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Sport
The best of 2023

● See pages 25 to 27

ROYAL AIR FORCE

Friday, December 15, 2023
No. 1574 £1.20

RAF News



REVIEW OF THE YEAR



Parcel force



CHRISTMAS CHOPPER:
33 Sqn's Flt Lt Northcote gets into the festive mood for this year's Santa Drop, delivering gifts to children at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxfordshire
PHOTOS: AS2 JOSH GORMAN

A BENSON Puma crew launched a festive mission – flying in more than 1,000 Christmas presents to their local children's hospital.

En route to the John Radcliffe children's wing to deliver the festive load, the 33 Sqn helicopter circled some of the Oxfordshire schools that took part in this year's Santa Drop Appeal – now in its fifth year.

Station Commander Gp Capt Royston-Airey said: "The Santa Drop is without doubt one of Benson's finest traditions.

"Being able to bring joy and Christmas cheer to children across Oxfordshire, and in particular to those in hospital, is an absolute privilege."

BiteSize

“To overcome adversity you have to put yourself in some uncomfortable situations,”

Domestic abuse survivor and Defence Woman of the Year Chf Tech Emma Morgan
See page 10



“I can’t wait to make my stage debut as Miss Scarlett,”

Ex-Corrie actor Helen Flanagan stars in *Cluedo 2* with Jason Durr
See R’n’R p4-5



“Merging with the RAF Sports Federation will bring benefits for the Service”

RAF Central Fund CEO Ross Perriam
See page 28



Immortals reborn



PARADE: AM Harv Smyth chats to 809 NAS crews at the unit re-established to operate F-35 at Marham. *Inset*, Immortals tail fin mascot

Staff Reporter

A SECOND frontline F-35 Lightning squadron has been stood up at RAF Marham.

809 Naval Air Sqn, known as ‘The Immortals,’ has been recommissioned as the nation’s second frontline fighter unit operating the fifth-generation stealth fighter.

Cdr Nick Smith received the squadron crest from his predecessor, Cdr (Retd) Tim Gedge, 41 years after 809 NAS was decommissioned as a Sea Harrier squadron.

Air and Space Commander Air Marshal Harv Smyth said: “It is simply superb to see 809 Sqn stand up, continuing our endeavours to grow the Lightning Force.”

“I know from my time on Joint

Force Harrier and multiple tours in the Lightning enterprise that when the RAF and RN operate together, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

“And when equipped with Lightning, it makes for an unbeatable combination for the Combat Air Force, capable of delivering next-generation air power from land and sea.”

Thank you, RAF Family

THE SKIES of our country are safe because of the RAF; and every time I hear the roar of your big beasts rising up from the air base in Lossiemouth I think Hurrah! The dragon is awake and on duty.

To everyone, to the proud families of brave serving airmen, and admin and ground crew and the whole flight of fabulous ones, merry Christmas and a happy New Year with love and admiration.

Dame Joanna Lumley



More celeb greetings on p5

This Week In History



1924

Trenchard Brats

LORD TRENCHARD reviews the first 399 aircraft apprentices to complete training at the No 1 School of Technical Training at Halton.

1943

V-1 mission

617 SQN launch the first attacks against V-1 rocket launch sites in Northern France, dropping 12,000lb bombs on a location near Abbeville.



1987

Desert Fox attacks

12 SQN Tornado GR1s operating from Kuwait launch strikes on targets in Iraq as part of Operation Desert Fox, following Saddam Hussein’s failure to comply with UN Security Council resolutions.

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



ROYAL AIR FORCE

RAF News

RAF News

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Helping to bridge the Gulf this Christmas



903 EAW: II(AC) Sqn



903 EAW: MT Section



HQ: 83 EAG

“Wishing families and friends back home a very Merry Christmas”

Festive good tidings from all at 83 EAG

903 EAW: AM Det



903 EAW: HR Flight





Royal Air Force
Benevolent Fund



THANK YOU

We'd like to thank everyone for their incredible support this year.

Without you donating via Service Day's Pay Giving, completing fundraising challenges, or signposting friends and colleagues who need our help, we wouldn't be able to provide essential support to other RAF serving personnel, veterans, and their families.

Whether it's tackling financial difficulties, providing access to counselling, or offering respite holidays, we've been able to help in so many ways and we'll continue to be here for you for as long as you need.

Your continued support is deeply appreciated, and we look forward to standing side by side with you in 2024. Thank you for being part of our RAF Family!

Find out how you can get involved and how we can support you: rafbf.org



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Witt feet of strength



WITTERING FRONTLINE
fighters stuck the boot in as they went head to head with UK and Canadian military rivals in a Battle Royale for the Duchess of Edinburgh Cup.

The RAF team faced off against British and Canadian Army units with honorary links with HRH Sophie (pictured left) during a series of combat trials in Ontario, Canada, including a boot-throwing challenge, shooting and medical evacuation drills.

The Air Force took top honours in the eight-mile orienteering event, narrowly losing out in the title fight to hosts and last year's winners the Lincoln and Welland Regiment.

Station Commander Wg Cdr Nikki Duncan said: "This was an incredible experience for all those involved. Not only did it promote and foster teamwork, but we also learnt a lot and made some great friendships.

"When we set off on this amazing journey, we did not think we would finish in Toronto, learning so much about Canadian military history and how it was intertwined with ours – just fabulous. Thank you so much to our hosts."

Celebrities wish the RAF Family a Merry Christmas

'Allo 'Allo everyone serving in the RAF. Listen very carefully, I shall say this only once!

Thank you for the brilliant work you do keeping our country safe, we owe you such a great debt of gratitude. I'm so proud of our Armed Forces.

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year – you are fabulous.

Lots of Love, XXX
Vicki Michelle, Actress

I WAS lucky enough to be asked to read at this year's carol concert in aid of the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation and it reminded me of the huge debt that we all owe to our Services.

This is just a message from me to simply congratulate and thank all the men and women in the RAF for their extraordinary courage, commitment and professionalism. Keep flying high in 2024. We need you and appreciate you.

Merry Christmas
Gyles Brandreth, author and broadcaster

I WOULD like to wish a very joyful, safe and healthy festive season to everyone serving in the RAF, and your families.

Thank you for all that you do. I am so proud to be a tiny part of the wonderful RAF family. Lovely Jubbly to you all.

Sue Holderness, Actress

SO GREAT to meet so many of you during our cycling adventure for RAFA Rides in the summer.

Wishing everyone in the RAF and the whole RAF family a fantastic Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Wherever you are, I hope you get to tuck into the very best festive feast. You deserve it. Cheers.

Matt Tebbutt, Chef and TV presenter

DARLING MEN and Women of the RAF.

Thank you, Guardian Angels of the Skies, for protecting us and making us feel safe in a rather frightening world.

In fact, RAF should also stand for 'Really Amazing Friends.'

Please have a Merry and not too cold Christmas and I wish you all the Happiest New Year possible.

And aren't we lucky to have RAF News to record your heroic achievements.
Jilly Cooper, best-selling author



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In Brief



Star search

CHARITY CHIEFS have launched a search for the high fliers helping to improve life across the Service

RAF Benevolent Fund judges are looking for nominations for the annual awards ceremony where they will be naming the Service's top fundraiser, station and unit.

RAFBF Controller AVM Chris Elliot said: "Our awards are a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the efforts of our generous supporters and those who tirelessly devote themselves to improving the lives of the RAF Family.

"The awards recognise the tremendous work that allows us to continue to support veterans, serving personnel and their families, and make a real impact to the lives of those who need us. Please get nominating."

● Go to rafbf.org/awards to nominate your RAF hero before January 12.

AWARDS:
RAFBF
Controller
AVM (Ret'd)
Chris Elliot
is calling for
nominations
for annual
event



Sting Ray lift for Poseidon



FIRE POWER: The Sting Ray Mod 1 torpedo alongside the Poseidon P-8 at Lossiemouth. Inset left, launching a torpedo during a training exercise over the Atlantic

Tracey Allen

THE UK'S Poseidon fleet is to be fitted with an enhanced version of the Sting Ray torpedo capable of autonomously hunting down and destroying enemy submarines.

The British-built weapon, already used by the Royal Navy and launched from frigates and helicopters, will be adapted for use by the maritime surveillance aircraft, alongside the US Navy Mk54 torpedo already in its armoury.

Described as the world's most advanced underwater weapon, Sting Ray Mod 1 can detect, identify and hunt down enemy deep water and surface vessels using acoustic homing and navigation systems.

A Defence spokesman said: "The enhanced Mod 1 weapon sustains Sting Ray's position as the world's premier lightweight, autonomous underwater weapon for decades."

"Sting Ray Mod 1 was designed to defeat the dual threats of fast, deep-diving submarines

and the quiet, conventional submarine in coastal waters.

"The enhanced performance of Sting Ray Mod 1 is underpinned by the development of new acoustic and tactical software, drawing on knowledge gained from extensive in-water trials with the Mod 0 weapon."

The RAF operates nine P-8 Poseidon aircraft equipped with sensors and weapons systems for anti-submarine and surface warfare, as well as surveillance and search and rescue missions.



Voyager fuel first

Alex Gill

Brize Norton

A BRIZE-BASED Voyager carried out the first refuelling exercise alongside a Luftwaffe Atlas A400M.

German pilots with Air Transport Wing 62 Test and Evaluation Flight flew into the Oxfordshire station to carry out the drill as part of a Nato-wide drive to increase interoperability between Alliance countries.

Luftwaffe exchange pilot Maj David Fischer, who took part in the drill, said: "This was the first time a German A400M crew have acted

as a receiving aircraft during air-to-air refuelling.

"It was a great opportunity to do it behind an RAF Voyager as the Royal Air Force have been conducting AAR with Voyager and A400M for some time.

During my time on exchange with the RAF I have become an A400M air-air instructor, so I was pleased to instruct my German colleague.

"Interoperability is key between our nations and because the A400M is a true partnership platform, this will open the doors for further air-to-air refuelling training in the future."



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Maestro Ify's on song with RAF



Martin Wade

WELSH VIRTUOSO Ify Iwobi shared the stage with the Central Band of the RAF as Forces musicians joined local talent to celebrate world music in Cardiff.

The young piano maestro (*left*) performed a set of jazz classics and Welsh-inspired music before a rousing rendition of her track *Flying High*, which she recorded with the Central Band, during the show at the Pierhead in Cardiff.

The RAF's top officer in Wales, Air Cdre Adrian Williams, said: "It was an honour for the RAF to be here and great to see the Band of the Royal Air Force come to the Welsh capital.

"It was fantastic to hear them play with Ify Iwobi, who is such a great Welsh talent, and we're very grateful to the Minister and the Senedd for hosting us here.

"The links between Air Force musicians and Wales were strengthened during the pandemic when many of the military personnel helping the NHS to deliver the vaccine in Wales were RAF musicians, some of whom had trained at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. After that valuable work in those difficult times, I'm so glad they've been able to return and share the joy of music."



Organiser Prof Uzo Iwobi added: "We are delighted to work with the Central Band of the RAF on this showcase of world music.

"We are thrilled with the collaboration with a young Welsh musician of African heritage whose music has been arranged by the Central Band of the RAF.

"It's a great honour for us to have the band in Wales and we're thankful to the Minister for sponsoring and hosting the event and the support of Air Officer Wales."



Bomber award

VOLUNTEER STAFF at the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincolnshire have been awarded the prestigious King's Award for Voluntary Service.

The honour is the UK's highest award for community groups and recognises the achievements of the 400 staff at the centre, which has attracted more than 450,000 visitors since opening in 2018.

IBCC chief Nicky van der Drift said: "I know first-hand the amount of work, dedication and care that our volunteers have given to this project.

"It's important that we remember the sacrifices made during the war so that we can recognise the many acts of bravery and heroism, while reconciling the actions of those who served and supported Bomber Command."

In Brief



HOUSE CALL: SSAFA volunteers provide support across the Service family

£20m welfare service pledge

FORCES WELFARE group SSAFA has landed a £20 million contract to provide support to Air Force families and the veteran community.

The five-year contract will provide services across a range of issues including mental health problems, domestic abuse, financial issues, housing, childcare and resettlement, a spokesman said.

SSAFA chief Sir Andrew Gregory added: "For more than three decades SSAFA has worked in partnership with the Royal Air Force to deliver personal support and social work to Service personnel and their families.

"We are honoured to be given the opportunity to continue our work, which has been essential in ensuring that the RAF's military personnel can fulfil their roles."

CDS marks decade in fight against Daesh terrorists

Staff Reporter
Middle East

CHIEF OF the Defence Staff, Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, met US and UK commanders in the Gulf as the coalition operation against Daesh in Iraq and Syria enters its 10th year.

Britain's most senior military officer flew into the Middle East for talks with Brig Gen David Mineau, the Deputy Commander of the US Ninth Air Force leading the coalition mission against the terror group.

Speaking to RAF personnel deployed in the region with 83 Expeditionary Air Group, Admiral Radakin said: "Operating in a coalition headquarters such as this is one of the best places in the world for RAF personnel to develop and apply their ability to command and control the air.

"For the last decade the RAF has been the service that has been most active at the sharp end of operations against Daesh in Iraq and Syria. It is now contributing to our situational awareness at a critical time for regional and global security."



