

The Forces' favourite paper

Theron in Western rom com

● See R'n'R p8

Win!



Classic cars of bygone times

● See R'n'R p5

Win!



ROYAL AIR FORCE

Friday, April 5, 2024
Edition No. 1581 £1.20

RAF News

Blade of Honour tribute for the unsung heroes of the Battle of Britain



See pages 14-15

Hockey
Women go for double



● See page 23

Rugby
RAF rout



● See page 27

Fencing
Kitchen's hot stuff



● See page 28

Ukraine's 'Few' prepare for war



THE FIRST Ukrainian pilots to graduate with the RAF have been compared to 'The Few' who fought the Battle of Britain as they prepare for war armed with F-16 fighters.

Chief of the Air Staff ACM Sir Richard Knighton said: "We understand perhaps more than most how powerful the few can be against the many."

● Continued on p7

BiteSize

“When it comes to the RAF Cadets, there are no ceilings, just bright blue skies,”



Mother of 13-year-old Olivia Cornell, the first deaf RAF Cadet to pilot an aircraft
See page 5

“It’s nice to be able to share a different side of me,”



Quiz queen Jenny Ryan takes her cabaret show on the road
See R’n’R p5

“It was an empowering event that got women to push our limits,”



Powerlifter Fg off Jessica Lythgoe wins Lift-Off competition at RAF Cosford camp
See p25

Race is on for E-kit



ROYAL AIR FORCE
RAF News

RAF News
Room 68
Lancaster Building
HQ Air Command
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire
HP14 4UE

Editor: Simon Williams
Email: editor@rafnews.co.uk

Features Editor: Tracey Allen
Email: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk

News Editor: Simon Mander

Sport: sports@rafnews.co.uk

All advertising:
Edwin Rodrigues
Tel: 07482 571535
Email: edwin.rodrigues@rafnews.co.uk

Subscriptions and distribution:
RAF News Subscriptions
c/o Intermedia,
Unit 6 The Enterprise Centre,
Kelvin Lane, Crawley
RH10 9PE
Tel: 01293 312191
Email: rafnewssubs@subscriptionhelpline.co.uk

Staff Reporter

DEFENCE CHIEFS have brought in boffins from UK race acers McLaren to help develop new-generation electric military vehicles for the frontline.

Technicians from the motorsport team’s Accelerator programme behind the NEOM McLaren Extreme E race car joined Defence engineering chiefs at the MOD’s Battlelab development facility to launch the partnership.

They will work on Project Lurcher, which aims to deliver the first electric armoured vehicles.

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said: “McLaren Racing will bring their world-class expertise from the racetrack into a number of Defence projects.

“By collaborating with industry we will continue to drive innovation which will benefit Defence’s engineering and operations across the course of the partnership and beyond.”



ASSAULT AND BATTERY: Technology developed for McLaren’s NEOM E-race car could be used in new generation of frontline military vehicles

This Week In History



1956 Venom returns

6 SQN Venoms leave RAF Habbaniya, marking the end of the Air Force’s operational deployment in Iraq.

1984 Arthur Harris dies

MRAF SIR Arthur Harris, the Commander-in-Chief of Bomber Command from 1942 until the end of the war, dies.



1991 Kurdish aid drop

HERCULES OPERATING from Turkey drop 450 tonnes of aid to Kurdish refugees fleeing to the border to avoid persecution by Iraqi troops loyal to Saddam Hussein.

Extracts from *The Royal Air Force Day By Day* by Air Cdre Graham Pitchfork (The History Press)

Atlantic Rocked

Gruelling ordeal for Rock Apes but they conquer ocean crossing

Tracey Allen

A FOUR-STRONG team of RAF Gunners have crossed the finish line of an epic 3,200-mile race across the Atlantic, raising £22,000 for five military charities.

The Atlantic Rocks team set off from Rubicon Marine in Lanzarote at the end of January and reached Jolly Harbour Antigua after 61 days 19 hours and 13 minutes at sea, completing the C-MAP Atlantic Dash – and a combined weight of 68.7kg lighter.

Led by skipper Sgt Phil ‘Gus’ Angus, the quartet, including Sgt Dan Martin, Cpl Gary ‘Binnsy’ Binns and Cpl Justin ‘Wally’ Wallace, had to overcome plenty of challenges to finish the race, including severe weather conditions, described as the worst in the event’s history.

Sgt Dan Martin said: “To say this whole ordeal would be a major understatement. Physically tough of course, but the



NOW WE'RE ROCKING: Gunners celebrate their arrival at Antigua after 62 days at sea (above), where conditions weren't always as favourable as pictured (inset right). On land there were emotional reunions with loved ones, inset left

mental test it came with was the real fight I had to overcome.

“The ocean will dictate to you how far you will go each day and not the other way round. This was a real mental hurdle that brought new challenges every day. One day you could be travelling at 2.7 nautical miles and feeling good and the next you

would be travelling at 1.2 nautical miles and there would be nothing you could do about it.

“The ocean was in charge, and you just had to deal with that fact. Other simple things like the satellite phone not always getting signal, equipment failure or having to put on your already drenched kit and

go out and row in a storm was also a real mental test.”

The team members worked in two-hour rotations during the day and three hours at night, burning more than 6,000 calories a day.

After a setback with the onboard reserve power generator they had to conserve energy from their second week onwards, using hand and foot steering for much of the row.

Project Officer Flt Lt Aimee Martin said: “Overcoming the initial power issues were exacerbated by the 7 knot plus headwinds and low-pressure systems, which made it feel like they were rowing through treacle.

“A storm around day six saw them use their Para Anchor, a large underwater parachute, for the first time outside training. It is used to avoid unwanted drift in stormy conditions – which is what they faced for 18 hours. They were confined to their cabins, which are completely airtight and watertight to avoid flooding, and were reportedly very hot and uncomfortable. Each rower said this was the worst aspect of the whole crossing.

“They also had a close encounter with a large tanker one night – it eventually moved out of their way, about 100m from their vessel.”

Blackjack's on a Turbo charge

DISPLAY ACE Flt Lt Dave ‘Turbo’ Turnbull (inset right) put the finishing touches to his show-stopping routine with a low-level, 500ft pass in the distinctive Blackjack Typhoon.

The team of 29 Sqn specialists has spent months perfecting this year’s routine, which features negative-G manoeuvres and a stunning slow-speed pass over the crowd.

A spokesman said: “We’re looking forward to display season and showcasing the mind-blowing speed, power and agility of the Typhoon.”





**Royal Air Force
Benevolent Fund**

**DID YOU SERVE
IN THE RAF?**



**We support the RAF Family through the big challenges
and the small changes.**

- Emotional Wellbeing
- Friendships and Connections
- Family and Relationships
- Independent Living
- Financial Assistance

We're the RAF's oldest and most devoted friend, and we're here to help.

Find out more: rafbf.org

CALL 0300 102 1919



**SCAN
ME WITH
YOUR
CAMERA**



In Brief



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS: Men's Shed group operates a network of more than 1,000 projects across the UK

Shed a load

WELFARE CHIEFS have joined forces with the UK Men's Shed Association to help vets battling mental health problems.

The charity operates a network of more than 1,000 shed projects across the UK, which offer a creative and social space where those suffering from conditions such as depression and PTSD can meet up and get involved in building projects.

The Royal British Legion has signed a three-year partnership with the group to promote the benefits to the UK's veterans community, as part of the MoD's nationwide Operation Courage programme of support.

As well as building on the existing network of Men's Sheds, the partnership aims to establish new Armed Forces-friendly Sheds, including Dementia Sheds linked to the RBL's six care homes.

Gail Walters, the RBL's Director of Network Engagement, said: "Many members of the Armed Forces community have unique social and emotional needs, and the effects of military service on their life experiences are not always fully understood by civilian services."

"The RBL's partnership with UK Men's Sheds will enhance support in communities for veterans, providing Sheds which are accessible and understand the needs of veterans."

Olivia's off to a flyer



Tracey Allen

A 13-YEAR-OLD who was born with total hearing loss has become the first-ever deaf RAF cadet to fly an aircraft.

Now, for Olivia Cornell, the sky's the limit and the teenager's ambition is to be an RAF pilot.

The cadet, who lives near Welshpool in Wales, was given bilateral cochlear implants when she was 18 months old. She joined 2364 (Welshpool) Sqn Air Cadets aged 11 and recently flew a Grob G 115 at RAF Cosford.

Her proud mum Keilly said: "The squadron staff are incredible, there's always consideration for Olivia and her needs and they've always been met – there's nothing she hasn't been able to do."

"Flying the Grob was an incredible opportunity. She wants to be a pilot and for

her birthday in June we'll buy her flying lessons.

"She would like to fly for the Red Arrows and she has a soft spot for the Typhoon as well. We're not far from RAF Cosford so we go to their air show."

"We're an RAF family – my father was a Wg Cdr in Logistics and my brother is CO of the Cadets squadron Olivia attends."

Keilly added: "She's unstoppable. When she was first born they said she wouldn't speak and now she's bilingual, she speaks Welsh as well as English."

"She tries everything – she plays rugby and football. Cadets and flying are her heart. She goes twice a week, presses her uniform herself, does all the parades and is very proud to take part. I am extremely proud of her."

"The staff who run the squadron allow her every opportunity to access the ranges, camps and so much more. They are truly an inspiration and their continued support to never see Olivia as 'different' is exceptional," Keilly said.

"Olivia's achievement not only lets people know the first female cochlear implant-wearer has flown an aircraft, but also when it comes to the RAF cadets there are no ceilings, just bright blue skies."

PIONEER: Olivia Cornell is the first deaf cadet to take to the skies with the RAF

D-Day call to mark 80th anniversary

AS THE countdown begins to the 80th anniversary of D-Day, the Royal British Legion is calling on the public to take part in activities across the UK and in Northern France to commemorate the Normandy campaign in their own communities.

The charity will be leading nationwide celebrations with a service of Remembrance at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire on June 6 – the day of the landings 80 years ago. Organisers are calling on local

communities to trace their own D-Day heroes, and veterans who took part in other landmark battles in 1944 including Monte Cassino, Kohima, Imphal and Arnhem.

RBL director Philippa Rawlinson said: "The legacy left by the World War II generation lives on in the freedom and democracy we have today."

"It is vital we continue to honour their service and sacrifice, so with under 80 days to go until the 80th anniversary of D-Day we are urging people to register

for our event and commemorate within their own communities.

"We want to remember the diversity of the contribution across the Allies and the Commonwealth, who served together in the Allied Forces and made the liberation of Europe possible."

"The RBL's support extends beyond commemorative periods. We will always be here to offer ongoing support, whenever it's needed."

● Go to: britishlegion.org.uk for more information.



COUNTDOWN: D-Day veterans join serving personnel to launch UK celebrations



Help us recognise
engineering excellence



MAKING WAVES

MAKING HISTORY

Nominate an Armed Forces
Technician today



The IET Achievement Awards 2024

theiet.org/AFTech-award

In Brief



AWARD: Youngsters take part in Scampton church project to remember the fallen

Historic win

SCAMPTON CHURCH and RAF War Graves Heritage Centre have scooped second place at the coveted Ministry of Defence Sanctuary Awards Ceremony, held at The Historic Dockyard, Portsmouth.

The Keeping Their Stories Alive project aims to teach children the meaning of remembrance by telling personal stories of those from RAF Scampton buried at the church.



REMEMBERED: Sqn Ldr Mick Haygarth and WO Phil Hunt at the new memorial at the National Arboretum

Bomb aces honoured

A MEMORIAL to RAF Bomb Disposal personnel has been officially opened at a dedication ceremony at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire.

The memorial project was led by retired Sqn Ldr Mick Haygarth, who commanded the last RAF Bomb Disposal Squadron, 5131 (BD) Sqn, and retired WO Phil Hunt.

They helped to raise £10,000 to fund the memorial.

Around 200 RAF Bomb Disposal veterans, serving personnel and families and friends attended the dedication ceremony. The squadron was disbanded in 2020.



THE LATEST additions to the UK's F-35 Lightning fleet have landed at Marham. A pair of stealth fighters flew in from the US to the Norfolk base ahead of delivery to the 207 Sqn Operational Conversion Unit where engineers performed serviceability checks. PHOTO: CPL BEN MAYFIELD

CAS tribute to Ukraine's 'Few'

THE CHIEF of the Air Staff, ACM Sir Richard Knighton, paid tribute to the first Ukrainian pilots to graduate after training with the RAF, evoking the spirit of Churchill's Few who overcame the odds to halt the Luftwaffe during the Battle of Britain.

The first group of 10 pilots received basic flying, ground school and language training in the UK and will one day form the first line of defence in protecting Ukraine's skies from Putin's forces.

Speaking at the graduation ceremony at RAF College Cranwell, Sir Richard said: "From our own history we understand perhaps more than most how powerful the few can be against the many."

The Ukrainian crew will now move to advanced flying training with the French Air Force before learning to fly the F-16 fighters which will form the cornerstone of Ukrainian air power in the fight against Putin.

The UK training programme is part of the Air Capability Coalition - led by the US, Denmark and the Netherlands to boost Ukrainian air combat capability, which currently consists of Soviet era aircraft.

