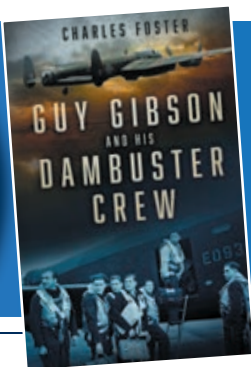


The Forces' favourite paper



The Guys with 617's Gibson

● See R'n'R page 5

Win!



Fatboy's legendary party

● See R'n'R p3

Win!

ROYAL AIR FORCE

Friday, October 20, 2023
No. 1570 £1.20

RAF News

Britain's most effective WWII 'secret weapons'

● Win new book *Women in Intelligence, The Hidden History of Two World Wars*



See pages 16-17

Angling Inters win



● See page 27

Awards All of the nominees



● See page 28

Golf Men's team to the fore



● See page 31

Terror in the Middle East

P-8 joins UK mission as

Israel moves on Gaza



AIR FORCE maritime patrol and surveillance aircraft have begun missions in the Middle East to track the transfer of weapons to terrorist groups in the wake of attacks by Hamas on Israel.

Sorties by the RAF's Poseidon P-8 fleet to prevent escalation began as a Royal Navy task group moved to the eastern Mediterranean to support humanitarian efforts.

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said: "No nation should stand alone in the face of such evil and today's deployment will ensure Israel does not."

"The Royal Navy Task Group, RAF operations and our wider military support will be an undeniable display of the UK's resolve to ensure Hamas's terrorist campaign fails" ● See p3

BiteSize



“It’s been an unbelievable career, I have worked all over the world,”

RAF Music chief Wg Cdr Piers Morrell on retiring on a high note
See page 21

“Most of my career would not have happened without Paul Merton,”

Composer and silent movie tour pianist Neil Brand
See R’n’R p4-5



“I have left things in a better place for whoever is coming in,”

Outgoing RAF Rugby League men’s head coach Chf Tech Garry Dunn
See page 31



Ukraine aid targets Putin drone terror

MOBILE DRONE-BUSTING air defence systems are being sent to Ukraine in the latest military aid package.

The MSI-DS Terrahawk Paladin remote-controlled short-range system, which can track and destroy unmanned air systems, was recently identified by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as one of the country’s most critical needs to protect citizens from indiscriminate Russian missile strikes.

The procurement, as part of a previous £70m International Fund for Ukraine air defence package, comes as a further £100m aid to help clear minefields, maintain military vehicles and shore up critical national infrastructure is announced.

That deal also provides equipment for river and trench crossings and heavy-duty plant vehicles to destroy Russian non-explosive obstacles and build defensive positions.

Chief of the Defence Staff Admiral Sir Tony Radakin said: “This winter, Russia will seek to undermine the morale of the Ukrainian people and divide the international community, but Putin underestimates the strength and resilience of his opposition.

“If we stick together, and stay the course, Russia will continue to lose, Ukraine will prevail and the rules that matter to global security will endure. “Ukraine is now the most mined country on earth, which has provided the biggest obstacle to Ukraine’s counter-offensive this year, and mine clearing will be essential to Ukraine pushing forward.”

Equipment from both packages will arrive in coming months.

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said: “The UK, alongside our allies, is delivering new contracts to provide Ukraine with critical air defence systems to protect civilians from Putin’s barbaric bombing campaign, and more than



£100 million of new equipment to give Ukrainian soldiers what they need to breach Russia’s deadly minefields.”

To date, £785m for military

kit has been raised through the IFU following contributions from the UK, Norway, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland and Lithuania.

This Week In History



1942
El Alamein strikes

WELLINGTON BOMBERS strike targets in the first phase of the El Alamein offensive paving the way for the total defeat of the Afrika Corps.

1971
Yemen reprise raid

RAF HUNTERS destroy a fort in Yemen after Egyptian Air Force MiG fighters bomb Nuqab in Aden.



1984
Ethiopia famine mission

HERCULES C-130S begin famine relief flights to Ethiopia. More than 32,000 tons of food and medical supplies are delivered during 2,152 sorties.

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



ROYAL AIR FORCE

RAF News

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Royal reward

A VOLUNTEER engineer who has maintained iconic aircraft at the RAF Museum Midlands for 50 years has been presented with an MBE by The Prince of Wales at Windsor Castle.

Former Chief Technician Roy Martin served 22 years, including nine at Cosford, before returning to his roots as a curator overseeing a team of technicians and apprentices.

He said: "I was over the moon when I received my letter from Buckingham Palace in June informing me I was on The King's Birthday Honours List.

"It was a long but exciting wait until October, when I was invited to Windsor Castle to receive my medal, accompanied by my wife and our two sons.

"Being involved in the evolution of the RAF Museum has been an amazing experience."

Simon Mander

A FORMER TORNADO unit will fly the RAF's new fleet of Protector unmanned aerial vehicles following a ceremony at Waddington.

The reformed 31 'Goldstars' Sqn will operate the MQ-9B medium-altitude, long-endurance aircraft following the recent delivery of the first of 16 Protector air vehicles.

The squadron will be joined by 13 Sqn as one of two frontline units when operational flying begins in 2025, with full operating capability scheduled for 2026.

The UK variant of the SkyGuardian provides British Forces with a sovereign capability, unlike its Reaper predecessor operated in partnership with the US.

Besides intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) and strike capabilities, the RAF hopes to use it for civil support in the UK.

The first Protector was shipped by a AN-124 transporter to Waddington from Southern California last month.

The aircraft will use enhanced data links and carry next-generation, low-collateral British Brimstone missiles and Paveway IV laser guided bombs.



REFORMED: 31 Sqn personnel parade at Waddington as they prepare to operate the new Protector

Hamas terror alert

Simon Mander

AIR FORCE maritime patrol and surveillance aircraft have begun missions in the Middle East to track the transfer of weapons to terrorist groups in the wake of attacks by Hamas on Israel.

Sorties by RAF Lossiemouth's Poseidon P-8 fleet to prevent escalation began as a Royal Navy task group moved to the eastern Mediterranean to support humanitarian efforts.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said: "We must be unequivocal in making sure the horrific scenes we have seen this week will not be repeated.

"Our military and diplomatic teams across the region will support international partners to re-establish security and ensure humanitarian aid reaches the thousands of innocent victims of this barbaric attack from Hamas terrorists."

Mr Sunak has ordered UK military teams in Israel and Cyprus to be bolstered to deal with any spillover from the conflict and spoke to Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to underscore the importance of supporting civilians to leave Gaza.

Meanwhile a Joint Expeditionary Force summit in Sweden was expected to discuss the need to support stability in the Middle East, while remaining focused on backing Ukraine's defence against Russia.



WAR ON TERRORISM: Flames and smoke billow during Israeli strikes in Gaza in response to Hamas terror attack
PHOTO: ALAMY

The military package – which includes two Royal Navy ships, RFA Lyme Bay and RFA Argus, three Merlin helicopters and a company of Royal Marines – demonstrates the UK's support for Israel's right to self-defence and comes after Foreign Secretary James Cleverly visited Israel to see the destruction

caused by Hamas.

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said: "No nation should stand alone in the face of such evil and today's deployment will ensure Israel does not. The Royal Navy Task Group, RAF operations and our wider military support will be an undeniable display of the UK's

resolve to ensure Hamas's terrorist campaign fails, whilst reminding those who seek to inflame tensions that the forces of freedom stand with the Israeli people."

The UK has pledged to facilitate commercial flights to help vulnerable British nationals wanting to leave Israel.



JEWISH HERO: Soloman Joseph

WWI medals net £20,000

A DFC awarded to the highest-scoring Jewish ace of the Great War fetched £20,000 at auction.

The medal and bar, won by Sopwith Camel fighter pilot Capt Solomon Clifford Joseph of the RNAS and RAF – the only Birmingham-born ace – was bought by a private collector.

More than 60 DFCs and Bars were awarded for the Great War.

Joseph was regarded as a 'gung-ho' pilot whose aggressive flying style and skill accounted for at least 13 aerial victories over the Western Front between May and October 1918.

Auctioneer Noonans' medal specialist Mark Quayle said: "The lot was well contested on the day and has gone to a good home, where it will be appreciated by a collector."





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Benevolent Fund

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Laura, Thrive participant

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In Brief



RESCUE: Andrew Lax received Royal award for saving casualty from burning car

Road smash hero honour

Sarah Newton

A FYLINGDALES contractor has been awarded a Queen's Commendation for Bravery after pulling a motorist from a burning car following a head-on collision.

Andrew Lax was driving to work as a night shift MT driver at the air base when he was in a head-on collision with a vehicle travelling on the wrong side of the road.

Dazed and shocked, the 55-year-old father-of-three rescued the other motorist, who was trapped in his car, dragging him through a side window as the vehicle erupted in flames.

He said: "I looked up and saw flames and realised his car was on fire. I thought I saw someone moving around on the passenger side.

"The driver inside was delirious as the flames were getting really high.

"I was just doing what anyone else would have done."

An air ambulance took the man to hospital and Mr Lax escaped with bruising and minor cuts.



Flower power

A GULF War vet who took up photography after developing PTSD will have his work featured in a charity calendar to raise funds for wounded Forces fighters.

Rod Trevaskus, who served for 30 years with the RAF, will have his snap of summer wild flowers published in the latest Help for Heroes calendar.

He said: "Photography can be a lonely road to follow. The Help for Heroes photography course became a new focus for me and something I had never had before."

Crocodile Wokk



Chinook triggers

killer reptiles

mating frenzy



Tracey Allen

THE THROBBING sound of RAF Chinooks flying into Brize Norton has been dubbed 'Viagra' for crocs at a reptile park in the shadow of the UK's biggest air base.

Keepers at Oxfordshire's Crocodiles of the World attraction say the noise and vibrations of the distinctive double rotor aircraft coming into land at their local RAF station gets an amorous reaction from their adult crocs and alligators and triggers their primal mating instincts.

Crocodiles of the World education director and reptile expert Colin Stevenson said: "Crocs can't hear higher frequencies like humans but they can hear lower frequencies much better than we can.

"Those helicopters churn out a lot of noise and vibration at low altitude and that combination instigates bellowing and mating and courtship behaviour.

"Crocs are very vocal and

have between 30 to 40 different vocalisations.

"We don't speak croc so we don't know what all of them mean but we get the gist when they start bellowing in response to a Chinook. They are trying to attract a mate."

The arrival of RAF Chinooks – nicknamed 'Wokkas' – from nearby Benson is a highlight for visitors who head for the reptile house to watch the crocodiles' reactions.

"We give our crocs the chance to mate if they want to, so the RAF is doing us a favour in that regard"

Colin added: "If we have a group of visitors and a Chinook thunders over we tell them to run into the building and witness the effect it has on the crocs because

they will start calling back.

"When a croc bellows, you feel it. It's not just the sound – it rattles the windows. It's very powerful. It's all kicked off by those lower frequencies and powerful vibrations that the Chinook rotors produce."

Brize Norton is home to the RAF's transport fleet of C-17 and Atlas A400M transporters and the Voyager tanker and troop carrier.

But despite their size and powerful jet and turbo-prop engines, the heavyweights of the RAF's globe-trotting fleet leave the reptiles cold, Colin said.

"The bigger planes coming in low don't really do much for our residents but the helicopters always get a reaction.

"If one of those flies over we know they are going to start bellowing and getting in the mood for love," he added.

The effect is so powerful the park now has a thriving breeding programme.

Colin said: "A lot of zoos

like to take credit for their breeding programmes but to be honest the crocs do all the work.

"We give them the opportunity to mate if they want to and the RAF is doing us a favour in that regard.

"It's no risk to the crocs. The Chinooks just kick in territorial and breeding instincts and mother nature does the rest."



DOC CROC: Reptile expert Colin Stevenson



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up for brothers in war

Simon Mander

THE TOP Gun Taylor brothers swapped their fast jets for a turbo-prop Texan T1 to fly together over the Welsh valleys.

And the duo put the trainer through its paces jinking, twisting and turning as low as 250ft, performing aerobatic loops and rolling manoeuvres with G-Forces up to six times the force of gravity.

For former first Gulf War Tornado F3 veteran, and Royal Navy Reservist, Lt Cdr Tim Taylor who has 40 years' experience in the cockpit, it was a trip down memory lane – and the seventh time he's shared a cockpit with his brother.

After a varied RAF career, including a tour on Op Deny Flight over the former Yugoslavia with 29 Sqn, he flew Sea Harriers 'on loan', for 899, 800 and 801 Naval Air Squadrons before switching to the Fleet Air Arm in 1999 after 15 years with the Air Force.

His younger brother Paul – known as Giz – is a Flt Lt at Valley where he passes on his experience as a Qualified Flying Instructor on 72 Sqn flying the Texan.