COALITION MISSION: RAF Typhoons spearheading UK operations against terror in Middle East. Left, CDS Admiral Sir Tony Radakin with 83 EAG's Gp Capt Hannah Bishop

Gp Capt Hannah Bishop, the Commander of 83 EAG, said: "Visits such as that of CDS are hugely important as it allows those of us serving here

to hear in real time what is in the minds of our political and military senior leadership.

"Of course, they are fully aware of the Royal Air Force's role in

the region through their regular briefings of the situation, but such visits enable us to share our day to day experiences of working within the coalition."

News



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Tech that

Engineering ace Emma's

Defence awards double



Staff Reporter London

ENGINEERING ACE Chief Technician Emma Morgan scooped the double at the recent Women in Defence awards, after battling back to frontline fitness following life-saving heart surgery.

The Air Force single mum-of-three outshone Army and Navy rivals to be named Defence Woman of the Year before taking the event's Resolute Spirit category for overcoming adversity.

Chf Tech Morgan was shortlisted for the prestigious award in recognition of her role setting up the Defence Domestic Abuse Survivors group after her personal experiences of domestic violence.

Speaking at the event at London's Guildhall she said: "In order to overcome adversity you've got to put yourself into some uncomfortable situations.

"I feel like I've come out of it a lot stronger, having maybe helped other people along the way."

The battling aviator, who lost both her parents shortly after joining the RAF, also underwent open

heart surgery but fought through illness to pursue her career at the Cosford training school.

Despite the demands of her high-flying military career and parenthood, she launched a fundraising campaign for the RAF Central Fund and backs local charities supporting children with life-threatening illnesses.

A spokesman for the event said: "Emma has navigated a challenging upbringing, a recent diagnosis necessitating open-heart surgery and surviving an abusive relationship, emerging as a tenacious single parent of three.

"Her meteoric career rise and unwavering support for others showcase her commitment to overcoming adversity. Currently serving as Chief Technician in a male-dominated technical training school, Emma shatters gender barriers, embodying the strength of Women in Defence."



RESILIENT: Defence Woman of the Year CT Emma Morgan overcame a health crisis and family tragedy to pursue her RAF career and support Forces and local charity organisations



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RAF News

Review of the year 2023



RAF News

Review of the year 2023



January

01

1 99 SQN C-17 crews brave -30°C temperatures as they take part in extreme weather training during Exercise Clockwork at Nato's most northerly airbase at Bardufoss in the Arctic Circle.

2 HUNDREDS GATHER in York for the funeral of Leeming's last known WWII RAF aircrew veteran. The event, on what would have been the 100th birthday of FO Doug Petty, is marked by a lone bugler and tributes from former colleagues.

3 RAF RESCUE experts join the search for two women climbers attempting to mark New Year on a lakeland peak after one fell and broke her ankle as extreme weather halted their bid to see in 2023 on one of Cumbria's highest mountains.

4 ELITE CYCLIST Megan Walker is riding high after graduating from Cranwell. The 25-year-old Flt Lt from Huntingdon, who rides for the UK's top women's team, is set to hit the road as a military medic after passing the Specialist Officer Initial Training Course.



February

02

1 THE RAF Museum launches a mission to raise £600,000 to keep the only Victoria Cross won by the RAF in the Far East in WWII, awarded to Sqn Ldr Arthur Scarf for a single-handed assault on a Japanese airfield after his unit was wiped out.

2 HERCULES AND Atlas transporters fly in life-saving aid after Turkey and Syria are rocked by earthquakes, killing an estimated 45,000 people and leaving more than a million homeless.

3 PUMAS ARRIVE in Cyprus to mark a new era in search and rescue operations on the Mediterranean island as they take over from the 84 Sqn Griffins that have completed more than 50 years of flying operations.

4 REGT VETERAN Luke Wigman becomes the first runner to complete the World Marathon Challenge for the third time. The former SAC, whose leg was shattered in an IED strike in Afghanistan, completed seven marathons in seven continents in seven days.



March

03

1 RAF REGT Gunners step up training of Ukrainian conscripts as the fight to liberate their country enters a second year. WO Roger Hopper says: "They are fast learners and have been quick to adopt new and complex tactics."

2 UK AND German Typhoons team up to conduct the first-ever integrated Nato Air Policing mission. Crews fly joint sorties over the Baltic as Lossiemouth-based IX(Bomber) Sqn prepares to hand over to Luftwaffe jets in Estonia.

3 MENTAL HEALTH crusader Hayley Court is named Fund Raiser of the Year by Forces' charity chiefs after smashing her own cash target after launching the Healing Military Minds support group.

4 COMBAT JETS from across the world hone their warfighting skills on the biggest UK-based training exercise, Cobra Warrior. Finnish F-18 Hornets, Saudi Typhoons and Indian Mirages join Belgian F-16s, USAF and British crews



April

04

1 ENGINEER, AIR Chief Marshal Sir Richard Knighton becomes the first non-pilot to lead the Royal Air Force as he takes over the top job from outgoing CAS, ACM Sir Mike Wigston.

2 PILOT OFFICER Natalie Insall graduates from Cranwell marking 108 years of military history for her family. The 22-year-old discovered one of her ancestors, Gilbert Insall, won both the VC and MC in the Royal Flying Corps during WWI.

3 DEFENCE CHIEFS sign a £161 million contract with US aero giant Lockheed Martin and BAE Systems to develop the UK's F-35 Lightning fleet. The four-year deal will increase flying hours and enhance maintenance and pilot and ground training at RAF Marham.

4 JACK RUSSELL Sam, who became a parade mascot at Linton-on-Ouse, is given a military send-off in York. The 16-year-old terrier made regular appearances at military ceremonies.



May

05

1 HELICOPTERS AND the Red Arrows fly over Buckingham Palace following the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla. Bad weather prevents the scheduled 60-aircraft display but hundreds of Forces personnel take centre stage.

2 A HERCULES accompanied by an Atlas completes the final UK flight from Sudan during the largest Western evacuation from the African state. The 47 Sqn aircraft lifts off from Port Sudan after an eight-day operation that rescues 2,450 people in 30 flights.

3 A VOYAGER powered partially by cooking oil completes an air-to-air refuelling flight over the North Sea. Flying on a 43 per cent blend of sustainable aviation fuel, the aircraft tops up two Typhoons during a training exercise.

4 THE UK supplies Storm Shadow missiles to Ukraine following the deliberate targeting of civilians by Russia. The air-launched, long-range, bunker-buster is designed to destroy stationary targets.



June

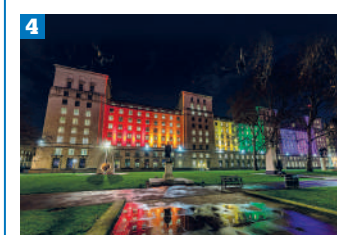
06

1 BRITAIN SAYS an emotional farewell to the Hercules after 57 years spearheading combat and humanitarian missions worldwide. The aircraft is officially retired following a ceremony at the RAF Museum, Hendon.

2 HUNDREDS ATTEND the funeral of one of the last known WWII Caribbean airmen. FS Peter Brown is given a full military send-off at the RAF Church, St Clement Danes, after an appeal for mourners.

3 VETERANS MARK the 80th anniversary of the RAF Mountain Rescue Service. Volunteers from Defence's only emergency service for personnel lost in remote locations gathered at Caernarfon Airport, where it was founded.

4 WOMEN VETERANS prosecuted under MOD rules on sexuality scrapped more than 20 years ago win the right to have their convictions wiped from their records, the Home Office announces.





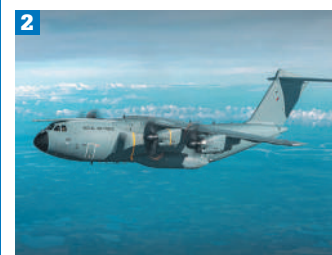
July 07

1 F1 RACE-ACE George Russell takes his need for speed to a new level in a 29 Sqn Typhoon ahead of his storming British Grand Prix performance. The British driver takes to the skies with display pilot Flt Lt Matt Brighty.

2 ATLAS AIRCREW complete their longest-ever flight during an exercise in the Pacific. The transporter flew non-stop for 22 hours from Brize Norton to Guam, coming close to the North Pole en route.

3 CADETS AMBASSADOR Emma Wolstenholme leads a six-strong team of women rowers to a new World Record after completing a 2,000-mile voyage around the coast of Britain, battling torrential rain, high winds, lightning and thunder, during the 44-day challenge.

4 CHINOOK VETERAN Liz McConaghy, who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan and published a candid account of her battle with PTSD, is honoured with a prestigious national award as she is named 2023 Inspirational Woman in Defence.



August 08

1 FITNESS INSTRUCTOR Cpl Emma Whitbread wins her 20th beauty title after being crowned Ms United Kingdom Crown & Glory. The 34-year-old RAF mum entered the pageant to raise awareness about premature birth problems.

2 TYPHOON TOP Guns return home after intercepting 50 Russian aircraft on Nato Baltic Air policing duties. Crews fly more than 500 hours in four months from Ämari Air Base to safeguard the Alliance's eastern flank.

3 COMMEMORATIONS ARE held across Britain to remember more than 1,000 Servicemen killed in the Korean War. A total of 32 RAF pilots served with 77 Sqn in the conflict, of which four were killed in action, one was taken PoW, and four were awarded the DFC.

4 A RARE turtle washed up on the Welsh coast is flown home to the Gulf of Mexico after an RAF rescue mission. Kemp's Ridley reptile 'Tally' is flown from Valley to Northolt before boarding a scheduled flight to Texas for release.



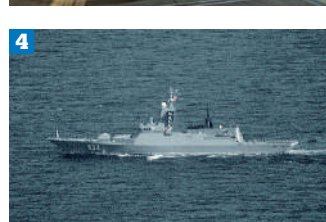
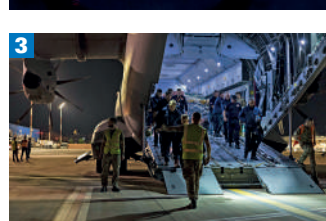
September 09

1 FEARLESS 102-year-old RAF Super-Vet Colin Bell abseils down a 300ft tower block at the Royal London Hospital to raise funds for Forces charities. The former WWII Mosquito pilot nets more than £25,000 with the daredevil stunt he describes as 'Money for old rope'.

2 DEFENCE CHIEFS invest £40 million to develop a cutting-edge fighter jet helmet for Typhoon pilots. The Striker II is one of the world's most advanced helmets and displays mission-critical data in colour on the visor.

3 BRITISH SEARCH specialists are flown to Morocco by two RAF transporters after an earthquake kills more than 2,500 people. The Air Movements Sqn scrambles to prepare two Atlas aircraft to take 60 rescuers, medics, search dogs and their lifesaving kit to the epicentre of the disaster in the High Atlas mountains.

4 ROYAL AIR Force Poseidon maritime reconnaissance aircraft monitor Russian warships operating close to the UK. 120 and 201 Sqn crews join Royal Navy and Nato allies to track vessels in the North Sea and North Atlantic.



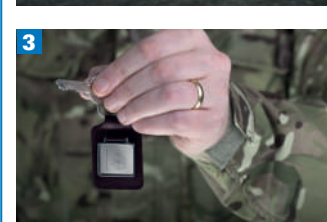
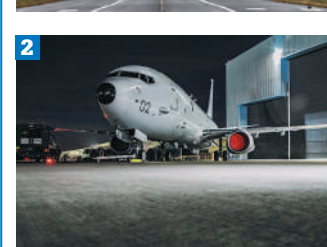
October 10

1 TYPHOONS AND F-35s turn roads into runways during Nato training in Finland. A pair of 41 Sqn jets hit the road in Tervo municipality using a remote single-lane carriageway as an emergency take-off and landing strip to test the RAF's Agile Combat Employment strategy.

2 P-8 POSEIDONS launch missions in the Middle East to track the transfer of weapons to terrorist groups in the wake of attacks by Hamas on Israel as a Royal Navy task group moves to the eastern Mediterranean to support humanitarian efforts.

3 MILITARY PERSONNEL are to be housed on need not rank or marital status under what Defence chiefs claim is the biggest change to Forces accommodation for a generation. The move is designed to end the ongoing problem of empty and poor-quality Forces quarters across the UK, the MOD says.

4 THE SOUND of Chinooks flying into Brize Norton sparks a crocodile mating frenzy at a nearby reptile park as keepers dub the noise of the double-rotor aircraft passing overhead 'Viagra' to their residents.



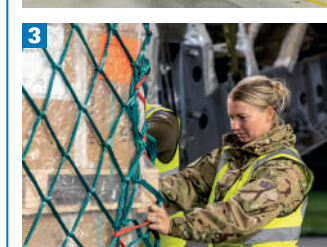
November 11

1 THE RAF's Goldstars squadron begin testing on the first of Britain's unmanned Protector surveillance aircraft at Waddington. Recently reformed 31 Sqn will conduct global land and maritime intelligence and strike operations following trials at the Lincolnshire station.