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said: "I would like to congratulate



IN THE FIGHT: Ukrainian pilots graduate. They will now train on the F-16 before deployment to the frontline. Left CAS ACM Knighton at Cranwell



these brave pilots on completing their initial training here in the UK. Thanks to the world-renowned skills of the RAF, these pilots have received some of the best training available and are now a step closer to joining the fight against Putin's illegal invasion.

"The UK has led the way in building Ukraine's air capabilities over the last two years, enhancing

its aircraft with additional equipment, as well as being the first nation to provide long-range cruise missiles.

"This milestone is another step forward for Ukraine's aerial capabilities - together with our allies we are showing that we will continue to stand by Ukraine's side."

Speaking after receiving his wings, one Ukrainian pilot said:

"I have enjoyed being in the United Kingdom and being part of this training programme.

"The course has been challenging and enjoyable, it has made me a better pilot. I am grateful to the UK for its support to Ukraine and I am personally grateful to the Royal Air Force instructors for preparing me for the future."



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

WiFi for the RAF

Get private internet in your room, across your air base
and at 150 MOD sites

- ✓ Cancel any time
- ✓ Unlimited data
- ✓ Unfiltered content

★ Trustpilot

★★★★★ 4.7

Reviews 4,998



Connect to **Wifinity PAYG**
or visit wifinity.co.uk/get-online

wifinity

Atlas launches Gaza aid drop

Staff Reporter

RAF CREWS dropped 10 tonnes of life-saving aid into Gaza as part of a joint UK/Jordanian mission to ease the plight of civilians trapped in the war-torn territory.

Supplies of water, rice flour, tinned goods and baby formula were parachuted from an Atlas A-400M as the UK backed a United Nations Security Council call for a cease fire.

The Atlas crew flew from Amman to the drop zone over the Gaza coastline in the latest mercy flight, which follows recent UK land deliveries of 2,000 tonnes of food and 150 tonnes of relief aid.

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said: "The UK has already tripled our aid budget to Gaza, but we want to go further in order to reduce human suffering.

"This airdrop has provided a further way to deliver humanitarian support and I



MERCY MISSION: Atlas parachutes food supplies over war-ravaged Gaza coastline; left, Army's 47 Air Despatch Sqn loads cargo ahead of aid drop
PHOTOS: ASI LEAH JONES

thank the RAF personnel involved in this essential mission, as well as our Jordanian partners for their leadership."

Alongside the latest deliveries of aid, the UK has announced a further £10 million in aid funding for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, bringing the total spend to more than £100 million.

The funding will support UN

agencies on the ground to deliver life-saving aid and will also provide core relief items, such as tents, for the most vulnerable, a spokesman said.

The RAF launched its first aid mission to the region in November, flying in aid and humanitarian supplies to Egypt for distribution by the Egyptian Red Crescent and UNRWA.



'Lower risk' ops medal launched

A NEW operational medal recognising personnel on operations in lower risk environments has been announced by Defence Secretary Grant Shapps.

The Wider Service Medal, approved by HM King Charles, recognises Armed Forces personnel and civilians who might not currently qualify for existing operational awards.

Mr Shapps said: "The WSM recognises the wide range of roles our personnel play in ensuring success on operations and the ever-changing nature of warfare."

Great Scott



ENDURANCE STAR FS Scott Hill will be leading the triathlon charge at the Inter-Services as the association's newly-appointed performance director.

Leeming-based Gunner Scott is the first NCO to hold the post and will be bringing a decade of experience in some of the world's toughest events.

He said: "We will be propelling our association to new heights with commitment, planning, training and support for both our current and next generation of personnel."

Scott says he took up the triathlon by 'accident' after competing in the gruelling Iron Man tournaments in the UK and the US and completed his first event in 2018.

He was made a serving ambassador for the Royal British Legion for championing veterans' mental health and homelessness, which included cycling from Land's End to John o'Groats in four days.

News



SPORTS LOTTERY

WILL YOU BE OUR NEXT £10,000 JACKPOT WINNER?

Play for as little as £1 per week whilst supporting your RAF charity!

Join today or increase your tickets at:

www.rafcf.org.uk



OPEN TO RESERVISTS!



Reservist and RAFCF beneficiary, Cpl Phil Hall - World Rally Championship co-driver



RAFCentralFund

BeGambleAware.org

The RAF Sports Lottery operates as a society lottery within the Royal Air Force Central Fund and is licensed and regulated by the Gambling Commission (www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk). The Royal Air Force Central Fund is a company registered in England and Wales 8555984, Charity registered in England and Wales 1152560, Charity registered in Scotland SC044299.

Registered office: Hurricane Building | HQ Air Command | RAF High Wycombe | Bucks | HP14 4UE
Principal office: RAF Central Fund Danesfield | New Lock Lane | Henley Road | Medmenham | SL7 2EY

Clean sweep



SUSPENDED 100ft from the ground, the RAF Museum Midland's team of specialist dustbusters got to work bringing a shine to the collection of vintage warbirds.

The Cosford venue's hanging exhibits including the Vulcan, Canberra, Meteor, Sabre, Hunter, Lightning, Dakota and Javelin got their annual spring clean.

The work presents a unique challenge to the team, who abseil down from the rafters to reach the aircraft.

No chemical solutions are used during the process, which relies on old-fashioned fibre mops to remove dust from the exhibits without damaging the paintwork.

Curator Tom Hopkins said: "The Museum's commitment to preserving objects within our collection extends beyond mere display.

"It involves each aircraft and vehicle undergoing a regular inspection by our skilled technicians and volunteers.



"However, when it comes to the aircraft suspended from the ceiling of our National Cold War Exhibition, a unique challenge emerges.

"These iconic aircraft reach up to 100 feet in places and navigating such dizzying heights requires a specialist team equipped with the necessary skills and equipment."

McCloud Remedy: what's your best option?

Join us. Find out.

If you were serving on or before 31st March 2012 and on or after 1st April 2015 (with any break in service of less than 5 years), you will be eligible to choose between the pension benefits of your legacy scheme and those of AFPS15. But the choice may not be a simple one, since it needs to take account of your personal circumstances.

Arming yourself with all the relevant information you need to make an informed choice, is a subject that's occupying many of the experts in our Forces Pensions Consultants team. As a Member of the Forces Pension Society, you have access to guidance from our team on a personal, individual basis. With Armed Forces pensions, there is no one size fits all answer. The schemes are complex and every individual has specific requirements.

Right now, for many, that means choosing the best options from the AFPS15 Remedy.

Independent, not-for-profit

Pension guidance is just one of the many benefits of membership. As an independent, not-for-profit organisation, our membership subscriptions help to fund our support for the Veterans' Community, our Roadshows and Webinars, our attendance at CTP Employment Fairs, plus our vigilance in taking governments to task whenever we spot unfairness or injustice in the system.

Visit: forcespensionsociety.org/join-now/

Annual membership for you and your spouse/partner is just **£45**. You will have exclusive access to our Forces Pensions Consultants, our informative Members' Webinars and you'll receive our bi-annual newsletters and our magazine, Pennant.

You'll also have access to our wide range of membership benefits from discounts on new cars to insurances, including our latest range of travel policies.

IT PAYS TO UNDERSTAND YOUR PENSION

Forces Pension Society

68 South Lambeth Road, Vauxhall, London SW8 1RL.
T:020 7820 9988 E: memsec@forpen.co.uk www.forcespensionsociety.org



HELPING YOU MAKE
BETTER CHOICES

Find your Home Sweet Home this spring!

at Newton Meadows, Colsterworth

Ask about
our special
incentive*
exclusive to
RAF personnel



Embrace village living with our exclusive collection of 3, 4 and 5-bedroom family homes in Colsterworth.

With easy road access to the surrounding thriving towns of Grantham, Oakham and Stamford, everything you need is close at hand.

Designed for modern living, these exceptional new homes are ready to reserve NOW, priced from **£425,000**. Call today to book your appointment.

Show Home and Marketing Suite open
Thursday – Monday, 10am – 5pm

Bourne Road, Colsterworth,
Grantham, NG33 5JF

Tel: 07763 212627

Email: newtonmeadows@balfourbeattyhomes.com



Balfour Beatty
HOMES

balfourbeattyhomes.com

QUEEN ETHELBURGA'S COLLEGIATE

Welcoming day students from
3 months to 19 years
and boarders
from Year 3



Next Open Morning: 9 March 2024

email admissions@qe.org to book a tour or call 01423 333333

FORCESLINE

REACH OUT FOR TRUSTED SUPPORT IN YOUR TIME OF NEED

Forcesline is our free and confidential helpline and webchat service, providing support for regulars, reserves and veterans from the Armed Forces and their families.

Family, debt, housing, mental wellbeing, addiction or other problems - don't keep quiet talk to us.

CALL **0800 260 6767**

Free and confidential. Open weekdays,
09:00 to 17:30

OR SCAN HERE TO
CONTACT US ONLINE

ssafa.org.uk/forcesline



ssafa | the
Armed Forces
charity

Regulars | Reserves | Veterans | Families

Registered as a charity in England and Wales Number 210760 in Scotland Number SC038056
and in Republic of Ireland Number 20202001. Established 1885.



DONATION: Gp Capt Hoare with Valley's new emergency vehicle

Blue light for Valley medics

VALLEY MEDICAL responders took delivery of their first emergency vehicle following a fundraising drive by local businesses and community groups. The fully-equipped emergency response vehicle will be used by the station's 13-strong team of trained volunteers, who support NHS medics.

Station Commander Gp Capt Matt Hoare said: "Our volunteer team is making a difference in our Ynys Mon community.

"It is thanks to the generosity of local donors we now have a dedicated vehicle that will enable us to do much more."

Dogs gong it



DOG'S WINNER: Coningsby's Gp Capt O'Grady presents Prestige Trophy to station's dog team



CONINGSBY DOG handlers scooped this year's Prestige Trophy after showcasing their canine security skills.

The team was presented with the award by Station Commander Gp Capt Paul O'Grady for their training skills and animal welfare programme, which includes a new hydrotherapy facility.

Handler Sgt Shaun Perkes said: "Our dogs' ability to detect, deter and protect is unique and irreplaceable. They are a formidable force multiplier."

Final salute for D-Day hero John

Tracey Allen

WG CDR John Bell, the last surviving British wartime member of the famous 617 'Dambuster' Sqn, has died a week before his 101st birthday.

Considered too tall to be a pilot, at 6ft 4in, he was trained as an observer, then as a bomb-aimer. He was one of the last surviving Bomber Command veterans to have served during World War II.

Among many paying tribute to Wg Cdr Bell was the RAF Benevolent Fund - he was a huge supporter of the charity for decades and played a significant role in raising the funds for the Bomber Command memorial in London's Green Park.

AVM Chris Elliott, the Fund's Contoller, said: "John was a treasured member of the RAF Family, not only in his remarkable courage and skill as a part of Bomber Command crew defending our nation through the hardest times, but also in his generous support of the Fund. For that we are incredibly grateful.

"The heroism of the Bomber Command veterans inspired



TRIBUTE: Wg Cdr John Bell at the Bomber Command memorial service in 2022. PHOTO: Oliver Dixon

a nation during the war, and continues to today. John and his fellow airmen embody the values of the Royal Air Force which the Fund exists to support; brave, humble and selfless."

Born on March 25, 1923 in Wandsworth, London, John volunteered as RAF aircrew in June 1942, and was called up a few months later.

Told he was too tall to be a pilot, he trained in South Africa as an observer, combining the roles

of navigator, bomb-aimer and gunner. Posted as a bomb-aimer on his return to England in early 1943, he joined a crew captained by Fg Off (later Flt Lt DSO DFC) Bob Knights. Following their conversion training, the crew was posted to 619 Sqn, based at Woodhall Spa.

In July 1943, the crew carried out its first mission to Hamburg and the following winter flew to Berlin eight times, during the so-called 'Battle of Berlin'.

After an interview with Wg Cdr Leonard Cheshire, the crew joined 617 Sqn in January 1944 in a bid to stay together.

John was involved in a number of dangerous operations including attacks on viaducts, a railway tunnel, 'V'-weapon sites, and E-boat and U-boat pens, as well as the squadron's vital contribution to the D-Day invasion.

After completing 50 operations he was awarded the DFC. He then trained as a photographic interpreter before moving into intelligence and, for 25 years, served at Nuneham Park, Singapore and Washington, with a period working with the USAF at Kimpo Air Base Seoul during the Korean War when the Americans were short of specialist personnel.

John was awarded an MBE in 1970, and retired from the RAF in 1977. In March 2016 he received the Légion d'Honneur from the French Consul, recognising his bravery and commitment during WWII, including his role in precision attacks against factory targets in occupied France and Belgium with 617 Sqn.

● See p19 for full obituary.

In Brief



KICK START: Cpl Farrand hit the road in the London Marathon to raise funds for defib project

Cpl Tom's all heart

BRIZE NORTON-BASED medic Cpl Tom Farrand has raised nearly £20,000 to support a campaign to provide life-saving defibrillators in his hometown.

