

The Forces' favourite paper

Beatles Beat is back

● R'n'R page 4

Win!



Magnum P.I. & the missing 'tache!

● See R'n'R p8

Win!



ROYAL AIR FORCE

Friday, May 3, 2024
Edition No. 1583 £1.20

RAF NEWS

80 Sqn return keeps F-35 at combat cutting edge

See pages 14-15



Golf Comeback in opener



● See page 25

Cycling Crit blitz



● See page 27

Motorsport Donington Dambusters



● See page 28

NATO call for UK Chop-Guns



Staff Reporter

A FLEET of 16 battlefield helicopters has deployed to Eastern Europe to take part in the largest Nato exercise since the Cold War.

Three RAF Chinooks joined nine Apaches and four Wildcats from the British Army to train alongside Nato allies in Finland and Estonia.

Chinook crews will fly in troops and battlefield kit as Wildcat and Apache find and strike enemy ground targets.

The exercise is part of the Steadfast Defender war drill involving 90,000 troops from all 32 members of the Alliance, including 20,000 from the UK.

BiteSize

“It’s a tribute to the Typhoon pilots of WWII and all who took part in D-Day,”



Typhoon display pilot Flt Lt Dave “Turbo” Turnbull on the aircraft’s new paint job
See page 9

“My wife’s to blame for my career in comedy,”



Former Det Sgt-turned-funnyman Alfie Moore
See R’n’R p4-5

“I want so much to see other young aviators have the journey I’ve had,”



RAF ice queen Sqn Ldr Heather Ratnage-Black
See p23



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JEF bomber drill

Staff Reporter

RAF TYPHOON aircraft launched an intercept drill alongside Joint Expeditionary Force allies to escort US B1B Lancer bombers over the North Sea.

The US strike aircraft were conducting a long-range training sortie from the States to mainland Europe before returning to their home base.

UK combat jets were part of a coordinated mission involving handovers to F-16s, F-18s, Gripens and F-35s from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and the Netherlands supported by ISTAR and search and rescue aircraft.

The sortie was part of regular RAF training with the US Air Force and Allied crews from the UK-led, 10-nation JEF, a spokesman said.



This Week In History



1969
Harrier record

HARRIER PILOTS win the Harman Trophy for the fastest transatlantic crossing from London to New York, flying from the Post Office Tower to the Empire State building in 6 hrs 11 mins.

1945
German surrender

THE UNCONDITIONAL surrender of Germany signals the end of World War II in Europe.



1990
Solo pioneers

FLT LT Sally Cox and Flt Lt Julie Gibson become the first women to fly solo after completing training sorties in the Jet Provost at Linton-on-Ouse.

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

In brief

Summit to be proud of



CHEERS: Climbers toast their success

AIR FORCE mental health campaigners Cpl Hayley Court and Sqn Ldr Rob Kemplay led a fundraising team to the summit of Mount Snowdon to net more than £2,000 for the Healing Military Minds group.

The Brize Norton-based duo were joined by climbers from Combat Stress and charity sponsors Tesla and Pinnacle SF. The Welsh hills were alive with music as they hit the 3,500ft peak as members of the HMM house band, AK-47, led a celebration singalong.

Rob said: "The overwhelming support we've received, from volunteers to corporate sponsors like Tesla and Pinnacle, really drives home the message that together, we can make a huge impact."

Anzac tribute



WREATH: HRH Prince Edward

THE DUKE of Edinburgh joined UK Defence chiefs and members of the Australian and New Zealand Armed Forces at the Cenotaph to mark Anzac Day.

HRH Prince Edward, CAS Sir Richard Knighton and Defence Minister Dr Andrew Murrison led a wreath-laying ceremony in remembrance of Allied fighters from both countries who have died in conflict from WWI onwards.

Anzac Day was first observed in 1916 to honour the fallen of Gallipoli, where 8,000 Australian soldiers and 2,779 New Zealanders were killed alongside other Allied soldiers from the British Empire and France.

Siobhan and Isla twin it to win it

Siblings scoop RAFBF award for Ben Club volunteering

Tracey Allen

RAF WADDINGTON has won the prestigious Station of the Year Award at a glittering RAF Benevolent Fund ceremony.

Held at the Sheraton Grand in London, the event was hosted by actor Alistair Petrie – whose father served in the Air Force for 40 years – and attended by RAF personnel, veterans and supporters of the charity.

Now in its twelfth year, the coveted awards celebrate the outstanding contributions of the Benevolent Fund's fundraisers, volunteers and partners.

The Outstanding Support from an Organisation award went to South Ayrshire Council, and the title of Young Supporters of the Year to 16-year-old twin sisters Isla and Siobhan Bennett for their volunteering efforts at their Station Ben Club youth programme at RAF Boscombe Down.

AVM Chris Elliot, the Fund's Controller, said: "The awards are a fantastic opportunity to recognise all of the great work that allows us to continue supporting RAF veterans, serving personnel and their families and making a real improvement to their lives."

"Many congratulations to all this year's winners, their inspirational enthusiasm, creativity and generosity has been wonderful to see. From everyone



DOUBLE DELIGHT: Award-winners Siobhan and Isla Bennett with Babcock's Chloe Barker



HOST: Petrie

at the RAF Benevolent Fund – thank you."

Winning the Special Recognition Award was MBDA Missile Systems for their continuous support to the Fund over the last 15 years. In 2023, they reached a significant milestone – exceeding more than £500,000 in donations for the Fund.

Paula Campbell, Head of Engagement for MBDA, said: "We weren't expecting to win this award at all, but we're thrilled and honoured to be recognised. We're delighted to be able to support the Fund, we admire all the work the charity does and we're really excited about the prospect of being a longer-term partner."

RAF Wittering picked up the Airplay Project of the Year award;

Outstanding Support from an Individual went to ASI Neil Robinson; and East of Scotland Universities Air Squadron scooped the RAF Formation or Squadron of the Year title.

The awards were supported by category sponsors including Babcock International, Exolum, Lockheed Martin UK, MBDA Missile Systems, Midshires Mobility Services and Proludic.



TOP STATION: RAF Waddington



AIRPLAY EXCELLENCE: Presented to RAF Wittering's CO Wg Cdr Nicola Duncan and team



ASI NEIL ROBINSON: Award for Outstanding Support from an Individual to the charity

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gave us the
quality time
we needed as
a family.”**

- Al Dyer



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**Royal Air Force
Benevolent Fund**



Herc crash hero signs on

Staff Reporter
Cranwell

A HERCULES crash survivor who battled flames and exploding live rounds to save other members of the crew trapped in the wreckage signed on at the Cranwell Wall of Honour.

Flt Lt Piers Wakeman was awarded The Queen's Commendation for Bravery for his actions when the RAF transporter crashed during a night-time take off, in 1999.

Despite being dazed and disoriented he managed to squeezed out of a gap in the damaged fuselage before realising most of the crew were

still trapped inside the burning airframe.

He forced his way back in to the burning fuselage to help the surviving crew as a live ordnance on board exploded around him.

He was invited to discuss his frontline experiences with the latest RAF and Navy aircrew to graduate from their SERE training at Cranwell.

Training chief Mark Fairhead said: "The students and staff sat transfixed as he shared his personal thoughts with candour

describing the horror, shock, injuries and their reactions to that and the truly exceptional feats performed by the crew and those that set out to rescue them.

"He advised the graduates to learn how to be able to recognise emotional trauma in yourself and others, know your equips, know your drills and know your people.

"His advice to always 'dress for the taxi queue and not the dance floor' and to be willing and able to adapt quickly to any situation however horrific at the point of impact was invaluable."



Airlift aces eye BAFTA win

Staff Reporter

HARD-HITTING CONTENT captured by a RAF-led team during the evacuation from Kabul as the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan has been nominated for a BAFTA.

The three-part Channel 4 documentary *Evacuation*, featuring the work of Flt Lt James Langan and Petty Officer Ben Shread is in the running for Best Factual Series at the British Film and Television awards.

Flt Lt Langan commanded the crisis communications team during the evacuation in 2021.

With the Taliban's return to power, news teams were unable to access Kabul airport and relied on the forces team to gather content later broadcast worldwide.

One story made the front page of over 24 national newspapers – a first for any military media team.

Flt Lt Langan said: "Evacuation winning a BAFTA is recognition of the dedication and hard work of all Service personnel involved in the UK military's biggest operation since the Berlin Airlift".

After returning to the UK the documentary commissioned to tell the story of the evacuation relied heavily on footage the team had gathered, with the pair featuring in the documentary.

Now retired from the military, PO Ben Shread was awarded the prestigious Royal Navy Photographer of the Year in 2021 for his efforts.

Flt Lt Langan said "The documentary is the result of the



CHAOS IN KABUL: UK forces monitor crowds as thousands flee the Taliban. Above right, Flt Langan (left) and PO Shread on duty during evacuation.

courageous efforts of the men and women on the ground in uniform. It's a privilege to see our work recognised by such a distinguished event but it is also a time to remember the bravery and sacrifice, not only of all British military personnel who served over the past 20 years but the Afghan people who

supported us as well." "At the time of the evacuation, we had no idea how events were going to unfold, we deployed to initially evacuate 1,500 people, and in the end we got out more than 15,000, a testament to the professionalism and ability of all three Services."

Mr Shread said: "The UK

military's bravery and sacrifice is at the heart of this story, and it's an honour to have been able to share their experience through our footage."

Evacuation is currently on 4OD and aired in July on Channel 4 last year. The BAFTA Television awards will be broadcast on May 12.

In Brief



Jellies join UK's D-Day celebration

THE MANUFACTURERS of one of the UK's favourite sweetie brands has joined forces with Help for Heroes to mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

Maynards Bassetts will be donating £25,000 from the sale of their Jelly Baby packs to the charity to support the military community.

Jelly babies were originally branded as 'Peace Babies' to mark the end of World War I.



Tom bows out

MACR THOMAS Lee took a bow at Brize Norton after 48 years of service.

Tom joined up in 1976 at Scampton as a technician and served all over the world with the RAF's Hercules fleet. He was presented with the traditional bowler hat by station chiefs.

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Sink or slim for Rocks rowers



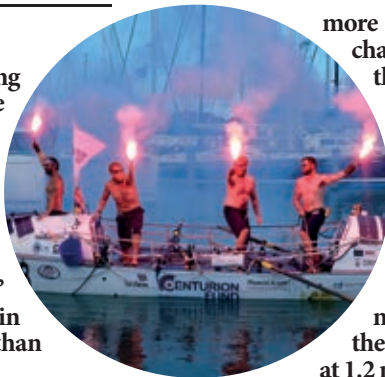
BEFORE: Land-blubber

Staff Reporter

THE RAF'S record-breaking Atlantic Rocks rowing team have revealed they shed almost 20kg each completing their epic 3,200-mile voyage.

Led by skipper Sgt Phil 'Gus' Angus, the quartet, including Sgt Dan Martin, Cpl Gary 'Binnsy' Binns (pictured) and Cpl Justin 'Wally' Wallace spent 61 days at sea, working in two-hour shifts, and burning more than 3,000 calories a day.

Battling storms, strong headwinds and generator problems, the Rocks reached the finish line in Jolly Harbour, Antigua earlier this month, raising



more than £20,000 for five military charities after shedding more than a few pounds of their own.

Sgt Dan Martin said: "To say this whole ordeal was difficult would be a major understatement.

"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 is in charge, and you have to deal with that fact."



AFTER: Ship-shape

WAAF Eve's medal joy

97-year-old vet receives WWII service award after 80-year wait

Tracey Allen

A 97-YEAR-OLD WAAF veteran who worked with fighter ace Douglas Bader has finally received her wartime service medal, after 80 years.

Evelyn Hillier (née McDonald) was awarded the 1939-45 War Medal last month by Wg Cdr Nicola Duncan, RAF Wittering's Station Commander, at Eve's care home in Stamford.

Eve's son John said the presentation had been kept a surprise for her.

He said: "Mum was a bit shocked but she was very happy about it, very pleased. She was very humble, she didn't think she deserved it, she was only 18 at the time. Wg Cdr Duncan did a fantastic job."

Eve joined the WAAF in October 1944 and after completing basic training near Manchester worked near Regent's Park in London, at the home of Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton.

In early 1945 Eve transferred to RAF North Weald, a frontline fighter station commanded by Gp Capt Douglas Bader after his release from Colditz PoW camp.

John added: "Mum looked after him in the Officers' Mess.

"She was also asked to take part in a recruiting film for the RAF



THANKS: RAF Wittering Station Commander Wg Cdr Nicola Duncan and Cpl Steve Martin-Logue visited Eve and her family to present the medal. Photo: Rutland & Stamford Mercury.

and attended Uxbridge for training – the film still exists in the BBC archives.

"She took part in the Ralph Reader Gang shows for a year. Ralph Reader turned out to be a British spy."

Later that year Eve met Spitfire pilot Flt Sgt Hubert 'Blackie' Blackwell. She continued to work

at North Weald until she was discharged in 1947.

John added: "She married Blackie in January 1948. They spent the next 30 years travelling the world with the RAF and bringing up four children. Dad retired from the RAF on his 60th birthday in 1985.