2 TYPHOONS FLY 7,000 miles to Malaysia to support UK ground troops during a major jungle warfare training drill alongside Australian Air Force F/A-18 Super Hornets. It is the first time XI Sqn has operated in the region since Spitfires patrolled the Malay Peninsula at the end of WWII.

3 A C-17 DELIVERS more than 20 tonnes of aid to Palestinian civilians as international diplomatic efforts intensify. Supplies include 76,800 wound care packs, 1,350 water filters and 2,560 solar lights.

4 THE TEAM behind the Bloodhound land speed record bid launch a hunt for a new driver after longstanding wheelman RAF combat pilot Andy Green stands down. The 61-year-old veteran, who set the existing world record in 1997, takes on a mentoring roll to the new recruit.

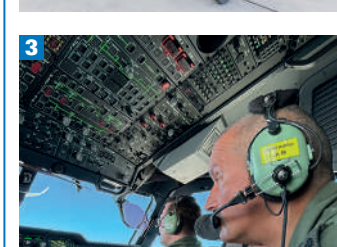


December 12

1 ENGINEERING ACE Chief Tech Emma Morgan is named Defence Woman of the Year after battling back to fitness following life-saving heart surgery, and wins the Resolute Spirit award for overcoming personal tragedy.

2 DEFENCE CHIEFS announce that the UK's Poseidon fleet is to be fitted with an enhanced version of the Sting Ray torpedo. The British-built weapon, already used by the Royal Navy, will be adapted for use by the maritime surveillance aircraft, alongside the US Navy Mk54 torpedo.

3 A BRIZE Norton Voyager carries out the first refuelling exercise alongside a Luftwaffe Atlas A400M. German pilots with Air Transport Wing 62 Test and Evaluation Flight fly into the Oxfordshire station to carry out the drill as part of a Nato-wide drive to increase interoperability between Alliance countries.



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Who's your hero?

Did your great grandfather, grandmother, great uncle or other relative support 'the Few' during the Battle of Britain? Then this is your chance to commemorate their bravery, sacrifice or service as the RAF took on and defeated the Luftwaffe.

The Battle of Britain Memorial Trust's Blade of Honour project is laying commemorative tiles at the Memorial in honour of those who supported 'the Few' in the Battle (10 July - 31 October 1940) or one month either side of it.

Do you know someone who served?

Perhaps as -

- ☐ Air Raid Warden?
 - ☐ Ground crew?
 - ☐ Coastguard?
 - ☐ Fireman?
 - ☐ GPO?
 - ☐ Royal Observer Corps?
- Or in some other way?



The grey granite tiles will be laid along the edge of one of the white propeller blades around the National Memorial to the Few and are expected to cost £495 each (inc VAT). This includes a deposit of £5 (inc VAT) which is required to register an interest via the website below and will be refunded if the nomination is ineligible.

For details see <https://www.battleofbritainmemorial.org/blade>

Surplus funds will be used to support the charity and work will only begin when the Trust has enough names to complete one whole blade.

Please help us remember 'the many' by nominating your own family hero.



The Trust is a charity with no public funding. Please give generously to help us bring the Battle of Britain to life across the generations.

www.battleofbritainmemorial.org

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Mosquito, by Rowland White (Bantam Press, penguin.co.uk)

BOOK REVIEW

Mossie was a PR coup

Photo Recon just one of the roles of RAF's wooden 'jack of all trades'

"THE BEAUTIFULLY streamlined Mosquito was simply the smallest amount of airframe you could shrink-wrap around a crew of two, a couple of thousand pounds of bombs and a pair of Merlins." But bombers were big 'heavies' such as the Lancaster, and fighters looked like Spitfires. The middle-weight Mosquito was a jack of all trades, and when it first appeared sceptics assumed it would master none.

White's book, however, is no techno-fest. The important parts of the tale of the development of the 'Wooden Wonder' emerge subtly from a very human story. One that entwines several strands that come together in the third section, which details a celebrated March 1945 raid on the Gestapo Headquarters in Copenhagen. It begins and ends with a poignant vignette of the real costs of war, the highs of human courage and grace, and the low tragedies of chance and fate.

Anyone who has peered into a low sun through a bug-splattered canopy, desperately trying to find a navigation feature while avoiding the granite, knows the perils of low-level flight. But you don't have to have flown yourself to marvel at how these brave crews navigated hundreds of miles, at Mosquito speed, to find single buildings in the middle of cities while flying, literally, between the high-rises. To then drop bombs accurately – with flak firing at you – using the most rudimentary bomb sights is genuinely remarkable. Concentrating on a few aircrew, White reveals how they became so good at this most demanding of flying roles – and thereby proved that the 'jack of all trades' was also the master of several.

Decorated

The age of some aircrew still startles – at both extremes. Pilot Officer Ted Sismore was 21 and already battle-hardened when he transferred to the 'Mossie'. He went on to become the most decorated navigator in the Service, revered for his skill. Air Vice-Marshal Basil Embry, aged 41, was their group commander and a force of nature who insisted on flying on operations against regulations – using the alias 'Wg Cdr Smith' in case he was shot down and captured. White conjures well – as he did with his earlier *Vulcan 607* – the spirit of the air force of the time.

But that is only a part of this story, which is set as much in Scandinavia as it is the UK. White explores how a UK airline – BOAC – routinely flew unarmed Mosquitoes to and from neutral Sweden. Speed and height allowed them to evade German fighters. Amongst other vital cargoes – such as the atomic physicist Niels Bohr, fleeing the Nazis ultimately to join Oppenheimer – were the tons of Swedish ball-bearings

vital to UK manufacturing. Photo Reconnaissance (PR) and the female photo-interpreters of RAF Medmenham take their rightful place in the hunt for the V1 and V2 test sites on the Baltic at

Peenemünde. Many considered the Mossie the best PR aircraft of the War.

But it is in exploring the secret World of the Special Operations Executive and the incredibly

courageous Danes who resisted Nazi tyranny while passing vital intelligence that the book draws its moral force. Again, White uses the stories of a few individuals to convey the terrible dilemmas faced

Mosquito by Rowland White, reviewed by Air Marshal Edward Stringer

FORMER 54(F) Sqn pilot Air Marshal Edward Stringer (Ret'd) spent his early years in the RAF flying tours on the Jaguar in the ground attack and low-level reconnaissance roles. He completed many operational tours including the 1991 Gulf War, the 'No Fly Zones' over Iraq and Bosnia between 1991 and 2003, and counter-insurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

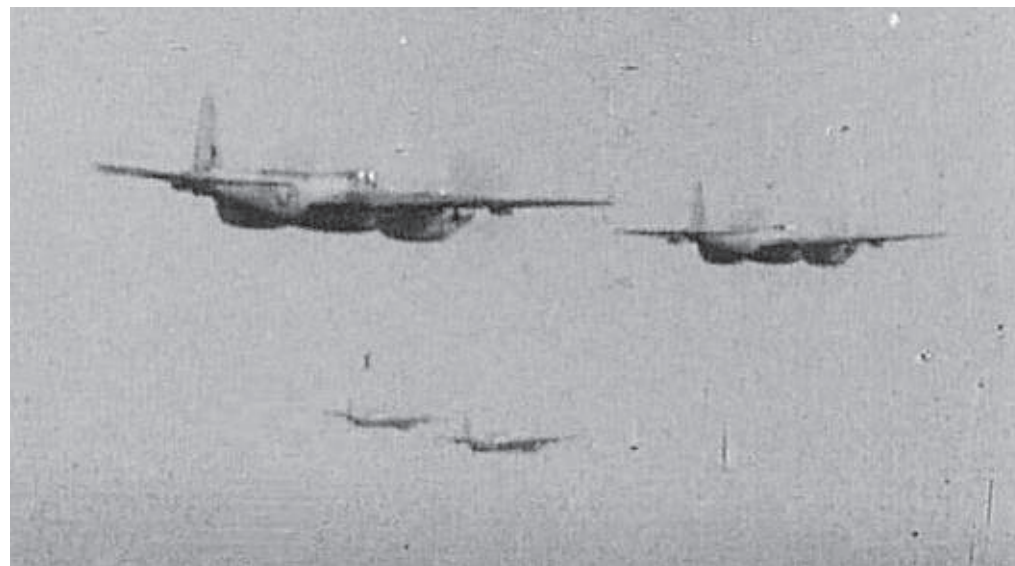


He was appointed Assistant Chief of the Air Staff in April 2013, was the MOD's director of military operations (ACDS(Ops)) from March 2015 to 2018, then became Director General Joint Force Development and the Defence Academy, responsible for the conceptual component of UK fighting power.

His awards include the MBE, OBE, CBE and the CB.



SIMILAR ROLE: Jaguar was also used for attacks and recon



MISSION: After taking off from RAF Fersfield bound for the Shellhus, the 140 Wing Mosquitos flew low across the North Sea



COMMANDER: RAF legend Basil Embry



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED: The burnt-out ruins of the Shellhus, the Gestapo HQ in Copenhagen, after attack by 140 Wing's Mosquitos

by those living under occupation. The climax of the book is about moral courage – as Embry balances the demands of the Danes to bomb the Gestapo HQ and save their resistance network, regardless of cost, with his fear that Copenhagen is just too dense a city to allow a surgical strike.

The raid is more successful than any could have imagined – many of the tortured prisoners survived and escaped while the Gestapo building was being totally destroyed. But Embry had been right to be worried. Turning off target a Mosquito hit a lighting gantry and crashed into a school nearby. Some of the following bombers then attacked the smoke, and 87 schoolchildren perished. The poignancy comes from the subsequent relationship that developed between the crews involved and the Danes who lost their children, or were amongst the pupils who survived. The reflections of all are remarkable and moving.

The book is strikingly relevant. A vicious tyranny once again stalks Europe in Ukraine, and, once again, we work closely with our Scandinavian allies. Intelligence-led operations are the norm. The Mosquito recipe became the model for the fighter-bomber force we maintain today. And in our most terrible and morally testing weapon – the Trident D5 nuclear missile – you will find that some essential parts are still made of wood.



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Cyprus posting as married couple was first for service

...but when I got pregnant I was demobbed

I HAVE been going through my archive of photographs, prompted by the loss of a friend from RAF days. My own service was rather short, but I married a long-serving member – Duncan McCallum. Many years later we divorced.

However, in our early days together we were posted to Akrotiri, Cyprus, as a married couple, the first time this had been allowed by the Service.

I worked in pay accounts, while Duncan was ground crew. My stint in accounts was short-lived as I became pregnant, and so had to be demobbed! My son Scott was born in the old hospital there on January 2, 1962.

Several years later we were posted back to Akrotiri, this time with another son in tow. During both these tours we lived in hirings in Limassol and made many good friends among the local community. Of course, all this was before the Turkish invasion of the island.

Many years later the elder of my two sons became an officer in the Royal Army Medical Corps. He had a tour at the new hospital at Akrotiri. He and his wife lived on the base and their son was born in the hospital. During that time he was introduced by his senior officer to the head of the nursing corps, who was visiting. It turned out she had been the matron in charge of the old hospital (which incidentally had formerly been the



RAF COUPLE: Doreen with then-husband Duncan

morgue) and she had been the one who delivered my first-born son.

Doreen Scott-Douglas
East Lothian



SOCIAL SCENE: Doreen (right) and friends at a concert at Curium Amphitheatre, Akrotiri

Competition

It's only Smock'n'roll ...but we like it!

RAF NEWS has joined forces with sleeping bag and insulated clothing manufacturer Snugpak to offer readers the chance to win a Snugpak Tactical Softie Smock worth £190.

Snugpak have worked from their factory in West Yorkshire since 1977, to become the leading UK-based manufacturer of sleeping bags, tents, and outdoor clothing and equipment.

The company offers a wide range of products for everyday hiking, bushcraft and survival, and for military and tactical situations.

Snugpak are two times winners of The Queen's Award for Enterprise and were awarded the Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award in 2013.

Breathable

The Tactical Softie Smock is a UK-made insulated garment, with side vents to allow rapid access to essential kit. High performance insulation and breathable fabrics, together with chest and hand pockets, mean that you will stay warm and dry as well as ready for action.

The smock allows seamless access to lower layers and belt equipment, via two-way side zips, which can both be opened fully for enhanced ventilation. It is fully lined with Snugpak's TS1 fabric, a high performance, textured and moisture-wicking material that, together with Snugpak's Softie Premier insulation, provides a comfort rating of -5°C. You will stay comfortable as well as warm, thanks to the Paratex Micro outer fabric, which has a high moisture-vapour transmission rate to keep you dry when active. For military use,

Layer up in comfort with these Tactical Softies, worth £190



unit/name badge soft hook & loop patches are available on both arms.

The Snugpak Tactical Softie Smock is available in black or olive and in XS to XXL sizes.

To be in with a chance of winning, just answer the following question:

In which year did Snugpak begin working from their factory in West Yorkshire?

Email your answer, marked Snugpak 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 January 12, 2024.

Please state your preferred colour (Olive or Black) and your chest size, so that we can supply you with the Tactical Softie Smock that is the best fit for you.

● See snugpak.com for more about Snugpak's latest products.



Win!

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By Tracey Allen

Feature

I SPY...