The crusading airman and his colleague Josh Bell netted the cash by running race nights and raffles and taking part in charity marathons in Weston-Super-Mare and London.

Hesaid: "Working in healthcare, it is vital that we increase the number of defibrillators around our local town.

"Giving back and helping within the community is what it's all about and why I have the drive and continue to work alongside Josh and the team."

Feature

Remember **The** from **Battle** of **B**



BIRTHDAY TREAT: Gp Capt John 'Paddy' Hemingway celebrates turning 103 with BBMF's Mark Sugden and a Hurricane when he was guest of honour at the Irish Air Corps' centenary celebrations in July 2022

Now aged
to be the
Paddy Hem
the Blade

A KENT BATTLE of Britain charity's ambitious aims to remember 'The Many' who supported the fighter aircrew who defeated the Luftwaffe in 1940 has won support from Group Captain John Hemingway DFC, widely believed to be the last of 'The Few'.

Now living in a care home in Dublin at the age of 104, the remarkable Gp Capt Hemingway recently gave a unique interview to the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust, custodian of the National Memorial to The Few at Capel-le-Ferne, high on Kent's famous white cliffs.

The memorial, a stone carving of an Irvin jacket-clad airman, looks out across the Channel to France, where Irish-born John Hemingway first pitted his flying skills against the enemy.

No 85 Squadron

He said his experiences in France flying Hurricanes with No 85 Squadron had "started a love affair with the country" and admitted to enjoying "the wine and the women".

In the Battle of France and later as one of 'The Few' John – or 'Paddy' as his Irish nationality inevitably saw him called – played a vital part in keeping this country safe from a Nazi invasion, but he was quick to highlight the important part played by those who supported the RAF, particularly those who kept their aircraft flying.

"We were always confident that the aircraft we were flying had been well looked after," he said, in tribute to the ground crew. "They produced it and we used it. We couldn't have done what we did without support from a lot of other people."

The Memorial Trust's Blade of Honour project is encouraging people to honour those who played a wider part in the Battle of Britain, or one month either side of it, by funding commemorative stones that will be laid along the edges of the white propeller blades that radiate out from the central

By Malcolm Triggs

Many Britain

and 104 and believed
the last of *The Few*,
Hemingway is backing
of Honour project



ONE OF THE FEW:
John Hemingway
was awarded the
DFC and his name
appears on the
Battle of Britain
Memorial in Capel-
le-Ferne (above)

airman carving at Capel-le-Ferne.

While there is no definitive list of the occupations that might qualify, the Trust is thinking of people such as firefighters, runway repair crews, telephone engineers, observer corps, ambulance drivers, the Air Transport Auxiliary and WAAFs, about whom John has spoken in the past, describing them as “steady as a rock” even while pieces of corrugated iron were being ripped off their building by enemy bombs.

John, right, was one of an estimated 10 Irish nationals to fly in the Battle of Britain despite the fact that Ireland was officially neutral during the Second World War.

As to why he joined the RAF, he said simply: “My father made me,” a reference to the fact that he had been under pressure to choose a career. “I wanted to fly and found I could,” he added.

John was with 85 Sqn at Lille/Seclin airfield on May 10, 1940, the first day of the German Blitzkrieg. Then a Pilot Officer, he claimed a Heinkel He111 destroyed and the following day shared in the destruction of a Dornier Do17 but made a forced-landing after being hit by flak over Maastricht.

He said 85’s experience in France had created the nucleus of the squadron that played such a vital part in the Battle of Britain. It was, he said, “a good basis to build on.”

Dickie Lee

John was full of praise for Squadron Leader Peter Townsend and particularly for Richard ‘Dickie’ Lee DSO, DFC, who shot down a He111 over Boulogne on 21 November 1939 in what was 85’s first victory and is thought to have destroyed at least nine enemy aircraft and shared in the

destruction of at least three more.

“Dickie Lee was an incredible pilot and one of the nicest people I ever knew,” John reflected. Asked later in the conversation what the first thing he recalled was when asked about the Battle of Britain, he replied: “Dickie Lee.” Lee was last seen on 18 August pursuing enemy aircraft 30 miles off the east coast and is remembered on the Runnymede Memorial.

Thinking back on his own experiences, John said: “Nothing scared me, but everything scared me,” adding that the incentive to fly well was simply survival. “I was as good as I could be, because my own survival depended on it,” he explained.

The squadron, he said “was life”, adding that he “got used to” losing colleagues who had become friends. “You just didn’t think about it,” he added.

Lucky

Pilots fell into two categories, John said. “Some were basically just good pilots while others had to be trained. I was naturally a lucky pilot.” Staying safe, he said was down to “habit, training and discipline,” before adding with a broad smile: “While thinking about the latest girlfriend.”

In a further tribute to the teamwork behind probably the most significant battle fought by this country in the 20th Century, John previously said: “I am here because I have had some staggering luck and fought alongside great pilots in magnificent aircraft with skilled ground crew in the best air force in the world at that time.”

● Visit battleofbritainmemorial.org/blade for more on the Trust’s Blade of Honour project.



85 SQUADRON: Hemingway, left, with colleagues including Sqn Ldr Peter Townsend, kneeling with dog



Run for the RAF Museum

How does it work?

1. Head to the website and browse the events available
2. Pick your race and register
3. Start your training and fundraising!



ROYAL AIR FORCE museum

The Royal Air Force Museum is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC000922) and is a charity registered in England and Wales (1197541)

Air Cadet Exclusive Offer

Subscribe to **RAF News** and get the **First 3 Months Free!**

Go to rafnews.co.uk to subscribe now
Offer Code AC01

RAF News - The Forces' Favourite Paper

Delivering the best frontline news, sport and features from across the RAF and UK Defence every fortnight.

Please note letters must be a maximum of 300 words and any accompanying pictures sent as attached, hi-res JPEG files.

Email: editor@rafnews.co.uk Post: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP14 4UE

RAF News has been part of my life for many years

THANK YOU for my Dilip Sarkar book, *The Gathering Storm*, the prize for getting my numbers in the correct order for the Prize Su Doku puzzle.

RAF News has been part of my life for a great many years – from a teenage cadet, being in two Air Forces (RAF and RAAF) and marrying two Flt Lts (the first one died from cancer).

Whilst in the WRAF I did a great deal of wet-winning with 228 and 202 Squadrons – I really enjoyed it, the crews were great and the ‘wee dram’ afterwards really hit the cold spots!

The WRAAF was not nearly exciting enough for me – I was always doing the wrong thing at the right time (or vice versa!) so, reluctantly,

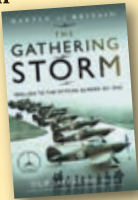


AUTHOR: Dilip Sarkar

I chose to leave.

Back in Edinburgh I started up a Women’s Junior Air Corps Unit, married a Flt Lt (RAF), and moved to Marham. He died from cancer in 1999. I stayed where I was, met a friend’s ex-husband, married him and we’re still happily listening to, and watching, the Jumping Beans from Marham – and the rugby on television.

I look forward to my RAF News for the foreseeable future. Lesley Hayward-Mudge King’s Lynn



Mull of Kintyre Chinook crash ruling still evokes strong feelings



JOHN NICHOL: Former Navigator

ACM SIR John Day (Obituary, *RAF News*, 1578, March 8) served his country with distinction for many years and is undoubtedly owed a huge debt of gratitude.

But regarding the findings of ‘Gross Negligence’ on the two pilots of the 1994 Mull of Kintyre Chinook crash, your obituary writer is simply wrong when casually declaring, ‘...the wider RAF fully supported Day’s findings of gross negligence.’

This is demonstrably untrue. Without revisiting the endless arguments surrounding the tragic incident, I can testify that many, many of us serving on the front line at that time regarded the ‘Gross Negligence’ decision as flawed, grossly unfair, and a worrying development in ‘blame’ culture.

This has been substantiated over subsequent years by the numbers of retired personnel, including very senior officers, who have opposed the 1994 finding, which I accept was supported by some at that time, but certainly NOT by ‘the wider RAF’.

John Nichol
Former Tornado Navigator
Hertfordshire



SIR JOHN: ACM passed away recently, aged 76

Mass Dakota D-Day parachute jump

THIS SUMMER Imperial War Museums (IWM) will mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day with a series of events, activities, and family programming across all five of its branches, including a themed Summer Air Show at IWM Duxford that will see more than 100 parachutists jump from 11 World War II era Dakotas – the aircraft synonymous with the D-Day landings.

“On D-Day, 6 June 1944, Allied forces launched the largest combined naval, air and land operation in the history of warfare – Operation Overlord. By the end of that day, 156,000 British, Canadian and US troops had landed in Normandy. D-Day would mark the start of a long and costly campaign to liberate Europe from Nazi occupation,” said an IWM Duxford spokesperson.

“Through its historic sites and WWII Collection, IWM will join with the rest of the UK, Europe and America in marking 80 years since this daring operation, remembering those who fought so bravely and honouring the men who sacrificed so much during this intrepid mission.”

The annual Duxford Summer Air Show (June 1-2) pays tribute to the momentous anniversary by welcoming Dakotas from the US and Europe for a series



ELITE FORCE: Paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division prepare to board a Douglas C-47 Dakota © IWM

of dramatic flypasts over the weekend and a mass parachute jump over the historic airfield on Saturday, June 1. On the second day of the air show, visitors will see the Dakotas flying together in a grand parade over Duxford as they make their way across the Channel to continue the historic commemorations.

The spokesperson added: “This ambitious WWII mass flight display will bring the extraordinary story of D-Day to life in the skies of Duxford, which

was home to the 78th Fighter Group of the United States Army Air Force. The 78th was heavily involved in supporting the Normandy invasion, flying missions on June 6 and over the summer of 1944. There will also be on-the-ground activities, living history groups and IWM’s static collections.

“IWM’s historic branches – Duxford, HMS Belfast and Churchill War Rooms – form an integral part of the D-Day story. HMS Belfast played a



DAKS OVER DUXFORD: Vintage transporters will be back in Cambridgeshire to commemorate D-Day 80 on June 1-2 at the IWM Summer Air Show © IWM

crucial role in the invasion, leading the naval bombardment force that supported the British and Canadian assaults on the Normandy beaches, and was one of the first to open fire, at 5.27am on June 6, 1944. Churchill War Rooms was the nerve centre of strategic decision-making during WWII,” said the spokesman.

IWM’s D-Day family programme will run every day during the summer holidays at Duxford, HMS Belfast, IWM London and IWM North. There

will be storytelling, trails, object handling and craft activities such as mini parachute-making and Morse Code breaking.

Additional ticketed events, talks and tours will take place across IWM branches throughout May and June, including In Conversation events featuring guest speakers James Holland and Dr Tessa Dunlop, expert-led D-Day focused gallery tours, lecture days and film screenings.

● Go to: iwm.org.uk for more details.



By Appointment to
H.M The Queen
Medallists
Worcestershire Medal Service Ltd.
Bromsgrove



Worcestershire Medal Service Ltd

Specialists in the manufacture and supply of full and miniature size medals, medal mounting and framing.



56 Broad Street, Sidemoor,
Bromsgrove.

B61 8LL

01527 835375

www.worcmedals.com

sales@worcmedals.com



ADDICA

Promotional and Corporate Gifting

01527 509380

www.addica.co.uk

sales@addica.co.uk



Last Dambuster passes aged 100

WING COMMANDER John Bell, who has died a week before his 101st birthday, was the last surviving British wartime member of the famous 617 'Dambuster' Squadron in which he served as a bomb aimer on some of the squadron's most important raids.

Too young for wartime service at the outbreak of World War II, he worked for a firm of chartered accountants in the City of London. His evenings and weekends were spent serving with the Home Guard. Shortly after reaching 18, he joined the RAF.

At 6ft 4in he was considered too tall to be a pilot so was offered training as an observer. He trained in South Africa before returning to England, where he became a bomb aimer destined for Bomber Command. He joined the crew of Bob Knights and they were to fly together for the next 18 months. In June 1943 they joined 619 Squadron to fly their Lancaster, which they named Thumper III.

On July 24 they were detailed to attack Hamburg. The next night saw them out again, against Essen, and then on July 27 it was back to Hamburg to continue Bomber Command's major onslaught against the German port. On this occasion the port inner engine burst into flames on the outward journey. Knights extinguished the fire, but the aircraft would not maintain height. Undeterred, they pressed on to the target, bombing from 10,000 feet, with the main force twice that height above. Two nights later they were back over Hamburg, such was the pace of operations.

The Big City

Between August 1943 and January 1944, the period of the Battle of Berlin, the crew flew to the 'Big City' no fewer than eight times. On October 20, during a trip to Leipzig, their two inboard engines cut due to icing. Bell commented: "We were plunging down towards the earth with a full bomb load. We had to release the bombs to reduce the weight on the aircraft and the flight engineer managed to get the engines working at a height of 10,000ft, so we were down pretty low." With no bomb load and the rear turret unserviceable they had no option but to turn for home.

Other targets during this period included Munich, Kassel, Hanover and a trip to Frankfurt, when they also carried Army War Correspondent Anthony Cotterell.

