

## NEWS & FEATURES

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# Richmond's Other Mayor

**To cap a crazy week, Richmond upon Thames Mayor Marc Cranfield-Adams visits and offers a few pointers.**

*Interviewed by Amy Biegelsen*

Wearing a double-breasted sports coat and his signature cowboy boots, Mayor L. Douglas Wilder stood in the stairwell of an immaculate Byrd Park home last week and introduced the small party at the foot of the stairs to the mayor of Richmond.

One stair up stood Marc Cranfield-Adams, round-faced and gray-haired with a ceremonial two-tiered chain of gold medallions resting on the shoulders of his pinstripe suit. He's mayor of our sister city in England, Richmond upon Thames, a wealthy London suburb and home to Kew Gardens.

He says he likes Virginia's weather and the city's laid-back sensibility, and often jokes that he's considering a move here. Wilder takes him up on the offer.

"Then I could march him down to City Hall and say he's the mayor of Richmond and not be lying," Wilder says to the delight of the crowd.

"No thanks," Cranfield-Adams joshes back. "I've read enough."

Earlier that day, Style talked with Cranfield-Adams about fashion, politics and why we can't all just get along.



**The mayor of Richmond, Va.'s sister city in England spoke at the Gay Pride Virginia's annual festival at 17th Street Marketplace.**

photo by Scott Elmquist

**Style:** *I understand that your full title is His Worship the Mayor of Richmond upon Thames Councillor Marc Cranfield-Adams. Can you parse the title?*

**Cranfield-Adams:** Well, I mean, basically I'm the mayor of Richmond upon Thames, so that's the title that goes with the job. I'm elected from amongst my fellow councilmen — we call them councilors, which is nice because it's not gender-specific. My term of office is just for a year.

*So you're the head of the council?*

Well, you see the queen is the head of state, and you have prime minister that's head of government. Well, equally at [the] local level, you have a mayor who is the ceremonial head and then you have the leader of the council who is the [political] head. So [it's] unlike your mayor, who is an executive mayor and it's his job to hold the administration to account, whereas what happens is our council holds the administration to account by a series of committees covering the mayor.

*When did you meet our mayor?* I met him in May when I came out to help celebrate your 400th anniversary.

*What was that trip like?* It was very exciting. I'd only been the mayor of Richmond upon Thames for two days and I was flying out here, so I was extremely nervous. ... I met him on the Thursday [in May] when we had the big celebrations ... and he's just such a character. I mean, I was told he's a character, but I'm a great admirer of his.

*What do you recall from the encounter?* It was just quite so funny. ... I was dressed in my full ceremonial regalia. I had a long red robe on and my chains and my bicorn hat and my gloves and whatever, and it was 90 degrees, so it was quite hot. I leaned over to him, and I said, "You know, I'd give anything to be in a suit now," and he just burst out laughing.

I see what's happening in the moment here from a politician's perspective, and I admire him. You know, we like omelets, and we know that you've got to break eggs to make those omelets, to make those changes.

*Are you aware of the mayor's aborted attempt to move the School Board offices out of City Hall over the weekend?* You might think that. I do enjoy using the Internet. I couldn't possibly comment on specifics.

*Now you're here for a different celebration this time.*

I met the chairman and the secretary of Gay Pride Virginia on my last day when I was here in May, and they said to me, "You know we would love it if you'd come out and speak to our rally in September" — because I'm an openly gay man myself. I'm the first openly gay mayor of Richmond upon Thames.

*So what do you plan on discussing?* I think in the UK we're just so way ahead of you in terms of how we treat the LGTB [lesbian, gay, transgendered and bisexual] community as opposed to here, where there seems to be very little legal protection or even semblance of equality.

*Is there anything else you wish Richmond, Virginia, would adopt from Richmond in England?*

I did say to Mayor Wilder back in May, you know, there are three things I would like you to do insofar as you can promise them. One, aim to make Richmond, Virginia, the greenest city in the states. You've got a long way to go to catch up with Arnie out in California, I guess. But also, to protect the view that you have from Libby Hill, from Church Hill, that you have of the River James [similar to Richmond upon Thames' view of the River Thames], because you know that is the one physical feature that unites us. That is why you were named Richmond. And so to have developments with flats down there to obscure that view would just be in my view criminal. ...

I did say to him, do you promise if you come over to the UK, you'll come and see me? And I think he's coming over in November.

He really is a great character. ... Having said that, I've met [City Council President] Bill Pantele, and again, another lovely guy. ... We had a long conversation with him about [the city]. See, I think if those two worked together,

they could make this city just really tick. **S**

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