The genesis of RAF aerial reconnaissance

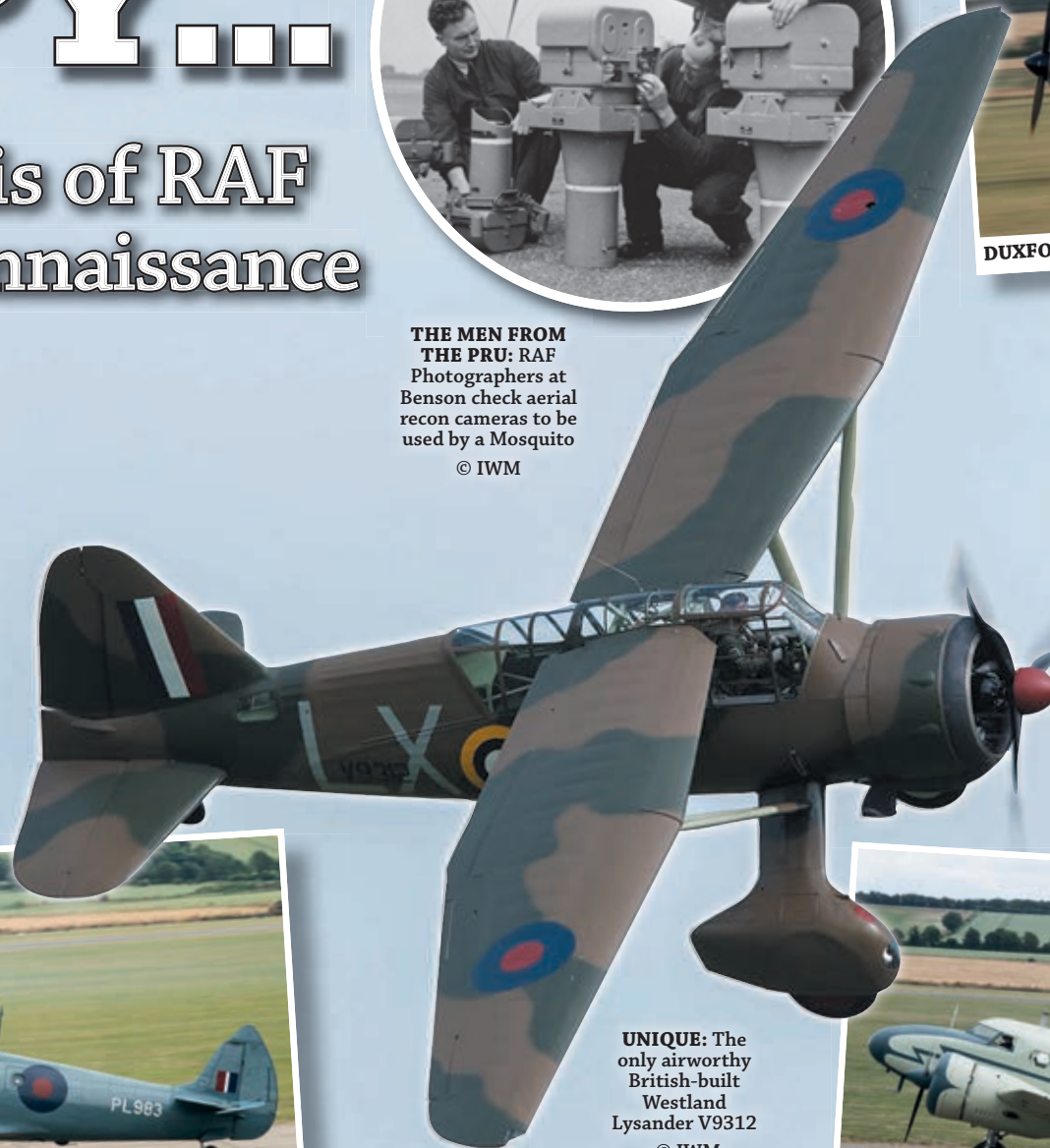


THE MEN FROM THE PRU: RAF Photographers at Benson check aerial recon cameras to be used by a Mosquito
© IWM



DUXFORD'S OWN: IWM's Mk 1 N3200 Spitfire
© IWM

Private collectors have loaned their aircraft to IWM for exhibition



UNIQUE: The only airworthy British-built Westland Lysander V9312
© IWM



PRU BLUE: Supermarine Spitfire XI PL983
© IWM



SECRET SERVICE: Lockheed 12A Electra Junior G-AFTL
© IWM

A NEW exhibition highlighting the vital role aerial intelligence gathering played in securing the Allied victory in World War II opens at IWM Duxford later this month.

Through historic aircraft, film and photography *Spies in the Skies*, running from December 27 to February 25, will demonstrate how aerial reconnaissance developed and significantly improved over the course of the war.

The exhibition highlights the daring role of the Photo Reconnaissance Unit (PRU) and those tasked with undertaking these highly dangerous but critical missions.

An IWM Duxford spokesperson explained: "At the outbreak of the Second World War, the RAF initially set out to improve aerial intelligence gathering by modifying existing aircraft.

"The Supermarine Spitfire, best known for its iconic role in

the Battle of Britain, was the first aircraft trialled for this purpose. Spitfires underwent continual modifications throughout the war to increase speed, height and equip them with the required cameras."

The exhibition brings together four historic, airworthy Spitfires – Mk XI PL983 and Mk XI PL965, both in the PRU blue camouflage paint scheme used to disguise the aircraft when flying at height; a Mk XIV Spitfire, which served in the Royal Indian Air Force, demonstrating how fighter reconnaissance aircraft could be adapted to accommodate cameras; and IWM's own Mk 1 N3200 Spitfire – showing the link between the early fighter Spitfires and the development to reconnaissance versions.

A replica Mk I Spitfire, painted in the exact pale pink colour scheme used to camouflage the aircraft at sunrise and sunset, will also be on display.

"Visitors will learn how PRU pilots had to battle both the



FILM STAR: WAAF flight officer photographic interpreter with two Canadian pilots © IWM

enemy and the elements as they flew deep into hostile territory, often unarmed, unaccompanied and in extreme conditions. The fuselage of Spitfire Mk IV AA810, shot down in 1942 on a mission to capture images of the German battleship Tirpitz, will be on

display," the spokesperson said.

"The aircraft's pilot, Flt Lt Alastair 'Sandy' Gunn, survived the initial attack but was captured and imprisoned in Stalag Luft III Prisoner of War camp and later executed after taking part in the Great Escape. The aircraft was

recovered from a peat bog in Norway in 2018 and is currently undergoing a full restoration to make it airworthy again."

The Westland Lysander V9312, the only airworthy British-built example of its kind, which flew more than 30 reconnaissance sorties in 1940-41, also features in the exhibition, alongside the Lockheed 12A Electra Junior, a civilian aircraft which was adapted for use by the Secret Intelligence Service in 1939.

The Electra was the last British civilian aircraft to leave Berlin before the outbreak of WWII and recently returned to UK skies in 2023 for the first time since 1940, having undergone extensive restoration.

The spokesperson added: "Spies in the Skies has been made possible thanks to a number of private owners who have loaned their aircraft to IWM for the duration of the exhibition."

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



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Citroën ë-C4 X (from £31,995 otr)

Motoring



Smooth operator

CITROËN HAS always been a great innovator. Think back to the complicated hydraulic suspensions that placed them at the top of the market for comfortable rides. Citroën has always been the weapon of choice for French Presidents and has a reputation for avant-garde luxury.

Imagine the paradox for the designers of the ë-C4 X therefore, Citroën's first globally distributed pure electric car. Luxury and size usually come at the cost of weight, the natural enemy of the EV, so there's a big circle to square. What Citroën has done with the ë-C4 X is quite impressive.

It's currently available with just the one powertrain, a 100kW, 134 bhp electric motor that works in sync with a 50kWh battery to deliver up to 222 miles of range. 0-62mph is achieved in a leisurely 9.5 seconds and it tops out at 93mph, so it is not a fast EV. What it is, is what Citroën does well, a comfortable cruiser with style.

Exterior

The big difference with the ë-C4 X over the regular C4 in terms of styling is the back end. This is a fastback, with a sleek saloon boot that is slightly reminiscent of a Mercedes. It looks

big, it looks expensive and it gives the car a sleek profile. At the front, the signature LED daytime-running lights and headlamps make it unmistakable, while crisp 18-inch alloys finish the ensemble. In short, it looks good.

Interior

The cabin is a spacious affair. You sit lower in the Citroën ë-C4 X than in most crossovers but it's still a higher position than you'll find in cars such as the Volkswagen ID.3.

The seats are lightweight and yet broader than many rivals, allowing you to sink in and get comfortable. They won't hold you in place well through fast bends but they are really comfy for long distance cruising which, let's face it, is what this car is all about.

Visibility is great at the front but the high back window means you'll be relying on your reversing sensors a lot. Just as well they come as standard.

Every ë-C4 X comes with a 10-inch touchscreen infotainment system that is quick witted and sharp. You get DAB radio, Bluetooth, plus Android Auto and Apple CarPlay smartphone mirroring. It does the job and you get actual air-con switches to make life simpler

on the move.

Everything is well put together and there are plenty of soft-touch materials on display to give it a quality feel.

On The Road

Think back to the flowing, rough-terrain conquering Citroëns of old and you'll be pleasantly surprised because the ë-C4 X flows effortlessly along on undulating roads.

As a payoff, it does lean through corners but it's stable enough to waft effortlessly along country roads as long as you're not too hoof-happy. The well-insulated cabin and low road noise levels add to the sense of serenity.

In terms of range, it will cover 222 miles on Citroën's official figures. Unfortunately, my test of the car took place on a particularly cold day, with heaters running full chat and lights permanently on.

It's therefore hardly fair to take my findings of around 100 miles per charge as a genuine medium.

Nevertheless, a quick look around the other review sites soon shows that other journalists have averaged around 139 miles, which isn't the greatest in this class.

Citroën ë-C4 X

Pros

- Expensive-looking
- Wafts along effortlessly
- Classy interior
- Plenty of space inside

Cons

- Not much fun to drive
- Could be quicker off the mark
- So-so range

Verdict

This is one of the best-looking cars I've seen from Citroën. The fastback rear and sleek profile make it look like an executive car in a taller package. The interior quality is lovely and it glides along serenely, so it has a luxury feel. With prices starting from £31,995 for the entry-level Sense trim, there are however rivals that will cost you less and go further between charges, if value is more important to you than comfort.

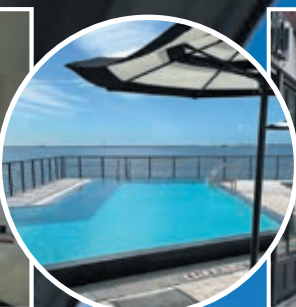
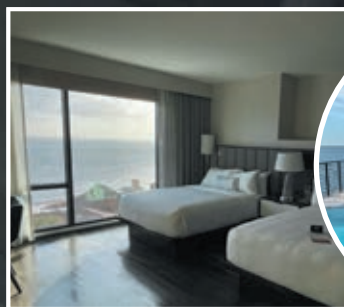
Travel

Tampa Bay

Tim Morris



Just roll with it...



YBOR: Above, left to right, Hotel Current room with a view, infinity pool and Downtown Tampa. Waterside (main picture)



CIGAR ROLLING: A dying art just hangs on



NEED A BEACH?
No problem



GATOR TAIL:
And make it snappy

THIS EDITION'S travel guide finds us in one of the most interesting places I've ever visited. This is Ybor City and it fools the senses. Wandering the streets here, you could honestly believe that you were standing in a quaint suburb of Havana, Cuba. You half expect to see classic cars from the 1950s rumbling around the streets and the Cuban flag flying, but this is America, Tampa to be precise.

Ybor City is Tampa Bay's Latin Quarter and home to 130 years of history. From its founding in 1885, Ybor City flourished as a global centre for cigar manufacturing and eventually outproduced Havana as the world's premiere epicentre for luxury smokes. Back in the heyday of tobacco, there were hundreds of small cigar-making shops here and now the J.C. Newman Cigar Company is one of the last remaining. You can still see skilled artisans rolling monster cigars by hand and it's a wonderful piece of history to observe, even if you don't smoke. If you do, you can come away with a luxury souvenir that is hard to find today. Be warned though, they're not cheap.

The factory is part of a walking tour that takes in the most charismatic parts of Ybor, one of only three National Historic Landmark Districts in Florida. The guides bring history to life here, covering manufacturing, immigration, organised crime and revolution. Teddy Roosevelt marched his Rough Riders through these streets with José Martí, the leader of Cuban

Visit Tampa

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independence. Moving on and we're into Downtown Tampa, a vibrant metropolis that's a joy to tour. This is a gem that many tourists miss on their way to a beach. This really is the authentic side of the city.

A new 'Riverwalk Attraction Pass' has been launched for 2023 that provides visitors with a map to guide them around the best sights and a ticket that allows access to all of them. The walk runs for 2.4 miles along the Hillsborough River and Garrison Channel, a beautiful and relaxed way to see the city. It also includes a day pass to take the Water Taxi and watch the view glide serenely past.