By January 1944, Knights had completed his tour, although the others needed to fly on more trips. Rather than



MEMORIES: John in BBMF's City of Lincoln Lancaster

remain with No. 619 Sqn and fly with a different captain, they decided to stay together, and opted to volunteer to join No. 617 Sqn.

After an interview with Leonard Cheshire, the crew were accepted, arriving on the squadron at the end of January 1944 as it was about to embark on precision attacks against factory targets in occupied France and Belgium. The attacks required extreme accuracy to prevent unacceptable casualties to civilians. To achieve this, Cheshire and his senior pilots pioneered a low-level marking technique to provide Bell and his fellow bomb aimers with a small and precise aiming point.

After a week of practice, the crew were ready for their first operation with 617, an attack on the Gnome-Rhone aero engine factory at Limoges, on February 8-9, which was a spectacular success. Further factory targets followed before the squadron led attacks on rail and communications complexes in the lead up to D-Day.

At the beginning of May 1944, the squadron was stood down for a month to practise for a special operation to be conducted on the eve of D-Day. Operation Taxable involved precise flying and navigation, with carefully calculated tracks over the Channel between Newhaven and Cap d'Antifer, while other crew members, including Bell, despatched bundles of 'window' [strips of aluminium foil] at exactly-timed intervals. The purpose of the operation was to create the impression on German coast-watching radar of an invasion force of ships approaching the shore near Calais, while the real invasion force, employing counter measures to mask its presence, approached the landing beaches of Normandy. The operation was a success.

Two nights later, the squadron was tasked to make a precision attack against a railway tunnel at Saumur, an important rail junction south-west of Paris. The



ANOTHER MISSION: Bell (2nd from right) with crew of Lancaster JB 131, December 18, 1943

operation would also be a baptism of fire for the squadron's latest weapon, Barnes Wallis's 12,000 lb 'Tallboy' deep penetration bomb. One bomb was a direct hit on the hillside directly above the entrance, bringing down tons of earth and rock into the tunnel, others severed the rail tracks and blocked the cutting leading to the entrance. By doing so, they severely restricted the movement of reinforcements to the Normandy battlefield.

Tallboy

Damage caused by Tallboy resulted from the shockwaves transmitted through the earth. This was achieved to great effect by a bomb released by Bell on July 17, against the potential V-2 launch site at Wizernes in the Pas de Calais. The target was a large concrete dome on the top of a quarry face, protecting underground workings. Bell's Tallboy struck the edge of the dome, causing part of the quarry to fall away, undermining the structure.

By August 1944 Bell had completed 50 operations and he was rested having just been awarded the DFC.

On August 24 he said farewell to the crew and was posted as an instructor at No. 12 OTU, Chipping Campden. It was a different world to that of operations and heralded the start of a period of readjustment.

In 1947 he was granted a short service commission and transferred to the Secretarial Branch. Posted to Fighter Command at Tangmere he was sent

to Gatow, Berlin, to assist with the humanitarian airlift.

On his return to Britain in 1951 he went to Shepherd's Grove in Suffolk to reactivate a former airfield for use by the USAF. While there he learned of openings to train as a photographic interpreter (PI) and then, after completion of a PI course, he entered the world of intelligence. For the next 25 years he served in the UK and overseas, including Singapore and Washington. He spent a period working with the USAF at Kimpo Air Base, Seoul, during the Korean War.

Awarded the MBE in the 1970 New Year's Honours List, he finally retired from the RAF in March 1977. In March 2016 he received the Légion d'honneur from the French Consul.

In retirement, Bell worked hard for charity, being a stalwart campaigner for the RAF Benevolent Fund. As a member of the committee of the 617 Squadron Association, and latterly its president, he played a significant role in championing the commemoration of wartime Bomber Command, raising funds for the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park, London and working to ensure that the story of Bomber Command is passed on to future generations. In an interview with the RAF Benevolent Fund, he said: "It's important that the men of Bomber Command are remembered for their role in D-Day".

A modest, friendly, and patriotic man, Bell enjoyed caravanning, golf and gliding.



BIG MAN: John was 6ft 4in



Advancing defence training through technology



IT²EC 2024: Exhibition and technical conference set to explore how advanced technology can transform defence training

This April will see the return of the highly anticipated military training technology exhibition and conference, IT²EC. With the overarching theme of the conference set to explore how nations and industry can enable operational advantage through training and simulation, the event is expected to drive the debate on how technological advances can expedite and streamline armed forces training. The event has attracted a number of prominent attendees from the defence community, including senior government and military officials, technology suppliers, academia and industry professionals.

IT²EC has a strong focus on disruptive innovation and is set to explore the impact it will have on the defence sector. With the rapid growth of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Extended Reality (XR) and Internet of Things (IoT) capabilities, the defence community acknowledges the strategic requirement to quickly integrate this technology to keep pace with other nations. Moreover, the role of Big Data and Advanced Analytics (BDAA), offers significant opportunity in transforming existing training methods to make it more data driven and tailored to individuals. Across the ExCeL exhibition centre in London, leading innovators are poised to demonstrate how their solutions can streamline defence training across the globe.



IT²EC's conference will bring together high-profile speakers from across government, academia and industry. There will be a range of high-quality presentations and panel discussions to explore, centered around three **key focus areas**: Technologies and Architectures, Human Performance and Emerging Solutions.

On day one, there will be a keynote panel discussion on Workforce Requirements with **Rear Admiral Jude Terry OBE, Director People and Training - Royal Navy, Brigadier Andy Cox MBE, Chief of Staff, Home Command - British Army** and **Air Vice-Marshal Simon Edwards, Director People - Royal Air Force**. On day two, among other key events, there will be an update given by **Major General Chris Barry CBE, Director Land Warfare** on the **Land Training System (LTS)**. On day three, there will be a talk on the journey to data-driven training which will focus on the challenges of implementing Big Data and the opportunities when implemented within armed forces training.

Who attends IT²EC 2024?

A variety of people will be in attendance including military, defence media, defence academics and defence company representatives. Defence companies will be in attendance from across the supply chain. Prime manufacturers such as **L3Harris** and **Leonardo** will exhibit alongside tens of smaller companies. There will be a large UK and US presence at the show in addition to companies from France, Germany, the Czech Republic, Sweden and many more.

With our 2024 event returning to London and co-locating alongside **UDT 2024**, our undersea defence and technology event, we already have **greater involvement from the UK MOD** and are expecting larger attendee numbers again at the show.

Interested in attending our technical conference sessions and bustling exhibition in London?

[REGISTER NOW](#)



With Support from





Tim Morris

Lexus RZ 450e Takumi (from around £73,000)

Motoring

RZ has landed



Lexus 450e looks futuristic but lacks range

ONCE IN a while a new model comes along that is genuinely different. That doesn't happen often in the crossover segment, believe me, but Lexus has managed it with the RZ. It's the first purpose-built EV that Lexus has ever produced and the attention to detail is excellent.

Exterior

Lexus has put in some serious effort to make the RZ stand out from the crowd. The two-tone paint job, with the black bonnet featured on our test car, won't be for everyone but it looks superbly futuristic from every angle. The contoured lines on the sides catch the light to give it impressive detail, the styled lights and air scoops, built into the front bumper, give it a mean, sporty look and the 20-inch alloys finish the package. It looks good. It looks quick for a crossover.

Interior

Inside, you'll find generous space and a nice level of trim. The driving position is superb, helped by comfortable, supportive seats, with plenty of adjustment. These are heated and cooled too, so the RZ's cabin is a very comfortable environment.

There's plenty of space and there are two brilliant dimmable panoramic roofs



to make it feel airy. You sit closer to the road than in most rivals, which I love, but you can also jack your seat height up if you want that SUV feel.

The digital instrument binnacle is easy to read, with nice graphics, while the 14-inch central infotainment system responds well.

Touches like the wireless phone charger, that comes with a fan underneath to cool your handset, and the heaters mounted in the dash to warm your knees using infrared radiation, are stand-out examples of the tech you get. Night illumination is excellent and adds a level of class.

On The Road

The Lexus RZ is rapid. It's powered by two electric motors that together pump

out a stonking 308bhp. Our test car was the RZ 450e Takumi and it felt very quick – 0-60mph in 5 seconds.

Those amazing looks build an image of a car that's fast and fun but that sets the bar a bit higher than the RZ can clear. There's some body lean and a bit of lift on undulating roads. There's also very little feedback through the wheel. That's not to say that it doesn't hold the road, you just don't feel any connection to it.

There is, in fact, quite a lot of grip from the tyres, and the steering wheel weights up nicely as your cornering speed increases. The Direct4 torque vectoring system shoves up to 80 per cent of the power to the back wheels. This reduces understeer quite effectively and improves stability through the bends.

Around town and on a motorway it's quiet and relaxing inside. There is a little bit of wind and road noise at higher speeds but that's only relative to the otherwise silent travel. Range is disappointing though. We struggled to get 180 miles out of a full charge.

If you love your futuristic tech,

Lexus RZ 450e

Pros

- Looks like the future
- Well-styled interior
- Quick, comfortable and quiet

Cons

- Range is nothing special
- Infotainment menu fiddly
- Sensors beep at everything – frantically

Verdict

The RZ is an interesting spin on the generic EV SUV. It's fast, deft through the bends and practical, in many ways. It has style in bags and is extremely clever, but its range lets it down.

it will be worth looking at the RZ again in 2025. That's when Lexus launches what it calls One Motion Grip (OMG). OMG replaces the regular (round) steering wheel with a digital version that has no physical connection with the front wheels. Instead, inputs are sent by wire to a motor on the steering rack.

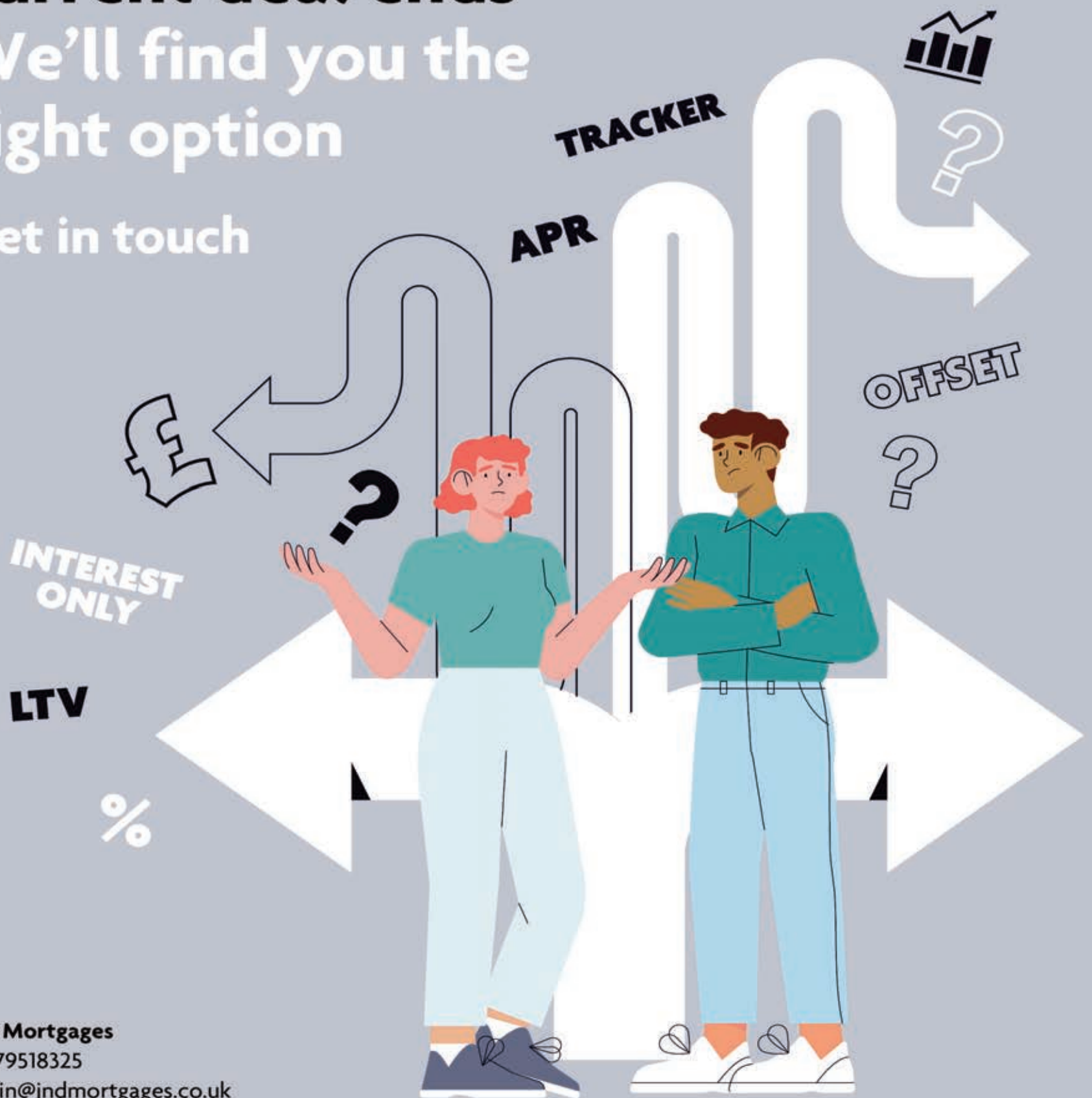
Anyone who's ever seen the 1980s TV series *Knight Rider* will conclude that Glen A. Larson's vision of the future has finally arrived. KITT, pick me up.



