the fintech giant grows its presence in London's financial district amid a long struggle to secure a UK banking licence.

In a boost for the banking district, the company said today that it would relocate to the YY London building, with a 10-year lease. The move is due to take place in May 2025.



While Revolut is already headquartered in Canary Wharf, moving to 7 Westferry Circus in 2018, its new base will put it at the heart of the iconic banking district and accommodate its swelling staff numbers.

Its office footprint in London is set to increase by more than 40 per cent to 113,000 square feet, taking up four floors of the new building.

Nikolay Storonsky, co-founder and chief executive of Revolut, touted the new base as being right "in the centre of London's financial district".

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LIFE & STYLE

Raymond Blanc is the original eco-minded chef, says **Daniel Edward**. It's what makes Le Manoir so special

You probably know of Raymond Blanc as the culinary Seigneur du Manoir Aux Quat'Saisons in Great Milton, where he has held two Michelin stars since opening in 1984, longer than any other manor house in the country. I'm quick to praise this achievement when I meet the culinary mastermind in his office overlooking the entrance courtyard, a compliment he humbly deflects by asking why I've taken so long to visit.

Unlike the pristine lounges and alluringly landscaped gardens, Raymond's office is a mess; creativity vignettted in mid-flow. Burgeoning ideas lean against the wall, books, bags and scraps of paper are scattered across the desk and the wall of bookshelves display a library of cookbooks from all over the world along with a smattering of ornaments: a cockerel (bien sur), a trophy, a pair of dumbbells and an impressive CD collection. It's like entering a bachelor pad from the 1990s.

Raymond has the same infectious energy now as I imagine he had as the 23 year old waiter who was fired for telling his head chef how he might improve his menu, a move which precipitated his exile from La République with no kitchen training at all. Oxford-based since 1972, he still has no formal training but for Raymond it's something instinctive.

He credits his parents for his admiration of food and respect for hard work: "My papa built his own house close to the Jura mountains; with seven to feed, the garden became everything to feed the family for a good eight months of the year. It was a cottage industry." Coming from a working class background – "I'm a peasant" – his parents taught him the value of fresh, seasonal produce from the garden and that "cooking is an act of love, no less". His formative years also taught him the importance of looking after the world – something luxury brands now call sustainability.

He regales me with stories of foraging for mushrooms and asparagus with "my friend, Rene, my best friend". Six decades on, Raymond's enthusiasm outshines even the beautifully glazed pastries set on the table



TAKE A FATHER'S DAY TRIP TO LE MANOIR TO MEET THE UK'S CULINARY KING

between us, as he describes "thousands, thousands and thousands of these little green stems with their beautiful little heads stretching towards the sunlight, their feet in the water."

"I was rich at the age of ten," he beams, detailing the rolling calendar of harvests, "morels, chanterelles, the black trumpets, the ceps, the champignons des greys, the petit gris that you smell – you hunt it with smell". His excitement is contagious, I want to go foraging for mushrooms right now. "Sometimes you would even sleep in the wood if you get lost. Ah, it was amazing."

Raymond has a unique way of making sustainability sound romantic: this isn't a spreadsheet exercise in carbon reduction, at Le Manoir – as in Raymond's rural

childhood home – "it's about creating a whole environment around it, not something presumptuous, but something beautiful."

The gardeners at Le Manoir grow over 150 varieties of vegetables, many heritage varieties, which form the foundation of the menus. As Raymond points out, this reduces the carbon footprint of the food, sure, but "if it's close to home it has better taste, better texture, better colours, better nutrients. You help the farmer to keep his farm, the village to keep its local pub, its local Post Office."

It's not just the local pub and Post Office on Raymond's mind these days: he's acutely aware that "we have a business which is very much dependent on my name", and

"if the business wants to live, my job is to prepare it for tomorrow."

It sounds alarmingly like a tomorrow without Raymond at the helm – is he retiring? "No, no," he casually waves aside my concerns (though at 72 he deserves to).

He outlines refurbishment plans for Le Manoir, which include heat pumps and re-wiring the 15th Century grade-II listed house, and a monumental 31 building expansion, including a spa, a bistro restaurant and more suites.

The plans have caused something of a stir in the local community and only narrowly cleared the planning committee (five to four), but Raymond is convinced this is what's necessary for his 38-year-old baby to thrive in the future – at the moment, the average length of stay is one night, whereas "when you give a spa experience, when you add seven new gardens... we'll increase people's stay to three or four days, so less carbon footprint."

The cynic in me silently adds less marketing spend per guest, higher occupancy rate and additional revenue streams, but I do believe Raymond's commitment to the environment is genuine – he's led the industry in using seasonal, home-grown produce, he hasn't used plastics for decades (not even to line the kitchen bins), he even keeps track of McDonald's sustainability credentials. I just don't think he could fake the enthusiasm when his day started at 5am and it's now almost dinner time.

Speaking of dinner, I sit down in the large conservatory and experience first-hand Raymond's "admiration for what the

table means – the most powerful medium where you bring friends together and you share that moment with food". How many world-changing conversations have taken place around a state banquet table in this country alone?

While nothing world-changing is discussed at our table, memories are made as we tuck into seven delicious courses from Raymond's gardens.

The mushroom risotto, which follows the signature French Onion Soup, is a sepia masterpiece of shapes and textures, whilst the braised Cornish turbot decadently lazing on a bed of pickled cucumber and Japanese mooli expertly showcases the power of top quality natural flavours, and also leaves me wondering how I'm going to finish another three courses.

But worry not, I'm as committed to my craft as Raymond is to his and I soldier on, devouring every speck of food on every plate. The first of our two desserts is a stylish twist on the classic French apple terrine, for which we must thank Monsieur Benoit Blin, Le Manoir's much-admired Chef Pâtissier, who has won so many awards that he now judges them instead. And the last hurrah is a decadent chocolate crumble sphere, capped with a beetroot meringue, paired with an oval scoop of raspberry and beetroot sorbet.

Undefeated, we roll merrily to the lounge where we flop onto a fireside sofa, only to be greeted by more drinks and a plate of petit fours. Despite being full to bursting, conversation turns to what we might have for breakfast – true passion!



Le Manoir achieved two Michelin stars upon opening in 1984 and has held them ever since: You can see why when you look at the amazing dishes