The scheme is being extended in 2024 but initial attractions include the Florida Museum of Photographic Arts, the Henry B. Plant Museum, The Florida Aquarium, the Glazer Children's Museum, the Tampa Museum of Art, the Tampa Bay History Centre and, my personal favourite, the SS

American Victory. This is one of only four WWII ships that remains seaworthy in the USA. It's a perfectly preserved piece of history and an absolute treasure to tour.

On your travels you will want to stop at one of the many outstanding restaurants in the area and you soon discover that Downtown Tampa is a foodie's paradise.

Eat

Start with breakfast at Psomi, owned and operated by a second-generation Greek-American family. Chef Christina Theofilos delivers a varied menu that does not disappoint. A Michelin Bib Gourmand recipient, this charming little restaurant creates delicious food. Everything, from the freshly squeezed tangerine juice to the delicious salmon and seaweed leaves your tastebuds singing.

Next stop, lunch at Ulele, a picturesque restaurant by the Hillsborough River. The restaurant is named after a Native American princess. The Mulan of Florida, so to speak.

It opened in 2014, created by the Gonzmart family, owners of the oldest restaurant in Florida. It's been a family-run business since, offering a menu that's inspired by Tampa Bay's early native and Spanish explorers. This Michelin-Recommended restaurant also includes its own craft brewery.

We were offered a taster menu that included Southern coated shrimp with a colourful Florida saffron sauce, chargrilled

oysters, seafood risotto, gluten free scallops and gator tail.

For dinner, stop at The Pearl, which specialises in seasonal seafood, shareables and handcrafted cocktails. Alternatively, join the millionaire set for dinner aboard a yacht. Yacht Starship operates from Channelside Drive and takes guests on an evening sailing experience along the waterways of Tampa Bay and Clearwater.

Enjoy freshly prepared dishes and unlimited cocktails as you watch the stunning sunset and, later, the lights of the city skyline, glide past.

Stay

Hotel Current is a smart, modern hotel that's perched on an outcrop. It offers dramatic, sweeping Tampa Bay water views from every guest room and stunning sunsets from almost every angle. Part of the Marriott Autograph collection, it is truly outstanding.

It has an infinity pool and a private beach and serves one of the best breakfasts you'll have in Florida. The service is of the highest standard, from the concierge to the valet. We stayed in a queen room, with a bay view, and it did not disappoint.

Downsides

A room to accommodate two adults and a child will set you back over \$300 per night in January 2024 and your valet parking will add a further \$25 to the bill.

RAF Sport

Review of the year 2023

Also
pages
26-27



3

January

01

1 THE TURN of the year was upside down and slope side up for the Service’s snowboarders as personnel took part in a two-week training camp to the Kitzsteinhorn glacier in Austria in preparation for the RAF Alpine Championships later that month. Debut winter training rider AS1(T) Chris Harrington called the camp ‘a brilliant opportunity’.

2 RAF FOOTBALLING stalwart Cpl Tom Claisse turned midfield dynamo to defibrillator provider for sports clubs across his native Leeds. He began his campaign after administering first aid to a parent who had suffered a heart attack outside the Bilal Sports Centre in Harehills, where he holds U14 football coaching classes.

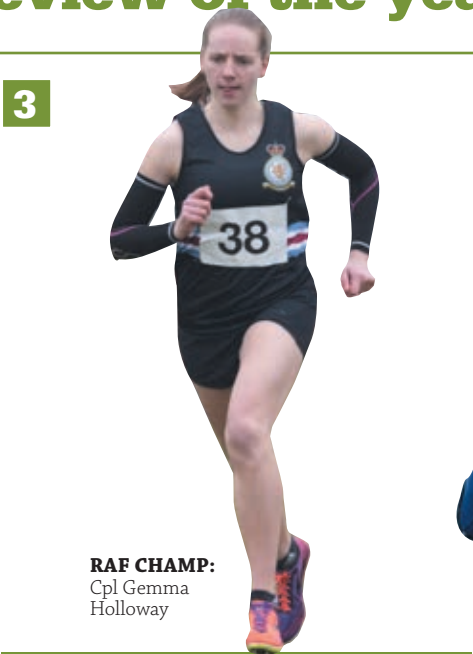
3 AS1 DOM BROWN was kick turning skateboarding into a Service force. The OIC of RAF Benson skate club had plans for a series of events throughout the year.

4 DIRECTOR OF RAF Sport Rich Fogden called for personnel to ‘have a go’ at sport in 2023. He cited personnel such as AS1 Luke Pollard – who was a guide to triathlete Dave Ellis at the Commonwealth Games and also led him to European glory – as to what could be achieved.

5 RAF MEN’S Rugby Union head coach FS Justin Coleman was embracing the new earlier start to the association’s season and running his eye over potential stars at all levels before a series of Inter-Services warm-up matches.



DEFIB DELIGHT: Life-saver Cpl Tom Claisse (left)



3

February

02

RAF CHAMP:
Cpl Gemma
Holloway

1 RAF AND England hockey star Sgt Liam Sanford suffered shoot-out heartache at the hands of the German team to lose 3-4 in the World Cup quarter-finals in Bhubaneswar, India.

2 RAF MUSTANGS, the Service’s gridiron stars, prepared for their first ‘tag’ match against Oxford Saints AFL with a training camp at Garats Hay Barracks, Loughborough. The team, led by general manager Sgt Paul Wakeford, would then play a 7-a-side United States Visiting Forces team in a match funded by the New York Jets.

3 A CHILLY Halton warmed quickly as the RAF Athletics Cross Country Championships went the way of speedsters AS1 Max Hazell and Cpl Gemma Holloway, who took the men’s and women’s title respectively.

4 RAF RUNNER Flt Lt Mike Kallenberg beat the heat to take first place in the Open men’s classification in the Doha Marathon in Qatar.

5 WINTER SPORTS stars were setting up for the Inter-Services in Meribel following a bumper Exercise Alpine Challenge 2023 – the first full championship for three years. It was welcomed by RAFWSAA chair Gp Capt Martin Cunningham, who called the Exercise a ‘huge success’.



2



3

March

03

NO. 1: Flt
Lt Rhys
Thornbury

1 THERE WAS a tough U23s IS football pill to swallow for head coach Sgt Danny Bartley after his side lost 3-0 to the Army in Aldershot. He was upbeat after the defeat though, saying: “Although a poor Inter-Services, there is a positive with seven players being called up to the senior team this season.”

2 THE RAF Vulcans ice hockey team put paid to Peterborough Warriors in a double-header whitewash 8-4 and 12-1 at Planet Ice Rink.

3 LUGE AND Skeleton success marked the ice sports IS championships at Lillehammer. After skeleton team captain Flt Lt Rhys Thornbury rolled over the line, finger up in salute, his team was celebrating its 11th win on the spin – and the 17th men’s title – while the luge team produced a one-two to take the title. The bob teams came third in the men’s event and runner-up in the women’s after they were struck by crashes and injury.

4 THE SERVICE’S swimmers took five gold medals from the Royal Navy Masters event in Portsmouth, with Flt Lt Hannah Dodwell taking a brace and AS1 Matthew Holland three.



2



1



1

April

04

1 DESPITE OPENING the scoring, it was a tough 48-17 loss for the men’s rugby union team to the Army, basically killing off the RAF’s hopes of an IS title this year. The tough luck continued for the women’s team who, despite being bolstered by the return of internationals Fg Offs Amy Cokayne and Carys Williams-Morris, lost 36-8 to the Army.

2 GEARBOX ISSUES scrapped the chances of the RAF sidecar duo of Cpl Mark Middleton and Cpl Rob Atkinson at Croft in the F2 British Championship opener. Running with replacement Shane Colbrook due to Middleton being absent, the team had to reset their focus on the next round at Donington after losing the weekend at the Darlington track.

3 FOOTBALL JOY was unbound as the SRT and WRT both took home the IS titles when the men beat the Army 2-1 at Aldershot after drawing with the Royal Navy in their opening clash, while the women’s team conceded only one goal in their two games, thumping the Army 4-1 and the Navy 3-0.

4 TABLE TENNIS stalwart WO Tony Stead showed his class at his 34th RAF championships, taking home the Veteran and Mixed doubles titles at the Halton-hosted event.



3



2

RAF Sport Review of the year 2023

4



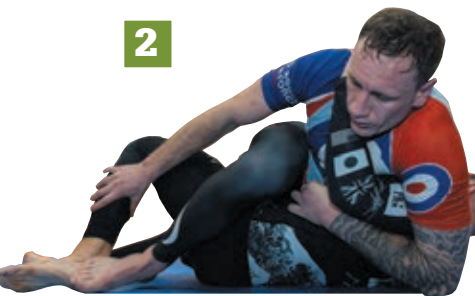
May05

1 SERVICE ANGLERS got their hooks into the association's development day at Linford Lakes with 15 personnel getting detailed coaching and time to set themselves up for the coming season of water-based action. The Carp Angling Association would hold another development day in October as a pre-cursor to the RAF Championships.

2 PREPARATION WAS also key for three Honington personnel selected to represent the RAF in the Brazilian Jui Jitsu IS in July. Flt Lt Wayne Elliott, Cpl Jai Nembhard and L/Cpl Tyrone Heaney were put through their paces at the camp on their station.

3 BOXING MADE a thumping return to Odiham with the RAF team knocking the Army opponents of the Royal Logistics Corp for six, winning all of the evening's bouts.

4 HISTORY WAS made at Lord's Cricket Ground with the first IST20 day to feature both men's and women's teams. Sadly, for the RAF men, having beaten their Navy counterparts by three wickets, they could not beat the weather. Their daring run charge was cut short at 45-2, chasing the Army's 150-8.



1



June06

1 THE FINAL whistle blew on a 21-year career officiating Service rugby union as WO Paul Owens bid farewell to his time in the middle. RAF Rugby Union Referees Society (RAFRURS) chairman Wg Cdr Fraser Gray said: "He has been an absolute star."

2 IT WAS a boat and shore one-two for FS Scott Rennie and novice angler Pte Mick Parkinson at the Sea Angling Festival in Holyhead, North Wales. The pairing triumphed at the annual two-day event which attracted 43 anglers.

3 16 INTER-SERVICE championship hunting golfers took full advantage of the week-long Costa Bellana training camp in Spain. The club's championship course was utilised for Match play and 18-hole competitions daily.

4 THE SERVICE'S motocross riders produced top-20 finishes at the all-new Tri-Service MX championship round one, with AS1(T) Ted Bailey in the EC350 class coming home first. Taking on the course at Clearwell in Gloucestershire, AS1(T) Suzi Boyce, the Service's first female rider, finished 13th in the 250cc class.



3



July07

1 THE BLUEWINGS returned the pride to the RAF ice hockey world winning the Tri-Service Bowl, crushing the Royal Signals 5-0. The RAF Aces suffered 4-0 and 7-0 defeats in the Inter-Services Championship.

2 FOUR RAF gravity MTB team riders produced top-20 finishes in the first round of the 2023 Pearce downhill race series in Powys, North Wales. Kick-starting things in typical gutsy fashion, the team boasted two debutants in the senior 19-29 men's race – AS1(T)Liam Johns (32nd) and AS1(T) Alex Metcalfe (35th).

3 HARINGEY INTERNATIONAL Boxing Cup gold was the reward for AS1 Ben Waugh, signing off one of the most successful seasons in the association's history. The Leeming fighter finished with the 71kg Class C title at the iconic Alexandra Palace.

4 CPL SARAH TOMS was the queen of the road at the RAF Championships at Scorton, North Yorkshire. Flt Lt Ed Calow beat Cpl Will Lewis in a sprint for the men's event.



3



August08

1 A TOP 20 GB Time Trial finish at the Gran Fondo World Championships in Scotland was the prestigious reward for Sqn Ldr Tina Hartnell as the Service's cyclists shone brightly. Flt Lt Fiona Padbury secured a top 30 road race finish at the event, held in Perth and Dundee, as the Service saw six riders don GB colours.

2 HOOKING IN another IS win was the order of the day for the Drennan Service angling team. Another dominant display in the Match Angling Championship on the Gloucester Canal saw the team take the two-day championship event. Team captain FS Daniel Hurst said: "Knowing we had our tactics right going into day two meant we just had to hang on."

3 THERE WAS martial Arts Inter-Stations glory for Cpl Georgia Lee as she took a brace of medals at the RAF Digby event. Lee won gold in Kumite (sparring) and bronze in Karate.



2



September

09

1 UKAF'S RUGBY union stars secured a World Defence Cup semi-final slot, which they would eventually lose, after beating Spain 128-3 in their final group match. Head coach FS Justin Coleman's charges had been victorious in their opening two games; 43-14 against Tonga and 24-21 against Georgia. The team would suffer the tragic loss of teammate Able Seaman Steffan Rees, killed in a cliff plunge, before their semi-final defeat to eventual tournament winners Fiji.

2 AS1 MAC JORDAN was the only scorer as the RAF Vulcans ice hockey team were beaten 10-1 by USAF Tri-Base Lightning at Cambridge Ice Arena. The third charity game between the sides produced some classic action and raised funds for the RAF Central Fund.

3 THE FAST-growing sport of motocross and enduro set up home at RAF Lossiemouth thanks to funding from the RAF Central Fund.