"It was fantastic to fly with Giz again – our first turbo-prop flight together," said Tim.

"Low-level flying through Wales, then some aerobatics, what a great



TEAM TAYLOR: Tim (left) and Paul check out the Texan at Valley

experience.

"This was an extremely rewarding, exciting and privileged opportunity to see and experience the flying training system and aircraft used by future RN fast jet pilots.

"We only achieved this through the great support from HMS Pegasus and RAF Valley."

A reservist since 2003, when not assessing would-be pilots or observers for 727 Naval Air Sqn at RNAS Yeovilton, Tim (58), flies corporate jets with a company

based at Farnborough.

The Taylors have shared cockpits before, in a Tornado F3, Sea Harrier, Hawk and a handful of civilian aircraft.

"We've now flown together in seven different aircraft types. I'm not sure how many other brothers have managed this," Tim added.

There's the chance to make it eight next month, flying a vintage Hawker Hunter under Military Registered Civil Owned Aircraft auspices.

As Paul prepares to leave the RAF soon, this could be their last opportunity to fly together.



TEXAN TRAINER



DEADLY DUO:

Main, Paul at the controls of the Texan as Tim takes a back seat. Inset top, Tim takes the helm in Tornado F3 in 1995

WAAF Elsie marks marks her century

Staff Reporter

A WORLD WAR II RAF veteran who narrowly escaped death during the Blitz in Manchester popped open the bubbly as she celebrated her 100th birthday.

Elsie Ellis joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) at 18 and served as a Wireless Operator Mechanic at Cranwell and Melton Mowbray.

But it was while a 16-year-old volunteer cyclist messenger with Air Raid Precautions in her hometown of Salford in Greater Manchester that she had her brush with the Luftwaffe.

She said: "It was a dangerous job with bombs going off, the guns were firing, and the shrapnel was falling and hitting the streets and making sparks.

"On one occasion a bomb hit a surface air raid shelter. I'd been

there a few moments earlier and had been talking to the warden outside.

"Everyone was killed, but I was just turning the corner. The blast from the bomb caught me and blew me off my bike."

Her centenary was marked by a party at the Royal Star and Garter home in Solihull and a large family get-together at the nearby Hogarth's Hotel.

BIG DAY: WWII vet Elsie marks the event at the Star and Garter in Solihull



Medals change

MEDALS BEARING The King's image will replace those featuring the late Queen on almost 50 different awards from the beginning of this month.

The new designs feature six different depictions of The Monarch along with the inscription *Charles III Dei Gratia Rex Fid Def* – meaning Charles the Third, by the Grace of God, King, Defender of the Faith – and one of them shows The King wearing the uniform of a Marshal of the Royal Air Force.

Her Late Majesty's effigy has continued to be in use for medals and awards which recognised service given during Her reign.





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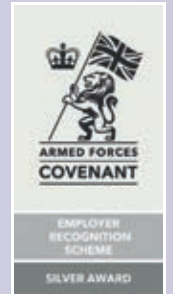
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In Brief



PROTECTION: New chemical warfare sensors will hit frontline in 2028

Bio-war deal

AIR FORCE personnel are to get better protection from chemical warfare agents and bio-hazards under an £88 million deal for new sensing equipment.

Thousands of UK military will benefit on the battlefield from wearable personal devices that can – for the first time – detect threats from both vapours and aerosol, ensuring that users can take immediate action to protect themselves and others.

Under the DE&S contract, UK company Smiths Detection will develop a wearable device, a survey sensor to check potentially hazardous areas and a remote capable, stand-off unit for use in fixed locations, to be operational by 2028.

As new hazards emerge in the future, the equipment can be continually updated and improved, a spokesman said.

Minister for Defence Procurement James Cartlidge added: “It’s vital we protect our Service personnel, and this cutting-edge technology is so important to reduce the threat posed by toxic chemicals across a range of environments globally.”



RUNNING UP THAT HILL: Taking on Gibraltar’s landmark for vets’ welfare

Ready to Rock

UK FORCES fundraisers are set to scale the 1,400ft Rock of Gibraltar to support local veterans.

A team of 20 runners led by Army Commonwealth Games competitor Arnold Rogers will take on the gruelling relay challenge to mark Trafalgar Day and net cash for the Waterloo Uncovered charity.



Deck mate

A USAF CV-22B Osprey shows off its vertical take-off skills behind a 617 (Dambusters) Sqn Lightning on HMS Queen Elizabeth.

The Mildenhall-based tiltrotor aircraft and the RAF’s F-35Bs from Marham have been working together to complete deck landing training on the Royal Navy flagship ahead of its autumn deployment to the Baltic region on a Nato and Joint Expeditionary Force mission. PHOTO: ASI AMBER MAYALL

Ballroom Glitz

Alex Gill

Brize Norton

MENTAL HEALTH campaigner Cpl Hayley Court netted £28,000 for her Healing Military Minds charity at a glitzy fundraising ball.

The event brings the total raised by crusading Cpl Court and her team to more than £90,000.

Coronation Street star Antony Cotton joined Status Quo drummer John Coghlan and *Britain’s Got Talent* stars Lee and Vince from The Soldiers of Swing at the event, now in its third year.

RAF veteran and author Liz McConaghy, dubbed ‘Chinook Crew Chick’, was given a standing ovation for her speech by a crowd including Chief of the Air Staff ACM Sir Richard Knighton.

Speaking after the event she said: “The RAF know better than most that PTSD does not discriminate in age, gender or rank. It’s about not only looking after those to the left and the right of you, but those above and below.

“The Military Minds Ball saw so many come together from all backgrounds to do exactly that.

“I feel very privileged to not only have been invited to speak, but to now feel included in the special family.”

Guests at the DeVere Cotswold Water Park were piped into the event by

Crusading Cpl Hayley

nets £28,000



INSPIRING: Liz McConaghy



FUNDRAISER: Event organiser Cpl Hayley Court, with RAF veterans Stu Robinson (left) and Kevin Nicolls (right), and Chief of the Air Staff, ACM Sir Rich Knighton

Pete Murray-Jones and entertained by The Brize Norton military band. Auction items included a signed gold disc

from the Iron Maiden legend Bruce Dickinson, a tennis racket signed by Novak Djokovic, some exquisite art provided by Aces-High Gallery and a year’s supply of Jellybeans.

Lee and Vince, winners of a BBC *Bargain Hunt* golden gavel, hosted the

auction helping to drive up the bids.

The event was sponsored by Air Tanker, Pickfords, Thales and the Pinnacle Group, which has adopted mental health campaigners Combat Stress as their official charity for the year.

News

Stars scramble to salute 'The Few'

Staff Reporter

BATTLE OF Britain Memorial chiefs scrambled some of the nation's biggest stars on its mission to raise £1 million to secure the memory of Churchill's Few for future generations.

Oscar-winning actor Sir Ben Kingsley and fellow thespians Hugh Bonneville and Neil Pearson led the celebrity tribute Stars in Salute at a charity Royal gala at the RAF Club.

The fundraiser also featured veteran broadcaster Michael Aspel, stars of *Midsomer Murders* Annette Badland and Neil Dudgeon and *EastEnders* legend Pam St Clement.

The Trust is bidding to install dog-fighting simulators for younger visitors to experience the

epic battles between Spitfires and Messerschmitt Bf 109s, to mark the 30th anniversary of the UK's tribute to The Few.

The Next Sortie appeal plans for the Capel-le-Ferne site also include upgrading the exhibition areas to house Battle of Britain-related artefacts which tell the story of the air and ground crews' fight to halt the Nazi air invasion.

Speaking at the launch of the appeal earlier this year, Trust President former Chief of the Air Staff, ACM Sir Stephen Dalton, said: "The Trust wants to make the Memorial relevant to all generations and introduce new ways of helping younger people understand the challenges that faced The Few during the Battle."



FUNDRAISERS: Actor Neil Pearson at the Stars in Salute event; inset left, Sir Ben Kingsley; and, above, Downton star Hugh Bonneville



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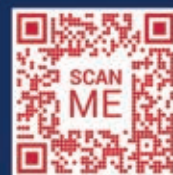
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"The RAF Central Fund continue to provide essential support to Station clubs so that they can get off the ground and maintain their kit and equipment. The Fund has been a key supporter of the Brize Norton Kart Club over the years, providing funding for karts, engines, and tools. Without this funding our club, like many others across the Air Force, would not be as successful as it is, and the team would struggle to compete in championships."

Sgt Robert Small

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Polish Typhoon date for Minister

TYPHOON CREWS honing their combat skills in Poland were joined by Armed Forces Minister James Heappey after he urged allies to keep up the pressure on Vladimir Putin at the Warsaw Security Forum.

Four armed jets from Akrotiri are practising dogfighting tactics with Polish, Spanish and Italian Nato allies close to the border with Ukraine.

UK and US Joint Terminal Attack Controllers, who direct the fighters, are also conducting Close Air Support training as part of the exercise.

Mr Heappey arrived at the Poznan-Krzesiny Airbase on a Polish CASA C-295M transporter with UK Defence Attaché Colonel Tom Blythe

to be greeted by personnel on the two-week deployment, codenamed Operation Carson.

RAF Detachment Chief of Staff, Sqn Ldr Nick McGuigan, said: "The UK and Poland have a historic partnership in Defence and it's a privilege to be part of a deployment that demonstrates our unwavering commitment to maintaining those deep ties."

"We are looking forward to strengthening this invaluable relationship by training together to achieve our common goal of bolstering the security of Nato's Eastern Flank."

The Minister went on to Rzeszow to see the Sky Sabre air defence system deployed alongside Polish and US forces.



Veteran's chute out

VETERAN FORCES fundraiser Roger Allton took a dive to net £1,200 for the RAF Association.

The 80-year-old served as an SAC at RAF Seletar in Singapore before he joined his father and opened the first UK SPAR store.

He jumped from 15,000ft above Hibaldstow in Lincolnshire, freefalling at 120mph down to 5,000ft before the parachute opened.

The daredevil stunt is the latest in his fundraising missions which include wing walking, cycling events and marathons.

In Brief



NATO DUTY: Typhoons at Poznan in Poland where UK crews are supporting NATO operations

Global reach for Typhoon

Staff Reporter

TWO RAF Typhoon squadrons have deployed to opposite sides of the world to support UK allies.

While one is on Operation Carson in Poland undertaking combat air training with Nato, another is taking part in Exercise Bersama Lima in Malaysia.

In eastern Europe pilots are dogfighting against diverse types of aircraft and practising Close Air Support to ground forces, while 7,000 miles away jets are training on air defence scenarios with Malaysia, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand.

The nations form the Five Powers Defence Arrangements, a defensive military agreement to help maintain regional security.

Speaking from Poland, Sqn Ldr Hunter said: "We take our role in European security seriously and these joint exercises only serve to bolster collective defence across the region."

Voyager joins Kosovo mission



Simon Mander

A VOYAGER aircraft has flown 200 British soldiers to reinforce Nato's Kosovo Force after increased tensions in the region.

The transporter left Brize Norton following a request by Nato's Supreme Allied Commander Europe after a violent attack on Kosovo Police last month.

The soldiers from the 1st Battalion of the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment join more than 400 UK troops already in the country as part of an annual exercise, who will remain to support stability. The first wave arrived in Pristina as part of Operation Sandrock to be followed by hundreds of vehicles shipped in by sea.

Nato has been leading a peacekeeping operation in Kosovo since 1999 in accordance

with its UN mandate and currently fields more than 4,500 troops from 27 Allies and partners.

The UK has two intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance units deployed and a Strategic Reserve Force commitment.

The British commitment to KFOR was extended in May 2023 to at least 2026. The UK is urging Kosovo and Serbia to de-escalate and return to political talks.

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CONTROL: New ATCC system goes live at Brize Norton

Radar upgrade

THE THIRD and final RAF radar hub has gone live at Brize as part of the £1.9 billion Programme Marshall investment in defence air traffic equipment.

The latest Terminal Air Traffic Control Centre (South) at the Oxfordshire base incorporates Benson radar teams.

It joins similar centres at Coningsby – that services Barkston, Cranwell and Waddington – and Marham, that amalgamates Wittering.

Under the changes nine radar-trained personnel have moved from Benson to Brize Norton to use upgraded displays capable of exploiting feeds from innovative surveillance sensors.

The current 70 personnel at the centre is set to rise to more than 90 in 2024 when people from Odiham and Boscombe Down join the team to make TATCC (South) – the largest air traffic terminal in the UK military.



OUT OF THIS WORLD: The RAF Museum Midlands launches half-term space exhibition

Star struck

YOUNGSTER ARE set for blast-off with the RAF Museum's half-term exhibition celebrating the UK's space programme.

One of the star attractions will be the huge mobile planetarium and Space Odyssey's Galileo Dome providing a panoramic journey through the cosmos, plus organised star-gazing evenings.