Worried your mortgage payments will rise when your current deal ends We'll find you the right option



Get in touch



JND Mortgages
07879518325
edwin@jndmortgages.co.uk

Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage

HOCKEY

Hockey chief Oatley: 'Make ours a double'



PHOTO: MEG WATTS

Daniel Abrahams

RAF HOCKEY Association Deputy Chairman Wg Cdr David Oatley is 'hopeful of another double winning year' after a successful IS women's training camp in Cardiff.

The week-long event at the

Cyncoed University Campus saw the Service's hockey team – who hold both indoor and outdoor Inter-Service crowns – take part in training and coaching sessions along with a video call masterclass with top coach Simon Organ. There were also three matches and some interactive training

events with local schools.

Oatley said: "Winning both outdoor and indoor Inter-Service titles for the first time in over 20 years last season and having already retained the indoor crown in November, the RAF Women's side have gone from strength to strength and are

hungry for further success.

"We as an association are constantly looking at ways of giving our players the extra support we can to help them to continue to develop and improve as individuals and as a squad. Having the call with Simon Organ, who has performed as both a player and coach at the very highest level, was invaluable. The players and coaching staff were impressed by both his honesty and humility while he shared his thoughts, experiences and advice with them.

"It's no surprise, with his words of wisdom still fresh in their minds, that they went on to perform so strongly in the subsequent training camp and fixtures.

"I am really hopeful that they will take this forward into the outdoor Inter-Services tournament as they bid for another double-winning season."

In the first fixture of the camp the team played Cardiff & Met Hockey Club at the Cyncoed University Campus. A hard-fought battle in the wind and rain ended 2-1 to the RAF Women.

The second fixture took place at the Sport Wales National Centre in Cardiff against a good Penarth side. Again, the team were tested but managed to come



HIGH NOTE: Call with coach Organ

away with a 3-3 draw.

For the final fixture of the week, the RAF were up against a strong Wales Over 35s team, once again at the Sport Wales National Centre. A close game from start to finish ended in a 2-1 win for the Service team.

The RAF women also took time to support Wales Hockey with its interactive event for schools.

Oatley added: "Engagement is an important and rewarding part of the training week for the team; it's an opportunity for the RAF Women to share their love of the sport and to inspire the new generation of players."

● Follow RAF Hockey on Instagram @rafhockey.

ICE HOCKEY

Ice stars warm up

THE RAF Aces ice hockey team kicked off their season with the first three-day training camp of the year at Telford.

Held in preparation for this year's UKAF Ice Hockey Tournament and June's Inter-Service championships, the event attracted 20 skaters, who took part in team building-focused training and coaching sessions.

There was also on-ice and off-ice tuition of individual skills, flow drills and team cohesion.

● Follow RAF Ice Hockey on Instagram @raficehockey.



Would you like to see your sport featured in RAF News? Send a short report (max 300 words) and a couple of photographs (attached jpegs) to: Sports@rafnews.co.uk

IT²EC

9 - 11 April 2024
ExCeL, London

Register Now

Advancing defence training through technology

IT²EC is Europe's leading defence training technology and simulation exhibition and technical conference. This specialised event brings together prime full-service training providers and technology start-ups, alongside key influencers and decision makers from all areas of the supply chain.

You can now register to join us in ExCeL, London from 9-11 April 2024.

Sponsorship and exhibition enquiries:

 Samar Jaafar, Event Manager
 Samar.jaafar@clarionevents.com

In association with

NTSA

Headline Partner

BAE SYSTEMS

Lanyard Sponsor

 4C STRATEGIES

Organised by

 CLARION
EVENTS

POWERLIFTING

Jess powers on through

Lythgoe wins Lift-Off crown



RUNNER-UP: 78 Sqn's AS1 Jenna Allen, left



SQUAT STAR: Fg Off Jessica Lythgoe

Daniel Abrahams

IT WAS girl power to the fore at the second RAF Powerlifting Association Ladies' Lift-Off camp at RAF Cosford, following the success of last year's event.

With a mixture of training and lifting, the top spot from the two-day event went to RAF Swanwick lifter Fg Off Jessica Lythgoe, with fellow 78 Sqn colleague AS1 Jenna Allen second and Cpl Nicola Shutt, RAF Cranwell, third.

The idea of a Ladies' Lift-Off event was the brainchild of RAFPA Female Team Manager Sgt Charlie Elson, who wanted to create an event at which women could feel free to share and discuss specific training issues whilst developing their powerlifting.

Day one of the Lift-Off consisted of female specific briefs such as training

around the menstrual cycle and pre/post-natal, followed by yoga sessions and powerlifting specific training, with the second day featuring competition designed to focus on the skills learned.

Fg Off Lythgoe said: "The Lift-Off was an empowering, well-run event which encouraged women of all abilities to try something new and push their limits

through a knowledgeable training camp followed by a supportive competition the next day.

"This is the third RAF Powerlifting event I have attended and each time I learn something new. I found the presentation on women training around their menstrual cycle to be informative and very beneficial.

"Due to the educational training and

support from all staff, I was able to hit some personal bests and will take the new techniques learnt into my next competition."

● Sign up for the annual RAFPA Championships through the RAF Powerlifting PowerApp found via SharePoint and follow the association on Instagram @rafpowerlifting.



ON COURSE: AS1(T) Laura Sheppard

PHOTOS: DAVE CATHERALL @MUSHY_MUSHY_PHOTO

CYCLING

Sheppard's on road to success after crit

"A GREAT start to the season," is how AS1(T) Laura Sheppard describes the Service road cyclists' recent criterium races, which saw two top 10 finishes.

Sheppard was accompanied by AS1 Zoe Catherall, with the pair kicking off the Fusion Media Women's Series at Tudor Grange, Solihull, which saw Sheppard finish eighth, followed by seventh in the next round at Darley Moor in Ashbourne.

The Series includes training sessions and competitive events. Sheppard said: "We learned about bike handling skills, positioning, cornering and sprinting."

New skills were put to the test in a 10-minute race at the end of the session.

Catherall said: "The coaching session was informative and enjoyable, allowing the riders to

build confidence in their first steps into criterium – road racing."

During her race Sheppard held her own around the technical and fast circuit in a decent-sized field.

Strong headwinds on one side, with fast corners and finishing straight in the other, presented constant challenges, with a tight group fighting for positions the entire time.

A three-rider breakaway then left remaining riders to fight out a bunch sprint, with the RAF woman finishing eighth overall.

Sheppard said: "I came away with seventh place the following weekend. It was a great race. There was one crash unfortunately, but I was well away from it thankfully.

"I felt good throughout and it was valuable race craft experience before getting stuck into any road races later this season."

Sport

NETBALL

Women go down fighting as men play first ever IS match



EYES ON THE PRIZE:
RAF v Army
PHOTOS:
GRAHAM MAIN

Daniel Abrahams

IT WAS a battle royal, but the RAF women's netball team could not stop a clean Inter-Services sweep for the Army at Aldershot.

The Open category clash was the final match of the championship, with the hosts being run close 36-26.

The Army had already secured victory in the first ever men's netball IS clash (44-16) and also taken the masters (47-36) and development categories too.

Having pushed their Army opponents close in last year's event, the ladies in light blue got off to a flyer leading 4-1 in the opening quarter, through a Fg Off Faye Bateson score, before a penalty shot from her saw the visitors lead 6-4 and then 10-9 into the second quarter before going in behind 11-10 at half-time.

The enthralling game had it all and summed up the brave battling style of all

the RAF teams in the championship.

An earlier convincing 63-30 win over the Royal Navy had set up the big clash, while the Development squad also thrashed RN 46-9 before succumbing to the hosts 45-26.

Development head coach Cpl Emily Luker said: "Throughout the season both squads demonstrated remarkable growth, this culminated at the Inter-Services. Harriet [Flt Lt Harriet Moxam - Open head coach] and I are so proud of what all the Elite players achieved this season and can't wait to see what next season holds."

Speaking after his team's historical first-ever IS clash, Men's head coach Sgt Craig Lenane said: "What an outstanding season for the RAF Men's Netball Team. Selections at the Inter-Stations tournament took place merely six months ago, and six months later we took to court at Aldershot Garrison to make history when competing at the Inter-Services.

"The pinnacle of the season was being part of history and to showcase not only the sport of netball but the growth and passion it has for men. Moving forward we will endeavour to train harder and develop as a team ready for next year. We hope the Royal Navy will join us to create history with the first men's IS tournament.

"I couldn't be prouder of what the squad has achieved in such a short time, and I only hope this continues to grow and develop for years to come."

Masters head coach Sgt Kirsty Floyd said: "Inter-Service winners was not to be this year but with the building blocks there we are on the up.

"A team is only as good as its players and those who support them - a special mention to Wg Cdr Lex Smyth for her dedication, sacrifice and understanding of being the ultimate team player."

● Follow RAF netball on Facebook: @RAFNetball.



ANGLING

Rathbone best of UKAF anglers but SAMF dominate



SHORE THING:
Sgt Steve Rathbone

A NEW dawn broke for UKAF sea angling at a recent shore competition, and despite finishing third behind Sea Anglers Match Federation (SAMF) and the Police, the team's future is bright.

The event at Cresswell Bay in Northumberland was the first since the RAF, Army and Navy agreed to put old Service rivalries aside for the common good when they compete together as a UKAF outfit.

The RAF's Sgt Steve Rathbone was the highlight, winning his zone on day two and being the top UKAF angler overall, with a few non scores from the less experienced anglers costing the team dear over the two days of action.

Team spokesman Maj Scott Booty said: "Despite the overall result there were learning points and it's great to see newer and, more importantly, younger

members on the UKAF team. There are early plans for further development of the UKAF team over the next 12 months, with priority for a training camp in the summer.

"The UKAF team will be the host force for the 2025 championships, which means that we will pick the venues with the hope to utilise home advantage and give us a real chance of challenging for the title.

"On the first match day we fished daylight into darkness and the team started reasonably well with most catching early on. However, fish numbers were down considerably from practice, and after the first hour it was clearly going to be a struggle.

"None of the teams were running away with it and most of the UKAF team were working hard and keeping their

scores ticking over. However, there was no pattern to what was showing, and while we focused on fishing close after our experiences in practice, SAMF went for larger fish at distance, and it mostly paid off for them."

Day two's action was during daylight, and more tough angling ensued, with people getting off the mark one by one. But it was an uphill struggle, though the team persisted and produced a second place finish on the day.

"Despite the challenges of competitive angling, the combined Forces team worked well together utilising good communication throughout and briefing as a team in the evening after practice and between matches.

"This proved useful and we are happy with the second place on the day," added Booty.

RUGBY

Shelford shellshocked as RAF go on rampage

Shelford RUFC	0
RAF	38

A FRIDAY night cracker under the lights saw the RAF women's rugby union stars thrash Shelford RUFC 38-0 in their last warm-up game before the Inter-Services.

Assistant coach Sqn Ldr Ian Cokayne said: "The manner of the performance was most pleasing. The forwards imposed themselves on a big pack with lots of dominant tackles, and the backs were patient and took their chances when they appeared.

"The other pleasing stat was keeping a clean sheet. Shelford battled away in our red zone but we were relentless at knocking them back.

"The strength and conditioning work, masterminded by Cpl Ceri Parkin, was obvious for all to see and was one of the reasons the scoreline built in the second half.

"Fg Off Rebecca Piddlesden's officiating of the game was exceptional. She has also been working with the players in camp to improve their technique and their understanding of the laws. We hope this will bear fruit in our penalty count stats at the Inters."

In difficult conditions at the Cambridgeshire ground, the Service stars proved more than capable against a tough opposition whose big aggressive forward pack carried hard around the ruck to really test the RAF defence.

The match acted as a perfect rehearsal for the upcoming opening Inter-Services clash



HAND-OFF: There's no stopping Flt Lt Carys Williams-Morris

PHOTOS: SBS

against the Royal Navy.

The first half was a real arm-wrestle between the two sides, but the RAF eventually got their noses in front with a brace of worked tries from Fg Off Chelcey Greasley

and Flt Lt Carys Williams-Morris. Some energetic defence from the forwards typified by Cpl Daniker Wilmore saw the RAF take a 12-0 lead into the break.

In the second half the RAF

reduced the penalty count and began to get a firmer foothold in the game. With their set piece performing well, despite great pressure from Shelford, the Service backs had a solid platform

to launch some exciting attacks.

Further tries followed from Cpl Orla Proctor (2), Cpl Kat Robinson and Flt Lt Sarah Graham to see the RAF comfortably home.

FOOTBALL

Aries & Icarus reach for stars

A STELLAR second season of Astra League football closed with the action going to the wire as the fixtures now turn to the semi-final stages.