4 THE RAF Rowing Club entered a bumper 16 crews to this year's Town and Visitors Regatta, coming away with a gold and second in the mixed event behind Warwick Boat Club. Cpl Annabel Headley also won in a four with her civilian club, Worcester.



3



October

10

1 THE SERVICE'S gliders secured a hard-fought Inter-Service championships runners-up spot at Keevil Airfield, hosted by RAFGSA Bannerdown Gliding Club. Despite changing weather conditions there were early podium finishes for the RAF team of Gp Capt Neill Atkins (manager), Gp Capt Carl Peters, Sqn Ldr Mark Williams, Flt Lt Martyn Pike, Sgt Ross Craney and Sgt Paul McClean over the eight days of action.

2 THE RAF'S ASTRA football league started its second season with a bang. Goals galore saw TG5 win 5-2 and Dynamo MT 2-0, to lead the pack after the opening series of games. The Astra League plays fixtures monthly at various RAF stations.

3 UKAF'S FOOTBALLERS were to be saved the dreaded penalty shoot-out against the Germans when they hosted the Bundeswehr (German Forces) in the newly-rekindled Remembrance Fixture. The team ended up playing out a 0-0 draw at Aldershot Town's Ebb Stadium, while the women's team, managed by FS Karl Milgate, drew 1-1 with a late UKAF equaliser.

4 UKAF's rugby union stars would bring home a bronze medal from the Defence World Cup in France. WO Justin Coleman's charges produced a strong last match to beat New Zealand 24-12.

5 THE RAF'S rowers won 12 titles as they shone at the Joint Services Regatta in Peterborough City Rowing Club. Team spokesman Sqn Ldr Chris Nash said: "The win meant the RAF had won all four IS events."



1



November

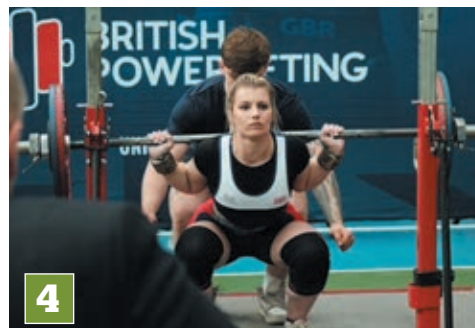
11

1 WO CRAIG HAMILTON was the king of Tiree as he held on to win the RAF Wave Championship after a three-way battle for the title. Extreme weather conditions saw entrants beset by accidents and injury, with third-placed Flt Lt Freddie Hunter snapping a mast and damaging his ankle as the Scottish Hebridean weather bit hard. Flt Lt Fred Thompson came second.

2 A HARD-EARNED third place was just reward for Flt Lt Ed Calow at the Army-dominated Inter-Services road cycling championships in Wiltshire. Racing on closed roads, the women's team dug deep to come runners up.

3 MILTON KEYNES Snowdome hosted the Service's Alpine sports stars' Indoor Winter Sports Festival to kick off the association's season. The day was designed to loosen up and inspire old and new athletes before Alpine Challenge 24 in Austria later in the season.

4 THE LADIES powerlifting team stormed to glory at the Inter-Services event at RAF Cosford – marking the association's recognition by the sport's national governing body, British Powerlifting. The men were third in their competition.



2



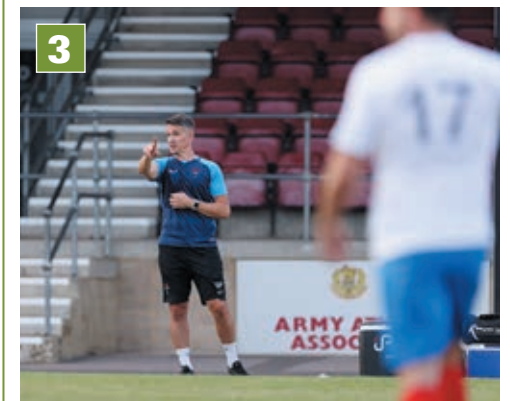
December

12

1 THE LAST Powerlifting Association training camps of the year delivered on all levels at RAF St Mawgan. Participants enjoyed top-level coaching and advice.

2 WEYMOUTH AND Minehead were the locations for the two-day RAF Sea Angling Championships. The event went the way of Brize, winning the shore team event, and Odiham B the team boat event.

3 UKAF'S FOOTBALLERS prepared for their bid to retake the Kentish Cup in France. Having won the tournament an historic five times in a row, the team finally lost its grip on the trophy for the oldest European cup competition last year, conceding to France in Waterlooville. New UKAF head coach Cpl Daryl White said: "I will be the first manager to be entering the tournament without the cup in the current set-up. We haven't got it, so we are going to get it."





RAF Sport Review of the year

● See pages 25-27



Anglers seas the day

A TWO-DAY sea angling competition in Weymouth and Minehead saw Brize Norton win the shore team event and Odiham B the team boat category.

Opening the champs with the shore event on Chisel and Abbotsbury beaches, there were tussles which went the way of Sgt Matt Spiller, followed by Sgt Steven Rathbone and Wg Cdr Karl Bird.

Brize Norton (Spiller and Chf Tech Mike Treharne) were followed by RAF High Wycombe (FS Scott Rennie and Bird) in second and Old Lags (Phil Clarke and Neil Charlton) third.

The individual boat winners were Sgt Ant Beckham, Rathbone, Chf Tech Curt Hohmann and WO Daz Rose, with Odiham pairing Beckham and Hohmann beating Scratch Team B (Clarke and FS Mark East) and High Wycombe (Rennie and Bird).



NEW CHALLENGE: Lifters hit beach

Mawgan delivers

RAF ST MAWGAN was the venue for the last Powerlifting Association training camps of the year, and it delivered on all levels.

Along with bespoke coaching, the association also focuses on team building with sessions designed to enable RAFPA to take several workshops back to station personnel.

AS1 Kerri Reant said: "The training delivered was great, I would not have got the PB today without the new techniques."

Lifetime Award

SQN LDR Paul Goodwin received recognition at the recent Sports Awards for his role within RAF Sub-Aqua, not Motorsports as captioned in a previous edition.

Governing bodies announce merger

New Central role for sport



CHIEF: Air Cdre Fogden

Daniel Abrahams

"JANUARY 1 is a landmark day for all of us in RAF Sport," said Director RAF Sport, Air Commodore Rich Fogden, on the merger of the RAF Central Fund and RAF Sports Federation.

The day-to-day head of all things sport was speaking to *RAF News* on the move that will combine the two charitable powerhouses – the biggest change of its kind in years.

The merger will see the Central Fund absorb the functions of the Sports Federation and many of the associations, cutting down their administrative burden and freeing them up to deliver more sport, increasing the potential of attracting a wider audience and new sponsors.

Fogden said: "The timing is right and we can see an even brighter future from the start of this next phase of our exciting journey."

The plan also aims to further involve family members and Service veterans, which Fogden believes 'will collectively benefit the Service and our people'.

The genesis of the merger predates the pandemic, when the directorate and the charities started to consider how they could do more in terms of public resources and through simplifying the charitable support mechanisms for RAF sport.

"This change will provide the new baseline for both the public and non-public areas of our work," added Fogden.

Ross Perriam, RAF Central Fund CEO (pictured right), said: "The merger of the RAF Central Fund and the RAF Sports Federation is a pivotal moment which will help to strengthen the landscape of physical activity and sport within the Royal Air Force. In both the short and long term, this union promises to deliver a wide range of benefits."



SPORT FOR ALL: (Clockwise from above) Inter-Services cricket at Lord's, SRT IS football at Shrewsbury Town FC's Croud Meadow ground, Jamaican bobsleigh's Gunner L/Cpl Shanwayne Stephens and England women's rugby union international Fg Off Amy Cokayne

The current profile of RAF sport is at a high at every level, from grass roots to international.

Fogden said: "We are looking to consolidate our brand to make us more attractive, knowing that we can do better for ourselves and commercial partners."

He added: "There are some strong relationships between sponsors and associations already and some will want to remain involved with them bilaterally, which is great, but

we want to discuss spreading our partners' brands and engagement too, for mutual benefit.

"This is not about just surviving, it's about thriving and making our people fit for service and fit for life, whatever the challenges presented. We are working very closely with Central Fund to see how we make the offer to our people and supporters right, to help us be better and better.

"Our people have set the bar extremely high with their incredible efforts on and off fields of play, so we are duty bound to be at the top of our game, to push things forward

and to reinvest in sport at every level to underpin the future of RAF Sport."

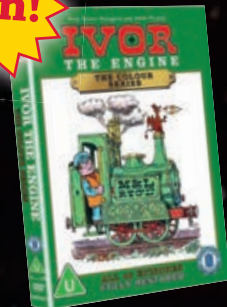
The 'new' RAF Central Fund, which is more than 100 years old itself, will be in place from January 1, 2024. Watch out for more in *RAF News*, on the RAF Sport homepage on MODNet and at rafcf.org.uk in the New Year.

Announcements

- p6-7
- Puzzles
- p8

R'n'R

Win!



Win kids'
classics on
Blu-ray and
DVD ● p8

Who's there? Christmas with the new Dr

Royal Air Force Festival of Music

www.rafmusic.org.uk



Lincoln Cathedral

7.30pm Saturday 11 May 2024

RAF Music Charitable Trust

20th Anniversary Concert

Compere: Melvyn Prior

Royal Hall, Harrogate

7.30pm Friday 28 June 2024

Royal Auxiliary Air Force

Centenary Concert

Compere: Howard Leader



Watersmeet, Rickmansworth

Royal Air Force Squadronaires

7.30pm Friday 15 March 2024

CAST, Doncaster

Band of the Royal Air Force College

7.30pm Thursday 19 September 2024

Palace Theatre, Newark

Band of the Royal Air Force College

7.30pm Friday 20 September 2024

Playhouse Theatre, Weston super Mare

Central Band of the Royal Air Force

7.30pm Friday 27 September 2024

Assembly Hall, Worthing

Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment

3.00pm Saturday 28 September 2024

West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

Central Band of the Royal Air Force

7.30pm Friday 4 October 2024

Film

Battle Over Britain (15)

Out now in selected cinemas and on Blu-ray, DVD and digital from January 29 (battleoverbritain.com)

Lincolnshire duo's film explores 24 hours in life of WWII pilots

Bomber county family's Spitfire tribute



RAF ENTHUSIAST:
Film's director Callum
Burn (pictured with
actor in uniform)

NEW BRITISH war film *Battle Over Britain* is the third release from UK company Tin Hat Productions. Shot entirely on set in Lincolnshire, the film has gained support from people in the county as it pays tribute to local RAF history and heritage. Two cinemas in the county recently hosted the premiere and special screenings, ahead of its current release in selected venues.

The film's director and producer Callum Burn said: "I went to Cranwell Primary School which has strong links to the RAF, and the area is filled with bases. So, it feels like something's embedded in the DNA of the county. Me and my father Andy, who also produced the film, are fans of classic

war films like *633 Squadron* and *Battle of Britain*. So, we've followed this natural path into making films."

Their first two features, *Lancaster Skies* and *Spitfire Over Berlin*, were also shot in the area and released in cinemas. This time *Battle Over Britain* takes a new perspective, following a young pilot, fresh out of training, called to join a Flight while they wait for the call to scramble.

Throughout a single day, we see the skies of southern England

filled with dog fights. After every battle, the pilots return to the dispersal hut only to find another of their number missing. Unwilling to surrender, they unite to take to the skies once more.

Callum explained: "We felt there was an opportunity to tell a more intimate story we haven't really seen before. Of course, we've seen this battle shown on a big scale, but seeing Spitfire pilots over the course of 24 hours and exploring the mental and emotional toll it must have taken, what they might have experienced, that really interested us."

While the film is seen as a throwback to classic British war films of the 1940s and '50s, the filmmakers also take modern inspiration.

Callum added: "My number one favourite director is Steven Spielberg and before I make any film, I rewatch *Bridge of Spies*. It's so well-crafted and gives me influence and inspiration in my own work."

"Although I don't have a personal connection to the RAF, members of my family served in WWI and II so I have real interest there.

"We've had so much support from people in the local area and we wouldn't have managed to make the film without many of them, and certain companies, getting involved. It's a real passion for us."



STAR: Tom Gordon

Film Review

There's Something In The Barn (15)

In cinemas and on digital download now

Call elf and safety, there's a pint-sized killer on the loose

AN AMERICAN family arrive in the snowy Norwegian suburbs for Christmas, moving into a property that still has a resident in the form of a murderous barn elf.

Beta-male Bill (Martin Starr), kids Nora (Zoe Winther-Hansen) and Lucas (Townes Bunner), and struggling but determined

stepmom Carol (Amrita Acharia) have left California behind for the cold, quiet mountains of Norway where there is skiing on every channel. Inherited from his uncle, who was the victim of a bizarre accident in the barn, Bill intends to fix the place up into a rental, that's if no accidents should befall him.



NEIGHBOUR
FROM HELL:
Murderous elf

The title alone should signal that something wicked this way lurks in this festive monster flick that is light on scares but doesn't

scrimp on gore. Whilst the jokes don't always land, there is a lot of humour in the collision of this brash American family with their

new, taciturn neighbours.