RAF Museum Midlands public events organiser Ulrike Stuebner said: "There's something to get children of all ages excited about the fascinating world of space, whether that's building their own pocket solar system, trying on a spacesuit, or marvelling in the planetarium."

The exhibition launches on October 26 at the Cosford site and is open from 10am until 4pm.

American Express

Staff Reporter

US AND British aircrew made 20 practice approaches to airfields across the UK in the USAF version of the RAF's Rivet Joint electronic surveillance aircraft.

The visitors from the Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska conducted flight deck training at Lossiemouth and an engine-running crew change at Waddington before the multi-station sortie in the trainer and cargo variant of the aircraft, callsign 'Maverick 51'.

OC 51 Sqn, Wg Cdr Keith Bissett, said: "These sorties were highly beneficial for my crew members, enabling them to conduct multiple approaches in a dedicated training aircraft, at the same time as exposing USAF operators to unfamiliar airfields in the UK."



NAILED IT: RAF 51 Sqn and USAF Rivet Joint crews join forces at Waddington

Top brass in pocket

Simon Mander

INJURED GULF War veteran Sean Allerton is offering RAF Top Brass a spin in his wheelchair – to raise funds for charity as he marks the 30th anniversary of the motor crash which left him paralysed.

The former Gunner is staging a round-the-clock wheelchair push at Honington to make money for four Air Force welfare groups.

"I've done more than 2,300 miles on these pushes so far that have included multiple 24-hour events," said Mr Allerton, who served for nine years and paraded for the late Queen in Cyprus three days before the incident that changed his life.

He said: "I've had every rank in the RAF have a go in my spare wheelchair except an AVM – so if the current Regiment Commandant General's free, he's welcome."

"I've had a CAS have a go, and there's promise of another. I had the Red Arrows have a go – the synchro pair are quite pants in a wheelchair."

Scots singing duo The Proclaimers have also backed Sean's mission, completing laps of The Orange at Cranwell.

He said his worst 24-hour push

was with 51 Sqn at Lossiemouth where he managed just 31 miles in appalling weather, but his best was 64 miles at Leeming, both in his normal day-to-day wheelchair.

Former RAF Regiment Commandant and Honington Station Commander Air Cdre Scott Miller, who is Sean's ex-flight commander, has already pledged to take part in the latest challenge.

The effort is in aid of the RAF Association, the Jon Egging Trust and the RAF Benevolent Fund, whose help secured Mr Allerton's Leeds home after he was discharged from a spinal unit in Wakefield where he was treated for 50 weeks.

And he hopes some of the money will go to the RAF Charitable Trust, which granted him a scholarship to fly a Piper PA-27 Aztec monoplane despite being tetraplegic.

"It's all about raising awareness of the amazing work that RAF charities do for people like me," said Mr Allerton.

"On the 30th anniversary of my accident later this month, I'll raise a glass and toast the fact that thanks to them, the Grim Reaper hasn't got me yet."

● Go to justgiving.com/crowdfunding/push500

WHEEL DEAL: Former Gunner Sean Allerton is challenging Air Chiefs to help raise cash for Air Force charities



By Tracey Allen

WHEN TALKING about the – mainly unsung – heroines who were at the heart of Britain's secret intelligence war during World War II, author Dr Sarah-Louise Miller cites a memorable quote from former First Lady of the United States, Eleanor Roosevelt: "A woman is like a tea bag – you can't tell how strong she is until you put her in hot water."

In her excellent new book, *The Women Behind The Few, The Women's Auxiliary Air Force and British Intelligence During The Second World War* (bitebackpublishing.com), she reveals the fascinating stories of the vital work they performed in areas such as photo reconnaissance, as radar operators, signals analysts and as members of the clandestine Special Operations Executive, Winston Churchill's brainchild.

They include WAAF Yvonne Corneau, SOE agent and wireless operator who chose to join the organisation after her soldier husband was killed during the London Blitz.

Dr Miller said: "She joined knowing full well that wireless operators usually only lasted a matter of weeks before they were caught and, if caught, were tortured and killed."

"She was a crucial link between the British and the French resistance. She posed as an innocent medical worker – she didn't even stop when she was shot in the leg. She was one of the lucky ones who came home [Yvonne died in 1997 aged 88]. She was given the Légion d'Honneur but had to keep silent about it."

Discussing her latest book, the riveting read *Women In Intelligence, The Hidden History of Two World Wars* (yalebooks.co.uk), espionage expert Dr Helen Fry revealed that she had scored a scoop, uncovering information that confirmed World War I nurse Edith Cavell – shot by the Germans in October, 1914 – had been not only a spy but also a spy master.

Dr Fry said: "She is hugely inspirational and inspired generations of women after her, particularly in World War II. The intelligence services to this day have not owned her as one of their own."

"Women were largely invisible as spies, the Germans didn't use them very much for spying in both world wars so they didn't think the British would use female spies. Edith Cavell had cast iron, formidable defiance – none of the women spies thought they were heroes, which is typical of veterans."

The author of bestsellers on M19 and spymaster Thomas Kendrick, among other titles, Dr Fry said: "I never thought even five years ago that I would write a book on women. You have figures in military intelligence, most famously Claude Dansey [assistant chief of the Secret Intelligence Service], who didn't think it was appropriate to send women behind enemy lines."

"In M15 and what became the SIS, women were doing the kinds of roles that did not necessarily suit their titles, officially they were cooks and secretaries – these women became experts in their particular fields of intelligence and this legacy has been hidden by official secrecy and not misogyny."

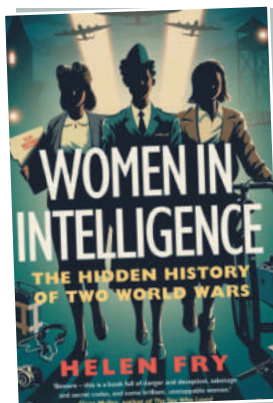
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Nora Littlejohn of B2
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DR HELEN FRY



TEAM WORK:
A WAAF
Y Service
Flt Sgt
collaborates
with an RAF
colleague
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WE HAVE copies of *Women In Intelligence* by Helen Fry to win. For your chance to own one, tell us:

Who was the WWI nurse who worked as a British spy?

Email your answer, marked Women In Intelligence book 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 November 3. Include your full postal address.

Win!

She added: "Even in the uniformed Services it's quite hard to tell if more women were spies in WWII than WWI because we don't have precise figures due to the secrecy around military intelligence work."

Dr Miller explained: "1940 was a crucial year for WWII. The Luftwaffe was numerically superior to the RAF at the time – with more planes and more pilots. Obviously, we couldn't win through brute force, so we needed an advantage in terms of information. What we had was brand new technology called radar."

Radar could pick up incoming enemy aircraft at a range of 80 miles – it played a crucial role in the Battle of Britain by giving air defences early warning of German attacks and WAAFs did vital work in radar

stations and as plotters in operations rooms. Intelligence on incoming raids was passed to the Filter Room at Fighter Command Headquarters at Bentley Priory, the central hub of the Dowding System.

Dr Miller said: "Women didn't generally study maths and physics at school so for them to use this highly scientific equipment was unexpected and it was also unexpected that they would do it extremely well."

She added: "The Dowding System was an extremely sophisticated, integrated air defence system, used mostly by women."

She explained that women also did a lot of work in photographic intelligence interpretation, based at RAF Medmenham.

"That was crucial work, there were

millions of photographs coming through that place. A lot of WAAFs were stationed there, including Sarah Churchill, Winston's daughter, and Constance Babington Smith. It was her team that noticed a tiny shape on a photograph that, through dogged determination, they identified as V weapons, persisting when she was told not to – the women were told it was lake-dredging equipment. But it was confirmed to be a pilotless aircraft."

Dr Miller (inset right) said: "Men were needed for frontline service, it wasn't legal for women to be on the frontline in combat then, so roles were identified where women could substitute, such as photo



reconnaissance. A lot of their jobs convinced me to send more women. Sexism still persists. Miller discovered that about whether women wore trousers."

She explained: "Women were out of aircraft and out of aircraft costing the RAF a fortune."

Among the women in her book, Witherington. She said: "Hollywood. SOE became taken. P. joining. she c. out."

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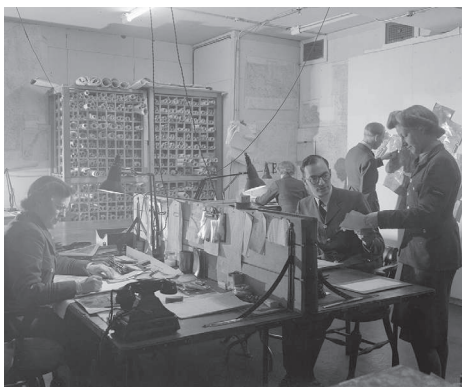
VIENT

And being very good at
ced the three Services to
n into these roles.”
ersisted however – Dr
a thick file in the archives
omen at war should wear

“They were climbing in
t, ripping their skirts and
lot of money to replace

feared females featured
she cited WAAF Pearl
as especially impressive.

“Pearl is the stuff of
movies – she joined the
ause her boyfriend was
OW and she thought by
y this clandestine unit
ould go and ‘bust him

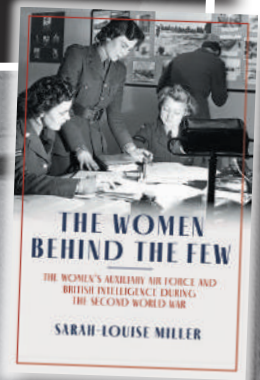


BOMBER COMMAND HQ: WAAF and RAF map
personnel at work © IWM

“She ended up as a commander of
thousands of the French Resistance who
went around blowing up bits of railways and
communications networks ahead of D-Day.



**PLOTTING
AIRCRAFT AT
BAWDSEY:** WAAF
radar operator
Denise Miley
© IWM



I can't get over the courage that takes. She
was in her 90s before she was recognised
properly.”
Dr Fry and Dr Miller appeared at

Cheltenham Literature Festival. Dr Fry will
be speaking at IWM London on March 7,
2024, in connection with the Spies, Lies &
Deception exhibition.

ABOVE: Constance
Babington Smith, whose
team identified V weapons
© Medmenham Collection



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Gunners rock the boat

Teams to battle 60ft waves in 3,200-mile charity Atlantic row



OARSOME FOURSOME: The RAF Regiment team with AVM Mick Smeath

Simon Mander

FOUR GUNNERS are set to follow in the wake of champion RAF rowers in a 3,200-mile race across the Atlantic.

The C-MAP Atlantic Dash will see the quartet, dubbed the Atlantic Rocks, set off from Rubicon Marina in Lanzarote on January 24 heading for Jolly Harbour in Antigua.

They depart in December to make final preparations to tackle a route 200 miles longer than that completed by the victorious Atlantic Flyers RAF pilots team in 2022.

Project Officer Flt Lt Aimee Martin said: "After an intense couple of years planning, they are now approaching their final hurdles as they prepare to set off for this amazing endeavour to raise an astonishing sum for charities close to their hearts."

During the voyage, the team will row more than 1.5 million oar strokes, burn in excess of 4,500 calories per day and battle waves up to 60ft high, in temperatures rising to 40°C.

And they hope to beat 2023 winning team Cabbies Do Atlantic Row – who completed the crossing in 59 days, 15 hours and 8 minutes.

Flt Lt Martin said: "The team plan on running a three-hours-on and three-hours-off shift rotation for the entirety, weather permitting, and aim to complete the crossing in around 40 days."

The team's main sponsor is the RAF Regiment charity The Centurion Fund, which helped procure their 29ft purpose-built ocean rowing boat Sentinel, that has two sleeping compartments.

Over the summer the team have raised £107,000 for the venture from air shows, public events, corporate sponsors and individuals via their Go Fund Me page.

The Atlantic Rocks are led by Skipper Sgt Phil 'Gus' Angus – a three-time Afghanistan veteran with 17 years' service, he spent his early career on The Queen's Colour Sqn and now puts RAF recruits through basic training as a Phase One Instructor. He is raising money for Mental Health Research, having lost his uncle-in-law Steve to suicide in 2019 after a long-suffering battle with mental health.

Sgt Dan Martin has served for 21 years, including two Iraq tours and three deployments to Afghanistan. Another former Queen's Colour Sqn member, he is rowing for men's mental health charity Tough Enough To Care.

Cpl Gary 'Binnsy' Binns is the lead organiser, who put the team together and has 19 years' service with multiple tours of Iraq and Afghanistan. After basic training, he qualified as a military parachutist and currently trains reservists. His chosen cause is The Veterans Charity, that supports ex-Service personnel struggling with hardship.

Cpl Justin 'Wally' Wallace served on 2 Sqn for 10 years passing the Pre-Para Selection Course and deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq and Cyprus. After four years training the Puma force at Benson, he is now at Odiham instructing Chinook crews.