The final week of pool games saw two first time winners of the divisions as Aries (Air & Space Ops) FC topped the Churchill division and Icarus snatched top spot in the Bader division with a 1-0 victory over last year's winners, RAF Regt FC.

Both teams won their divisions unbeaten.

TG5 & RAF Regt FC finished second in their divisions and complete the semi-final line-up.

The league fixtures threw up some memorable results including Icarus thumping Sparks 10-2 early in the season, and a hard-fought encounter

between Churchill division's eventual winners and its runners up in the Aries v TG5 game, as Aries took the clash 2-1.

Throughout the league section of the tournament fixtures were played at various locations including Carterton Town, Walsham Le Willows and Borderville Town as well as RAF station pitches. Oxford City FC's RAW Charging Stadium will host the semi-finals and final.

Both semis will be played on April 18, with Aries FC versus RAF Regiment kicking off at 11am and Icarus v TG5 FC at 2pm.

The final will be held at Oxford City on Thursday, May 23.

● Follow the league at: fulltime.thefa.com/index.html?league=562654037



CHASE IS ON: Flt Lt Lucy Nye breaks away for the RAF at Shelford RUFC

5

pages of the best of **RAF** Sports action



CLIMBING

Rhys peaks as climbers scale heights in Steel City

THE STEEL City was the venue for this year's Inter-Services Bouldering Championships (ISBC) with the RAF team dominant at The Climbing Works event.

A clean podium sweep and a series of top-five finishes in Sheffield were the just reward for the association, which saw the event kick off with RAF Shawbury climber AS1 Sam Spencer placing an impressive second overall in the Women's Finals.

The Men's U25s was dominated by RAF climbers, with AS1 Rhys Hall (Odiham) 1st, AS1 Brandon Phipps (Lossiemouth) 2nd and AS1 Jasper Ray completing the podium places in third. AS1(T) Aidan Coutts (RAF Benson) just missed out in 5th.

Association chairman Flt Lt



Stephen Day said: "We managed to field a really strong line-up, all of whom had been making the most of recent team training sessions and individual indoor climbing over the winter."

"On the day they delivered some consistently high performances and ended with an impressive number of podium places when the final scores came in."

"After such a successive win,

the team are now setting their sights high on the upcoming Climbing Works International Festival, again in Sheffield."

Flt Lt Day added: "We will be holding our Festival of Climbing on Friday, May 17. This is open to all RAF Regulars and Reserves and includes a competition for all, from absolute beginners to climbing ninjas."

"We run training workshops, injury clinics and have a talk from a pro climber. It's normally a well-attended event. We will be opening up tickets to both RAFMA and eligible non-RAFMA serving personnel in the coming days."

Contact: mountaineering.publicity@rafsport.org.uk for details.

● Follow RAF bouldering on Instagram @rafmountaineer.



ON A HIGH: AS1 Sam Spencer placed an impressive second overall

FENCING

Kitchen proves far too hot for novice fencers at Cosford



CHAMPION: Kitchen (right) with RAFFU's Sqn Ldr Niall Dowse

AS1 JAY Kitchen cooked up a Novice Cup fencing storm taking all three men's titles, with Off Cdt Amber Brittlebank taking two out of three in the women's.

A field of 17 men and 12 women did battle for the prestigious titles in épée, foil and sabre as the competition, in its fourth year, attracted 13 new members highlighting its growth in Service sport, with competitors hailing from RAF Regulars, RAF Reserves and University Air Squadrons.

The three-day event at Cosford featured a mixture of coaching, training and competition, with the best fencer in all three competitions being deemed Champion at Arms, with Kitchen and Brittlebank taking this year's titles.

Kitchen beat AS1 Ross Barker into

second in the épée with AS1 Josh Brown and AS1(T) Alex Williams joint third.

Barker was runner-up to Jay in the foil, with Flt Lt Adam Bailey and Cpl James Murphy joint third.

Bailey took the runners-up spot in sabre, with AS1(T) Williams and AS1 Barker joint third.

Having won the épée, Off Cdt Brittlebank came runner up to AR Mia Terry in the foil, before beating her in the sabre.

Director Combat, RAF Fencing Union, AS1 Sian Kelly, said: "All RAFFU events are designed to be as open and inclusive as possible, providing Whole Force personnel the opportunity to fence and enjoy the sport. They also act as recruitment events, to start new

members on their fencing pathway to the RAF Championships and onwards to represent their Service at the UKAF Fencing Inter-Services tournament. This year's cup was an invaluable opportunity to prepare for the RAF Championships and proved a huge success."

The coaching sessions were given by British Fencing qualified coach and referee Stefan Leponis.

● Follow RAF Fencing on Instagram @raffencing.



R'n'R

Win!



**Win action
rom-com on
DVD ● p8**

Secrets and songs – The Vixen live

● See
page 5

Announcements

- p6-7
- Puzzles**
- p8

Royal Air Force In Concert

Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the RAF Music Charitable Trust

Lincoln Cathedral

7.30pm Saturday 11 May 2024

Compere: Melvyn Prior



Royal Hall, Harrogate

7.30pm Friday 28 June 2024

Compere: Howard Leader



Watersmeet, Rickmansworth

Royal Air Force Squadronaires

7.30pm Friday 15 March 2024

CAST, Doncaster

Band of the Royal Air Force College

7.30pm Thursday 19 September 2024

Palace Theatre, Newark

Band of the Royal Air Force College

7.30pm Friday 20 September 2024

Playhouse, Weston Super Mare

Central Band of the Royal Air Force

7.30pm Friday 27 September 2024

Assembly Hall, Worthing

Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment

3.00pm Sunday 29 September 2024

West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment

7.30pm Friday 4 October 2024

The Bands play by permission of the Air Force Board of the Defence Council



 **ROYAL Music**
AIR FORCE Charitable Trust
www.rafmusic.org.uk/concerts





Film Review
Driving Mum (12A)
 Out now

Jon goes the extra mile for dead mum



AN ICELANDIC road-trip movie 27 years in the making, *Driving Mum* follows Jon as he takes his mother's corpse across the country to fulfil her final wish.

Set in 1980, the wondrous pastoral landscapes are shot in black and white, though you still get the texture and feel. Jon (Þróstur Leó Gunnarsson) has been living with his mother and dog out in the Westfjords: a scenic but secluded area of Iceland.

Spending their days knitting jumpers side by side, they have a tranquil life, or wearisome maybe, it's hard to tell. When Mama (Kristbjörg Kjeld) announces that she wishes to be buried in the village of

Eyrbakkí down on the south coast, she makes her son promise to see it through.

Sure enough she soon passes, and so Jon does his best to dress her up – slathering her face in make-up – before propping her up in the back seat of his rusted Ford Cortina to make the big journey, along with loyal hound Bresnef. Jon will have encounters along the way with old faces and new, including one particularly amusing exchange with a German backpacker with whom he has full conversations, despite them speaking different languages and at cross purposes.

Communication is an interesting blockade for our man, who has been living largely in isolation, with the



ROAD-TRIP: Jon and his dead mum stop for a break

most natural back and forth coming from bickering arguments with his posthumous mother in the rearview, hallucinated back into the fray. He is also followed by visions of his ex-girlfriend, pulling him into memories of the past.

Driving Mum is deliberately slow with a deadpan sense of humour that hangs over the film, and manifests as actual jokes on occasion. At times it can feel like you're just stuck in this car, driving at a snail's pace, alongside mum and dog, but there is a wry spirit that keeps it chugging along.

Review by Sam Cooney
Three roundels out of five ●●●



Theatre Review
Calendar Girls The Musical
 musicalsontour.co.uk

Calendar Girls is on song with Barlow's magic

IT'S 20 YEARS since the film of *Calendar Girls* was released, based on the true story of a group of women from a small Women's Institute in Yorkshire who created a risqué calendar after the death of the husband of one of them, to raise funds for charity.

It's been a stage play, now it's a musical, based on Tim Firth's play, with music by Take That's Gary Barlow, currently touring the UK. When I saw the show at Aylesbury's Waterside Theatre recently, the talented cast featured familiar faces including Laurie Brett (*EastEnders*), Maureen Nolan (The Nolan Sisters), Lyn Paul (New Seekers), Helen Pearson (*Hollyoaks*, *EastEnders*, *Emmerdale*) and Honeysuckle Weeks (*Foyle's War*).

Marie (Liz Carney) runs Knapley WI along traditional lines, but lively Chris (Samantha Seager) stirs things up when she gets her fellow WI members to, reluctantly at first, pose naked for the calendar – with strategically-placed, WI-themed props – to raise money for her local hospital in memory of Annie's (Brett) husband John.

It's a moving, heart-warming, uplifting show, packed full of Barlow's catchy songs, and the sadness of losing John to blood cancer is counterbalanced by plenty of comedy, not least that famous line uttered when former



CROWD-PLEASERS: (l-r) Paul, Brett, Pearson and Weeks

air hostess Celia (Pearson), teased by her friends over her breast augmentation, poses for the first photo behind a tray of cakes and Chris announces to photographer husband Rod (Andrew Tuton): "We're going to need considerably bigger buns."

The disrobing of each of the women is slickly choreographed and done with plenty of good humour. Brett and Seager showcase their particularly impressive vocals and Paul, at 75, shows she still has a powerful voice, as does Nolan. Pearson and Weeks are a delight as glamorous Celia and struggling single mum Cora and there is strong support from Colin R Campbell as John and Tuton as Rod.

It all adds up to a memorably enjoyable evening out – the Aylesbury audience gave the cast a standing ovation – that carries an important message, about grief, friendship and female empowerment.

To date the *Calendar Girls* have raised more than £5 million for Blood Cancer UK and each performance of the musical continues to fundraise for the charity.

Review by Tracey Allen
Four roundels out of five ●●●●



DVDs
Padre Pio (15)
 On Blu-ray, DVD and download now (Dazzler Media)



The making of a saint

BAFTA winner Shia LaBeouf (*Honey Boy*, *The Peanut Butter Falcon*) gives a powerful and deeply committed performance in this new film from legendary director, Abel Ferrara (*Bad Lieutenant*, *King of New York*).

It is the end of World War I and the young Italian soldiers are making their way back to San Giovanni Rotondo, a land of poverty, historic violence and the iron-clad rule of the church and its wealthy landowners. Families are desperate, the men are broken, but victorious.

Padre Pio (LaBeouf) also arrives to a remote Capuchin monastery, to begin his ministry evoking an aura of compelling charisma, saintliness and storied visions of Jesus, Mary and the Devil himself. The eve of the first free election in Italy sets the stage for a historic, and metaphoric massacre, an apocalyptic event, one that



DEVOTION: Padre Pio (LaBeouf) at prayer

changes the course of the world. We have copies of the film to win. For your chance to own one, answer this question correctly:

Who directed *Padre Pio*?

Email your answer, marked *Padre Pio* DVD competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: *RAF News*, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ

Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by April 22. Remember to include your full postal address.



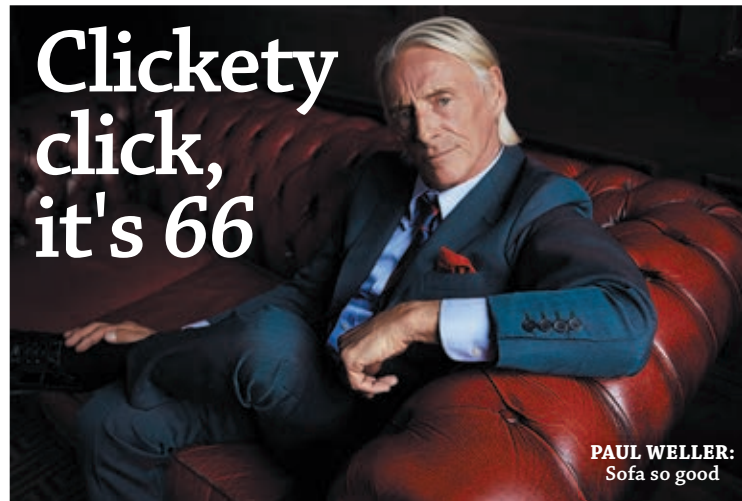
R'n'R



Music

Paul Weller/Midge Ure

UK tours



PAUL WELLER: Sofa so good

PAUL WELLER, who recently announced a 15-date April tour that sold out in record time, has confirmed a second leg in 2024.

The 17-date stint throughout October and November sees Weller and his band appearing across the country, including two nights in both Newcastle and Glasgow and finishing at the legendary Hammersmith Eventim Apollo.

With a career spanning five decades and an extensive catalogue of songs, to delve into, audiences will hear new tracks from Weller's forthcoming album *66*, released on May 24, along with deep cuts from his back catalogue and fan favourites.



Celebrated artist Sir Peter Blake created the artwork for *66* – his first for Weller since 1995's *Stanley Road*. It is released the day before Weller's 66th birthday.

The 12 songs on *66* were worked up in Weller's Black Barn studio over the course of three years with a host of guest musicians including Dr Robert, Richard Hawley, Steve Brooks and Max Beesley. The album includes lyrical contributions from an esteemed roll-call including Suggs (*Ship Of Fools*), Noel Gallagher (*Jumble Queen*) and Bobby Gillespie (*Soul Wandering*).