"Mum and dad divorced in

1980. She remarried in 1982, to Len Hillier who had been a navigator in Bomber Command and later worked in banking.

"She mentioned last year that she had never thought to claim anything from the war. The family thought it would be a nice thing to claim her medal on her behalf, so she now has her War Medal."

In Brief



RAFA salute for Ray, 100

Tracey Allen

THE RAF Association has paid tribute to World War II veteran and Association member Raymond Aird, who has died aged 100.

Raymond joined the RAF aged 18 and was posted to Coastal Command's 220 Sqn flying in B-17 Flying Fortresses.

Based in the Azores escorting convoys and hunting German U-boats in the North Atlantic, he escorted US president Franklin D. Roosevelt to the Yalta conference to discuss post-war reorganisation with Stalin and Churchill.

During one operation, Raymond spotted a life raft in the mid-Atlantic with merchant seamen on board. He radioed for help and a Royal Navy destroyer came to the men's aid. They had been at sea in the raft for 18 days.

He completed 34 operations and had flown 641 hours on B-17s and B-24s, earning seven medals for his wartime service.

After the war, he joined 51 Sqn and visited 20 countries, 54 different airfields and clocked up 1,435 flying hours. Raymond was a member of the Association's Newcastle and Gateshead Branch.

It's all about ticking the right boxes



RIGHT now, there are so many considerations to take into account before deciding to leave – or, if you have already decided, fixing exactly when to go, if you can.

Choosing the right departure date carefully can make a significant difference to the pension you receive after departure. You need to weigh your personal circumstances to decide whether to opt for a larger tax-free lump sum, or a smaller sum and larger pension payments (involving commutation or inverse commutation). And you need to consider the needs of your dependants.

If this wasn't complex enough, there's the AFPS Remedy (McCloud), which requires you to choose between the benefits of your legacy pension scheme and AFPS15 (for the Remedy period between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2022). Even here, as our Forces Pensions Consultants have identified, the "obvious choice", on closer examination, may not be quite so obvious.

At an even more basic level, it is critical to understand your pension entitlements and how to select the right options on your AFPS Pension Form 1. A tick in the wrong box can have profound consequences which may not be reversible. Your personal requirements and the timing of your discharge will determine the options available to you.

Underlining the critical nature of your decisions prior to departure, Maj Gen Neil Marshall, CEO of the Forces Pension Society said: "It's a fact, that at today's values, a

It's never been more crucial to understand your pension



● Neil Marshall, CEO, Forces Pension Society

pension of £20,000 pa would require a pension pot of at least £400,000. And your Armed Forces pension is inflation-protected and not subject to the vagaries of the stock market.

"In dealing with the thousands of pension queries raised by the AFPS Remedy, our pensions experts at the Forces Pension Society, have frequently advised our Members to reconsider their initial inclination to opt for their legacy scheme benefits. So much depends on your individual

circumstances, objective guidance can be invaluable. As and when you receive your RSS, we're here to support you.

"That's why we say - "it pays to understand your pension" - now more than ever!"

● **The Forces Pension Society is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that serves as a watchdog for the whole military community. If you would like to know more about our work and how we can help you make the most of your personal pension worth, visit forcespensionsociety.org**



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In Brief



Saddle up

THE RAF Association's global cycling event RAFA Rides is back – and this year it's bigger than ever, said the charity.

It will return to Kendrew Barracks, formerly RAF Cottesmore, in Rutland on June 15, where riders will tackle routes ranging from 25 to 100 miles, around Leicestershire and Rutland countryside.

Deputy CEO Rachel Huxford said: "Last year over 1,000 cyclists took part around the globe, raising more than £110,000. We're looking forward to welcoming more riders than ever in 2024 as we continue to grow the event."

Cyclists based all over the world can also join in with RAFA Rides Your Way, where teams and individuals can create their own events, choosing their own start time, distance and location.

● Go to: rides.rafa.org.uk for more details.

D-Day scramble



Tracey Allen

THE RAF'S display Typhoon has been given a D-Day makeover as the UK prepares to mark the 80th anniversary of the Normandy Landings.

Sporting the distinctive black and white stripes and

camouflage paint job used on the RAF's World War II Typhoons which supported the invasion, the swing role fighter will salute the Allies' D-Day heroes at air shows across the UK and Europe this summer.

Display pilot Flt Lt Dave 'Turbo' Turnbull said: "I cannot

wait for people to see this aircraft in the air.

"This design is a beautiful tribute to the Typhoon pilots of the Second World War, and to everyone who took part in D-Day. It is absolutely an honour to be chosen to fly it."



HONOUR: Flt Lt Turnbull

Cadets net £5m gliding upgrade

Staff Reporter

A £5 MILLION programme to upgrade flying training facilities for Cadets has been completed at Little Rissington.

The work includes a new accommodation and shower block and catering facilities for cadets training with Volunteer Gliding Squadrons based at the Gloucester site.

A former home to the Red Arrows, the station is also used as a drop-zone for parachute training and hosts ground-training exercises.

Both 637 and 621 Volunteer Gliding Sqns operate from Rissington, offering hundreds of RAF Cadets their first taste of flying.

The new facilities were officially opened by AVM Ian Townsend last month. Speaking at the ceremony, 2 Flying Training School's Wg Cdr Tim Willson said: "The new build at RAF Little Rissington has delivered environmentally friendly



INVESTMENT: AVM Townsend, right, chats with 621 VGS instructor Phil Woods at Rissington

overnight accommodation and enhanced operational accommodation.

"This will enable 621 VGS to operate effectively from the site and now allow them to recruit more staff to deliver the training for cadets. In addition, cadets from further afield

will be able to access gliding opportunities through the use of the accommodation, a major step forward."

Gliding instructor WO Steven Clayton was honoured at the event with the presentation of a fourth clasp to his Cadet Forces Medal for his 47 years' service.



CHIEF OF the Air Staff ACM Sir Richard Knighton joined serving personnel and veterans for the annual Founders' Day church service at St Clement Danes church.

Guests were greeted by a lining party from The King's Colour Squadron from RAF Northolt as they arrived for the event, which featured a performance by RAF Music Services.

PHOTO: AS1 CHRISTIAN SPARKS

News



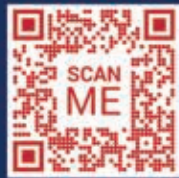
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Chinook ramps up

air assault training



NIGHT VISION: 18 Sqn crewman prepares for combat training sortie with elite Army air assault troops
PHOTO: SGT LEE MATTHEWS

Staff Reporter

FRONTLINE CHINOOK crews launched a seven-hour training sortie across the UK with elite Army air assault units in the latest war games to test joint forces combat readiness.

Three 18 Sqn helicopters are supporting multiple exercises across the UK, joining war drills in Shawbury and the early warning station at Fylingdales.

The RAF's heavy-lift workhorse

helicopters launched a seven-hour night mission over the remote North Yorkshire moors to insert and extract members of the Army's 16 Air Assault Brigade and the Parachute Regiment and evade ground and air threats.

A spokesman said: "The exercise has seen the crews and the three aircraft involved flying a number of different and varied sortie profiles, including trooping, low-level flying, mountain flying and threat evasion training."

BoB chiefs net tourism award

Malcolm Triggs

KENT'S CLIFFTOP tribute to the men who won the Battle of Britain is set to pick up a major national award as one of the top three visitor attractions in the country.

The Battle of Britain Memorial, home to the National Memorial to the Few at Capel-le-Ferne just outside Folkestone, won the Gold Award in the Small Visitor Attraction of the Year category of the 2023-24 Beautiful South Awards for Excellence.

Having beaten off all comers in the south of the country, the Memorial was put forward for the national VisitEngland Awards for Excellence – and delighted staff and trustees at the charity have now been told it has been shortlisted as one of the three finalists in its category.

It means that when the winners are announced at a glittering ceremony in Liverpool next month the charity is certain to win at least the bronze award.

"This is fantastic news for the staff, volunteers, trustees and supporters of the Memorial," said chairman Richard Hunting.

"We were delighted to win the Beautiful South award and to now be named as one of the top three small visitor attractions nationwide is a great tribute to the hard work and support of everyone involved."

The Memorial features a modern visitor centre, which includes an audio-visual guide to the Battle that changed history, as well as a replica Spitfire and Hurricane, the National Memorial to the Few and the Christopher Foxley-Norris Memorial Wall.



AWARD: Battle of Britain Memorial Trust chiefs, former CAS ACM Sir Stephen Dalton (left) and Richard Hunting

You need to know what you're worth before you decide to leave.
Join us. Job done.



Many of those serving decide to leave before taking all considerations about their pension into account. Worse, many do not appreciate their worth, often underestimating their pension value. At today's values, a pension income of £20,000pa would require a pension pot of at least £400,000.

Seeking individual guidance from the Forces Pensions Consultants at the Forces Pension Society, will help you secure a firm financial base before advancing into the outside world. Even timing your departure to best advantage can make a significant difference to what you receive.

Here's what one Society Member wrote to us recently:

"As I approach my final weeks in the Army, the Forces Pension Society has been amazing. Incredibly patient with my questions. A brilliant organisation, providing such important support to Service leavers. Thank you!"

Join us and arm yourself with the information you need about your real worth before you decide to leave.

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/

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ALL SHOOK UP: Elvis impersonator Gary Roman entertains residents at the Royal Star and Garter care home in High Wycombe

Elvis takes Star turn

'THE KING' made an appearance at the Royal Star and Garter, as Elvis impersonator Gary Roman hit the stage to entertain residents to mark the fifth anniversary of the charity's home in High Wycombe.

Gary performed a set of the legendary singer's greatest hits ahead of a presentation of certificates to long-serving carers.

Compassionate

The charity provides long-term compassionate care to veterans and their partners living with disability or dementia.

Home manager Reggie Ballos is among the staff who have worked at the home since it opened.

She said: "It's wonderful to share this special anniversary with the residents and staff, and recognise those people who have worked with us for five years."



Parisienne run-way

AN ANGLO-FRENCH team of runners completed a fundraising bid to cover more than 150 miles from the Bricy Air Base to the UK consulate in Paris and back in 24 hours.

They launched the challenge to mark the 120th anniversary of the historic Entente Cordiale between

Britain and France.

Organiser Flt Lt Christian Gerrett said: "As daylight broke we arrived at the centre of Paris and made it to the Embassy just before 06:30. After a quick fuel stop and some photos, we were back on the road again making our way back to Orléans."

In Brief



UNIQUE: RAF veteran Rich Goodwin will be performing in his home-built, hovering stunt plane this summer

Hover's no bother for Tonka vet

VETERAN TORNADO pilot Rich Goodwin will be showcasing his Harrier-style hovering skills in his unique home-built stunt aircraft at airshows this summer.

The former RAF man will be performing in his modified Jet Pitts stunt plane, fitted with two side-mounted Lynx jet turbines which allow him to hover at low altitude.

Eddie Forrester, who runs aviation data firm Aerobytes which sponsors the displays, said: "What Rich has achieved with his home-built aircraft is an inspiration to future engineers and pilots."

"You don't know what the limit is on 'possible' until you witness somebody having passed it."

Combat lift for transport crew

Staff Reporter

JUNIOR TRANSPORT crews are honing their frontline skills during UK-based war games to test their ability to carry out dispersed operations.

Heavyweight transporters supported by refuelling teams and Air Force medics launched combat drills across the UK during Exercise Venture Spirit.

It is the latest trial for the RAF's Agile Combat Employment tactics to evade enemy threats by fighting from remote locations.

The exercise gave junior aircrew and co-pilots experience of low-level air drops over the Scottish Highlands, ground refuelling from donor aircraft and medical evacuations.

24 Sqn operating the Atlas A400M were joined by a 99 Sqn Globemaster crew to deliver armoured vehicles and supplies and conduct aeromed evacuations.

Air Wing Commander Gp Capt Gareth Burdett said: "This exercise is how we take our junior crews who are capable of worldwide air transport and turn them into competent warfighters."

"It is our prime opportunity to practise flying as we would on live, contested operations, and to do so with our key partners in 16



FUELLING THE FIGHT: C-17 comes in to land for refuelling from an Atlas during Exercise Venture Spirit



Air Assault Brigade and the RAF's own Global Enablement Force.

"We've worked seamlessly with our Army colleagues, exercised our Tactical Fire, Air Traffic, Police and Medical Services, all from an unprepared airfield and deployed a forward refuelling capability."

"Training is always best when it meets multiple objectives, and these units have all got as much from integrating with our A400Ms

and C-17s as we have with them."

Wittering's Expeditionary Logistics Sqn deployed to RAF Honington to practise loading and unloading an air transportable refuelling system to defuel an Atlas and to refuel a C-17 Globemaster to test capabilities in preparation for future warfighting operations.

47 Air Despatch, Safety Equipment fitters, movements staff, Ops support staff and

Tactical Medical Wing teams worked from an operating base in a hardened aircraft shelter.

A spokesman added: "The exercise showcases our capabilities in preparation for future warfighting operations."

"It underscores the Combat Readiness Force's dedication to maintaining peak operational performance, ensuring the RAF's continued effectiveness in any operational environment."