PILOTS: Atlantic Flyers crossed the ocean last year

TRAINING: Atlantic Rocks put in the hard yards in the UK



Project Officers for the Challenge are Flt Lt Martin from Halton and RAF Police Provost Officer FO Fran Tilley (pictured above), with support from PTI Sgt Tom Hanlon and Challenge Champion Gp Capt Jason Sutton.

● For more information go to <https://Atlantic.rocks>

UP FOR A CHALLENGE: Cpl Gary Binns, Sgt Phil Angus, Sgt Dan Martin and Cpl Justin Wallace





Royal Air Force In Concert

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



CAST, Doncaster

Friday 6 October

Band of the Royal Air Force College

Winston Churchill Theatre, Ruislip

Friday 6 October

Royal Air Force Squadronaires

Friday 24 November

Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment

Friday 15 December

Central Band of the Royal Air Force

Palace Theatre, Newark

Saturday 7 October

Band of the Royal Air Force College

Assembly Hall, Worthing

Friday 20 October

Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment

The Gliderdrome, Boston

Thursday 23 November

Royal Air Force Swing Wing

Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the RAF Music Charitable Trust (2024)

Lincoln Cathedral

Saturday 11 May 2024

Band of the Royal Air Force College

Royal Hall, Harrogate

Friday 28 June 2024

Band of the Royal Air Force College

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By Tracey Allen

Feature

WWII Valentines love story

A Bomber Command Navigator's letters to devoted wife at home

A NEW play based on the World War II letters between Bomber Command member John Valentine, who became a prisoner of war, and his wife Ursula has its premiere next month during Remembrance Weekend.

The *Valentine Letters* by Steve Darlow and Frances Zagni is staged at the Maltings Theatre, St Albans, from November 9 – 11.

Aviation writer, historian and publisher Steve said: "John Valentine served as a navigator with 49 Squadron. He was shot down in a Manchester bomber on the night of May 30-31, 1942, on the thousand bomber raid to Cologne. At the time of



shooting down he was a Sgt. His pilot and one other member of the crew lost their lives, John was quickly captured and saw out the war as a POW."

Steve added: "In June 2016 I was approached by Frances Zagni, John and Ursula's daughter, with a proposal to publish the letters exchanged by her parents during the Second World War, and in 2018 we launched the book *Geprüft – The Remarkable Second World War Letters of Prisoner of War John Valentine and his wife Ursula*, at a Duxford airshow.

New play



CORRESPONDENCE: John, also left in flying suit, sent 100s of letters and postcards to Ursula, above



"The almost 600 letters provided an extraordinary insight into the couple's marriage, despite the separation and rigour of wartime life, yet they maintained their sense of humour and deep-felt love for each other.

"There is considerable drama and emotion expressed in their story, as told through the letters,

and it had always been on my mind to adapt the book as a play. We are performing the play during the Remembrance period, when we

rightly remember all those who lost their lives serving in war.

"In my years of writing and research I have met many veterans, their wives, and families. Those who returned also suffered, as did those close to them, having to find ways to deal with their loved one's experience. This play is also a reminder of the aftermath and consequence of war at a personal level."

Director Jo Emery said: "It's a real privilege to be able to work on this moving and touching piece of new writing with three talented actors, Tom Hilton in the role of John, Katie Hamilton in the role of Ursula, and Charlotte Drummond-Dunn in the role of Frances. It's sure to appeal to many people on Remembrance weekend."

The letters, compiled and edited by Frances, provide a unique insight into how two people struggled to find solace, keep their hopes and love alive despite the anxieties of John's dangerous operational life and his three years behind barbed wire, returning a different man to the one Ursula first knew and fell in love with.

● Go to: ovo.org.uk for further details and to book tickets.

Music chief Wg Cdr Piers Morrell passes on the baton

Tracey Allen

AFTER NEARLY three decades in RAF Music Services, Wg Cdr Piers Morrell is finally hanging up his baton – but he's not giving up music.

When he joined the RAF in 1997, young Piers was a trombonist, and he revealed that he's considering dusting off the instrument and taking it up again.

He said: "I haven't touched it for years but it'll probably come back out of the loft. It would be nice to continue to some degree within music."

His last performance for the RAF before retiring as Principal Director of Music was conducting during the Battle of Britain service at Westminster Abbey last month.

He said: "I reverse-engineered my exit date so that was the last job I would do. It was a real honour to conduct at a very important memorial service and it was really good to be back at the Abbey, it's been an important part of my career."

Highly-respected, in his time as PDM he has served at many historic national occasions, including the state funerals of The Queen



END OF THE PIERS SHOW: Conducting at the Battle of Britain Service, above; handing over to Wg Cdr Murray, inset below; and as a young Cpl, standing on the left with trombone, above

Mother, the Duke of Edinburgh and Queen Elizabeth II, the coronation of King Charles and Queen Camilla and the centenary of the RAF in 2018.

Now 52, he said: "It's been an unbelievable career, I've gone from Cpl to Wg Cdr within 10 years and have worked all over the world, including Australia, Moscow,

Europe, Ascension Island and the Falklands Islands.

"And obviously there's been all the state ceremonial work – I'm old enough to have served at the Royal Tournament twice, other highlights were the Royal Military Tattoo 2000 at Horseguards Parade and the Royal Wedding in 2011. In terms of what we have to do as military musicians I have done everything I needed to, so I leave very content. I've had all these extraordinary opportunities and I am very grateful for them."

He added: "I have done such a unique job for six-and-a-half years

in command of highly-trained, skilled people. I will never do anything like this again."

As for the future, the former air cadet revealed he hasn't decided what to do next. He explained: "The RAF has been my life for 40 years, now it's time for a break. The work Music Services do is mostly evenings and weekends. I've worked for six to seven days a week for so long, having put the Service first, and being away gets harder as you get older.

"It's time to put my family first, to rest and recuperate, reflect and reassess. I have been so fortunate to

have had such an incredible career."

His successor as PDM is Wg Cdr Richard Murray, who was acting OC when Piers was deployed.

Wg Cdr Morrell said: "We had a good chat during our handover, my only real top tip was every now and then take a step back from all that's going on to appreciate that it's an amazing job, you have and enjoy it.

"It's been an absolute privilege to be the RAF's PDM. The work we do is so valued by the Service and the senior leadership team, and successive Chiefs of the Air Staff have always relayed how much they value what we do."



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CHRIS COOPER never knew his RAF pilot father, a World War II hero.

Wg Cdr CS 'Stan' Cooper, DFC, CO of 254 Sqn, a torpedo bomber squadron with the North Coates Strike Wing, was killed in action on a strike in September 1943.

Last month, 80 years after his father was shot down attacking a German convoy off Den Helder in the Netherlands, Chris and his family made a special trip to the area to drop a wreath in memory of Stan and his observer/rear gunner, PO Jim 'Matt' Kirkup.

Chris said: "My father was 29. I was just over two years old and have no direct memory of him. His observer was 24 and newly-married. Their bodies were never found."

Stan was posted to North Coates to command the squadron in April 1943. Chris explained that part of his father's role was to help improve morale in the squadron after the previous autumn's losses.

The citation for his DFC read: "Wg Cdr Cooper



DFC:
Stan
Cooper

Son's tribute to DFC father he never knew

Torpedo bomber squadron pilot honoured

led his Squadron with great skill and dash, setting an inspiring example."

Chris added: "On September 25, 1943 the Wing undertook a major attack against a heavily-protected German convoy off the Dutch Friesian Islands. My father dropped his torpedo, but his aircraft was hit and the port engine caught fire. A final radio transmission, 'ditching' was heard and the aircraft was seen to go into the sea off Den Helder in position 52° 55'N 04°35'E.

"Coming home from a 2022 Remembrance service, it suddenly



CHARTER: Nieuwediep and, inset, wreath

struck me: September 2023 would be the 80th anniversary of my father's death; furthermore, as a sailing family, it might be possible for us to lay a wreath at the actual site of the ditching."

He explained: "Thanks to Dutch facility in English, the basics were easy: Admiralty chart 1546 identified the position at the seaward end of the Den Helder

entrance channel, approximately four miles offshore. Through the Harbour Authority we contacted a local charter fisherman who, on the strength of a brief email sent in April, booked us for September 25 without the need for paperwork or payment of a deposit. I booked the Land's End Hotel, at the very entrance of the harbour with a fabulous view across to Texel and only 15 minutes from our embarkation point.

"Mid-morning on the 25th saw my wife and two sons clambering down a dockside ladder to board 'Nieuwediep' a powerful 30-footer with a large open cockpit and a forward wheelhouse shelter. We set off at a good 20kts. As we approached the open sea it became seriously rough, wind against tide, and two tidal streams meeting. Non-sailors would have been terrified."

He added: "Half an hour saw us to the ditching position; the skipper went dead slow. I said a few words and prepared to drop the wreath. In the planning, I had imagined a calm sea with the wreath drifting serenely away; in the event, the wind snatched the wreath from me, bowling it over a couple of times before it settled on the surface. The job was done and, despite a bouncy trip back, it felt a satisfactory conclusion."

The story of the RAF's North Coates Strike Wing is told in *To Force The Enemy Off The Sea* (helion.co.uk) by John Vimpany and David Boyd.

The authors said: "By the end of the war in Europe the North Coates Strike Wing had destroyed 80,000 tons of enemy merchant shipping and 70,000 tons of surface warships and U-boats, comprising more than 100 enemy vessels."



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Feature



Flying in the slipstream of RAF heroes at Duxford

My thrilling taste of what it was like for early military pilots

Ronan Thomas

IN 1931 De Havilland delivered a new two-seat trainer for the RAF, the dual-control DH.82 Tiger Moth.

Weighing around 1,825lb, with a 30ft wingspan, the steel-framed, wood and fabric biplanes were powered by a Gipsy Major piston engine, generating around 130hp.

It entered service with the RAF in 1932 and seven years later 1,378 aircraft were operational, preparing British and Commonwealth pilots for war.

It was the aircraft that gave many of the UK's legendary fighter aces their first taste of military combat flying.

That raw experience is still available today, delivered by private operators based at Duxford, where the pioneers of the Royal Flying Corps, and later the RAF, trained.

Taking up the offer I was issued on arrival with a 1930s-style flying jacket, helmet and goggles, as well as an aviation microphone set to communicate with the pilot in the rear seat behind me.

The Royal Navy Tiger Moth



LIVING HISTORY: Ronan, front, experiences the exhilaration of a Tiger Moth flight, top

was waiting, expectantly. Built by Morris Motors at Cowley, it gleamed in period silver and yellow training colours with roundels on the upper and lower wings.

With the famous words 'Throttle Set, Contact' The Gipsy Major engine sprang to life and the wooden airframe started vibrating purposefully.

At Duxford you are flying in the

slipstream of legendary aircraft and in historical crosswinds. The Tiger Moth was not hanging around. It moved across the grass airfield and took off smartly.

Climbing slowly to around 1,800 feet we flew west, following an eight-mile circuit.

The pilot banked thrillingly over the old RAF Bassingbourn airfield, opened in 1938 and also used as

an operational station by the USAAF.

Taking the controls I managed to bank, climb and dive, briefly. The Tiger Moth responded to a light touch, but you could feel the power.

Returning, I was impressed to see Duxford from the air, and reflected on its distinguished history. I imagined the RAF trainees put through their paces by instructors back in the 1930s, before heading back to their classrooms.

The pilot made a soft landing on the grass – the vintage Tiger Moth has a sprung tailskid, not a tail wheel, and no brakes.

As I climbed out to shake the pilot's hand, I had a broad smile on my face. The sound of that whistling wind stayed with me for hours.

If you want to experience flying the old way, there is nothing to top the marvel that is De Havilland's DH.82 Tiger Moth.



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Motoring

Jeep Wrangler (from £60,785 otr)

Tim Morris



BACK IN the 1940s Jeeps were designed to be rugged pieces of engineering that you could hose the mud off after a battle and fix with a simple spanner wrap. The Wrangler is the modern embodiment of that Jeep genius and the most faithful homage to the original vehicle. It's brilliant because it's authentic, in all the ways that matter.

It's a convertible, if you have the time, and the help to unbolt/remove the roof. It's also a proper off-roader, equipped with a high/low-ratio gearbox and tyres so thick that they allow the Wrangler to scale the world's rockiest terrain with confidence. In a world of crossovers and 4x4 fakes, it's a refreshing reminder that it's okay to be different.

The latest version of the Wrangler, the JL, if memory serves me correctly, is more forgiving on the tarmac than its predecessors but is otherwise a thoroughbred 4x4. It is ruddy good off-road and is a real fashion statement. It looks good and really turns heads. If 4x4s were people, this would be a handsome cowboy who walks with charismatic swagger and rides off into the prairie sunset with heroic style. It is about as American as you can get.