● **Go to:** paulweller.com for more information.

50 years of Midge Ure

HAVING CELEBRATED his 70th birthday with a sold-out show at the Royal Albert Hall last October, Midge Ure has announced a new 23-date UK tour for November and December 2024.

Catalogue: The Hits Tour will give Ure the opportunity to showcase the musical breadth and versatility of his extensive song catalogue written during the past 50 years; giving old and new fans a memorable night of hits and rarely heard gems.

He said: "I performed live long before I was ever allowed anywhere near a recording studio and as much as I love spending time writing and recording, live music remains my first love."

"This *Catalogue* tour will allow me to not only play a wide selection of hits from my past but perform some of the most requested favourites. Revisiting these moments from my musical life is something I am really looking forward to sharing."

Ure has had an unrivalled career earning Ivor Novello and Grammy awards along with a flotilla of gold and platinum records during the past five



MIDGE URE: Catalogue man

decades. His story includes the early teen glam rock of Silk, his foray with The Sex Pistols' Glen Matlock for The Rich Kids, into the 80s – which saw him secure his place in musical history not just as part of Ultravox and Visage, who helped shape the new romantic and electro-pop era, but as producer and co-writer of Band Aid's *Do They Know It's Christmas?* which led to Live Aid, the global concert in the summer of 1985.

● **Go to:** midgeure.co.uk for more details.



Theatre

Cluedo 2

UK tour

BAFTA-winning TV writers Marks and Gran *do* have a *Clue* about theatre 2...

CLUEDO HAS been a stalwart of family life since the Hasbro board game – which celebrates its 75th anniversary this year – was launched at the end of the 40s. Then, in 1985, *Cluedo, The Movie*, directed and written by Jonathan Lynn, was a big hit when it was released. Fast forward to 2022 and a stage production of the film, based on Lynn's original script, toured the UK. Now comes *Cluedo 2 – The Next Chapter*.

This latest five-month UK theatre tour kicked off in February and continues to venues including Milton Keynes, Shrewsbury, Malvern, Bath, Sheffield, Nottingham, Newcastle, Glasgow, Southampton, Cardiff, Norwich, Truro and Cheltenham – finishing in Birmingham at the end of July.

With a new story set in the Swinging Sixties, featuring The Honourable Mrs Emerald Peacock, Colonel Eugene Mustard, 'Professor' Alex Plum (Jason Durr, *Heartbeat*, *Casualty*), Miss Annabel Scarlett (Ellie Leach, *Coronation Street*, *Strictly Come Dancing*) the 'Reverend' Hal Green and the housekeeper, Mrs White, *Cluedo 2* is a riotous spoof, a comedy thriller by the BAFTA Award-winning TV writing duo, Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran, whose numerous credits include *Birds of a Feather*, *Goodnight Sweetheart* and *Dreamboats and Petticoats*.

Marks and Gran didn't have to think twice about accepting the offer of writing a brand-new murder mystery. Marks said: "I think the producers felt Maurice and I had a pretty good grip on the 60s, which is when they wanted the play to be set somewhere in England."

Gran added: "We remembered that rock stars were moving into big country houses in the late 60s so we dreamed up a rock 'n' roll superstar with a Mockney accent and then constructed a cast to include

UPDATED: *Cluedo 2* features a rock musician with a Mockney accent and stars ex-Corrie actress Ellie Leach (third from left and inset below)
PHOTO: ALASTAIR MUIR



his wife, his agent, his interior decorator, butler, jack-of-all-trades and so on, all with colourful names. Someone is going to die and then so is someone else.

"But whodunnit? The challenge was to make audiences laugh, make them keep guessing and occasionally gasp out loud while keeping it clean with no swear words – something, in fact, for the whole family."

How do two people write one script? "We both sit at a keyboard, side by side," explained Marks, "trading lines. By that stage, we pretty much know what we're going to write. There were endless arguments along the way but they're mostly resolved by the



Theatre

Jenny Ryan: Out of the Box

UK tour

Jenny's Boxing clever

JENNY RYAN – better known as the Bolton brainbox The Vixen on the hit ITV quiz *The Chase* – will break away from teatime telly when she invites audiences to an evening of song, storytelling and even some showbiz secrets on tour this autumn in *Jenny Ryan: Out of the Box*, following the show's sell-out Edinburgh Festival Fringe premiere in 2023.

The show follows Jenny on a journey through her life and times punctuated by some of her favourite tunes, sung live – she has a powerful voice which blew the judges away on ITV's *X Factor Celebrity*, prompting praise from Nicole Scherzinger "Extraordinary... A diva voice" and will.i.am "Jenny – like... What!?!".

The tour runs from September 11 until November 10 and goes to 21 venues including Lichfield's Garrick Theatre, The Lights Andover, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, The Floral Pavilion, New Brighton, The Lowther Pavilion, Lytham St Annes, Pavilion Arts Centre, Buxton, Bolton Octagon, Stourbridge Town Hall, The Electric Theatre, Guildford, Taliesin Arts Centre, Swansea and Haddington Corn



RYAN: Can she sing? No question

Exchange, Edinburgh.

Jenny said: "I can't wait to take my cabaret show on tour around the UK. It's nice to be able to share a different side of me with everybody. What's reassuring is that when I've had opportunities to just be me, people have responded in a very positive way.

"People don't just like The Vixen, they like Jenny as well so I'd like to share her a bit more. I'm just an ordinary person that happens to be on the biggest quiz show on TV. I'm a different person altogether and not a scary one."

She will be joined on stage by the show's co-creator and musical director Eoin Mallon. Known as the 'Vocal Coach to the Stars', Eoin has a client list that reads like a Who's Who of film and television, boasting Oscar winners and industry icons.

He said: "Jenny secretly is one of my favourites and she has a really special talent and heartwarming show to share with anyone lucky enough to see it."

● **Go to:** jennyvixenryan.com for more details.



DVDs

Bangers & Cash Series One (E)

On DVD and download from April 8 (Dazzler Media)



The cars of Yesterday revisited

THE SMASH hit first series of *Bangers & Cash*, described as the ultimate classic car show, finally comes home on DVD and digital download.

Picturesque Thornton-le-Dale, known as the gateway to the North York Moors, is famous for its beautiful brooks and stunning thatched cottages but it is also, thanks to the Mathewsons, now a destination for classic car buyers from all over the world.

The Mathewsons are a dynasty of classic car auctioneers from North Yorkshire and, as the family hunt for rare vehicles to sell, they uncover heart-warming and remarkable stories behind classic car ownership. The series follows the Mathewson family



as they discover and auction more than 2,000 classic cars a year, as well as all kinds of rare

and vintage motorbikes and memorabilia.

Currently in its ninth series on TV, on the Yesterday channel, *Bangers & Cash* has become a huge success with audiences, owing to its warm personalities, passion, craft and heartfelt stories.

You could win a copy of Series One on DVD. To enter, answer the following question:

Where is Bangers & Cash set?

Email your answer, with Bangers in the subject field, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by April 22.



MARKS AND GRAN: Have made the switch from TV to stage PHOTO: JOHN HYTCH



time we start tapping away."

Marks and Gran, two north London boys, met at a Jewish youth club when they were 10. They're both 74 now. They earned their comedy spurs by writing gags for Frankie Howerd before going on to become among the most successful writing duos working today with a string of hits – from *Holding the Fort* with Peter Davison and Patricia Hodge to *The New Statesman* with Rik Mayall and *Love Hurts* with Adam Faith and Zoë Wanamaker.

They learned their stagecraft, they revealed, under the tutelage of acclaimed playwright Alan Ayckbourn. "No one knows more about the theatre than him," said Marks. "I'll never forget him saying we knew how to make people laugh and how to create characters. All he could teach us, he said, was how to get the blighters on and off the stage."

Marks first met Ayckbourn at the Hay Literary Festival in the early 90s where he complimented the duo on their sitcom, *Goodnight Sweetheart*. In 2005, he and Gran finally wrote their first play, *Playing God*, about a dying rock star, which Ayckbourn staged at his Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough. The duo got bitten by the bug; hence accepting their latest challenge.

"There's nothing to beat the feeling of sitting in an audience of 700 plus people and they're all laughing. I think that's why *Cluedo 2* is going to be such a rewarding adventure," said Marks.

● **Go to:** CluedoStagePlay.com for tour details.

Interview by Richard Barber



Your Announcements

You can email photos for announcements on this page to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk

Reunions

RAF Bawdsey Reunion Association. Have you ever served at RAF Bawdsey? If so, why not join our Association and come along to our next annual reunion to be held at Bawdsey Manor on Saturday, June 1. For full details please email Doreen Calver on: doreen.bawdseyreunion@btinternet.com or telephone: 0751 3301 723.

18 Sqn reunion (Operation Corporate) Falklands War reunion at Park Farm Hotel, Hethersett, Norfolk on Saturday, May 4. If you are interested please get in contact with David Hudson via email: d_hudson79@yahoo.co.uk

124 Entry Apprentices – RAF Cosford, 1974-77. 50th anniversary reunion. Members will be meeting at The Limes Country Lodge Hotel, Earlswood, Solihull on Saturday, October 12 with an informal buffet luncheon to follow on in the evening of Sunday, October 13. For further information please email: nigelcooper1@live.co.uk or call/WhatsApp on: 07986 200137. We have currently managed to locate and contact more than 30 of our 49 original members so a great time is assured.

Associations

RAF Armourers past and present: RAF Association's Armourers Branch aims to provide welfare support and comradeship for all who have served or currently serve as an RAF Armourer. Please see the website: rafaarmourers.co.uk or you can contact the committee via email at: plumbersrest@outlook.com.

THE Association of RAF Women Officers (ARAFWO) is a lively, friendly, world-wide networking group. Visit our website: arafwo.co.uk and discover the benefits of membership, plus see what

activities and events we offer all over the world.

SUAS – have you been a member of Southampton University Air Squadron as a student or staff member? If so, please join our Facebook page, 'Southampton UAS Association' or email: 6FTS-SUASAdmin@mod.gov.uk to join our association community so that we can welcome you back.

RAF Catering Warrant Officers' and Seniors' Association: all serving or retired TG19 WO or FS and all former Catering Branch Officers are invited to join the RAF CWO&SA. We meet twice yearly with a vibrant gathering of retired and serving members. So why not come along and join us? For more information send an email to: janedjones6@btinternet.com. The first year of membership is free.

IF you trained as an RAF Administrative Apprentice (or are related to one) we would be delighted to welcome you to the RAFAA Association. Please see: rafadappasn.org; or contact the Membership Secretary on: 07866 085834 or the Chairman on: 01933 443673.

RAF Physical Training Instructors Association holds an Annual Dinner and AGM over a weekend plus locally organised events. Please contact RAFPTIA Honorary Secretary Denise Street-Brown on: ptisec@outlook.com for membership enquiries. The Association was formed in 1996 to bring together serving and retired PTIs. It currently has 600 PTI members. To become a member of the Association you will have had to have successfully passed the RAF Physical Training Instructors Basic Training Course.

RAFA vacancy

DUE to the recent retirement of our Branch Secretary, the result of a road accident, the Beccles

and Southwold Area Branch of the RAF Association (RAFA), has an important vacancy to be filled at the earliest opportunity.

The post would suit a retired or mature ex-member of the RAF familiar with admin procedures at a basic level.

The applicant must also be computer literate and have their own transport.

The post is without remuneration, however, reasonable expenses will be paid and training given.

A warm welcome awaits for a friendly volunteer who will give a few hours of their time monthly to assist our Committee to provide welfare support and comradeship to our 60 members (14 of whom are still serving), veterans and their families and enjoy the company of those who have had similar experiences.

For further information please email branch President Brian Vousden on: lancaster457@btinternet.com, and see website: rafabecclesandsouthwold.wordpress.com/

RAFA Cranwell concert

THE ANNUAL RAFA Cranwell Branch Bomber County Charity Concert will be held on Sunday, May 12 from 7pm to 10pm at the Masonic Rooms, Watergate, Sleaford, with music by the Miller Magic Big Band. Tickets, £10 each, are available from Moore & Scrupps Jewellers and Sleaford Jewellers, both of Southgate, Sleaford, in the foyer of Sleaford's Tesco Superstore from 10am until 4pm on Thursday, May 9, and on the door of the Masonic Rooms, from 6.30pm on the evening of the concert.

There will be a licensed bar and a raffle of prizes donated by local shops and businesses.

The concert is dedicated to the airmen of Bomber Command who took part in the disastrous Nuremberg Raid on the night of March 30-31, 1944. This year the concert also celebrates the 80th anniversary of the D-Day Landings on June 6, 1944.

Jackie bows out after 35 years in same role



THANKS: Jackie receives her award from the Chaplain-in-Chief

HAVING SERVED as the Chaplain's Clerk at MOD St Athan for the past 35 years, seeing 24 chaplains come and go, Jackie Clifford was presented with the Chaplain-in-Chief's 2* Commendation by The Venerable Dr (Air Vice-Marshal) Giles Legood recently. Jackie finally left the post at the end of March.