Feature

Return of the

80 Sqn reborn in Florida to keep F-35 at cutting edge of air combat



**A DATA
REMEMBER:**
CAS meets 80
Sqn personnel
at Florida base



NORTHERN EXPOSURE: 617 Sqn F-35 bathed in the Aurora Borealis onboard HMS Prince of Wales during Exercise Nordic Response earlier this year
PHOTO: AS1 AMBER MAYALL

Eglin marvels



LANDMARK MOMENT: First F-35B onboard HMS Prince of Wales, June 2021

AIR FORCE and Royal Navy mission and data specialists joined their Canadian and Australian counterparts at the Eglin Air Base in Florida as 80 Sqn reformed to maintain the F-35 Lightning's operational advantage over fifth-generation adversaries.

Working out of the multi-million-dollar Australia, Canada and United Kingdom Reprogramming Laboratory, ACURL, highly-trained technicians will compile and analyse data produced by on board sensors to maximise the stealth fighter's combat capability.

80 Sqn came out of a 54-year hibernation Stateside to be reformed as a joint RAF and Navy squadron, alongside its Australian sister unit which shares the same number plate.

Together with the Canadian Air Force, the twin units have a clear mission – to sharpen the tip of the F-35 spear and maintain its status as the world's most deadly combat platform.

Speaking at the ceremony, Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Knighton, said: "F-35 warfighting capability in Europe and the Indo Pacific is dependent on how well the specialist personnel at 80 Sqn continue to sharpen the spear together in their work here in Florida.

"Co-location of the whole F-35 reprogramming enterprise at Eglin provides a unique opportunity to integrate with our closest F-35 partners to the fullest extent, it's an opportunity that wouldn't exist if we were at home alone."

As an air and space warfare unit, 80 Sqn now sits in the joint RAF and Navy Spectrum Warfare Division, producing the mission data essential to unlocking the full capability of the F-35.

Technicians use advanced electronic warfare knowledge and techniques to provide pilots with the situational awareness they need to identify targets and gain a tactical advantage over an adversary.

With multi-million-dollar in-house facilities at their disposal they have also driven the development of techniques and countermeasures now used by F-35 squadrons worldwide.



ALLIES: CAS ACM Sir Richard Knighton greets Australian air chief AM Robert Chipman at 80 Sqn reformation ceremony at Eglin Air Base

ACM Knighton added: "Central to our combat effectiveness will be the degree to which we can link our aircraft and the digital and data connectivity which will give us the information and decision superiority over our adversaries.

"Critical to our success in future air warfare will be the degree to which we can gain and maintain both air superiority and spectrum superiority across the electro-magnetic spectrum.

"As we consider current vectors in the evolution of warfare, our expert coders and programmers, our digital specialists and data scientists will be just as important, or even more so, than our aircrew.

"80 Sqn enjoys the proudest of fighting traditions and is now forging a pathway to our future – one which is international by design and where integration and interoperability form part of your DNA as aviators."

80 Sqn Royal Flying Corps was formed at Montrose in Scotland in 1917 and deployed to northern Europe tasked with attacking artillery positions with their Sopwith Camel F1s.

Following the formation of the Royal Air Force

in April 1918, command was passed to Major VD Bell, who inspired several enterprising corporals to requisition a local church bell as a squadron memento, eventually finding its way into the official insignia.

The unit went on to fight in the Middle East, North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean before returning to the UK to support the Normandy landings and conduct bomber escort duties. After World War II, the squadron called Hong Kong and Germany home before disbanding in 1969.

Down Under, 80 Sqn Royal Australian Air Force spent its war years fighting in New Guinea and Borneo, supporting amphibious operations in what today would be known as close-air support. It disbanded in 1946, waiting to rise again to continue its proud history.

Commanding Officer, Cdr Chris Wilcox RN, said: "Our success isn't possible without the unwavering support of the US and the plethora of Eglin Air Force base stakeholders who will continue to support the squadron and its outstanding capability.

"In our new facility we will be transforming the way we conduct mission data business through the introduction of enhanced software tools and innovative processes.

"80 Sqn provides a unique opportunity for overseas service for those in the Royal Air Force and the chance to work at the leading edge of software and data-enabled weapons systems. We are in the enviable position of being fairly autonomous in the way that we work, innovate and develop this capability for our warfighters."

80 Sqn avionics technician Cpl Andy Nash added: "Having worked in 1st-line roles prior to joining 80 Sqn, moving into an Electronic Warfare role has been a challenging and interesting experience.

"Working in a tight-knit team comprised of the Royal Air Force, Royal Australian Air Force and Royal Navy makes for a great working dynamic.

"Seeing the mission data we've created as a team perform well in F-35 operations and exercises around the world is hugely rewarding."

Royal Air Force 'In Concert'

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Lincoln Cathedral

7.30pm Saturday 11 May 2024

Compere: Melvyn Prior



Royal Hall, Harrogate

7.30pm Friday 28 June 2024

Compere: Howard Leader



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Points of order

● I AM probably one of many readers who have picked up on a couple of errors in *RAF News* No 1582 (April 19).

The illustration of Lightning aircraft on page 2 shows a formation of 56 Squadron whilst the text mentions 5 and 11 Squadrons. Only a very minor point but on p23 the picture of an Atlas is described as a Globemaster.

For those of us who have served for many years and been very conscious of the need for accuracy when dealing with aircraft, these blips can be very annoying. Nonetheless it is still good to be kept in touch through *RAF News* from the very first edition. Long may it prosper.
M G Russell, via email

Editor's note: We can confirm that an incorrect Lightning image was used and that the photograph on p23 was indeed of a Globemaster. Apologies.

● ON P5 of *RAF News* No 1582 (April 19), under the headline 'Museum makes a day of it' we incorrectly stated that the RAF Museum will be holding its annual Royal Air Force Day on May 6. We are happy to clarify that the date of the event is May 9.

French in battle to preserve piece of RFC history

YOU ARE probably aware that the RAF was born in Saint Omer in France having originated as the Royal Flying Corps and that there is a monument at the aerodrome.

However the aerodrome is on the outskirts of Saint Omer and is actually on the territory of a town called Longuenesse.

I have dual nationality and am deputy mayor in charge of sport in Longuenesse.

Next to the St Quentin church there is an old farmhouse with outbuildings and a large medieval barn which was bought by the town when the last owner died six years ago, with a view to demolishing it and building houses.

We decided to abandon the demolition when we discovered the barn and realised the importance of preserving the site. We also discovered on a wall in a loft a 5ft-wide wall painting showing the emblem of the RFC, probably because the loft was used as a mess given that the aerodrome is only a few hundred yards away.

The farmhouse and surrounding buildings were used after World War I as the headquarters of the architects of the Commonwealth Graves Commission.

Our mayor, Christian Coupez, managed



EMBLEM: RFC wings on the barn wall and, top, local newspaper report about the town's protest



to find a property developer who would include access to the wall painting via a dedicated entrance and stairs in the project, which involved renovating the buildings and creating 18 luxury flats. This was four years ago.

Since then the head of French heritage (l'Architecte des Bâtiments de France) has refused to validate the plans, rejecting four different

propositions – each based on minor details: roof too high, wrong materials etc. We recently organised a small 'demonstration' in order to attract press coverage to the situation.

We hope to be able to preserve the site, including the RFC wings.

Stephen Mound, sent via email

Conflict through eyes of tragic Hetherington

A MAJOR exhibition of work by the innovative, multi-award-winning conflict photographer Tim Hetherington has opened at the Imperial War Museum, London.

The compelling and moving exhibition, entitled *Storyteller: Photography by Tim Hetherington*, showcases photographs, films and personal objects from across the photojournalist's career.

Key works on display include his projects in Liberia (2003-2007) and Afghanistan (2007-2008), and his final, unfinished project in Libya (2011).

He was mortally wounded, aged 40, in April 2011 while working on a new project in Libya.

The free exhibition, which runs until September 29, opened on the 13th anniversary of Hetherington's death while covering the Libyan Civil War.

An IWM spokesperson said: "With newly displayed objects and photographs, including the camera and diary he used in the days leading up to his death, this exhibition, for the first



SELF-PORTRAIT: Tim Hetherington ©IWM

time, brings together aspects of Hetherington's personal experiences and perspective, alongside his most engaging projects.

"Featuring over 65 of his most striking photographs it shines a light on Hetherington's unconventional approach to conflict photography. In contrast to photojournalists who spend just weeks in war zones before moving on to new assignments, Hetherington, who was awarded four World Press Photo awards and was nominated for an Academy Award for his and Sebastian Junger's feature-length documentary, *Restrepo*, took an

unusually long-term approach to projects, which saw him return to the same places over several months or years."

In 1999, Hetherington began work on his first large-scale project, *Healing Sport*, exploring the consequences of conflict in countries including Liberia, Sierra Leone and Angola. *Storyteller: Photography by Tim Hetherington* invites visitors to consider how his Libyan project might have developed, had it not been tragically cut short.

Other defining and award-winning works by and about Hetherington, shown in dedicated screening rooms, include *Sleeping Soldiers*, *Liberian Graffiti* and his self-reflective film, *Diary*.

Curator Greg Brockett, said: "In the process of curating this exhibition, and the years I have spent cataloguing and researching Tim Hetherington's archive, I have discovered just how driven he was to explore his own fascination with the world through the lens of conflict.

"I've uncovered a depth of



COMBATANT: Anti-Gadaafi fighter, Libyan Civil War, April 2011

©IWM

personal insight to Hetherington's character and his thoughtful approach to his work."

Speaking for the Tim Hetherington Trust, Judith Hetherington, Tim's mother and founding Trustee, said: "The exhibition fulfils the Trust's core ambition that Tim's visionary work should continue to inspire

new generations of artists and journalists dedicated to bringing truth to the world. We are particularly excited that Tim's rich legacy has been amplified and given new relevance by the deep knowledge and historical perspective of the team at IWM."

● Go to: iwm.org for more details.



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Air defence specialist & butterfly discoverer

GP CAPT Keith Mossman, who has died aged 96, served in a wide variety of air defence posts as a pilot, controller and commander throughout the height of the Cold War.

He trained as a pilot at the RAF College Cranwell in the first post-war entry in 1947 and was awarded the Groves Memorial Trophy for being the best pilot on his course. He won the Victor Ludorum, established record times for sprinting and excelled at rugby. He went on to play for the RAF.

He converted to the Meteor day fighter before joining 63 Squadron at a time when there were 45 fighter squadrons in Fighter Command. During this time, he ferried a Meteor F8 from Chivenor to Singapore, where it was to enter service with the Royal Australian Air Force. The aircraft staged through the numerous RAF occupied bases in the Mediterranean, Middle East, India and the Far East. The 16 legs were covered in 21 hours.

After training at the Central Flying School (CFS), Mossman returned to Cranwell as a flying instructor on the Harvard. Within 18 months he was back at CFS to join the staff and train future instructors on the Vampire.

Following a tour at the MOD in London managing the careers and appointments of junior pilots, he returned to the air defence world when he completed the guided weapons course. He served at HQ Fighter Command as the plans officer for the development of the Bloodhound surface-to-air missile, to be deployed to protect the V-bomber bases.

In 1959, Mossman returned to flying and, after completing the all-weather conversion course, he joined 25 Squadron at Waterbeach, near Cambridge, as a flight commander to fly the Javelin. At the time, deployments to Cyprus were a regular activity for the squadron before it moved to Leuchars, where it held quick reaction alert (QRA) – ready to be scrambled if the Soviets threatened to enter UK airspace, an activity that became very familiar to all fighter aircrew during the Cold War and in the years that have followed.

Mossman's career on fighters continued when he was posted to the Central Fighter Establishment to command the All-Weather Fighter Combat School at West Raynham.



KEITH MOSSMAN:
Accomplished pilot

His career took a very different turn in 1962 when he sailed for Malaya to take up a three-year tour on secondment to the Royal Malayan Air Force based at Kuala Lumpur. The young air force was equipped with the piston Provost, the Pioneer and the Twin Pioneer. Mossman was responsible for flying operations and he converted to all the aircraft types, allowing him to fly into jungle outposts and landing grounds.

With the formation of the Federation of Malaysia in September 1963, tensions with Indonesia increased and there was an uprising in Brunei. Mossman made frequent visits to Borneo flying a newly-acquired de Havilland Dove aircraft. It was during this time that he developed a keen interest in butterflies and, on one of his numerous visits to the jungle, he caught a new species which was verified by the Natural History Museum and named after him,

the Ypthima Dohertyi Mossmani.

In 1965, he returned to the UK and was posted to the master radar air defence station at Patrington, near Hull. This was followed two years later with promotion to Wg Cdr and a posting to take command of No 260 Signals Unit in Cyprus.

The main control room was based at Cape Gata near Akrotiri with a long-range early warning radar mounted on Troodos Mountain at 6,400 feet, which extended the range of the radar considerably. The air defence of Cyprus was provided by a Lightning squadron and a Bloodhound guided missile squadron.

Lightnings were scrambled frequently to intercept both Soviet and Egyptian Air Force Tupolev 104 long-range bombers, which often tried to enter Cypriot air space. At the time, there was considerable air traffic from the Soviet Union to Egypt and 280 SU provided

the necessary control for 56 Squadron's Lightnings, which were scrambled to intercept.

At the end of his tour, Mossman was appointed OBE.