Inside

Everything about the Wrangler is set up to be brilliant off-road. The driver's seat is comfortable and lets you sit up high for the best view. Flat sides, large windows and chunky wheel arches allow you to easily place the car and gauge its width when navigating narrow green lanes.

The driving position is pretty good and could be perfect, if it wasn't for the fact that Jeep has allowed the gearbox tunnel to swallow up the space where you need to put your left foot. As a result, you find yourself struggling to keep your left leg out of the way and sitting at all sorts of odd angles. Pity.

This is the most crafted Wrangler interior to-date and interior quality is way up on previous models. Soft-touch plastics cover the most obvious surfaces around the centre console and on the door handles. The steering wheel and the dashboard are clad in soft leather, while the switches have a nice chunky, solid, feel to them. Jeep has made the interior here as upmarket as they can, without compromising on the fact that you can swill it out



Pure jeansius 4x4

Wrangler is a rough terrain mastermind

with a hose when you've finished mud-plugging.

The dashboard has a pleasingly retro feel, with analogue clocks, but you also get a 7.0 inch LCD display that sits between them and an 8.4-inch touchscreen infotainment system. This comes with a proper coordinate programmable sat-nav and an off-road-specific page that shows things like the angle you're driving at, the oil temperature of the transmission and other useful information. It also has the usual

stuff, like Android Auto and Apple CarPlay smartphone mirroring.

Both screens have sharp graphics, while the touchscreen is responsive. The menus are a bit fiddly but they're far from worst in class.

Driving

I recently clocked up a thousand miles by Jeep in the USA and, on my travels, I saw many Wranglers. Americans love them. Whether they're off-road in Death Valley, or

downtown in Tampa, the Wrangler fits all driveways and most lifestyles.

In the USA, my Rubicon 392 Wrangler came fully loaded with a 6.4-litre HEMI V8 that produced a whopping 470 bhp and achieved

0-60mph in 4.5 seconds. Unfortunately, that baby isn't available in the UK however, so our test car here is the Wrangler Unlimited Overland 2.0 litre, producing 272 bhp. Not quite the same experience, as you can imagine, but not a massive disappointment either.

Off-road, the 2.0 flatters your driving massively by traversing difficult obstacles with ease. It has bags of torque, especially when you're using the low-range gearbox and will just poole over a medium mountain on idle.

You get an eight-speed automatic gearbox with low-range, front, centre and rear locking differentials, plus hill descent control. Nuff traction.

The well-engineered set up makes the Wrangler a brilliant 'go anywhere' chugger that allows you to tackle positively horrible terrain in relative comfort. The thing that stands out here is that you will undoubtedly lose your bottle before you reach the Wrangler's limits.

On-road, it's a pretty comfortable cruiser for long runs. The big tyres do create a fair bit of road noise but it's nowhere near as bad as Wranglers past.

Off-road tuned suspension, combined with two tonnes of heft, make cornering at speed a bit 'squeaky bum time' but you soon get used to it. Having retarded your enthusiasm accordingly, you find the Wrangler a pleasant way to plod from A to B, especially with the roof off on a nice day.

The sensible 2.0-litre four-cylinder petrol engine will even return 20 miles to the gallon, if we accept the official figures. I managed around 18, but I'm a petrol-head thug of course.

Pros

- Brilliant off-road
- Good value for money
- Great American styling with plenty of standard kit

Cons

- Built for traction not luxury
- Does not like fast driving
- Not cheap to run

Verdict

Back in the day a Land Rover Defender and a Jeep would do pretty much the same job, in the same way.

Jeep Wrangler

These days they're different animals. A modern Defender is a comfortable, refined road car with great off-road capabilities. A Wrangler, with its three differential locks and a sturdy low-range gearbox, is a serious off-roader with pretty good on-road capabilities. It's overt, it makes no apologies, it is what it is, American. You don't need to wear a dinner suit to a barbecue.

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

The only weigh is Essex

Star cast win Inter-Services



PRIZE CATCH: FS Ian Coleman with biggest fish of the day, a 37lb 4oz mirror carp; WOs Reg Verney and Richard Cooke (top left) and the whole winning RAF team (inset, top right)

RAF Sports Awards

All the nominees for the exciting 2023 event revealed

See page 28



ANGLING

Daniel Abrahams

THE RAF'S anglers took home the Inter-Services crown after four days of nip and tuck action at Berners Hall Fishery in Essex.

The luck began to go the airmen's way from the off, as they were drawn out of the peg selection bag first, choosing peg 3, with the Army on peg 2 and Navy on 1.

The competition would be scored through a section win giving one point, second in section two points, third place three points and a dry net five points. The team with the fewest points wins. In addition, only the five biggest fish for each pair would count towards their total weight.

Eventually, six hours into the match, the first catch was registered by FS Ian Coleman, with a 22lb

mirror, this was quickly followed by a 35lb 6oz Army catch.

With no more fish landed, the first evening score update showed the Army first on weight with 16 points, RAF second on 16 points and Royal Navy third on 20 points.

As night fell, the Army scored a 18lb 12oz mirror. Soon after RAF WO Reg Verney landed a 19lb 14oz mirror, followed by a 35lb 2oz catch, to put the RAF first with 12, Army second with 16 and Navy third with 20 points.

As the first day closed, the Army extended their section lead with a 15lb 7oz mirror and a 36lb 2oz catch, while the Navy hooked a 36lb 2oz mirror. 40mph winds blasted the second afternoon with the Army netting, before Sgt Stu Thomson landed a 27lb 14oz common for the RAF.

Entering the last night the RAF led on 12 points, with the Army second on 16 and RN on 16.

A 31lb mirror followed by a 22lb fish saw the Navy rock the scoreboard in D section, meaning in a short space of time they had gone from third to first and were now sat on 10 points.

RAF angler Coleman then landed mirrors of 18lb 14oz and 30lb 8oz to retake the lead in D section, while Sgt Martin Emery and Sgt Dave Jones were delighted with a 22lb mirror, which removed two points from the RAF score.

Coleman hooked a 32lb 5oz mirror meaning with three hours left, the RAF led on weight, with 10 points, to the Navy's 10 and Army's 16 points, which is how the scores stayed, with Coleman's fabulous 37lb 4oz mirror ensuring the win.

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

RAF Sports Awards 2023



CATCH OF THE DAY: Angler Chf Tech Mark Collinson (left) is in the mix for Best Man, along with Sqn Ldr Simon Almond, right, while cyclist Cpl Sarah Toms (centre) is nominated for Best Woman

TEAMS

- Ladies' senior Hockey team, who won both the indoor and outdoor Inter-Services for the first time in at least 25 years.
- Women's Telemark Association, who, having entered the first ever women's telemark team at this year's Inter-Services in Meribel, went on to take the IS crown.
- Weightlifting team, who triumphed in the Inter-Services over a dominant Army team.

COACH/OFFICIAL

- Chf Tech Mark Silva, who has been at the forefront of Service and International/Olympic success in bobsleigh for the last 17 years.
- Chf Tech Chris Edgar, who has overseen the huge growth of snowboarding with RAF and UKAF victories during his time in post.
- Flt Lt Matthew Butcher, who, since beginning fencing in the RAF in 2020, has become a coach, founded and nurtured two station clubs and is now RAF fencing training manager.



FEENEY: Snowboard stalwart

ADMINISTRATOR

- WO Chris Slator, RAF Motor Sports Association
- Cpl Sharon Hayes, RAF Ice Hockey Association
- Wg Cdr Natalie Feeney, RAF Winter Sports (Snowboarding)

CIVILIAN VOLUNTEER

- Eamon Geraghty, RAF Boxing Association
- Ian Webb, RAF Gliding Association
- Ian Acey, RAF Winter Sports (Telemark).



LEAGUE: Clayton (left)

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

- Sqn Ldr Damian Clayton, RAF Rugby League
- Sqn Ldr Paul Goodwin, Sub-Aqua Association
- WO Ann Thomas, Powerlifting Association.

It's all to play for

Daniel Abrahams

"SERVICE SPORT finds itself at an exciting time yet again," said director of RAF Sport Rich Fogden speaking to RAF News ahead of this year's awards presentation.

On the event, to be held later this month, he added: "There are so many people, across all sports, who deserve thanks for all they do to deliver physical activity and sport, at every level, across the whole force. This year's nominations are a way of acknowledging that."

The day will be hosted by new head of RAF Sport, Air Vice-Marshal Ian Townsend, at Halton House.

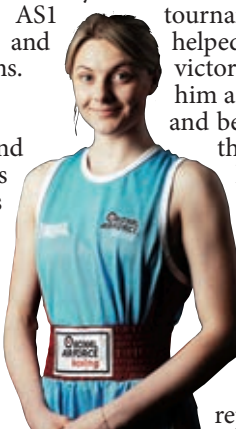
Alongside the main men's, ladies' and team categories, the event will feature coach/administrators and lifetime awards.

In the best man category, a three-way fight sees water-polo star Sqn Ldr Simon Almond up against course angling stalwart Chf Tech Mark Collinson and ice hockey star Fg Off Adam Rosbottom. The high bar of achievement is maintained with the women's nominations of rugby union star Fg Off Carys Williams-Morris, boxer AS1 Francis Lyall (inset right) and road cyclist Cpl Sarah Toms.

MEN'S CATEGORY

● Almond has RAF and British National victories under his prestigious belt, having won the 2022 British Water Polo Championships with his club Cheltenham, who he also secured a runners-up slot with in the 2022 Super 5s.

His eight-goal salvo



The runners and riders for this year's prestigious event



ICE HOCKEY STAR: Fg Off Adam Rosbottom scored a hat-trick on his comeback

in this year's IS event against tournament favourites the Army helped his Service to overall victory. His nomination cited him as: 'an exemplar in attitude and behaviour, which has lifted the RAF team to a new level.'

● Collinson, who is the current RAF coarse angling team captain, has 22 years of Service fishing experience, which crosses unit, Inter-Service and UKAF representation. He has

helped his Service win the coveted IS title for the last two years.

● Rosbottom, following time away from his beloved sport, scored a hat-trick in his first game back for the 2022-23 season.

His nomination cited: 'Rosbottom is the jewel in the crown for Service sport.'

WOMEN'S CATEGORY

● Williams-Morris (right), who recently celebrated

an extended international contract with her national side Wales, has graced World Cup and Six Nations stages along with Service rugby. She also mentors university students in the sport.

Her nomination cited: 'Her selflessness and commitment to supporting others are exemplary.'

● Lyall became the first RAF Female UKAF Elite Champion (F57kg) in history. She has also had many civilian competition successes throughout Europe, including a silver medal at the Women's Winter Box Cup and the Golden Girls event in Sweden.

The Digby boxer's nomination cited: 'Her dedication and commitment have been second to none.'

● Toms has celebrated a year of huge success with Inter-Service (IS) and Cyclo-Cross (CX) championship wins, followed by victory in the Army Cross-Country Mountain Bike (XC MTB) series.

This led to IS selection for XC MTB, resulting in a third-place finish, along with taking the RAF Champion title. Her nomination cited her as: 'Pivotal in inspiring female talent and incredibly tenacious - a formidable adversary on the bike.'

Follow RAF Sport on Instagram @rafsporthq.



TENNIS

AS1 EVE
BRADY:
Straight
sets wins
PHOTO:
ELEANOR
KEDGE

Double singles IS wins



DOUBLES ACTION: RAF Ladies at All England Club

Daniel Abrahams

SINGLES GLORY, two runner-up team finishes and a bright future was the outcome after a long summer of action culminated with the Inter-Services tennis at Wimbledon.

AS1 Eve Brady cruised to the ladies' singles title, winning both her matches in two straight sets against her Army and Navy opponents, while the Air Force's success continued in the men's singles where Flt Lt James Marchant beat his Navy opponent in straight sets and his Army opponent, after three sets.

Closing out their one-year tenures in the team captains' roles, WO Martyn Ledbury and Flt Lt Karen Redgate saw their charges produce gutsy displays at a rain interrupted

SW19, where despite drawing first blood against the Army and producing battling displays throughout, the men's team could not pip the Army to top spot, and the ladies team fell short against the Army having dominated their Royal Navy opponents.

Following his final IS in the captain's role, Ledbury said: "Taking over again as captain has been a huge privilege during this year's transition period.

"The brief was simple, win. The squad had



CHAMPS: Brady and Flt Lt James Marchant

amazing preparation and fought right down to the last rubber with victory still possible, but unfortunately lost to the Army by one match. This year again showed a vast improvement, winning seven out of 12 matches."

Ledbury, who will remain in the role of director of tennis, added: "I have now handed over the captaincy to Flt Lt Tom Elwick, who will look to build on the success and take us into the 2024 season full of confidence."

Redgate said: "The new

talent in the ladies' team are starting to step up to the next level and with the depth and experience in the squad we are excited for the 2024 season.