Free social media course

BFBS (BRITISH Forces Broadcasting Service) Academy has launched Social Media Specialists, a free course open to the broader military community, including the partners of UK military personnel, veterans, and their partners, offering them the opportunity to upskill in social media marketing techniques.

"This new course builds on the success of its predecessor, #SMSpouses, which, over the past four years, has trained 700 individuals and facilitated 1,500 connections through online communities and in-person events," a BFBS spokesperson said.

Participants will learn: the workings of Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok and LinkedIn's

algorithms, along with practical strategies to make content stand out; how to plan, implement and evaluate social media campaigns; techniques to grow and engage an audience, moderate comments and discussions, and handle difficult online situations; how to capture compelling images and create professional social media videos using your mobile phone; how to run paid social media campaigns; and how to utilise each platform's built-in analytics tools.

The #SMSpecialists programme consists of seven courses, all delivered online, and can be completed at your own pace, the spokesperson added.

● Go to the BFBS website: sms.bfbs.com to apply.

How to use our service

There is no charge for conventionally-worded **birth, engagement, marriage, anniversary, death, in memoriam seeking** and **reunion** notices. For commercial small ads contact Edwin Rodrigues on: 07482 571535.

We cannot, under any circumstances, take announcements over the telephone. They can be sent by email to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk. Please note that due to the coronavirus pandemic we are currently unable to accept notices submitted by post.

Important Notice

The publishers of *RAF News* cannot accept responsibility for the quality, safe delivery or operation of any products advertised or mentioned in this publication.

Reasonable precautions are taken before advertisements are accepted but such acceptance does not imply any form of approval or recommendation. Advertisements (or other inserted material) are accepted subject to the approval of the publishers and their current terms and conditions. The publishers will accept an advertisement or other inserted material only on the condition that the advertiser warrants that such advertisement does not in any way contravene the provisions of the Trade Descriptions Act.

All copy is subject to the approval of the publishers, who reserve the right to refuse, amend, withdraw or otherwise deal with advertisements submitted to them at their absolute discretion and without explanation.

All advertisements must comply with the British Code of Advertising Practice. Mail order advertisers are required to state in advertisements their true surname or full company name, together with an address from which the business is managed.

Tribute to Dame Vera

THE WING at the Battle of Britain Memorial at Capel-le-Ferne, Folkestone, is the venue for a unique evening of memories of and melodies from Dame Vera Lynn on Tuesday, April 16.

The fundraising event will be presented by Susan Fleet and Vicki Lee, both friends of Dame Vera, who will provide an evening of entertainment alongside a buffet supper.

Susan, long-time friend and PA to Dame Vera, will talk about her relationship with the Forces' Sweetheart, while New Zealander Vicki will present highlights from her Vera Lynn Show, performing Dame Vera's songs and telling veterans' anecdotes.

Vicki will also lead the audience in some well-known songs. The evening begins at 7.30pm, with a cold buffet provided between Susan's reminiscences and Vicki's performance.

Tickets are £50 and all proceeds will go to the Trust's 30th anniversary appeal, *The Next Sortie*.

Numbers are limited. To book your space call: 01732 870809 or email: battleofbritain@btinternet.com



Your Announcements

You can email photos for announcements on this page to:
tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk

Students reach for stars

MORE THAN 80 students from secondary schools in the West Midlands have taken part in a space-themed careers day at RAF Museum Midlands, organised by youth charity the Jon Egging Trust (JET).

Aimed at broadening awareness of careers in space and building aspiration, curiosity and confidence, the event was attended by Year Seven and Eight students from four schools. They took part in activities and challenges led by JET and supported by the RAF, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the National Space Academy.

Highlights of the day included interactive rocket challenges led by CAA STEM Ambassadors, a careers-in-space talk, an educational space workshop and immersive space-themed activities facilitated by the RAF Museum Midlands team.

Vicky Petrylak, JET's regional manager in the West Midlands, said: "Our aim at JET is to ignite curiosity, boost confidence and foster teamwork skills, and today was a giant leap in that direction,



EXCITING: The RAF Museum Midlands hosted a space careers day

showcasing the fascinating realm of space careers."

Adelle Roberts, Head of Space Licensing and Monitoring at the UK Civil Aviation Authority, said: "We've had a fantastic team from the UK CAA showing off all the brilliant careers in space – it's not just astronauts and space cadets.

"There's a huge range of exciting space jobs out there – from engineers to analysts, space lawyers to space communicators.

"We need inspired young people who can help make reaching for the stars a possibility, not just a figure of speech."

● Go to: joneggingtrust.co.uk



BARRELS OF FUN: Enjoying the activities on a SSAFA short break

Time to take a break


APPLICATIONS FOR military charity SSAFA's short breaks for serving families (including reservists) who have a child with an additional need or disability, whether developmental, emotional, behavioural, physical or any combination of these, are now being accepted.

The free short breaks take place at Calvert Trust sites in the Lake District and on Exmoor, and offer families inclusive opportunities for activities including kayaking, rock climbing, horse-riding and archery for all abilities.

"They are also an opportunity for families to spend quality time together, to try adventure activities and to meet other Forces families in similar situations," said a SSAFA spokesman.

The breaks are from May 10–12, Calvert Trust, Lake District; July 22–26 Calvert Trust, Lake District; August 19–23 Calvert Trust, Exmoor and October 28 to November 1 Calvert Trust, Exmoor.

● Go to: ssafa.org.uk for further details.




RAF News

The Forces Favourite Read

Hit your target market with **RAF News** - the official newspaper of the Royal Air Force since 1961.

Reaching an audience of more than 50,000 readers every fortnight, **RAF News** is the Forces' favourite newspaper delivering exclusive news, features and sports action from across UK Defence.

To discuss your advertising in **RAF News** please call or email:
 T: +44 (0)7482 571535
 E: edwin.rodriques@rafnews.co.uk



The official voice of the Royal Air Force

R'n'R



Prize Crossword No. 358

Solve the crossword, then rearrange the nine letters in yellow squares to find a famous RAF operation

Across

1. Trio break bread (4)
8. Tyre leaped all over the place again and again (10)
9. Fly Salah's given up over nothing (8)
10. Beguile company with a cross (4)
12. Regulation lacking the first figure (6)
14. Tell about deceased (6)
15. After rugby union, seem bored about where high-fliers touch down (6)
17. Leave the Kalahari (6)
18. They show resistance, on His Majesty's Service (4)
19. From Los Angeles, Pitt finds Golden Retriever (8)
21. Maybe Penny leaves lithe copper on RAF aircraft (10)
22. Split peas in church recess (4)

Down

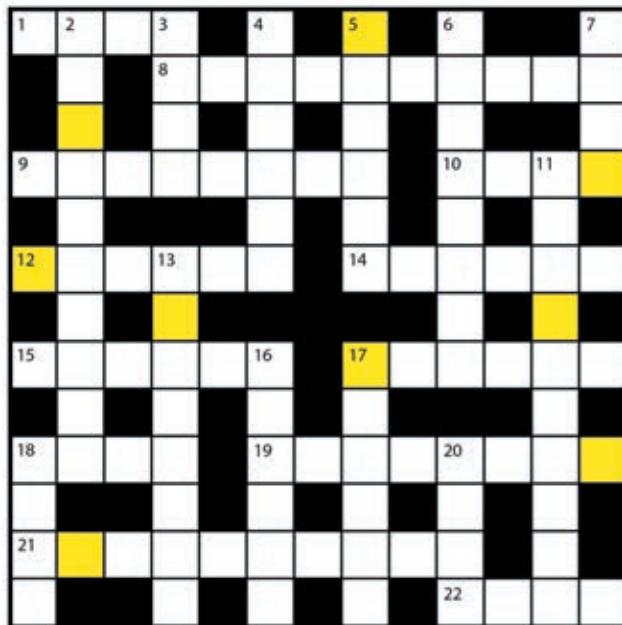
2. Unaware and not in play (3,2,5)
3. During affair, a quiet country emerges (4)
4. Leprechaun's location around Puerto Rico (6)
5. 4 embrace a 5 in good deed (6)
6. Girl's clues destroyed on RAF aircraft (8)
7. Wild cat's voice box loses a final purr (4)
11. Times of the day on seafront disrupted (10)
13. To half own boat in suburb (8)
16. To show pain is cowardly (6)
17. Debutante consumed in war of words (6)
18. Line that must not be crossed when propelling arrows (4)
20. First astronaut usually reached alien atmosphere (4)

Name:

Address:

RAF operation: Crossword No. 358

The winners of our Prize Crossword and Prize Su Doku puzzles will receive a recent top aviation title – please send your entries to the address printed in the adjacent Su Doku panel, to arrive by April 22. Prize Crossword No. 356 winner is: Mr P.A.F. Stapleton, High Wycombe.



Solution to Crossword No 357:

Across – 7. Hoists 8. Norton 10. Decorum 11. Brize 12. Apex 13. Count 17. Cysts 18. Puma 22. Pouch 23. Lily Pad 24. Shadow 25. Benson
Down – 1. Cheddar 2. Aircrew 3. Storm 4. Bombing 5. Staid 6. Andes 9. Immortals 14. Typhoon 15. Suppose 16. Landing 19. Spasm 20. Dumas 21. Blues
RAF aircraft – Lancaster



Prize Su Doku No. 368

Fill in all the squares in the grid so that each row, each column and each 3x3 square contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

Solutions should be sent in a sealed envelope marked 'Su Doku' with the number in the top left-hand corner to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP14 4UE, to arrive by April 22. The winner of Su Doku No: 366 is: Mr B Tanner, York.



Solution to Su Doku No: 367

2	9	3	5	8	4	1	6	7
8	6	4	7	2	1	5	9	3
5	1	7	3	6	9	8	2	4
1	2	5	9	7	6	3	4	8
9	7	8	2	4	3	6	1	5
3	4	6	8	1	5	9	7	2
7	8	9	1	5	2	4	3	6
6	3	2	4	9	8	7	5	1
4	5	1	6	3	7	2	8	9



Film Review

The Teachers' Lounge (12A)
In cinemas now

School of hard knock-offs

REPEATED CASES of theft on school grounds have suspicions turning from the children to the faculty in Ilker Çatak's Oscar-nominated feature, a pressure cooker of tension and moral quandaries.

Carla Nowak (Leonie Benesch) shares a mutual respect with her students: despite being in their teens they fall silent with one instructive gesture, and parrot a morning greeting with another. When accusations lead some of the teachers to invade her classroom, she expresses concern when some of the kids are questioned and others searched. Lingering over these exchanges is an intimidated abuse of authority and even racial profiling.



CARLA: The teaching outsider is firm but fair and not scared of confrontation

A great protagonist is found in righteous outsider Ms Nowak, who appears to stand for fairness and doesn't betray her principles toward students or colleagues, refusing to gossip with the other staff in the eponymous lounge. Not out to make friends, she is confrontational but vulnerable, and in taking steps to catch the culprit, she will find herself at the centre of a scandal that will challenge her principles.

School becomes a microcosm of society at large with its structure and surveillance, governance and subjects, policies and press (in the form of the school newspaper run by a group of tenacious students).

The film sticks to Ms Nowak's perspective for the majority of its runtime, and is limited to the school grounds. Combined with the boxy aspect ratio, the confined frame feels increasingly claustrophobic, with the walls

closing in on Carla as she becomes more isolated from everyone around her.

There is enough ambiguity to keep you engaged in the unfolding events of *The Teachers' Lounge*, helped by the authenticity of the performances – Leonie Benesch's as well as the children's. It is at times tense and uncomfortable, but asks questions that have a much larger implication.

Review by Sam Cooney
3 out of 5 roundels 🟡🟡🟡



DVDs

A Million Ways to Die in the West (15)
On DVD & Blu-ray now (Fabulous Films/Spirit Ent)

Western action rom-com has most genres covered!

A MILLION Ways to Die in the West was directed by Emmy Award-winning *Family Guy* creator Seth McFarlane and written alongside his collaborators on fantasy comedies *Ted* and *Ted 2* – Alec Sulkin and Wellesley Wild.

The film stars an ensemble cast including MacFarlane, Charlize Theron, Amanda Seyfried, Neil Patrick Harris, Giovanni Ribisi, Sarah Silverman and Liam Neeson, with cameo appearances from Ewan McGregor and Ryan Reynolds.

Inspired by Mel Brooks' *Blazing Saddles*, it's set in Arizona in 1882 where nothing comes easy in the bitterly unforgiving Old West except dying. Albert (MacFarlane) is a soft man in hard times who really doesn't fit in. Adding to Albert's distress and feelings of inadequacy, his girlfriend (Seyfried) leaves

him for the town's moustache groomer (Neil Patrick Harris).

When a mysterious and beautiful woman (Charlize Theron) rides into town she helps Albert find his courage. However, when her husband (Liam Neeson), a notorious outlaw, arrives seeking revenge, the farmer must put his new-found courage to the test.



We have copies of this romantic action comedy up for grabs. To be in with a chance of winning one, just answer this question correctly:

Where and when is A Million Ways...set?

Email your answer, marked A Million Ways DVD competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by April 22. Please include your full postal address.