After attending the Air Warfare Course at Manby, he remained on the staff for 18 months before taking command of RAF Buchan in Aberdeenshire. This large air defence early warning radar station provided the crucial cover for the airspace north of Scotland and into the Norwegian Sea. Outlying radar stations were based in the Shetlands and the Western Isles. The interception of Soviet bombers of the Northern Fleet by Phantoms and Lightnings were a common occurrence and QRA was kept busy.

On one memorable New Year's Eve party in the officers' mess, he dressed up as an oil rig worker wearing a long wig and a black lace shirt. No one recognised him and he maintained that he learnt a lot about his station that

night. For his services at Buchan, Mossman was advanced to CBE.

His final appointment in the RAF was in MOD, where he was the Deputy Director of Air Defence responsible for the many aspects of air defence of the UK including fighters, missiles, airborne early warning and the early warning radar units. He was also responsible for the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. He chaired a NATO Tri-Service group on air defence, requiring regular visits to Brussels.

After three years, Mossman decided to retire from the RAF and took up an appointment with the Sultan of Oman's Air Force with responsibility for overseeing the installation and commissioning of an Integrated Air Defence System, which had been purchased from British Aerospace.

On retirement, he became head of the Emergency Planning Office for Cumbria County Council.



Venice, USA



HIDDEN GEM: Fort Lauderdale has waterways, a marina, good hotels like the Hilton (inset, top), relaxed bars, state parks and is a great base for the Everglades

OUR SERIES of authentic Florida features continues with a much larger hidden gem, the Venice of America, Greater Fort Lauderdale.

Situated on Florida's East Coast, 30 miles north of Miami, Greater Fort Lauderdale boasts 24 miles of white sandy beaches, dazzling blue skies and warm seas. Its 31 neighbourhoods offer an amazing variety of attractions to entertain. Unlike Miami's commercialised nightlife, Lauderdale tempts you with a mix of live music, charismatic bars, a real ale trail and hysterical comedy clubs. It's a buzzing city vibe, with small town America appeal.

Head to Las Olas Boulevard, the downtown heart of Fort Lauderdale, to check out the varied nightspots and chic restaurants. Pop into the 1890s Riverside Hotel for a drink at the elegant bar, or dance all night to a live band at Mango's.

Shoppers will also love Las Olas, spending time browsing as they stroll from the downtown area to the beach. With its fabulous boutiques, galleries, speciality stores and world-class fashion houses, it's certainly worth a visit.

The other nearby shopper's paradise is Sawgrass Mills, apparently the largest outlet shopping destination in America. It's more of a shopping city really than a mall, with over 350 stores, 23 cinema screens, 33 restaurants, a billiards club, and one of only two Barbie DreamHouse Experience locations in America. You can always 'Beach' here Ken.



Relax

The beaches are an instant win in Lauderdale, with eight beach towns dotted around. Family-friendly Lauderdale-By-The-Sea is one of note. It's known as Florida's Beach Diving Capital and is a popular lobster diving destination. Pompano Beach is another, featuring eight dive sites with stunning coral reefs.

The state parks are another way to while away your day in the Florida sunshine. Dr. Von D. Mizell-Eula Johnson State Park (there's a mouthful), formerly known as John U. Lloyd Beach State Park (still a mouthful), sits just south of Port Everglades. It's the last example of an undeveloped coastal ecosystem in Broward County and a perfect spot to unwind, just moments from the heart of the city.

Action

Lauderdale is the best place to stay if you want to visit one of America's greatest wonders, the Everglades National Park.

Visiting the park, you can spend time hiking, camping, or experiencing the 'River of Grass' on an exciting airboat tour, Gators guaranteed.

If you want a slower pace on the water, you can book a Gondola, although these are a modern spin on the old Venetian classics. If you want something vintage American, take the Jungle Queen, an authentic 1890s paddle-wheeler, out of the city. This takes you into a small (re-created) Indian village in the Everglades, a million miles away from the bustling metropolis.

Alternatively, hop on the Water Taxi, a fast, fun and economical way to get around the city. It connects you to Las Olas, the beaches, state parks and many other attractions. The brilliant guides will also point out the homes of the rich and famous as you go, so it's not to be missed, on even the shortest visit.

Stay

We stayed at The Hilton - Fort Lauderdale Marina, a 4 Star hotel, situated in the heart of Venice of the Americas.

Set along a scenic stretch of the Intracoastal Waterway, The Hilton has its own 33-slip marina. It's the perfect spot for billionaires to moor their yachts and you certainly feel like you're staying with the jet set. The hotel was fully renovated in 2023 and it exudes that premiere Hilton panache throughout the interior.

The 576 guest rooms and 19 suites are airy, with contemporary décor that, we're told, is inspired by the refinement

of luxury yachts. Many rooms have balconies that offer beautiful water views, set against the dramatic city skyline.

Hotel facilities include a well-equipped fitness centre, an outdoor swimming pool that overlooks the marina and extensive conference facilities. You can also dine with a choice of view, either at the dockside, or at the pool bar. For a more formal dining experience you could try Olive & Sea, a rooftop, eastern Mediterranean restaurant that serves dishes infused with flavours from the Med.

Breakfast is plentiful, with bacon, eggs, cheeses, yogurt, fruit and homemade pastries, all available in a buffet setting. Service is outstanding and the dining room shares the same stunning waterside view, yachts and all.

Downsides

As you'd expect from Hilton, there are very few faults. It's not the cheapest hotel of course. A twin double room (with balcony) will set you back around £180 per night in September. That doesn't include breakfast, which will tag on around £30 extra, per person.

Verdict

Overall, this is a great stay in a cracking location. Fort Lauderdale is often overlooked, due to the hype of neighbouring Miami, but it really is a brilliant, laid-back option. There's a lot to see and do here. If you want to experience the Glades and the thrum of a vibrant city, it's certainly worth a visit.



Tim Morris

Mazda MX-30 R-EV (from £31,495 otr)

Motoring



In the swing

MAZDA HAS brought us some revolutionary vehicles over the years. The RX7 and the RX8 among them. Red-lining at 9,000rpm, thanks to their brilliant rotary engines, both were designed in the years before the green lobby outlawed the words 'fast' and 'fun'. They went like stink, drank like a fish and we didn't bother reading CO2 emissions.

These days it's a different picture and even Mazda launched its first fully electric production vehicle, the MX-30, a few years ago. Unfortunately, range was limited however, so it really was a car that was designed just for city work. Until now.

Mazda's newest addition to the MX-30 range is the R-EV, which indicates that it's been fitted with a rotary petrol engine. This is not a hybrid however. No, Mazda tells us that it's the same EV, with a bigger battery and a 'built in charger'. Wait, what???

Exterior

The MX-30 is clearly designed to fit into the crossover segment, with a higher stance than a conventional hatchback, but there are cues that Mazda is doing things differently. Take the swing-out door configuration, that opens up the cabin for rear seat entry/exit. This is a great nod to the iconic RX-8 and an immediate talking point. The profile is smart enough, rakish at the front, with sleek lines trailing to the rear. Hard-wearing plastic skirts and wheel arch trim give it a utility touch, while the front headlights and signature grille help it to be easily identifiable.

Mazda's MX-30 matures into a useable EV... with cool doors a nod to RX-8

Interior

The MX-30 is Mazda's eco-warrior. The interior is well finished but, when you look closer, you soon discover that the materials range from cork inlays to 'vegan leather' and repurposed denim.

The driving position is spot-on, exactly what you would expect from Mazda. There's plenty of steering wheel and seat adjustment to find the perfect position. It's easy to place through tight gaps thanks to excellent front visibility. Unfortunately, going backwards is more of a challenge though, thanks to the small rear windows and wide rear pillars. On the plus-side, all versions come with front and rear parking sensors as standard.

There are three digital screens on the dash and a head-up display that projects key info on to the windscreen. The driver gets a 7.0in digital instrument panel and a climate control touchscreen of equal size mounted just below the main 8.8 inch infotainment screen.

The system is very intuitive to operate,

with simple menus that you navigate with a handy rotary controller. This is far easier to operate on the move than prodding at a touchscreen menu. All trim levels come with built-in sat-nav but there's also Android Auto and Apple CarPlay.

On The Road

Mazdas always handle well, thanks to precise steering, well-balanced suspension and light weight. The MX-30 R-EV, with its low-slung 310kg battery and well-weighted steering, does its best to keep up this reputation, as much as a crossover can.

Mazda has fitted the same torque vectoring system that it uses in its other offerings, but has tuned it to work with the electric motor. The result is a car that develops 168bhp, enough oomph to wheelspin when you boot it out of a corner and hit 60mph in 9.1 seconds from a standing start.

Like many EVs, you'll top-out at 87mph but it's the economy that's interesting. Unlike the standard EV, which will cover a

Mazda MX-30 R-EV

Pros

- Handles well for a crossover
- Cool doors and smart interior
- Nice infotainment system
- Great Mazda reliability record

Cons

- Rear seats feel claustrophobic
- Limited rear visibility
- May depreciate quickly

Verdict

The Mazda MX-30 R-EV drives well and has a smart, well-equipped interior. The battery is large enough to cover everyday bimbbling on electric alone, while the petrol generator extends the range to a practical level, without having to find charging stations. It's well priced and has those awesome RX-8 doors. In-short, well worth a test drive.

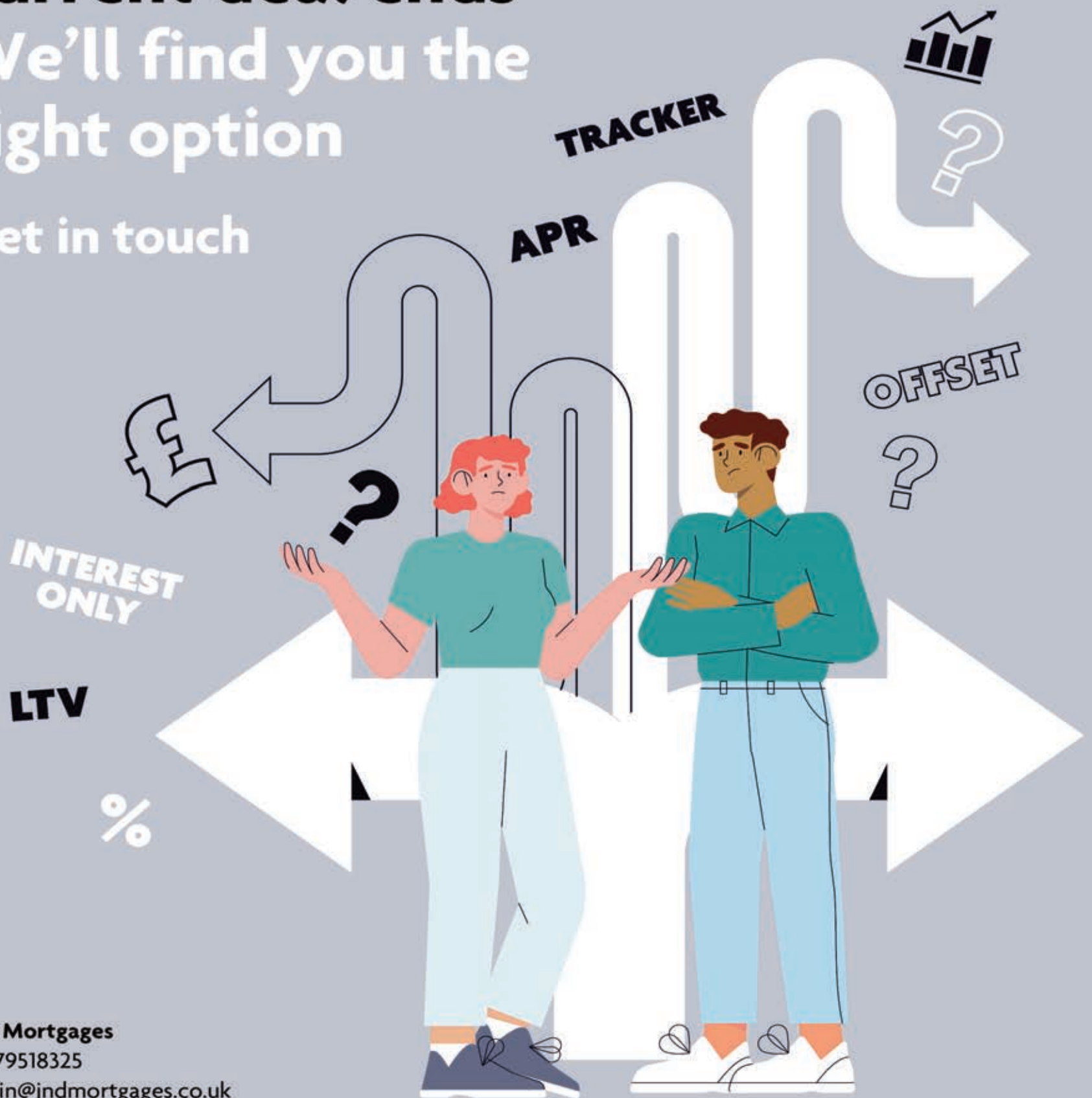
maximum of 124 miles on a charge, the R-EV claims to have an overall range, running the petrol genny, of around 400 miles. This works out to, wait for it, 283mpg. Impressive. Electric-only range is a reported 53 miles.