"The IS was an incredible opportunity for all team members, and we had phenomenal support from our reserves. The team showed great team spirit, both on and off the court.

"We saw some arduous battles, from debutants and older players alike, which took out opponents all the way, and of course AS1 Eve Brady had convincing wins in both her matches, playing incredible tennis.

"The team welcomes any ladies who would like to get involved in RAF Tennis at any level and encourages them to get in contact with us through our Facebook page and Teams sites."

Icarus show in-10-tions

Sparks put to sword by rampant officers

FOOTBALL

THE NEW Astra league season saw Icarus FC storm to a 10-2 win over Sparks FC at RAF Halton for the biggest result of the opening weekend of action.

The goal-bonanza marked the officers' team's intentions for the league, in wet and windy conditions at the late switch venue of Halton, from Odiham.

It seemed that the Cyberspace professionals from Sparks FC had adapted better to the weather when Icarus goalkeeper Flt Lt Jamie Jenkins was forced into an early save, but it was the officers who took the lead.



Icarus FC	10
Sparks FC	2

On 23 minutes, Flt Lt Dave Turnbull was brought down, which gave Icarus an attacking free kick. The ball bounced around inside the box before Flt Lt Alex Toogood held it up well and fed Turnbull, who smashed home.

The goal sparked the game into life, but still neither team could take full advantage until Flt Lt Jordan Kirk-Ellis whipped in a dangerous free kick, which was turned in by a Sparks defender for 2-0. Toogood added a



GOAL FEST: Another one goes in for Icarus

third before the break.

Five minutes into the restart Sparks netted but Icarus were able to weather the storm and netted a fourth time, on the hour, through Kirk-Ellis.

They then scored another five in quick succession with Flt Lts Aidan Robinson, Connall Burchell-Royle, Turnbull, Toby Andrews and Fg Off Alastair Turner – Turner's first for the club.

With the game beyond doubt, debutant Flt Lt Tom Askey entered the fray, with Man of the Match Toogood able to claim his hat-trick, and Sparks getting another consolation late on.



HONOURS SHARED: Both games ended in draws with, thankfully, no penalty deciders! PHOTOS: GRAEME MAIN, SOLDIER MAGAZINE



Something for UKAF to draw on

THE DESIRE not to lose produced two Remembrance game draws as UKAF took on their German Defence Force counterparts at Aldershot.

A technical match saw limited chances for the men's team, despite end-to-end play.

SSgt Athanasios Noutsos saw two first-half efforts flash wide at the EBB Stadium, home of Aldershot Town FC.

The game from a UKAF perspective was summed up when a gilt-edged chance fell to Cpl Mike

UKAF Women	1
German Defence Force	1

Campbell midway through the second half.

A cleverly chipped Cpl Jake Gosling free kick bounced up in front of Campbell, who from 12 yards failed to make enough contact, the chance was gone.

Later in the half Cpl Luke Cairney produced a wonder save at the other end, pushing a lofted cross-cum-shot from Cpl Malik Yerima onto the

UKAF Men	0
German Defence Force	0

crossbar and away. It ended 0-0.

UKAF head coach Cpl Daryl White said: "We had concentrated on our play off the ball, we wanted to analyse our roles and spaces, which we did brilliantly throughout.

"We knew they would be a good side, lots of rotation and moving parts, in some ways very similar to the French with the height with the Dutch, so it gave us the best

opportunity, it was a dress rehearsal for the Kentish Cup.

He added: "The boys worked so hard off the ball, we were dragging them off at the end exhausted.

"You know what you get with Luke [Cairney], that type of save he has done all his career, and he did it again.

"Things are coming thick and fast; we have a training camp and game coming up and then it's straight into the Kentish. We are confident and I am happy with the guys we have on board; I trust

them, and they know what they are about and can achieve."

A tale of two thumping goals opened the day's action as Cpl Karl Milgate's ladies' team produced a hard-fought 1-1 result.

Having gone one behind to a 55th-minute SSgt Anna-Lena Wassermann volley, LS Ciara Boylan's injury-time equaliser, blasted home from the angle of the area and into the far corner of the German net, lifted the roof from the EBB ground in the Navy girl's last game.

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

Army are outgunned



WINNERS AGAIN: RAF's golfers have won Inter-Services many times in recent years

Seventh IS win for men as Ladies fall just short

GOLF

A FINAL day shootout against the Army saw the RAF men's golfers take the Inter-Services crown at Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire, while the ladies came up agonisingly short.

The results after the opening two days meant the light blue teams needed to beat the Army in both the morning foursomes and afternoon singles to take the title, with the men led by FS Cameron Kinvig coming home 6.5-3.5, while the women lost out 4.5-7.5.

Teeing off the championships at the National Golf centre, the Army and Navy did battle, with

the Army winning both sets of play.

The second day saw the RAF Men deliver a resounding result in the morning Foursomes against the Navy, 4-1, with the Ladies edging out the Navy 2.5-1.5.

Chasing down 6.5 from a possible 10 singles matches to win, the Navy men came up well short and the RAF Men won 10-5. Sadly for the Ladies, they were not able to defend their lead from the morning and a 3.5 - 4.5 result in the afternoon in favour of the RN in the singles saw a tied match.

A tight set of morning matches on the final day saw the RAF edge out the Army Men 3-2 but the Ladies were not able to repeat their

success against the RN and trailed 1.5-2.5 at lunchtime.

In the afternoon the Ladies couldn't claw back the deficit, which meant the Army ran out 4.5-7.5 winners and took the Inter-Services.

The RAF men applied an inordinate amount of pressure on the Army, to deliver a 6.5-3.5 result to win the Inter-Services for the seventh time in the last 11 championships.

It was a brilliant result for the men's team, with Kinvig, Sqn Ldr Ben Spoor and AS1s Sam Whitaker and Scott Richardson unbeaten throughout the championship week.



LADIES: Success against RN in Foursomes

RUGBY LEAGUE



TALK TO THE HAND: Army player is kept at arm's length by RAF rugby league star and, inset, outgoing head coach Chf Tech Garry Dunn wouldn't change anything PHOTOS: SBS

No fairy-tale ending for Dunn

"IT WASN'T the fairy tale ending I wanted, but that's sport," said Chf Tech Garry Dunn speaking after the RAF Rugby League side's second IS defeat in this year's championship.

After seven years in the head coach role he oversaw his final championship clash on a day which saw the women's team triumph 24-14, before the men lost 22-16 to the IS-winning Royal Navy.

Speaking after the clash at Belle Vue, Wakefield, Dunn said: "Apart from the last 15 minutes of the Army game we were in every match. We were winning against the Army with 17 minutes to go and looking good here against the Navy, but it just didn't work out."

"If I looked back and analysed our preparation and my preparation, would I have changed things, no, would I have changed my team selection, the answer is also no."

"The two weeks before were good; we trained well and had a great set-up and the players worked superbly well."

"Looking at the set-up now, there is a good balance of youth and maturity, and I feel I have left things in a better place for whoever is coming in. The future is bright."

The two games saw a battling RAF produce some great running and quick plays throughout, having pulled back the Army to lead 6-8 at the break at St Helens. At the midway point of the second half the game sat at 12-14, before the hosts produced three tries in 15 minutes to lead 36-14 before a last-gasp RAF try and conversion reduced the score to 36-20.

Knowing a large scoreline was needed with the Navy



SUCCESS: RAF Ladies score another try against Royal Navy

beating the Army 30-18 in Portsmouth, it was not to be, with Dunn's men losing 22-16.

For the women it was a tale of two matches having lost 34-0 at St Helens to the IS winning Army, they produced a superb all-round display against the Royal Navy.

Having led 6-0 inside the first four minutes of the clash through a AS1 Grace Houghton-Burnett try, the RAF seemed to be well in control leading 14-0 before a Navy fightback.

The hosts clawed the scores back to 14-10 early in the second half, before a further RAF score and penalty through Cpl Hannah South along with a late try by Sgt Alice Fisher and conversion from AS1 Katie Segrave for a final score of 26-14.



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R'n'R

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The Silent Pianist speaks: Neil Brand on Laurel & Hardy p4-5

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Film Review

Daliland (15)

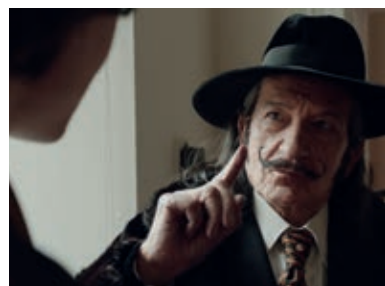
In cinemas now and on Icon film channel. On DVD & digital November 13

A FRESH-FACED gallery worker catches the interest of revered painter Salvador Dali, pulled into a world of extravagant parties, celebrity engagements and his complex marriage.

James (Christopher Briney) has an eye for art and a keen desire to learn, but it is his angelic androgyny that has Dali (Ben Kingsley) poaching him to be his assistant for an upcoming exhibition. This is 1974, Dali is a celebrated visionary living in New York, his success funding his lavish proclivities.

Kingsley looks like he's having a lot of fun embodying Dali and his playful mysteriousness. His wild artistic temperament is a joy to behold, whether suddenly bemused by the colour of a disposable coffee cup, or standing high atop a mountain conducting the wind. There is a physicality to Kingsley's Dali beyond his iconic

The madcap existence of an art icon



moustachioed appearance and dry, dead-pan Spanish accent that is absurdly comical.

Through the eyes of James, we see the company that Dali keeps, and the many ways that he distracts himself from painting, this is where wife Gala (Barbara Sukowa) plays a pivotal role. Commanding and not shy of confrontation, she holds her husband accountable, berating him



LAVISH PARTIES: Dali was a complex character who revelled in the flamboyant

for idling, for which he is greatly appreciative. It is clear, however, that they lack a romantic intimacy and that Gala openly finds this elsewhere.

Dali's madcap genius and humour make his scenes exciting to watch – one particular creative flourish sees his anecdotes drift into flashbacks, where he guides the listener through his memories,

present in the dream alongside his younger self (Ezra Miller) just as in *A Christmas Carol*.

Being confined mostly to this one exhibition late in his career allows *Daliland* to focus in on some quirks and relationships, but ultimately for a film about a master surrealist, it feels pretty on the rails.

3 out of 5 roundels ●●●

Review by Sam Cooney

The Darkness after a spell in the limelight

WELCOME TO *The Darkness*, a warts and all feature-length documentary about British rockers The Darkness, is coming to cinemas on November 9 for one night only. It will also be available on digital download and Blu-ray from December 4.

In 2003, the band took the world by storm with their smash hit single *I Believe In A Thing Called Love* and the award-winning, chart-topping, multi-platinum debut album *Permission to Land*. Then, at the

height of their fame in 2006, they split up and fell off the music radar.

Nine years later, director, and renowned celebrity portrait and beauty photographer Simon Emmett followed *The Darkness* on their long, rocky and hilarious comeback trail.

From a small pub gig in the middle of nowhere with the ambition of performing at packed arena shows once again, *Welcome To The Darkness* shows the stark reality of a 'cult band' struggling to

recapture former glory.

Twenty years on from their platinum-selling debut, Justin Hawkins, his brother Dan, eccentric bassist Frankie Poullain, and new drummer Rufus Taylor tell their story, in their own words, of *The Darkness*' comeback tale.

"With unprecedented access, unseen archive footage and intimate interviews filmed over six years, *Welcome To The Darkness* is a tongue-in-cheek reflection on fame, failure, friendship and forgiveness," said a spokesperson for the film.

"At its heart, this is a unique account of a band of brothers who are still haunted by the demons that ripped them apart. A band who can defiantly laugh in the face of adversities in their ultimate quest for happiness and redemption."

Permission To Land (inset, left) stormed to the top of the UK Albums chart, where it remained for four weeks, and spent 53 weeks in the Top 100. The record has sold over 3.5 million copies to date, with 1.8m in the UK alone.

Permission To Land... Again – a special 20th anniversary reissue collection – is out now. The Darkness will be touring the UK from December 2–22.

● Go to: welcometothe-darkness.co.uk for film details and thedarknesslive.com for tour dates.



THE DARKNESS: Still touring 20 years after their hit single, *I Believe In A Thing Called Love*



Competition

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HOST WITH THE MOST: Fatboy Slim

2002 party still raved about

IN 2002, SUPERSTAR DJ Fatboy Slim (real name Norman Cook) organised a free beach party, the Big Beach Boutique II, for his hometown of Brighton. Forty thousand ravers were expected by the seaside, but a quarter of a million turn up. Chaos ensued...

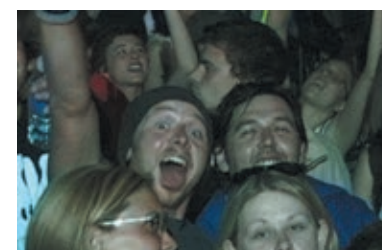
Right Here, Right Now is described as the real story behind dance music's most infamous gig: illustrated through jaw-dropping archive and told by the people who experienced the good, the bad and everything in between, including Simon Pegg, Nick Frost, Vernon Kay, John Simm and many more.