Young Lucas is warned by a dry local (Calle Hellevang Larsen) that he is sharing a home with a gnome-like creature from Scandinavian folklore who can be naughty or nice depending on how they are treated. Given a few basic rules in order to achieve domestic harmony, Lucas tells his family that these elves don't like change, hate loud noises and artificial light. Just in time for the family's Christmas housewarming party extravaganza.

Occupying a place between *Gremlins* and *Home Alone*, *There's Something in the Barn* is more of a violent family film than a horror.

It doesn't take itself too seriously and, despite the bloodshed, manages to feel Christmassy.

Review by Sam Cooney

RAF rating: 3 out of 5



Comedy
John Bishop
UK tour



John's out for laughs

COMEDIAN JOHN Bishop is going back on the road with a new UK stand-up tour, *Back At It*.

After two years spent TV presenting, acting, podcast-hosting, dog walking and decorating the spare room, John is getting back to the thing he loves most; standing on stage and making people laugh.

His tour kicks off in Bromley on March 9 and will play 57 dates at a host of venues throughout 2024, including two nights at the London Palladium.

He said: "I'm delighted to be hitting the road again with my new show. I did a few gigs in New York and some over in Ireland and I've got the juices flowing again! I'm looking forward to seeing you all out there on the road."

Within three years of his first ever-comedy gig in 2000, John was playing to sold out arena audiences across the country and released the fastest selling stand-up DVD in UK history.

Since then he has achieved huge success with a number of his own comedy, entertainment and documentary shows including:

John Bishop's Australia, John Bishop's Britain, John Bishop's Only Joking and *John Bishop's Gorilla Adventure*. Other TV credits include two series of *The John Bishop Show*, *Doctor Who* and the documentary *John & Joe Bishop: Life After Deaf*.

John is co-host of the podcast *Three Little Words*. With writer, actor and director Tony Pitts, the two friends talk to a rich mix of guests, from world famous musicians and actors, to scientists, politicians, artists and sports stars. Past guests have included Robbie Williams, John Cleese, Sebastian Faulks and Professor Brian Cox.

Most recently, John starred in the four-month UK and Ireland tour of *Mother Goose* with Ian McKellen, which included a successful run in the West End.

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



DVDs

Worzel Gummidge (PG)

On DVD & Blu-ray now (Fabulous Films/Fremantle)

Win!

Win Gummidge goodies to get the field-good factor

JON PERTWEE went on the record to say his favourite role was as the walking, talking scarecrow Worzel Gum-midge.

The classic TV series, written by Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall, ran on ITV between 1979 and 1981 and immediately became a cult classic. Guest stars included Billy Connolly, Bill Maynard, Barbara Windsor, Connie Booth, Mike Reid, Joan Sims and Lorraine Chase.

Worzel Gummidge lives on Scatterbrook Farm, where he stands in Ten Acre Field. When children John and Sue move to the countryside, they learn that life is never dull with Worzel around. The restless scarecrow dreams of a life away from his post in Ten Acre Field and often wanders off into mischief.

Whether getting his heart broken by the creaking fairground doll Aunt Sally (Una Stubbs) or disobeying his maker, the eccentric old Crowman (Geoffrey Bayldon), Worzel is lucky to have his young friends on hand to help

rescue him from trouble.

We have a copy of *The Combined Harvest Edition* (£159.99 on Blu-ray, rrp £129.99 on DVD), fully restored from the original negatives, which includes the original four seasons of *Worzel Gummidge*, as well as the two-season series of *Worzel Gummidge Down Under*. This special collection also features a bonus CD containing the soundtrack from the original series and the later *Down Under* series.

To be in with a chance of winning this great prize, tell us:

Where does Worzel Gummidge live?

Email your answer, marked Worzel Gummidge Combined Harvest Collection 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 January 12, 2024. Please mark on your entry if you prefer to win the Collection on Blu-ray or DVD.

WE ALSO have a copy of the complete restored edition of Series One and Two of *Worzel Gummidge Down Under*, featuring all 22 episodes from the series shot on location in New Zealand and shown in the UK between 1987 and 1989.

The series follows the lovable, if bad-tempered, scarecrow as he travels to New Zealand in pursuit of the love of his life, Aunt Sally, who has been sold to some New Zealand antique dealers.

For your chance to win this great box set (rrp £79.99 on Blu-ray, rrp £59.99 on DVD) answer this question correctly:

Where was Worzel Gummidge Down Under shot?

Email your answer, marked Worzel Down Under competition, to the email address above or post it to our usual address (see above) to arrive by January 12, 2024. Please mark on your entry if you prefer to win the set on Blu-ray or DVD.



WHODUNNIT:
Helen Flanagan and Jason Durr star in *Cluedo 2 - The Next Chapter*, touring the UK next spring

Edited by Tracey Allen



THE NEW DOCTOR: Ncuti Gatwa

THIS YEAR'S festive line-up on the BBC is headed by *The Doctor Who Christmas Special*.

On December 25 Ncuti Gatwa will take control of the Tardis as the 15th Doctor in his first epic adventure following the show's 60th anniversary celebrations.

Also hotly-anticipated is the finale of hit comedy *Ghosts*, where the restless spirits and Button House residents give the show the send-off it deserves.

In *EastEnders* all will be revealed as viewers discover which unlucky Walford resident meets his demise, and the *Call the Midwife* Christmas special takes viewers back to 1968, when Apollo 8 was poised to circle the moon.

Attenborough and the Giant Sea Monster follows Sir David as he investigates the discovery of a lifetime, and in *Charles III: The Coronation Year* viewers will get a unique insight into the life of King

Who's for a serving of Christmas telly?



TURNING THE TABLES: Critics to cook for *MasterChef's* Torode and Wallace



Charles III and Queen Camilla, taking them behind the scenes of the first year of his reign.

Strictly Come Dancing returns for a Christmas special with Dan Snow, Sally Nugent, Jamie Borthwick, Tillie Amartei, Danny Cipriani and Keisha Buchanan taking to the floor alongside a musical performance from Sam Ryder.

And the barn opens its famous doors for some magical festive fixes in *The Repair Shop*, with Jay Blades.

For the first time in *MasterChef* history, after years of tasting and critiquing contestants'

dishes, the tables will be turned on five of the country's top food critics in *MasterChef: Battle of the Critics 2023*. Who will receive positive reviews and who will crumble at being critiqued?

Then it's time to deck the halls, stuff the turkey and break out the Christmas fizz, as *MasterChef* judges Gregg Wallace and John Torode welcome back four of the most memorable celebrities from past series in *Celebrity MasterChef: Christmas Cook-Off 2023*.

Jason and Helen as keen as Mustard

HELEN FLANAGAN – known to millions as Rosie Webster from *Coronation Street* – will make her theatrical stage debut as Miss Scarlett in the world premiere UK tour of the murder-mystery *Cluedo 2* next spring.

Starring alongside Helen will be West End actor and TV favourite Jason Durr, who will take the role of Colonel Mustard. Most recently seen as David Hide in BBC One's *Casualty* (a role he played for seven years from 2016), audiences will also recognise Jason from his numerous other roles, including the motorbike-riding policeman Mike Bradley from ITV's *Heartbeat*.

Jason said: "I'm thrilled to be joining the cast of *Cluedo 2* as Colonel Mustard. I was a huge fan of the *Cluedo* board game as a child and the Colonel is such a great character. I am looking forward to bringing laughter and this ultimate

whodunnit to audiences across the UK in its 75th anniversary year."

Helen added: "I've long been looking for the right theatre role and I'm so excited to be making my stage acting debut in the iconic role of Miss Scarlett. It could not be more perfect! I am thrilled to be working alongside such a great actor as Jason. I can't wait to begin rehearsals in the New Year, and, of course, to wear the famous red dress."

Based on the classic Hasbro board game, which celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2024, the five-month UK tour marks the world premiere of *Cluedo 2 – The Next Chapter*, which kicks off at Richmond Theatre on February 29 and visits theatres across the UK until July.

An original new story, set in the swinging 60s, the play was penned by one of the UK's most successful TV and stage writing duos, Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran, whose numerous credits include much-loved

television series such as *Birds of a Feather*, *Goodnight Sweetheart*, *The New Statesman*, *Shine on Harvey Moon* and, for the stage, the musical franchise *Dreamboats and Petticoats*.

As the bodies pile up, the colourful characters – The Honourable Mrs Emerald Peacock, Colonel Eugene Mustard, 'Professor' Alex Plum, Miss Annabel Scarlett, 'The Reverend' Hal Green and the housekeeper Mrs White – move from room to room trying to escape the murderer and survive the night.

Cluedo 2 will keep audiences guessing right up to the final moments, and budding detectives of all ages, from eight to 80 and upwards, can watch for the clues and unravel the secrets, as they try to work out whodunnit... with what... and where.

● Go to: cluedostageplay.com for full tour information.



Your Announcements

Email photos for announcements on this page to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk

Reunion

RAF TG11 Reunion – calling all ex T/phonist/TPO/Teleg/TCO/TCC/WOP Spec/TRC personnel in the former Trade Group 11, also any contemporary comms trades that superseded any of the above. All are welcome at the forthcoming TG11 reunion in March 2024. Venue is the Marriott Delta Hotels Nottingham Belfry, Mellors Way, off Woodhouse Way, Nottingham NG8 6PY, Friday, March 22 to Sunday, March 24. Please find further details at: tg11association.com where, if not already a member of the association, there is a facility to become one (just click on the register motif at the top of the website page).

Associations

6 Squadron will celebrate its 110th anniversary on January 31, 2024. To commemorate the event, the Sqn Association, in concert with the squadron, will be holding a dinner at the Queen's Hotel, Farnborough, on Friday, February 2, 2024. Given a numbers limitation of 130 diners, we currently anticipate the event being 'stag' but that might change to a guest night closer to the time if take-up is less than anticipated. Whilst still at the formative stage, likely details are as follows: three-course meal – approx. £60 including arrival drink, half bottle of wine with dinner and a glass of port; room rates – £99 including VAT and breakfast, based on a maximum of two people sharing. The Association Committee has kindly agreed that Association Members will get a subsidy of £10 per head. If not already an Association Member, you can join by contacting: 6sqnassociation@gmail.com.

Expressions of interest should be made to Clive Mitchell at: clive.mitchell163@mod.gov.uk. Please let Clive know if you would like to attend and bring a guest, should that opportunity arise.

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. See: rafaarmourers.co.uk or contact the committee via: plumbersrest@outlook.com.

RAF Physical Training Instructors Association holds an annual Dinner and AGM over a weekend plus locally organised events. Contact RAFPTIA Honorary Secretary Denise Street-Brown on: ptisec@outlook.com for membership enquiries. To become an Association member you will have had to have successfully passed the RAF Physical Training Instructors Basic Training Course.

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

RAF Catering Warrant Officers' and Seniors' Association (RAF CWO&SA): 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 and a membership application form, email: janedjones6@btinternet.com. The first year of membership is free.

High fliers scoop top awards

'RED 1', Sqn Ldr Jon Bond, leader of the Red Arrows, presented four prestigious awards at the charity Aerobility's Aviators Ball recently – its biggest fundraising event of the year.

The Pooley's Aviator Sword was awarded to Mike McClelland – a disabled Aerobility student and volunteer who earned his Private Pilot's Licence this year. Mike was medically discharged from the RAF in 2018 after suffering an undiagnosed slipped disc 15 years earlier.

Aerobility's Special Recognition Award went to The Blades Aerobatic Team, founded by 2Excel Aviation. It was received by 2Excel Aviation CEO Andy Offer, who co-founded 2Excel and The Blades after he retired from the RAF.

A spokesperson for Aerobility said: "Over the past 14 years, 2Excel has supported Aerobility by providing auction prizes, raising funds and participation in flying

events, and many other charity projects. The award recognises its enduring commitment and support for Aerobility since 2009."

Sqn Ldr Bond presented the Gallagher Fundraiser of the Year award to wheelchair motocross athlete Tom Woods and his coach Ben Adshead, who have been completing 10K fundraising races across the country.

The Gallagher Volunteer of the Year award went to Emrys Harries, who has Primary Progressive Multiple Sclerosis. He has been heavily involved with the charity since 2005 and recently retired as the Secretary of the Board of Trustees.

The spokesperson added: "The award recognises Emrys for his contributions to Aerobility – including being the person who came up with the name for the charity."

Aerobility CEO Mike Miller-Smith said: "We are so glad that these outstanding individuals are getting the recognition they



WINNERS: Sqn Ldr Bond with Mike McClelland and, inset, Andy Offer

deserve within the Aerobility network and beyond."

Established in 1913, Aerobility gives anyone with any disability the opportunity

to fly, providing access to modified aircraft and equipment.

● Go to: aerobility.com for more details.

Innovation and excellence recognised



CHAMPIONS: Sqn Ldr Metcalfe (left) and Sqn Ldr Hodgson

THE HARD work of two Squadron Leaders from the RAF People Operations Profession at High Wycombe has been rewarded after they won a Government Property Award which recognises innovation and excellence in the development of programmes in the public sector property arena.