The R in R-EV refers to the 830cc rotary engine that is used as the generator. When it fires into life, it runs quietly in the background, with the sound of a tyre inflater working away outside the cabin. It's not a sophisticated sound but it's not overtly intrusive either. The only downside is that it does cause some vibration that you feel running through the steering wheel.

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ICE SPORTS

UK Sports role for Sqn Ldr

Ice queen Ratnage-Black to hand over the reins at UKAF



RAF STARS: Men's skeleton captain Flt Lt Rhys Thornbury celebrating another Inter-Services team victory (above) and Jamaica bobsleigh ace Cpl Shanwayne Stephens (inset, top left)

Daniel Abrahams

FOLLOWING A decade of success Service ice sports will have a new feather in its cap as Sqn Ldr Heather Ratnage-Black becomes a UK Sports International Leader.

The ever-busy Sqn Ldr somehow found time to complete an IBSF (International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation) programme and her full-time role in Sports Policy at the RAF Sports Directorate, while holding her role as UKAF skeleton and bobsleigh chair, something she will hand over now as she takes up the UK Sports lead.

She said: "There are several reasons I am moving from the UKAF post. I feel somebody else needs to take a hold of this, it's good to see all three Services in good places, so it's a good time to step off."

"I have been a director with GB since 2017, a couple of years ago I was asked to take on the role of Chair of Diversity and Gender Group within the IBSF, so I am doing more work there as well, so I think we need new ideas for the UKAF role."

She added: "I started sliding in 2001 as an athlete and now I am seeing the success we have had with Flt Lt Rhys Thornbury, FS Mark Silva and now Cpl John Stanbridge [see p26] plus

the Olympic successes of Sgt John Baines, Cpl Shan Stephens and Chf Tech Stu Benson. It's amazing.

"For me this all started at a novice camp when an Air Commodore was giving a talk about taking opportunities. I whispered to a colleague that I had always liked the idea of bobsleigh.

"A bit later I was told I was too small for bobsleigh, but not for skeleton. I would never have imagined that trajectory from that chance moment to finishing this course, and it would not have happened if I was not in the RAF.

"I want so much to see other young aviators have the journey I've had."

Despite numerous successes throughout her time in post for UKAF, Ratnage-Black (pictured

inset below) said she was shocked when approached about the UK Sport programme.

"When I was asked to go on the course I was taken aback. All 14 of us on the course, from different Olympic sponsored sports through UK Sport, felt surprised. It's a great environment to learn from each other, and all those contacts then come back to RAF sport."

The final part of the course was held in Lausanne, Switzerland, home of the International Olympic Committee. "Now that was a wow moment," said Ratnage-Black.

"The opportunities we are getting come from the success we have built on, people see that other doors open, and I want to walk through them, our Association is benefitting from its success.

"I am always looking at how Ice Sports and all sports benefit, I want to find the ways to get the most for and from our people."

And on her final hurrah in the UKAF post, she said: "Wg Cdr Helen Smith will take over event direction for the ice champs and I will be handing over the UKAF skeleton role to Lt Cdr Greg Powell [Royal Navy] in May.

"In a way there is a nice neatness around being the chair for a decade. The landscape has changed significantly - and next month I will hand over to Helen and Greg."



PADEL

World-class padel lesson

WHAT DO you do when stationed in Madrid? Take up a new racquet sport and train with the world number one, that's what.

Or at least you do if you're Flt Lt Ben Hanley and Flt Lt James Davey.

The pair took up padel a year ago then won an online competition to train with Seba Nerrone, a former world number one and five-time world champion.

Former RAF Basketball star Hanley, 36, said: "Padel is a dynamic racquet sport that combines elements of tennis and squash, and it has been gaining immense popularity globally."

The pair were put through their paces during intensive training sessions with Nerrone, on a purpose-built court in the heart of Madrid, erected for the Hexagon Cup.

Hanley said: "It was a great opportunity to train with someone of that calibre, going



COACHING: Flt Lts Ben Hanley and James Davey with Seba Nerrone

from not knowing the sport to playing with an ex-world number one in a year was an eye opener.

"The sport is growing and I have taken on the role as the padel development manager for the RAF, trying to bring it to the UK military.

"We are in talks with The Padel School - the world's largest online padel organisation - to host an Armed Forces open day later this year."

● Email: Benjamin.hanley101@mod.gov.uk to find out more about the sport.



HIGH-ADRENALINE: RAF Bobsleigh

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



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GOLF

Honours even after a singles comeback

MOUNTAIN BIKING



IT'S GOOD TO TALK: Gravity mountain bike team members get some tuition in Scotland



IT'S IN THE BAG: RAF golfer in action at Henbury

A 10-MAN RAF golf team battled out an honours even first representative match of the season, hosted by Gloucestershire Golf Union at Henbury Golf Club.

RAF men's captain Flt Lt Tom Howells said: "It was a great result to start the season.

"Morning Foursomes are notoriously difficult, alternating shots with a playing partner. A couple of holes were lost towards the latter stages of some matches meaning we lost the session 4-1.

"Despite the large deficit, moving into the afternoon singles there was the required belief and talent within the team."

Early victories for Inter-

Service stalwarts Sgt Aaron Ashberry and LCpl John Blanks, coupled with representative debutant victories for Sgt Aaron Docherty and AS1 Jake Kirby, meant the RAF produced a winning singles afternoon session, 6.5 to 3.5, tying the overall match at 7.5 points apiece.

Howells added: "A huge thank-you must go to GGU and Henbury Golf Club. The match was played in fine spirit and the course was in great condition despite the unprecedented rainfall we have seen over recent months.

"A fantastic performance by all players has ultimately set the early foundations for September's Inter-Services."

SEASON PREPARATION could not have gone any better for the RAF Gravity Mountain Bike team after its successful training camp in Tweedvalley Scotland.

With the first race of the 2024 season fast approaching, riders were delighted to visit the sport's UK mecca.

Association spokesman Sgt Andy Lochhead said: "The training camp provided participants with the opportunity to hone their skills at a fantastic location. The aim was to get



Looking good in Tweed

the team together, develop bonding, enhance skills and instil some friendly competition.

"There was plenty of moisture on the trails and the on/off rain provided the perfect training conditions: mud, slick roots and low visibility. This forced the riders to utilise every bit of skill to ride the

trickiest sections of trail."

Day one saw bikers work on their dirt riding skills, with 2016 British Downhill Champion and Enduro pro racer Innes Graham, along with 2009 Scottish and GB Cross Country Champion Andy Barlow, on hand to take on a hill ride while imparting their extensive knowledge.

Day two saw the Service riders put their newly-learned skills into action along Glentress trails, before the third day saw a race against the clock at Innerleithen.

Lochhead said: "There's nothing like healthy competition and some added pressure to simulate race conditions. The riders had to remain calm and remember their training to put down their fastest times."

He added: "Our annual Inter-Station racing series caters to all levels of riders and is a great opportunity to get into racing, meet the team and spend the day riding. Anyone interested in getting involved in the mountain bike racing scene or who is interested in becoming an RAF Gravity Cycling team member should get in touch."

● Email: rafinterstationracing@outlook.com or visit [@rafgravitymtb](https://www.instagram.com/rafgravitymtb) on Instagram or Facebook.

Sport

BOBSLEIGH

Pushing on for 2026 Olympics

RAF ice sports taster 11 yrs ago sees Cpl enjoying World Cup racing for GB

Daniel Abrahams

“I ENCOURAGE anyone to try something new, you never really know where you’ll end up,” said Cpl John Stanbridge after his World Cup finishing bobsleigh season.

Talking to *RAF News* within days of securing a 15th-place World Cup race finish, Cpl Stanbridge is already focusing on what it will take to continue his charge towards a 2026 Olympic Team GB spot.

“The next two years are pivotal for the team to ensure that we have a chance to qualify for the Olympic Games in 2026, with the focus back on physical training over the summer to prepare for GB selection testing in August, the first step in the process.

“As I look back at the season, it’s truly been an unbelievable journey. We got the first top-six finishes in Lillehammer back in October with Jens Hullah in the European Cup and showed consistency to secure four wider podiums, qualifying for a GB2 World Cup spot in St Moritz.

“We took another leap forward on our second World Cup race back at Lillehammer to achieve a top 15 with fellow aviator Cpl Alex Cartagena in the new year.

“The team cemented a World Championship spot and proved that we can compete in a World Cup field. We finished fifth overall in Europe in our first full season that didn’t involve injury



RAF: Cpls Stanbridge (left) and Cartagena

and managed to pull together as a team to make it all happen. Overall, we competed in 17 races between two-man and four-man disciplines and travelled over 12,000 miles across Europe in a four-month season.

“All for three minutes of ice time per day.”

Having overcome serious injury to compete in the 2023/24

season, Stanbridge (right) stunned onlookers when his team took the World Cup circuit in February, saying: “It was a special feeling to come back to the track where our GB debut took place, Winterberg,



BACK WHERE IT ALL BEGAN: Stanbridge with former GB rower Jens Hullah at the World Championships in Winterberg, 2024

Germany. It was amazing to come back and show how far we have developed since that first season back in 2020. We achieved 23rd place out of 28 sleds in the competitive world class field.

“We were outside the top 20 by only a few tenths and finishing strong with a 19th place run in our last heat, although I am a little disappointed with the result as I

expected to be inside the top 20. I remind myself that I’m lucky to just be around and the season we had this year has surpassed everyone’s expectations.

“Attending a World Championships is a serious marker for the team to show the BBSA [British Bobsleigh and Skeleton Association] and UK Sport that we are a real contender in achieving Olympic qualification in 2026.”

As he begins to shift focus onto his 2024 efforts, Stanbridge looked back on how his time in ice sports kicked off and what further hurdles will need to be overcome if the 2026 Olympics are to remain a reality.

“This has been a 10-year journey in the making that began when I signed up to a week on ice in Austria with the RAF Bobsleigh team back in 2013,” he said. “It’s been a journey of discovery, fear and pure determination, with plenty of hurdles to overcome.

“The challenges of the sport have made me a better

leader, communicator and team member. Sport really has the potential to put you under immense pressure, like what’s expected from us as individuals on military operations. It’s an environment that I now thrive in and I enjoy that feeling of pressure to perform.

“With the support of our sponsors the team has continued to grow and improve year on year. Competing as an unfunded team is one of our biggest challenges that we continue to face. A season can cost around £40-50k and we can only compete because the athletes contribute to accommodation and living expenses to keep things moving. Our goal heading into next year is to find a way to raise enough money to invest in a competitive four-man sled, an additional £40-£50k on our operating costs. We rented one this season, which paid off with us securing two top-10 finishes in the European Cup.”

● Follow RAF Bobsleigh on Instagram @raf_bobsleigh_team.



CYCLING



GOING DOWN A STORM: Cpl Will Lewis (above), and first woman home AS1 Laura Sheppard (inset right) PHOTOS: FS IAN SWINSCOE (Instagram: @sarah_behind_the_lens)

Where there’s a Will...

A FIELD of 13 riders faced down Storm Kathleen to compete in the high-tempo RAF Time Trial Championship with winds gusting at 40mph across a 25-mile course.

Running alongside the Darlington CC and VTTA North 25 events, just 65 of the 95 starters finished the race, over a course near RAF Leeming comprising two circuits out and back, adjacent to the A1(M).

Cpl Will Lewis won the men’s race with a time of 56 minutes and 15 seconds, his closest challenger being Cpl Adam Baker, who was 90 seconds behind, with Sgt Rich Summerbell coming home in 58 mins and 15 secs.

In the women’s race AS1 Laura Sheppard cruised to victory in 1 hr 9 mins and 16 secs, with Flt Lt Tina



Hartnell taking a hard-fought second place in 1:20.19.

Sqn Ldr Ash Stevenson, who finished sixth in the men’s race, said: “The course was tough but it wasn’t all bad; we were treated to some sunshine to soften the blow of having to cope with Yorkshire rain, and the coffee and cake was plentiful post-race.”

CYCLING



WATCHFUL: Cpl Euan Campbell (left)

PHOTOS: PAUL SMITH, Insta @psphoto71

Sheppard breaks hearts

Bowl crit ends with procession for Laura

Daniel Abrahams

THE RBL CRITERIUM cycling series was held amid seasonal downpours at Milton Keynes Bowl, with top-five places aplenty for the RAF riders.

The women's '234' and open 4th category race was a wet encounter, with the open race

setting off first with the women's field shortly after.

At around 45 minutes, and three laps of the bowl, the open race fractured early with a group pulling away, which saw AS1 George Westall secure third place.

AS1(T) Laura Sheppard produced a one-rider break in the women's event before winning

with, effectively, a solo time trial ride to the end.

The leading bunch of riders behind worked well together, with Cpl Katherine Robinson taking second place and Sgt Susan Pugh third.

The handicap '234' proved a hard-fought affair with riders trying to break throughout, but it was Flt Lt Ed Calow who finally managed to get away and stay clear, producing a solo ride to the finish line.

AS1 Danny Hedley found himself with one other rider and fought out a sprint finish to come second.