It was said to be the last rave of its kind and it changed dance music forever.

We have copies of *Right Here, Right Now*, on DVD up for grabs. To be in with a chance of winning one, answer this question correctly:

What is DJ Fatboy Slim's real name?

Email your answer, marked



RAVERS: Simon Pegg and Nick Frost, above, and John Simm, below



Right Here, Right Now DVD competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by November 3. Please include your full postal address.



Theatre

The Woman In Black

UK tour



IN THE SHADOWS: Mark Hawkins in *The Woman in Black*

PHOTO: MARK DOUET

Hill's ghostly goings-on

THE WOMAN In Black, the powerful ghost story by Susan Hill, ran for an incredible 33 years in the West End and is now touring the UK again.

It's at the Blackpool Grand from October 31 to November 4, then goes to Malvern Theatres, Richmond Theatre, Nottingham Theatre Royal, Liverpool Playhouse and more venues up to June 1, 2024.

Hill revealed that she never anticipated the show would have such a long life when it first opened.

"We thought it would run for six weeks!," she admitted. "It opened in Scarborough in 1988, and it started because they had a pantomime on in the theatre and Alan Ayckbourn, who was the Artistic Director, wanted to have something to put into the studio theatre alongside the pantomime."

"Stephen Mallatratt [who adapted Hill's 1983 novel for the stage] went on holiday and at the airport picked up *The Woman in Black*. He was then lying on a beach in Greece and thought he could make this work on the stage. When he wrote to me asking if he could adapt it I thought it was mad but it's a truly remarkable piece of theatre."

The spooky tale concerns lawyer Arthur Kipps who is obsessed with a curse that he believes has been cast over him and his family by the spectre of a Woman in Black. Kipps engages a sceptical young actor to help him tell his terrifying story and exorcise the fear that grips his soul. It all begins innocently enough, but then, as they reach further into his darkest memories, they find themselves caught up in a world of eerie marshes and moaning winds.

Hill said: "The Woman in Black herself very much existed in my mind, I knew what she felt like, so it

is very peculiar to feel her presence in a theatre. The two gentlemen are such brilliantly developed characters and utilised so well by Stephen's writing for the stage that they become quite different. I'm always interested to see new actors taking it over, because although it is the same text, every pair of actors bring something different to it, it really does change."

She added: "I have always loved reading ghost stories but had realised that in recent years not a lot had been written. People were writing horror, but horror is different to me. You can have a horror story that doesn't have a ghost, whereas a ghost story could be horror but also could be unnerving in a different way or even heartbreaking."

"I made a list of the key elements I thought a good ghost story should have and worked from that. I thought it should have atmosphere, lots of atmosphere, an isolated location which in itself is unnerving, and I was absolutely sure the ghost needed a reason to be there."

"I wasn't sure at first whether that would be because they wanted revenge, or they needed to communicate with the living world but I knew they had to have motivation."

Does Hill believe in ghosts?

She said: "I think I do, in a sense. I've never seen one (as far as I know!), but enough people I know have been in a place which emanates a sense of evil and have felt the urge to immediately get away from it. Also, you always hear of dogs having that sense of something not being right, being spooked, and why would an animal make that up?"

● Go to: thewomaninblack.com for full tour details.



HILL: Author



PIANO MAN: Royal College of Music prof Neil Brand

NEIL BRAND is a man of many talents. A highly accomplished pianist, he's also a composer, dramatist, broadcaster, actor and a professor at the Royal College of Music.

Now he's touring the country in a unique show – accompanying the silent films of adored comedy duo Laurel and Hardy on the piano with improvised music.

An Evening With Laurel and Hardy features clips cherry-picked by Neil and two short comedies from 1929 – *Big Business*, in which the hapless duo attempt to sell a man a Christmas tree, and *Liberty*, where they are trying to swap their trousers and end up on a partially-built skyscraper.

Neil said: "I've known people to cover their eyes during that film, you absolutely believe they are up there, it's an amazing piece of filming and it's so funny."

He explained: "The Steve Coogan and John C Reilly film *Stan & Ollie* created a new audience with an interest in Laurel and Hardy who certainly would not have seen their silent films. People haven't really had a chance to watch the great films they made before sound came in and certainly not on a big screen."

Every night of the tour is different, he revealed, because he improvises the accompanying music – and can't remember it when he's finished a show.

“Most of my career would not have happened without Paul Merton”

"What I love about being a silent film pianist is it's like a workout for your brain. You sit down in front of a film and there's something there, the music starts to come," he said.

"Laurel and Hardy are deliciously funny, their comedy is joyful. The beauty of silent comedy is that you have a whole audience losing it at the gags, it's a really immersive comedy. It's an extraordinary privilege to be playing the piano and presenting a show which is pure joy, especially in these current tough times. I could not love Laurel and Hardy more."

As a child, Neil found he could play the piano by ear. He studied drama at university in Aberystwyth then, with a group of former students, ran the Tivoli Arts Centre in Eastbourne for five years during the 1980s.

He said: "I got into improvising music for silent films by chance. Eastbourne Film Society approached me to improvise Buster Keaton's *Steamboat Bill, Jr* for them. As soon as the first big laugh from the audience came all the pre-planned music I'd had went out of my head and I was suddenly playing music I'd never heard in my life before. It was kind of

Laurel and Hardy my Brain of com

Top pianist talks to about his silent mov



COMEDY HEROES: Neil with Laurel and Hardy image

Win

beautiful. At the end I stood up to wonderful applause but I could not remember a single note I'd played, and that's still the same now."

He went on to play for silent films at London's National Film Theatre and since then the job has taken him around the world.

He said: "It's opened up a lot of other opportunities – I've become a writer because of it [his play *Stan* about Laurel's visit to see Hardy on the last day of his life was broadcast on national radio, then TV], scored silent films and done TV series."

Neil was the piano player for the comedian – and silent comedy aficionado – Paul Merton for two years, on the nationwide tour *Paul Merton's Silent Clowns*.

Neil said: "I still owe him a great deal,

most of my career would not have happened without Paul."

Neil is now Visiting Professor of Improvisation at the Royal College of Music, who are training to be comedians.

He said: "That's funny because it's kind of passing the torch, also because I do it to help them that might be of good for me as well because it's different approaches to the fact that young people want to be comedians and are completely obsessed with it."

He's not acted for a while, but he's performing and that's one of the joys of the tour.

He said: "There's a

Edited by Tracey Allen

and are and edy

RAF News
ries UK tour



Win tickets

WE HAVE two pairs of tickets for *An Evening With Laurel And Hardy* up for grabs for a venue of your choice – see: thesilentpianistspeaks.co.uk for a list of venues and dates. For your chance to win two tickets, tell us the name of the famous comedian Neil Brand toured with.

Email your answer, marked Laurel and Hardy tickets competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Rm 68, Lancaster Bldg, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by November 3, and include your venue choice.



PARENTS: Neil's father served in the RAF in WWII

and not have happened

ing Professor Film M, teaching students concert pianists.

ing on the torch, but help bring music out of use to them. It's very use you hear so many things. And I love the watch these silent films used by them."

hile, but says he loves one of the reasons he's

a bit of a stand-up

comedy feel to the show and that direct interaction with the audience is a lovely, lovely thing."

He is now rewriting a musical he wrote about 20 years ago – called *Talking With Mr Warner*, about the opening night of *The Jazz Singer*, the first feature-length film with synchronised dialogue.

Not surprisingly, Neil is a strong advocate for keeping music on the school syllabus.

He said: "Music offers an outlet, a therapy and it's particularly for kids who aren't coping well with school. I've found this time and time again with music, drama, art, film – kids who aren't coping with the academic world, if you provide an outlet to allow them to express themselves in their

own way, the amount of confidence they gain is huge. That happened to me at school, which is particularly why I'm so in favour of it. I think every kid should have as much exposure to music as possible."

Although not having military experience himself, Neil remembers his father Ken telling him about his wartime service in the RAF.

He said: "He was a clerk with a squadron that went to Tobruk, then to Iraq for most of the war. He stayed in the Service until 1947, I think he became a corporal. He loved the RAF, he had terrible eyesight so he was 'flying a typewriter' but on the frontline."

● Go to: thesilentpianistspeaks.co.uk for a full list of tour dates.



BOOKS

Guy Gibson and his Dambuster crew
thehistorypress.co.uk



Win!

Gibson's Dambuster Guys

THE DAMS Raid is arguably the most famous bombing operation of World War II and its Commanding Officer, Guy Gibson, was its most famous bomber pilot.

Now Charles Foster has written the first biography of the six men who flew with Gibson on the 1943 Dambusters Raid.

Guy Gibson and his Dambuster Crew (thehistorypress.co.uk), tells the collective story of those men – rear gunner Flt

Lt Richard Trevor-Roper, flight engineer Flt Sgt John Pulford, front gunner Plt Off George Deering, bomb aimer Fg Off Frederick Spafford, wireless operator Flt Lt Robert Hutchinson and navigator Fg Off Harlo Taerum.

Of those six men who made up Gibson's 617 Sqn crew – two Canadians, an Australian and three Englishmen – only one had previously flown with him – Hutchinson, his regular wireless operator, but altogether they had amassed more than 180 operations.

This new book, by the author of the acclaimed *The Complete Dambusters*, draws on rare and unpublished sources and family archives, exploring the previous connections between the seven men who would fly on just one



LEGENDS: Gibson (on steps) and Dams Raid crew

operation together and examines how their relationships developed in the few months they spent in each other's company.

The title also looks at how, after the deaths of the seven men, which all fell in one 12-month period, their service was immortalised in print and on screen.

We have copies of this absorbing book to win. For your chance to own one, simply answer this question correctly:

How many men made up Guy Gibson's 617 Sqn Dambuster crew?

Email your answer, marked Guy Gibson book 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 November 3.



DVDs

Inside Man (15)

Out now on Blu-ray, DVD and download-to-own (Dazzler Media)



Win!

Insider dealing

FROM THE makers of *Sherlock*, a convicted murderer on death row, a vicar in a quiet English town, and a maths teacher trapped in a cellar cross paths in the most unexpected way in *Inside Man*.

Steven Moffat's critically-acclaimed drama delivers incredible performances from BAFTA winner David Tennant (*Good Omens*), Emmy winner Stanley Tucci (*Supernova*), Dolly Wells (*The Outlaws*) and Lydia West (*It's A Sin*).

The four-part BBC series stars Tennant as vicar Harry Watling with Tucci as Jefferson Grieff, a prisoner in the US on death row seeking atonement as he faces execution, and Wells as Watling's son's maths tutor. West plays journalist Beth Davenport, who is looking for a story. All four of them are about to be entangled in a dilemma that could lead one of



VICAR: Harry Watling (David Tennant)

them to murder.

We have copies of the series on DVD to win. For your chance to own one, simply tell us:

Who plays Harry Watling in *Inside Man*?

Email your answer, marked Inside Man DVD competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by November 3.



Your Announcements

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

Death

HOWELL Kenneth passed away at home on August 27. Loving father of Tracey, father-in-law to Steve and grandfather to Sam and Elliot. Donations in memory of Kenneth to The Royal British Legion directly or via: www.greenwillowfunerals.com/tributes-donations/



KENNETH HOWELL

Reunions

THE Association of RAF Women Officers (ARAFWO) Annual Reunion Lunch will take place on Saturday, October 28 at the RAF Club from 11am. Our speaker is Flt Lt Colin Bell (*below*) DFC who is 102 years old. A most amusing and engaging speaker, he will talk about his experiences as a Mosquito Bomber Pilot. For tickets, please contact Hilary Davidson on: h.davidson399@gmail.com. All will be made very welcome. For further information about the Reunion and ARAFWO visit: arafwo.co.uk.



THE RAF and Defence Fire Service reunion will take place from Friday, November 3 to Sunday, November 5 at

the Sketchley Grange Hotel and Spa, Sketchley Lane, Hinkley, Leicestershire, LE10 3HU. Visit: rafanddfs.co.uk/reunions or email Don Pape: donaldpape252@yahoo.com or Mike Clapton, email: fire.bucket@btinternet.com. We welcome new members.

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 you are not already an Association Member, you can join by contacting: 6sqnassociation@gmail.com. At this stage 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 whether you would like to bring a guest, should that opportunity arise.

THE Association of RAF Women Officers (ARAFWO) was formed in 1955 to provide a medium through which serving and former serving women officers could maintain contact with

the Royal Air Force and with each other.