Sqn Ldr Alistair Metcalfe and Sqn Ldr Victor Hodgson were crowned Capability Champion Winners for demonstrating phenomenal commitment to improving skills and developing talent.

The Sqn Ldrs secured £200,000 of funding over five years to allow those in the RAF Infra Function to gain a professional Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors qualification.

Sqn Ldr Metcalfe said: "Before our work there was no accreditation route for RAF infra professionals."

Wg Cdr English, SO1 People Ops Profession Advisor, added: "Infra is a critical enabler for how we fly and fight from the home base and on overseas operations."

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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RAFA thanks supporters

ROYAL AIR Forces ASSOCIATION Area Councillor Jon Tomlin has been presented with a certificate by RAFA Area Chair Steve Calhoon to acknowledge many years of service and outstanding contribution to the RAFA Wales Midlands and South Western Area.

Mrs Lorna Tomlin was thanked for her long-term support of RAFA and presented with a bouquet



SERVICE: Lorna and Jon (centre) with Steve

by RAFA Chair Bridport & Lyme Regis Group, Bill Davies. For further information on joining RAFA please contact Bill Davies on: 01308 281200.



Your Announcements

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

Un-Shackled

WR977 nose job complete

AFTER FOUR months the scaffolding has been removed from the nose and forward fuselage of Avro Shackleton WR977 at Newark Air Museum (NAM).

The bespoke scaffolding system was installed to allow teams of museum volunteers to work on this significant restoration and repainting project in safe conditions.

The work included replacement and resealing of the main cockpit glazing, in-depth cleaning and lichen removal on the upper fuselage surface, resealing the upper escape hatch just behind the cockpit and conservation of, and the painting of, this area of the aircraft.

A spokesman for the museum said: "During the work period, WR977 remained open as part of



LIBERATION DAY: The scaffolding is down... for now

our open cockpit offer. The modest contributions for accessing this iconic aircraft went towards the cost of scaffolding hire, materials and paint/chemicals. The museum is also thankful to those who contributed to its Just Giving Campaign, which is now closed."

He added: "In future further restoration work

will be undertaken on the remainder of the airframe. A scheme will also be evaluated to raise the aircraft nose wheels from their current position. This will involve the analysis of data from the jacking pads that were constructed underneath the aircraft and the refurbished jacks to be installed under both wings of the aircraft."

Classic Christmas present

IF YOU'RE searching for a quirky Christmas present for the car enthusiast in your life, the British Motor Museum's new adoption scheme could be just what you're looking for.

The museum, based in Gaydon, Warwickshire, recently launched the scheme which allows members of the public to 'adopt' one of the cars in its collections.

Vehicles that form part of the museum's permanent collections – from the Albion A1 8hp dog cart to the Wolseley 2200 (last of line) – will be available for adoption.

Cat Boxall, the museum's curator, said: "By sponsoring one of our iconic vehicles, people can play a vital role in preserving this important collection for the next generation to discover and enjoy."

"These adoptions make the perfect gift for anyone



UP FOR ADOPTION: 1964 Austin Healey Lenham (above) and 1925 MG Old Number One (left)



who has always loved a particular British classic or who worked in the British motor industry."

A museum spokesperson added: "This new scheme helps to support the overall work of the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust. It could help with the restoration costs of recent additions to the collection, support the preservation of historic documents in the archive, or fund outreach community work."

"Most importantly, it

will help the British Motor Museum to continue to tell the story of Britain's motor industry, the people's industry, now and in the future.

"Anyone interested in adopting a car just needs to look at the museum's Online Collections and choose the 'adoptable' filter. Adoptions cost between £25 and £100 and adopters receive a digital adoption certificate and have their name added to the car's listing in the Online Collections."

Go to: britishmotormuseum.co.uk for more information.



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The official voice of the Royal Air Force



Prize Crossword

No. 353

Solve the crossword, then rearrange the nine letters in yellow squares to find an RAF station

Across

- Black planes? (4)
- Buttons for charitable monarch? (6,4)
- No ruling made on hospital equipment (4,4)
- South African was heartless using tools (4)
- All-conquering plane? (6)
- Unimportant person lacking vital murder evidence (6)
- Hold back basket (6)
- Pleasing some commuters enjoying nature in countryside, at first (6)
- In plot, Tommy meets German (4)
- Maybe it's illuminating when none sing (4,4)
- Just not odd (4-6)
- Relative sounds like hard worker (4)

Down

- Nattier box becomes ridiculously over-priced (10)
- Penny in bad behaviour during descent (4)
- Big cat on Anglo-French aircraft? (6)
- Carrying banner for big bottle (6)
- Heavens! New sword replacing Rapier (3,5)
- Wise men lose their head for a long time (4)
- Wanting odd, very odd station (10)
- Aircraft shop Tony destroys (8)
- Fugitive without a place to land (6)
- Bearing promises and weapons (6)
- Duck and swan exposed (4)
- Returning Spanish goodbye, I leave drink (4)

Name

Address

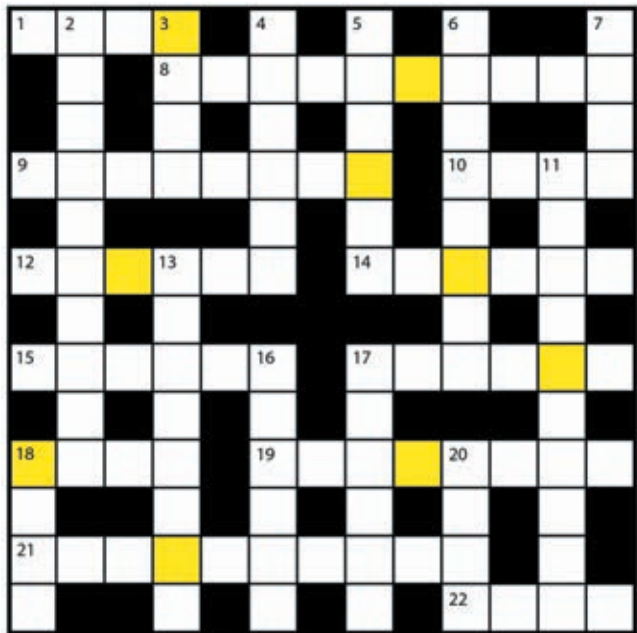
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RAF station:..... Crossword No. 353

The winners of our Prize Crossword and Prize Su Doku puzzles will receive a recent top aviation title – please send your entries to the address printed in the adjacent Su Doku panel, to arrive by January 19.

Prize Crossword No. 351 winner is: J Bowland, Cambs.



Solution to Crossword No 352:

Across – 7. Easter 8. Mirror 10. Placebo 11. Rifle 12. Roll 13. Admit 17. Month 18. Undo 22. Obama 23. Reproof 24. Hawker 25. Hunter

Down - 1. Reapers 2. Assault 3. Level 4. Air Raid 5. Graft 6. Fries 9. Goldstars 14. Voyager 15. En Route 16. Cosford 19. Mocha 20. Fatwa 21. Spout

RAF word – Operations



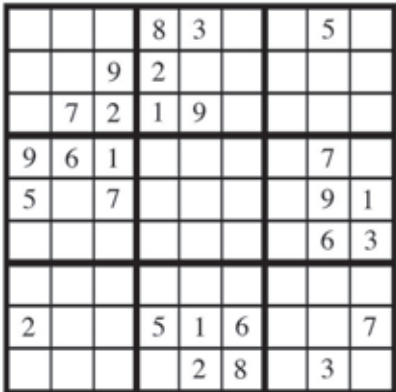
Prize Su Doku

No. 363

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 January 19.

The winner of Su Doku No: 361 is: Mr E Petchell, London SW14.



Solution to Su Doku No: 362

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



Competition Ivor the Engine (U)

The Complete Collection & The Colour Series (Fabulous Films Ltd/Spirit Entertainment)

You'd be chuff chuffed to win Ivor collection

SMALLFILMS FOUNDERS Oliver Postgate and Peter Firmin are legends in the world of children's animation – they made a host of classic series including *Noggin The Nog*, *Bagpuss*, and, of course, *Ivor The Engine*.

Their first collaboration as Smallfilms, working in the new and challenging area of stop-frame animation, came in 1958 with the story of how Ivor got the chance to fulfil his dreams of singing in the choir of the Grumbly and District Choral Society.

Now, for the first time, all the series have been remastered and brought together in one definitive collection – *The Complete Collection* includes *The First Story*, *The Black & White* (2nd Series) and *The Colour* (3rd series).

The 2nd series, from the 1960s, consists of two black and white 13-episode seasons, each episode 10 minutes long. This is the first-ever release of the series which has not been seen since 1969, restored

from the original negatives with the original sound.

The 1970s saw the production of a colour series consisting of 40 five-minute films. This latest release sees all five-minute episodes fully restored on DVD and Blu-ray.

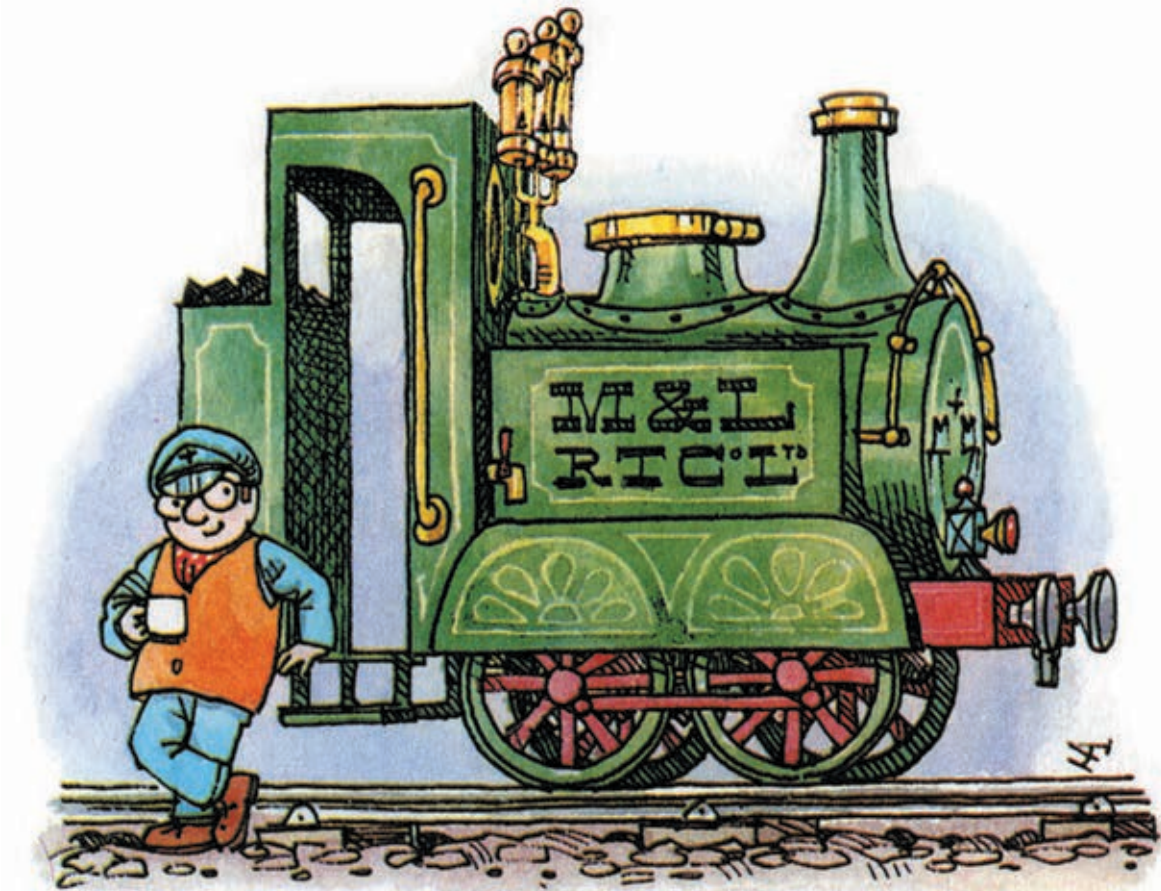
Ivor the Engine is the story of a (sometimes disobedient) small green locomotive who works for the Merioneth and Llantisilly Rail Traction Company Limited – although he dreams of singing in a Welsh choir. His friends include his driver Edwin Jones, known as Jones the Steam, and stationmaster Dai Station.

We have a copy of *The Complete Collection* on Blu-ray (rrp £79.99) or DVD (rrp £59.99) up for grabs. We also have copies of *The Colour Series* on Blu-ray (rrp £34.99) or DVD (rrp £29.99) to win.

For your chance to win *The Complete Collection* tell us:

What's the name of Ivor's driver?

Email your answer, marked Ivor The Engine Complete



IVOR: The little engine would rather be singing in a Welsh choir than working for the Merioneth and Llantisilly Rail Traction Company

Collection 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 January 12, 2024.

TO WIN a copy of *The Colour Series*, tell us:

In which decade was the colour series produced?

Email your answer, marked Ivor The Engine Colour Series

competition, to the address above or send it to our postal address (above), to arrive by January 12, 2024.

Please specify on your answer your preference of Blu-ray or DVD.