THIRD PLACE: Sgt Susan Pugh



ON BOARD: Association is ramping up its profile
PHOTOS: CPL WILL DRUMMEE

SKATEBOARDING

Association gets its skates on

THE WORK continues for the Service's skateboarders as they hold their fifth open meet, this time at Creation Indoor Skatepark, Birmingham, on June 19.

The day, which is open to skaters of all levels, is another step by the association towards obtaining official recognised status from the Sports Directorate, with more events planned throughout the year.

Flt Lt Charlie Turnbull said: "The days are designed to improve the skills of all those involved and provide vital team-building opportunities in a relaxed environment.

"RAF Skateboarding continues to grow and has members of all skill levels from stations across the UK and overseas.

"It's open to serving personnel of all abilities, including those who have never skated before but want to try something new.

"The sport offers many benefits, both physically and mentally, is affordable and extremely social.

"We encourage anyone interested to get in touch



and be part of this growing sport within not only the RAF, but the military as a whole."

Anyone interested in attending the day, or finding out more about the sport, should email: Charlie.Turnbull206@mod.gov.uk or visit the Instagram page: @royalairforceskateboarding.

5

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



Bobsleigh

p26



Cycling

p27

MOTORSPORT

Going for *five* in a row

Off to a flyer in Inters and a fine result for the 617 Dambusters

Daniel Abrahams

IT WAS first round honours to the RAF in this year's GB Racing Protection Armed Forces Inter-Service Championship, with four out of the top five finishes at Snetterton.

The result sets the team on its way to recording a possible fifth straight IS series win.

With a further seven rounds to go, they followed up the opening round success with an historic first five-hour Endurance race under the moniker 617 Dambusters, at Donington Park, where they placed an impressive fourth in class.

At Snetterton AS1(T) Kenny Macleod came second behind an Army rider, with 9.263 seconds the difference. Flt Lt James Field,



NEW TALENT: Cpl Dean Turner, above



ENDURANCE: WO Alan Sharp racing (above left) and, far left, with teammates Flt Lt James Leslie (centre) and Cpl Dean Turner
PHOTOS: CAMPIX PHOTOGRAPHY

Cpl Michael Russell and WO Alan Sharp made up the remaining top five spots.

from all RAF riders. This race is an 'open series' which has all manner of bikes on the packed

grid, ranging from the mini twins, 600cc up to the 1000cc, 200 bhp monsters, all on the track at once and the racing is far closer than you might imagine.

"At the end of the final lap, the RAF had six riders in the top 10 securing a great points haul which will hopefully be a solid foundation to build on to secure

an unprecedented fifth title in a row, fingers crossed."

The team, who will be unveiling new RAF livery on their leathers and bikes in July at Brands Hatch, are boasting their largest number of novices this year with five out of 15 riders.

And the achievements did not stop there, as Sharp explained: "After Snetterton I approached Flt Lt James Leslie, a fellow 'Cup 1000' licence holder, and Cpl Dean Turner, one of our novices. All of us ride 1000cc bikes and my intention was to race as a team within the endurance class, which is a five hour or 700km race - whichever is completed first.

"We needed a number to ride under so we chose 617, it is iconic in the RAF, and having entered the race and given it our all we found ourselves 15 seconds behind the team in third, but as the race closed out, we could not make up the difference, but to finish fourth and ahead of the Army is something to be proud of."

The team will next race at Cadwell Park, May 25/26.

● For more information on the team visit RAF Motorcycle Road Racing on Facebook.

RUGBY UNION

Red Roses head for Grand Slam decider

FG OFF Amy Cokayne's return to Six Nations rugby was bitter-sweet, touching down a try and being sent off as the Red Roses thrashed Scotland 46-0.

Cokayne, who donned the white of England for the first time following a lengthy injury lay-off, opened the scoring after seven minutes at Hive Stadium, Edinburgh.

Having picked up a yellow on the half-hour with England 17-0 ahead, a second after the break ended her Roses return.

She said: "As always, it was a proud moment to be selected to play international test rugby for England; but this seemed more special because of the struggles I've had with injury over the past year.

"The game got off to a great start for me. I was hitting all my line-out throws in some horrendous conditions and scrummaging felt good too.

"Early on I managed to get the ball 5m from the line and force my way over for a try. I was disappointed to have my return cut short with a second yellow card, but I remain positive and will relish every



DREAM START: Cokayne goes over for first try against Scotland

opportunity I get to represent the red rose and the RAF on the international stage."

England followed up with an 88-10 drubbing of Ireland and play France after

RAF News goes to press in what promises to be a thrilling Grand Slam decider.

● Follow England Rugby on Instagram @ englandrugby.

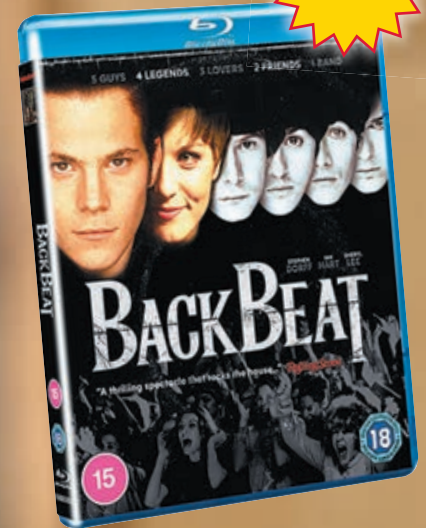
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R'n'R

Announcements

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Win top
musical drama
on Blu-ray and
DVD ● p4

Cult classic – Withnail and I on stage

● See
page 5

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Film Review

Kidnapped (12A)

In cinemas and on Curzon Home Cinema now

Religions battle for a boy's soul

A JEWISH child is taken from his family and converted to Catholicism in director Marco Bellocchio's historical drama.

Based on a true story from 1858, six-year-old Edgardo Mortara (Enea Sala) is abducted by Papal authorities after being baptised in secret as a baby. Performed by a Catholic housemaid when the boy was sick, afraid that he might die and be lost to limbo, this would make his continued upbringing with his family forbidden and so Edgardo (Enea Sala) is forcibly



taken to Rome and placed into a boarding school for converted Jews.

If the story wasn't wild enough, Pope Pius IX (Paolo Pierobon) takes a personal interest in the boy's case and gives him direct tutelage, as well as a second baptism: full force indoctrination right from the horse's mouth. Meanwhile Edgardo's parents are distraught, working out how they can retrieve their son and keep him from losing his Jewish faith.

Kidnapped is operatic, due to the nature of the story as well as the painterly way



POPE PIUS IX: Catholic leader takes a personal interest in Edgardo in film directed by Marco Bellocchio, inset left

in which scenes are presented. Wide shots of grand rooms, and this cherubic boy at the heart of the story, possess the glow and grandeur of renaissance art. The opposing religions are shown in tandem, intercutting their ceremonies as though competing for the boy's soul.

Pleading for their son's return, the Mortara case increasingly becomes a matter of public attention, and also symbolic of

the much larger battle of the church at this time in history, struggling to retain its hold of the Papal States – the territories that would fall under sovereign rule of the Pope.

Despite its narrative weight, this film could too easily drift between dull and melodramatic, but it is rescued by its opulent cinematography.

3 rounds out of 5 ●●●
Review by Sam Cooney



KIDNAPPED: Edgardo Mortara (Enea Sala)



Film Review

Jericho Ridge (15)

In cinemas now

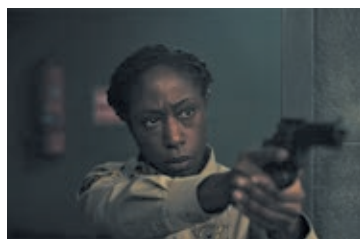
Small town cop's fight for survival as crooks invade

ONE DEPUTY is working the phones at the Sheriff's office when all hell breaks loose, and all local criminals break in.

Tabby (Nikki Amuka-Bird) still has her ankle in a cast when she arrives back early from her leave of absence to work dispatch. She may be unarmed and limping but that doesn't knock her confidence in holding things down whilst the Sheriff and his Chief Deputy follow up on a lead.

The station was robbed of cash and small firearms the night previously and so they are looking to settle the case without drawing attention to the matter, especially during an election year against an aggressive candidate. Watching the live feed of the patrol cars on her monitor, all Tabby has for company is her sullen teenage son Monty (Zack Morris) in the car and a local troublemaker (Michael Socha) in the cells.

Despite its rural North American setting, British screenwriter Will Gilbey writes and directs, bringing a bunch of fellow Brits in the cast. Taking place mostly in one location and in real-time, the tension builds naturally but there is some clever



TABBY: Under siege at the Sheriff's office

writing to keep the story moving forwards and to keep you from guessing what is around the corner.

It seems Monty may know more than he is letting on about a recent murder currently under investigation but it's unclear who can be believed. A locksmith arrives to see to the front door and vault, but can he change the locks before things go full *Assault on Precinct 13*?

Jericho Ridge is an impressive debut with some clever low budget storytelling, not quite matched by its visual effects. Coming in under 90 minutes, it manages to smuggle some suspenseful scenes and plot twists whilst keeping its target fixed.

3 rounds out of 5 ●●●
Review by Sam Cooney



Fashion

Icons of Fashion

Blenheim Palace

Feast for the eyes at Blenheim

THE DAZZLING work of the greatest names in British fashion design, from Jean Muir to Bruce Oldfield to Vivienne Westwood, is showcased in *Icons of British Fashion* at an extremely suitable venue – the sumptuous rooms of Blenheim Palace, near Woodstock in Oxfordshire.

The exhibits are imaginatively displayed, such as Lulu Guinness's handbags on trees and Alice Temperley's exuberant party guests positioned around a grand dinner table – with one mannequin stood on the table itself.

This show is a feast for the eyes and includes accessories, drawings, patterns, photographs and archive material, all to be viewed amongst Blenheim's own collections of exquisite furniture, paintings and wall hangings.

Of course, the Palace (near RAF Brize Norton) was famously the birthplace of Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the exhibition features a homage to the great man – milliner Stephen Jones's specially designed



PARTY TIME: Alice Temperley's dresses displayed around a table

smoking cap, created in the same fabric as the siren suit displayed in the Palace's Churchill Exhibition, embroidered with the initials WSC to match the initials on Winston's slippers. And Jones has included a tribute to Winston's wife, embellishing the cap's lining with an embroidered Clementine.

Being a huge shoe-lover, one of my favourite parts of this terrific show is the extensive footwear display, focusing on legendary designer Terry de Haviland's spectacular creations, including the striking Zap Pow sandals worn by Amy Winehouse and the Zia Mid Rose Gold and Isabella Disco platforms featured on the TV series *Emily in Paris*. There's also a great display of this season's must-have footwear – cowboy boots.

The exhibition's final room holds a fascinating collection of Stella McCartney's work, with gorgeous gowns worn by the likes of Madonna, Rihanna, Kate Moss and Reese Witherspoon, plus eye-catching bags – no leather, feathers or fur allowed.

● Icons of British Fashion runs until June 30.
Five rounds out of five ●●●●●
Review by Tracey Allen



LIP SERVICE: Lulu Guinness handbags

R'n'R



Theatre

Between The Covers Live!

UK tour



WELL-READ: Kacey Ainsworth (left), Stephen Mangan and Jo Brand will be slipping Between The Covers on a UK tour

Is this your fantasy book group?

KACEY AINSWORTH, Jo Brand and Stephen Mangan – three of the most popular stars from the hit BBC Two series *Between The Covers* that brings books to life – will be taking part in the UK tour of the show next month.

The trio will form the fantasy book group alongside bestselling author of *Star of the Sea*, Joseph O'Connor, who, it's promised, will tell all on his books and writing habits. The tour will be hosted by Amanda Ross, executive producer of *Between The Covers*. Amanda picks all the books for the television series and has chosen a new book to inspire theatre audiences to get reading with the panel.

Between The Covers Live! goes to six venues



from June 1 to June 7 – they include Richmond Theatre, Oxford Playhouse, Birmingham Town Hall and Brighton Theatre Royal.

As with the TV show, the celebrities will wax lyrical about some of their favourite books, offering audiences plenty of recommendations, as well as enlightening and humorous insights into their reading habits.

Ross said: "We are constantly told by our viewers that the TV show is way too short, and that they would love to join in the ultimate fantasy book group – well, this is their chance. We couldn't be more excited to take the show around the country and meet the viewers."

Ainsworth said:

"As a professional escapologist, books are the ultimate instrument of choice. And with the advent of audio books more people than ever can escape into a world of words."

Brand added: "I love reading. It takes you into a parallel world which, let's face it, can be a relief at the moment. Come along for a night of book chat and fun."

Mangan said: "Finding and reading books that you love is one of life's greatest pleasures. Sitting around and discussing books with smart and funny people is up there too."

A bookshop will be set up at each venue and signings will take place after the show, with the celebrity panel, O'Connor (inset left) and other authors.

● **For more details go to: BetweenTheCoversLive.com**



Comedy

Alfie Moore

UK tour

Alfie's N... just ano

ALFIE MOORE says he has 'a face for radio' – and that's the title of the policeman-turned-comedian's latest tour.

The former Detective Sergeant, star of the hit Radio 4 series *It's A Fair Cop*, is now treading the boards at venues around the UK for the mammoth tour that continues until December 6 – with a run at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival from August 2-25, where he'll be performing *It's A Fair Cop Live*.