Your Association is a lively, friendly, world-wide networking group. Membership is exclusive to all serving and former serving women officers of the RAF, RAuxAF, RAFVR(T), WRAF, PMRAFNS, WAAF, WRAuxAF and WRAFVR who hold a Queens' or King's Commission.

Visit our website: arafwo.co.uk and discover the benefits of membership, plus see what activities and events we offer all over the world.

RAF Armourers past and present. Do you know that the RAF Association has an Armourers Branch? Its aim is 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.

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 Mem Sec on: 07866 085834 or Chairman on: 01933 443673.

RAF Catering WO's and Seniors' Association (RAF CWO & SA): all serving or retired TG19 Warrant Officers or Flight Sergeants and all former Catering Branch Officers are invited to join the RAF CWO & SA. We meet twice yearly. Please email: davescott10@hotmail.co.uk.

Cenotaph parade

ANY 6 Sqn Association member who would like to join the Cenotaph parade on November 8 should contact Robert Miller asap if you have not already done so. Email: romeomike5@yahoo.co.uk; phone: 07842 244915.

Obituary

RAF Regiment founding member dies aged 102

RAF REGIMENT veteran Bill Atkinson has died aged 102. Originally from Newcastle, Bill was a founding member of the Corps.

He joined the RAF on April 10, 1941, and was posted to 2757 Squadron in May 1941, an airfield defence unit in the UK. While he did the odd short attachment to various other units, he essentially stayed with them until August 8, 1944, when he transferred to 2717 Sqn, on similar duties.

“It has been an absolute honour to have made a connection with Bill”

Bill's Record of Service shows that he landed with the unit in Normandy on August 21, 1944. Although this was six weeks after D-Day, Normandy was still a very dangerous place to be, with the airfields that were being established (and which were critical to the Allied breakout from the beach heads) under



SPECIAL DAY: Bill Atkinson celebrating his centenary. Members of 34 Sqn spent time with the veteran on his 100th birthday

regular German air and artillery attack.

His unit travelled across North West Europe, and was involved in the defences of RAF airfields during Operation Bodenplatte, when the Luftwaffe made a

massed, last ditch attempt to regain air superiority by attacking Allied airfields.

2717 Sqn was posted to the Middle East in September 1945, and Bill went with them to Palestine. He returned to the UK in the summer of 1946.

The following year, 2717 Sqn were renamed 52 (Rifle) Sqn RAF Regt.

Flt Sgt Paul Goodfellow, from No 2 C-UAS Wing HQ, RAF Leeming, said: “It has been an absolute honour to have made a connection with Bill and spend time in his company these past two years. To listen to his stories serving with the RAF Regiment during World War II was both inspiring and exciting.

“He was extremely proud to have served in the RAF Regiment and every time I and other Service personnel from RAF Leeming went to visit him, it literally made his day.

“My fondest memory was last Christmas, when he broke down in tears because he had his RAF Regiment family around him.

“It was clear how much the RAF Regiment meant to him.”

Bill passed away last month.



FOND MEMORIES: Bill was visited by RAF Regiment personnel last Christmas

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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Your Announcements

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Bell ringers mark BoB day

MEMBERS of the RAF Guild of Bell Ringers gathered at the church of St Martin of Tours, Exning in West Suffolk to begin the three-day Battle of Britain meet last month.

A spokesperson said: "This church tower had an interesting access, as owing to the installation of a very large organ at the bottom of the tower, the group first wound their way up some steep stairs, and were then faced with a vertical ladder going up at least 12 feet.

"The afternoon was completed by ringing at Barrow and Horringer. The highlight of the day was being able to join in the practice night on the beautiful sounding 12 at Bury St Edmunds' Norman tower.

"Our efforts at rounds, call changes, plain hunt, Stedman, Grandsire caters and Little Bob Royal with lots of help from the regular band were not too bad.



GUILD APPEAL: The RAF bell ringers are looking for new members

"Listening to the 12 being rung by the Cathedral ringers to Stedman cinquies was something else."

The next day the bell ringers were joined by several

more RAF ringers and visited Elveden and Ixworth, then after a lunchbreak went on to Bacton, Gillingham and Redgrave.

"The day after saw the

group at Bildeston, then to Offton and Kersey before a break for lunch. The delightful light 8 at Offton gave us the chance to ring several Surprise Major methods," the spokesperson added.

"The afternoon was harder work with three heavy eight bell towers, at Boxford, Stoke by Mayland, and anticlockwise Bures.

"The wonderful sound of the Stoke by Mayland bells were slightly marred by the graveyard of flies in the ringing room.

"After this we wended our way homewards. Our thanks go to Geoff Cowling for a well organised outing with an interesting selection of towers."

■ New members are welcome to join the Guild, either serving or retired, and dependants of serving or ex-serving personnel.

Please contact the Secretary, Mike Le Marie, mjandcjlemaire@btinternet.com for more details.

FUNDRAISER:
Elizabeth
in action



Daughter runs for dad

UNIVERSITY STUDENT Elizabeth Williams has completed the Haver Castle triathlon, raising money for the RAF Benevolent Fund in memory of her late father, an RAF serviceman.

The Fund is a charity close to Elizabeth's heart due to the support she has received since she was 11, said an RAFBF spokesperson.

Elizabeth's father, Flt Lt David Rhys Williams, was a Tornado navigator in the second Gulf War and served in the RAF for 17 years. He was killed when his Tornado was shot down in a blue-on-blue incident in March 2003; Elizabeth, now 22, was just two at the time.

The Fund enabled her to go to Lord Wandsworth College for her senior education. She recently completed a Masters degree at Newcastle University in Renewable Energy Enterprise and Management.

She said: "After school, the Fund continued to support me very generously through my higher education, allowing me to achieve both an undergraduate and postgraduate degree."



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The official voice of the Royal Air Force

R'n'R



Crossword

No. 349

Solve the crossword, then rearrange the 10 letters in yellow squares to find an RAF station

Across

- 1. During the picture 'Ben-Hur', maybe (4)
- 8. They're walking a tightrope (10)
- 9. Much pink spread over this creature (8)
- 10. Young lion on a country (4)
- 12. Golden Gate is looking dingy every day to start with (6)
- 14. Canter round in a dream (6)
- 15. Orders newspaperman in charge of The Sun initially (6)
- 17. He's paid to finish pointless in maths, maybe (6)
- 18. See 4 Down
- 19. Poirot's kind of plane? (8)
- 21. Most cereal is wasted on these laggards (10)
- 22. Adventurous RAF almost quiet (4)

Down

- 2. RAF Force which led the way in WWII (10)
- 3. Base accountant joins member (4)
- 4. And 18 Across. Urge Crown to re-organise RAF personnel (6,4)
- 5. Jill's partner has alien clothing (6)
- 6. Flying skill in plane (8)
- 7. While I visit a land-mass (4)
- 11. Swashbuckling planes? (10)
- 13. Avoid drug used on pond problem (8)
- 16. Teach dolphins (6)
- 17. RAF plane destroys throne (6)
- 18. Placid English river by the sound of it (4)
- 20. American senator loses heart in communist state (4)

Name

Address

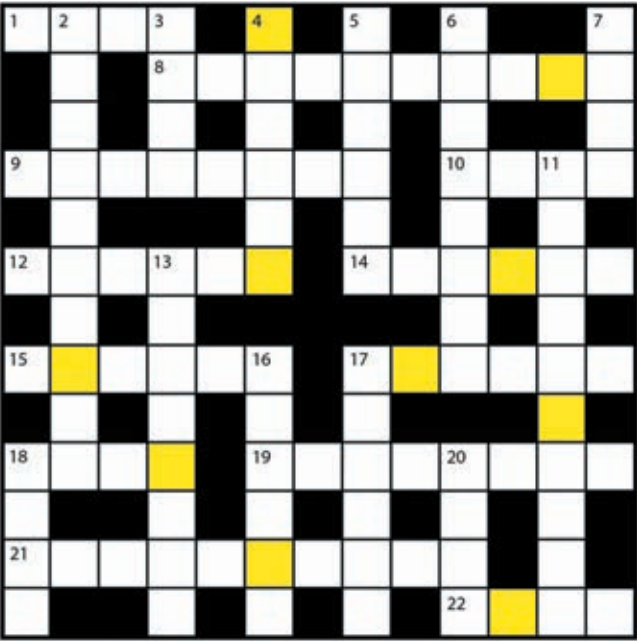
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.....

RAF station:..... Crossword No. 349

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 November 3.

Prize Crossword No. 347 winner is: Dave Masters, Sheffield.



Solution to Crossword No 348:

Across – 6. Healthy 7. Flute 9. Crews 10. Mission 12. Grant Shapps 14. Air Policing 18. Hardest 19. Stamp 21. Veils 22. Madeira

Down – 1. Beard 2. Flower 3. The 4. Alaska 5. Stroppey 8. Airsick 11. English 13. Citadel 15. Puddle 16. Nutmeg 17. Amari 20. Day

RAF word – Flight



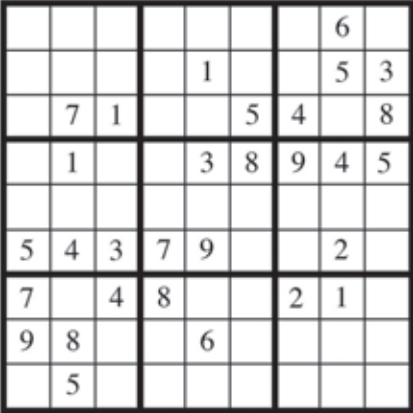
Prize Su Doku

No. 359

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 November 3.

The winner of Su Doku No: 357 is: Natasha Booker, Aldershot.



Solution to Su Doku No: 358

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



Show Review

La Voix

On tour: lavoix.co.uk

UK tour



IN THE PINK:
La Voix on stage.
PHOTO: CHRIS JEPSON

Dazzling diva delights

HAVING only seen the brilliant La Voix live in panto, I was looking forward to her show at London's Lyric theatre, part of her current Red Ambition tour – and it didn't disappoint.

She's a first-class performer, a top of her game drag queen who belts out showstopping song after song, from *Don't Rain On My Parade* to a medley of Tina Turner numbers, and many other favourites in between, dazzling in an array of sparkly costumes and sky-high platform shoes, and demonstrating her razor-sharp wit with sparkly interaction with the audience.

If you don't want to be part of the show, don't sit near the stage as she focuses – with a torch! – on front row fans, and further back, and is

mercilessly funny, but not unkind.

There's some hilarious business with her silver globe drinks cabinet, that's also an Alexa and a 'psychic ball' that allows the fabulously entertaining diva to act as a medium, having great fun as she interacts with willing audience members.

And her musical impersonations of such icons as Diana Ross, Judy Garland and the aforementioned Turner are spot-on, affectionate tributes to the divas she admires.

There's also great support from her excellent four-piece band and her all-girl dance troupe.

Catch the tour if you can – it's a real night to remember.

5 out of 5 roundels
Review by Tracey Allen



Show Review

Peter Pan Goes Wrong

On tour now: mischiefcomedy.com

It's simply Pantastic

IF YOU like your comedy gloriously silly and full of slapstick, then *Peter Pan Goes Wrong* is the ideal night out for non-stop laughs.

It's a riotous evening of hilarious entertainment that gets more and more frenetic as the fabulously inept Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society stage their chaotic version of JM Barrie's classic tale about the boy who never grows up.

Mischief Theatre's superbly funny and slick, fast-paced production has a strong element of panto and there was enthusiastic audience participation when I saw it at Aylesbury's Waterside Theatre recently.

From the creators of the other highly successful *Goes Wrong* titles, it's a very cleverly-written show and features every kind of mishap, from crashing scenery to technical troubles, disputes among the cast to wardrobe malfunctions – all delivered with split-second timing by the brilliant company.

You surely have to be pretty good at wire-flying to cope with the crazy acrobatics performed by the awful Jonathan (Gareth Tempest) who stars as Peter Pan and tech man Trevor (Jake Burgum) without doing yourself a mischief.

There's a rather sweet sub-plot about young Max (a delightful Theo Toksvig-Stewart) who plays Michael Darling, a mermaid and



PETER PAN: Gareth Tempest is flying by the seats of his pants PHOTO: PAMELA RAITH

the crocodile – and is in the show only because his uncle has given the company £80,000 – who carries a torch for Sandra (Ciara Morris) playing Wendy Darling. But Sandra is entangled with big-headed Jonathan – will true love eventually triumph?

All the cast are faultless – worth special mention are Jack Michael Stacey as the increasingly uptight Chris (playing Mr Darling and

Captain Hook), Clark Devlin as gormless Dennis (John Darling, mermaid and Mr Snee), Jean-Luke Worrell as glitter-sprinkling Francis (the Narrator and Cecco) and Jamie Birkett as a wonderfully sassy Tinker Bell.

The tour continues until April 14, 2024 – you'd be so wrong to miss it!

5 out of 5 roundels
Review by Tracey Allen