It was at the Fringe that Alfie was discovered by Radio 4 producer Alison Vernon-Smith, who later commissioned a pilot show, with the first series of *It's A Fair Cop* broadcast in 2014. Series 8 can currently be heard on the station at 6.30pm on Mondays, and on BBC Sounds.

Alfie said: "The first Fringe show was in a Portakabin in a pub car park and my wife and I were giving out flyers for about four hours a day. There are about 1,300 comedy shows at the Fringe and everyone harbours a secret desire they might be discovered."

"I don't think anyone thought there would be such longevity in the radio show. It was a nice surprise and it's allowed me to tour. I write a new tour show about every two years and take that on the road, then repeat the cycle."

It's A Fair Cop is the embodiment of BBC founder Lord Reith's principles – it informs, educates and entertains – and is also hilarious. Alfie gets the audience members to make policing decisions as he takes them through real-life crime scenarios, then reveals at the end of the programme what really happened.

He explained: "In *A Face For Radio*, I tell a story about myself and the show's first half is very interactive. It's a lot more personal than previous stuff I've done."

"I talk about getting older [he's 56] and how people respond to that, and I tell the story of a TV opportunity that came my way. I soon realised there's a lot of ageism in television, people can consider you less

relevant as you age. I found out that TV doesn't want a 50-year-old new face, so hence the touring show's title."

Alfie revealed that he never had a particular ambition to become a policeman.

"My family were from a long line of engineers in the steelworks in Sheffield. I started an apprenticeship at the steelworks but there was a recession and I was made redundant," he said.

"I didn't want another low-paid job. I didn't think I'd be bright enough or educated enough to be a policeman. I joined when I was 24 and my first station was Skegness, then I was based in the Humberside region, mainly Scunthorpe, with Hull my last station."

"I became a Detective, worked in various specialist units, drugs, the public protection team and training new starters – lots of different things."

He took a career break to develop his comedy career then rejoined the Police Force five years later. He later took early retirement from the Force to concentrate on comedy. What did his colleagues think about his initial pursuit of a comedy career?

He admitted: "Most of them thought I was a bit mad. Policing is a



PC: A young Alfie



DVDs

BackBeat (15, 18 Ireland)

On Blu-ray and DVD from May 6 (Fabulous Films/Spirit Entertainment)



The Beatles' Beat still going strong

BACKBEAT IS an energetic, musical drama chronicling the pre-fame Beatles as they head to Hamburg and the relationship between teenage bandmates John Lennon and Stuart Sutcliffe (the fifth Beatle) and 22-year-old German photographer Astrid Kirchherr.

The screenplay, co-written by director Iain Softley, is based on multiple interviews he did with Kirchherr and whose iconic portraits of the band Softley took inspiration from.

"I wanted the film, like the photographs, to look timeless, not nostalgic," said Softley.

Its soundtrack includes rock and roll classics performed by an indie-rock supergroup which includes Dave Pirner (Soul Asylum), Greg Dullis (The Afghan Whigs) and Henry Rollins (Black Flag) on vocals, Thurston Moore (Sonic Youth) and Don Fleming (Gumball) on guitar, Mike Mills (R.E.M.) on bass guitar and Dave Grohl (then of Nirvana now of Foo Fighters) on Drums.

BackBeat opened the 1994 Sundance Film Festival and went on to receive a BAFTA Award

nomination for Best British Film.

Ian Hart, who plays Lennon, had already played him in the 1991 film *The Hours and Times*. Gary Bakewell, who plays McCartney, played him again in the 2000 television film *The Linda McCartney Story*. Scot Williams reprised his role as Pete Best in the 2000 television film *In His Life: The John Lennon Story*.

In *Backbeat* the pre-fame Beatles head to Hamburg in search of success, as they gain popularity the 'fifth Beatle', bass guitarist Stuart Sutcliffe (Stephen Dorff), falls in love and ultimately must choose between his best friend Lennon, his new love Kirchherr (Sheryl Lee) and the greatest rock and roll band in the world.

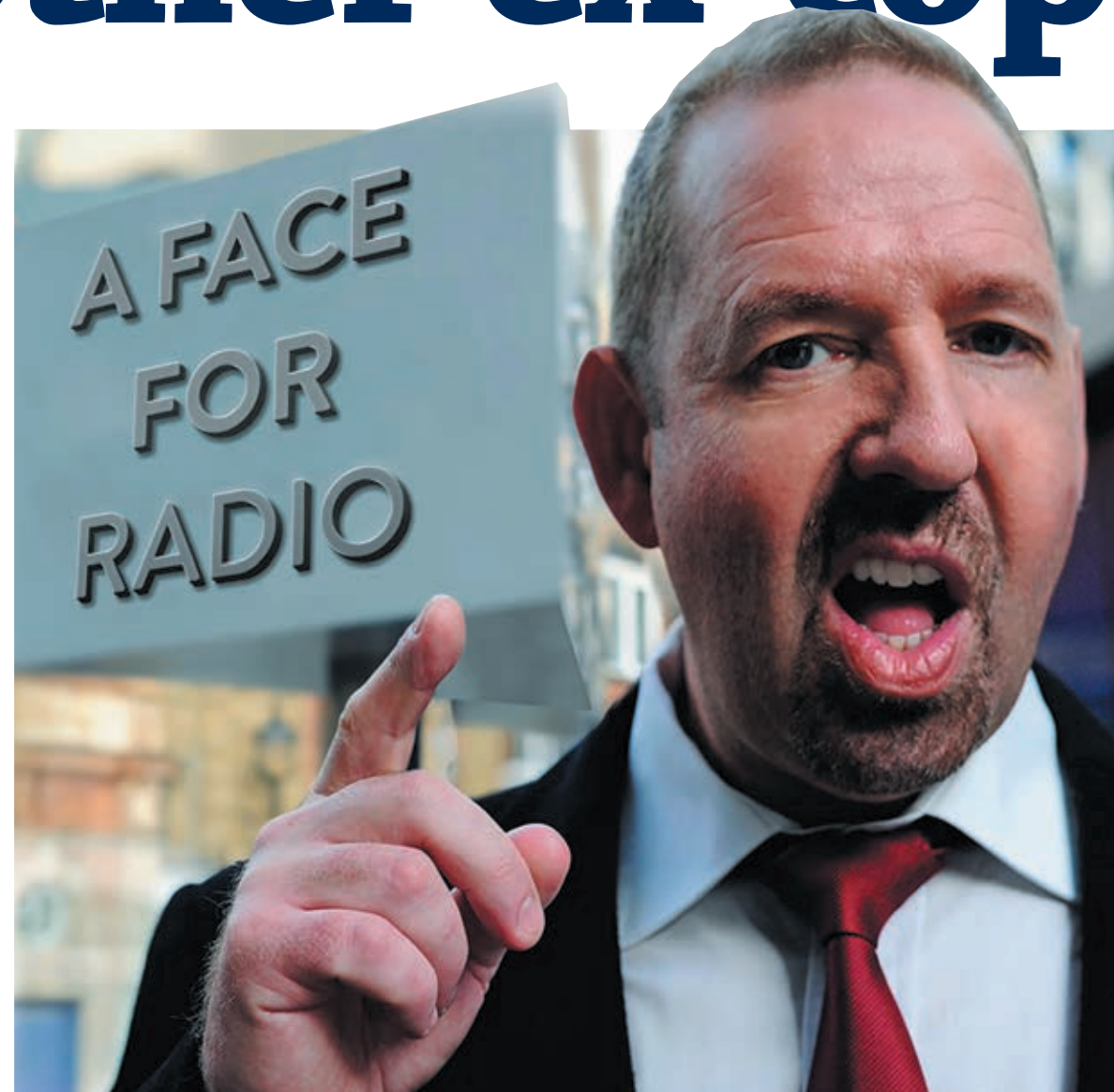
We have copies of *BackBeat* on Blu-ray and on DVD up for grabs. For your chance to own one, tell us:

Who plays John Lennon in BackBeat?

Email your answer, marked BackBeat 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 May 17.



Moore than other ex-cop



NEW SCOTLAND BARD: Former Det Sgt Alfie Moore is a strong supporter of the police and the job features heavily in his shows

very secure occupation, comedy's the opposite. When the work stops there's no money coming in – during the pandemic I had no work at all for 18 months.

"I had just worked hard to pass all my Inspector's exams which was the next rank up and I was on the list for promotion when I took the career break. It was awful timing but an opportunity had come along in 2011 – an ITV series, *Show Me The Funny*, hosted by Jason Manford, a kind of *X Factor* for comedians. I was in the first and only series of that, got to the final and that got me a manager."

He added: "I love doing live shows, the energy in the room because of the audience is magical and never to be repeated – there's something special about that."

Alfie said his wife was 'to blame' for him becoming a professional comedian.

“Most of my fellow officers thought I was mad to leave the job”

He explained: "She took me to a new comedy club in Scunthorpe – I'd never been to one before. There was the chance to enter a new acts competition – I'd had a couple of pints and felt brave. Everyone else had done it before but this was my first performance. I got to the final, which was against all the odds as my competitors had been doing it for years.

"I then did a gig just before

Rhod Gilbert broke into TV, it was a special comedy night in a room above an Indian restaurant in Leicester that held about 40 people. I was on before Rhod doing the opening slot.

"He watched me and we had a chat in the interval, he told me I needed to talk about being a police officer. Policing is one of those subjects people are intrigued about."

Alfie said: "If the Radio 4 show had done just a couple of series I probably would still be in the police. I always loved being a cop, if this opportunity hadn't come along I'd have quite happily stayed in the Force. I'm still a massive supporter of policing and try to give 'the other side of the riot shield' in my shows."

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

Interview by Tracey Allen



Theatre
Withnail and I
Birmingham Rep

Revered movie hits the stage

WHEN ROBERT Sheehan was offered the part of the garrulous dipsomaniac Withnail in the new stage adaptation of the hit 1987 film *Withnail and I*, he jumped at the chance.

"It's a feast of a role to play," said the BAFTA-nominated actor. "*Withnail and I* is just an incredibly well-written movie and play.

Frequently included in 'best film ever' lists, *Withnail and I* features two out-of-work actors who take a holiday in the Lake District in a cottage owned by Uncle Monty, who then comes to visit – and mayhem ensues. Written by Bruce Robinson, who has adapted the script for Birmingham Rep's stage show, it is loosely based on his experiences as a young unemployed actor.

The film catapulted Richard E. Grant's Withnail, Paul McGann's Marwood and Richard Griffiths' Uncle Monty into cinematic history.

"Since as far back as I can remember I've been aware of the movie and its unique status as a movie that is much adored and much quoted by everyone, and the reverence that surrounds it," said Robert.

"It was very much one of those formative films and since this job has come along a lot of friends of mine, mainly male, have told me they got into acting because of this movie. The film showcases some wonderful acting and that is why it lends itself so well to the stage. It's a very character-driven piece."

Opening at Birmingham Rep on May 3, the show, directed by the Rep's artistic director Sean Foley, runs until May 25. Adonis Siddique plays Marwood and Malcolm Sinclair is Uncle Monty.

Robert has built up a successful career in many stage productions including *The*

Playboy of the Western World at the Old Vic, *Endgame* at Dublin's Gate Theatre and Trevor Nunn's *Richard III* at the Rose Theatre. That's alongside numerous television series including playing his BAFTA-nominated Nathan Young in the sci-fi comedy series *Misfits*, Klaus Hargreeves in *The Umbrella Academy* and Darren Treacy in *Love/Hate*.

What does it feel like to be playing an out-of-work actor?

"Well, we've all been there," he laughed ruefully. "I'm probably playing an out-of-work actor who is desperate not to be out of work but at the same time there's a huge hypocrisy going on with Withnail.

"At one point, a job is floated to him, but he thinks it's beneath him so the audience suspects he doesn't really want to be an actor.

"I don't think he can cope with the idea of getting up every morning and working hard and taking direction. Essentially he has completely the wrong attitude going into the world of acting."

Robert added: "The play says a lot about British personal identity and friendship. It demonstrates a friendship which is probably toxic, not the healthiest in the world, but it's two people who allow for one another 100 per cent. Withnail has found in Marwood a friend who can tolerate him and enjoys him for all his flaws. The show has something very truthful at its core – that real friendship allows for warts and all."

"I would love people to go away and think it was great, it was like re-living the film but there were aspects that were completely different. I hope they have a good laugh because when you get an entire audience laughing you get the most wonderful feeling."

● **Go to: birmingham-rep.co.uk for booking details.**

Interview by Diane Parkes



WARTS AND ALL: Adonis Siddique as Marwood (left) and Robert Sheehan as Withnail. PHOTO: Manuel Harlan



Your Announcements

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Deaths

FOSTER Renee Elsie Mable passed away on April 12, aged 87. Beloved wife of the late Anthony Foster Flt Lt (Rtd), dearly loved mother, grandma and great-grandma. The funeral service has taken place. Donations in memory of Renee to St Nicholas Hospice or RAFA may be gift aided online at: funeralhelp.co.uk or sent c/o Armstrongs Funeral Service, 43 St Andrews Street North, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 1TH, tel: 01284 723889.

RUSSELL Bob (Sqn Ldr Admin-Sec Rtd) passed away on April 8 after a long and brave battle with Parkinsons. His many postings included: RAF Swindon, The Falkland Islands, RAF Rheindahlen, RAF Wildenrath, RAF Leeming, RAF Northwood and RAF Innsworth. Deeply mourned by his widow Ann, daughter Clare, son Nick, twin granddaughters Ruby and Lily and his daughter-in-law Samantha. Private family funeral, but all donations very welcome to the Parkinson's Foundation.

WARREN Bunny Warrant Officer TG2 Flight Systems, Served 1956 - 1994. Passed away on April 17 in Harrogate Hospital, aged 83, after a short illness. Husband to Jean, father to Susan, Steven and Claire, papa to four grandsons.



WO Bunny Warren

In Memoriam

STEVE Cleary Junior Technician, April 29, 2000. Forever missed beyond words. Mum, Dad and Neil.

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.

45TH Entry C Flt 3 Sqn Suppliers. 64th anniversary reunion at Barn Hotel, Cocksparrow Lane, Cannock on Friday/Saturday June 28-29. If interested please contact Dave Bell on: 01482 377625.

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 this address: 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.

RAFA Cranwell concert

THE annual RAFA Cranwell Branch Bomber County Charity Concert will be held on 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 May 9, and on the door of the Masonic Rooms, from 6.30pm on the evening of the concert.

RAF Wainfleet

LOOKING for photos/memorabilia/stories from RAF Wainfleet. The current owner of the tower would love you to get in touch. Please contact: willroughton@hotmail.com.

Brenda receives Maundy Money



DESERVING: Brenda Brown with AVM Legood at Worcester Cathedral

BRENDA BROWN, RAF High Wycombe's PA to the Service's Chaplain-in-Chief, The Venerable Dr (AVM) Giles Legood, was one of 150 people chosen to take part in the annual Maundy Money ceremony recently.

Queen Camilla dispensed the money at Worcester Cathedral - a custom that dates back to the Middle Ages.

Recipients, deserving senior citizens, are normally nominated by their local diocese

in recognition of service to the church or local community.

Brenda has a long history of working with the chaplaincy and has arranged many events involving Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace.

She said: "It was unbelievable, so humbling. I still cannot believe it happened to me. Thousands of names must be put forward.

"I just can't believe it, such a memorable, fantastic day where we were treated so well."

Museum is given gifts

THE OWNERSHIP title of several objects on long-term loan from the RAF Museum have been formally gifted to Newark Air Museum.

The items are a Rolls-Royce R.B.108 engine and jet pipe, a Yellow Sun bomb casing and a Fireflash Missile and trolley (pictured). Some of them have been displayed at NAM's site in eastern Nottinghamshire for more than 15 years.

"The museum trustees are grateful to the RAF Museum for donating these objects," said NAM trustee Colin Savill.



"Such donations illustrate the benefits of our Accredited Museum status."

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.

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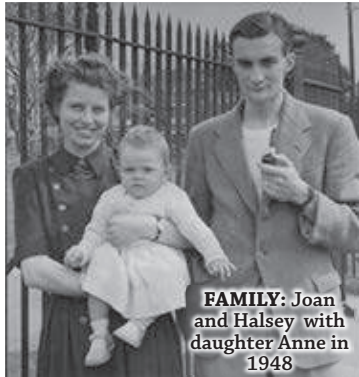
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Joan marks special day



FAMILY: Joan and Halsey with daughter Anne in 1948

JOAN ROSCORLA, who worked as a civilian wages clerk in World War II for contractors building an RAF aerodrome in Derbyshire, has celebrated her 100th birthday.

She married WWII pilot Halsey, who she met at a dance in 1946, and they settled in Wales. He had just left the RAF, and the couple had two children.

Halsey, who died in 1966, rarely spoke to his family about his time in the Service.

Many years after his death, the Roscorla family discovered



BIRTHDAY GIRL: Joan celebrated her centenary with a lunch and tea party

that Halsey had helped fly young orphan survivors of Nazi concentration camps to the UK, from Prague, for a new life.

Joan, a resident at the Royal Star & Garter home in Surbiton that cares for veterans and their partners with disability or dementia, enjoyed a lunch with family, including her son Charles and grandchildren, on her special day, followed by a tea

party, where she celebrated with other residents and staff, with live music by the Not Forgotten Association.

Charles said: "Mum has had a wonderful time. She enjoyed spending the day with her family, and she loved the tea party afterwards."

"Staff made her feel special, loved and looked after, just as they do every day."

Disabled Yvonne learns to fly from her own home

A 56-YEAR-OLD disabled woman from London is learning to fly on her computer with charity Aerobility's Virtual Aviation Experience (VAE).

Yvonne (pictured inset), whose disabilities have a profound impact on her mobility, speech, and emotional wellbeing, says her life has been 'enriched' after completing Aerobility's free VAE course.

She has been disabled since 2021 after she had a stroke which severely affected the right side of her body, making it challenging to complete tasks requiring fine motor skills and coordination.

Her speech was also affected by the stroke, meaning communicating effectively with others can be difficult.

Yvonne said: "I found the VAE course to be a transformative experience that has enriched my life."

"Coping with the challenges

that resulted from the stroke can take a toll on my emotional wellbeing. It's not just the physical limitations but also the frustration and sometimes embarrassment that come with struggling to perform tasks or express myself.

"The encouragement I received from my instructor has boosted my self-esteem and confidence. I hope I can inspire others with disabilities to sign up."



The free Virtual Aviation Experience launched by Aerobility is funded by the Government and powered by GeoFS – an accessible web-based flight simulator.

"The course opens up the world of aviation to a community of people who might have previously felt it was not possible," said a spokesperson for the charity.

● Go to: aerobility.com/vae-application to apply to the course.

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R'n'R



Prize Crossword No. 360

Solve the crossword, then rearrange the 9 letters in yellow squares to find an RAF aircraft.

Across

- 1. Southern taxi for strike-breaker (4)
- 8. With fashionable air-conditioning, clergyman proves imperfect (10)
- 9. See 13 Down
- 10. Near darkness imminent (4)
- 12. A little cheddar, wine for naturalist (6)
- 14. Sounds like two letters of farewell (3,3)
- 15. A marsh turned into religious retreat (6)
- 17. The Italian entered, intoxicated if silent (6)
- 18. Trumpet at Globe, by the sound of it (4)
- 19. China Pat smashes in an emergency (2,1,5)
- 21. It indicates possession of spare photo, maybe (10)
- 22. Cuts down first man or woman's son (4)

Down

- 2. Salt lake found in Asian space (7,3)
- 3. Where a grave object stands (4)
- 4. Stop working at station (6)
- 5. Fruit for a company of registered nurses (6)
- 6. 100 sprinted superbly to station (8)
- 7. Without any men, Shay upsets network (4)
- 11. RAF personnel crushed sailors (6,4)
- 13. And 9 Down. RAF worker of the waves (8,8)
- 16. Modest Frenchman may agree (6)
- 17. Defence Secretary to be quiet before applications (6)
- 18. Bill magistrate (4)
- 20. Article of fruit embarrassing (4)

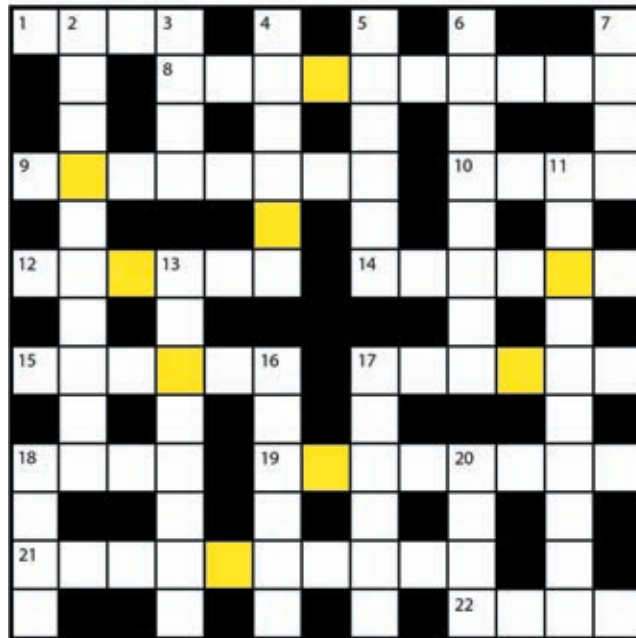
Name:

Address:

.....

RAF aircraft: Crossword No. 360

The winners of our Prize Crossword and Prize Su Doku puzzles will receive a recent top aviation title or recent DVD – please send your entries to the address printed in the adjacent Su Doku panel, to arrive by May 17. Prize Crossword No. 358 winner is: Mr MJ Wade, Swansea.



Solution to Crossword No. 359

Across – 7. Icarus 8. Quarto 10. Scratch 11. Smirk 12. Omen 13. Grand 17. Mocha 18. Kiwi 22. Grief 23. Locusts 24. Liners 25. Barolo

Down – 1. Winston 2. Harrier 3. Gusto 4. Cuisine 5. Fruit 6. Forks 9. Churchill 14. Cosford 15. Mission 16. Airshow 19. Agile 20. Lions 21. Scram

RAF term – **Frontline**

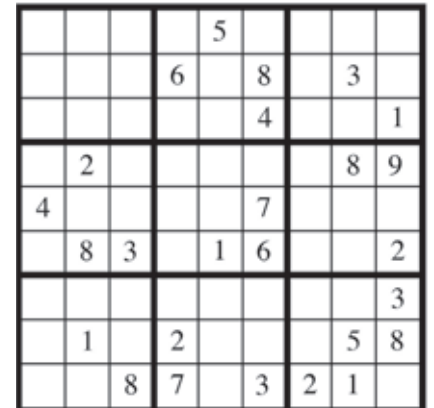


Prize Su Doku No. 370

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 May 17.

The winner of Su Doku No: 368 is: J Bowland, Cambridgeshire.



Solution to Su Doku No. 369

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



Film Review

Io Capitano (15)

In cinemas now

Dreaming of Europe

TWO SENEGALESE teenagers risk life and limb to travel across desert, ocean and hostile territory to get to Europe, where they think their dreams will be realised.

Seydou (Seydou Sarr) lives with his mother and sisters but spends most of his time with cousin Moussa (Moustapha Fall). They play football, exclusively wearing an assortment of faded European kits throughout the film, but their passion is in music, which they write and perform together a cappella with friends on the street.

Though the two boys seem happy with their lot, buzzing with a contagious cheerfulness, they have been sneaking out to work on the sly, stashing away earnings until they have enough to run away from home and embark on an impossible journey to Italy. This involves entrusting their lives to various criminals and gangs who will promise anything for enough money.

Matteo Garrone, the film's director, is Italian, and so the motive here seems pretty clear: not only to humanise the immigrants that arrive in the country, but to appeal for empathy on what we will soon learn is a death-defying journey where practices of kidnapping, torture and slavery are commonplace.

There is a diverse score to Oscar-nominated *Io Capitano*, at times carrying a bluesy soulfulness that fills you with hope for what *could* be the adventure



GRUELLING JOURNEY: The boys cross deserts and ocean



of a lifetime for these young boys. This will grow darker as the reality sets in, but it never loses its rich, West African voice.

The heart of the film lies with Seydou, who appears in turn confident and fearful, uncertain of the huge decision he is making, but able to focus on the hurdle that lies directly in front of him. Although it could be easy to make this a gruelling watch, Sarr's performance, along with the film's tone, make it thrilling and hopeful.

Four out of five roundels

Review by Sam Cooney



DVDs

Magnum P.I. (12)

On DVD now (Fabulous Films/Spirit Entertainment)



The complete Magnum P.I.

THIS MODERN take on the classic series, which starred Tom Selleck in the 1980s, has Jay Hernandez playing Thomas Magnum, a decorated former Navy SEAL who, on returning home from Afghanistan, repurposes his military skills to become a private investigator.

A charming rogue, Magnum lives in a guest cottage on Robin's Nest, the luxurious estate where he works as a security consultant to supplement his P.I. business. The 'major domo' of the property is Juliet Higgins (Perdita Weeks), a beautiful and commanding disavowed MI:6 agent whose second job is to keep Magnum in line, with the help of her two Dobermans.

Guest appearances include Cyndi Lauper, Roger E. Mosley as John Booky (Mosley co-starred in the original series as T.C.), and Lee Majors.

You could win the 96-episode Complete Collection of the series (rrp £119.99) and we also have copies of Season 5 (rrp £39.99),

a five-disc collection featuring 20 episodes, up for grabs.

Whether they're taking down Hawaii's most dangerous criminals, solving impossible cases or just throwing back a few more Mai Tais after work, the team has never been tighter – and the adventure has never been bigger.



Season 5, Episode 16 (*Run With the Devil*) stars professional surfer and Hawaii native Malia Manuel. She was the youngest surfer ever to win the US Open of Surfing in 2008, aged 14.

For the chance to win *The Complete Collection* on DVD, tell us:

Who stars as *Thomas Magnum in the modern version of the series?*

Two runners-up will each win a copy of Season 5 on DVD.

Email your answer, marked *Magnum P.I. 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 May 17.