

The Forces' favourite paper

Go ahead Punk.. The Damned concert DVD

Win!

● See R'n'R page 3



RAF ink rethink for new recruits

● See page 7



ROYAL AIR FORCE

Friday, February 23, 2024
Edition No. 1577 £1.20

RAF News



Falcons set for airshow chute-out

See pages 14-15



Football SRT bang on target



● See page 23

Alpine Final call for Meribel



● See pages 26-27

Hockey Club Euro honours



● See page 28

Jack's on a record roll

102-year-old daredevil

pulls Spitfire stunt



DAREDEVIL WWII veteran Jack Hemings pulled off some record-breaking aerobatic stunts in a vintage Spitfire... at the age of 102.

The wartime Dakota pilot took to the skies from Biggin Hill to raise funds for the charity he founded, which flies in aid to some of the world's poorest and most remote regions.

He said: "Getting in the Spitfire gave pleasant feelings of being above the ground - where you can leave behind all the problems of the world."

"210 knots was faster than my RAF flying days. The controls were slightly heavier than I expected, but perhaps that's because I'm just a bit rusty. It was absolutely delightful."

● See p3 for full story

BiteSize



“Our aim is very much to inspire for the future”

Red 1, Sqn Ldr Jon Bond, as RAF aerobatic team celebrates diamond anniversary
See p13

“I’ve adapted three of my favourite episodes for the stage”



Comedy legend John Cleese on taking 70s TV classic *Fawlty Towers* to the West End as a play 50 years on
See R’n’R page 5

“I’m loving the way things are going and want to keep achieving more”



Skeleton novice Flt Lt Nicole Burger, who is tearing it up on the Euro and World circuit
See pages 26-27



ROYAL AIR FORCE
RAF News

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

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

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

News Editor: Simon Mander

Sport: sports@rafnews.co.uk

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

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

Ukraine drone deal

THE UK is to order thousands of drones for Ukraine under a £200 million agreement.

First-Person-View drones have proven highly effective on the battlefield, providing operators with situational awareness to target enemy positions with explosive ordnance.

The UK and Latvia will lead a capability coalition to ramp up supply to Ukrainian military chiefs as the conflict with Russia enters its third year.

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said: “The UK continues to do all we can to give Ukraine what it needs, committing £200m to manufacture drones, making us Ukraine’s largest drone supplier.”

“UK and Latvia will co-lead an international coalition to build Ukraine’s vital drone capabilities. Together, we will give Ukraine the capabilities it needs to defend itself and win this war, to ensure that Putin fails in his illegal and barbaric ambitions.”



PLEDGE: Defence Secretary Grant Shapps with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg

This Week In History



1971
Prince at Cranwell

HRH PRINCE Charles begins training at RAF College Cranwell and learns to fly under the instruction of future CAS Sqn Ldr Robert Johns.



1991
Gulf PoWs released

ALL SEVEN Tornado aircrew shot down during operations against Iraqi forces during Operation Granby are released from captivity.



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



1941
D-Day trial raid

HALIFAX CREWS drop more than 1,200 tons of bombs on rail marshalling yards at Trappes, south west of Paris, in preparation for the Normandy landings.

Crasher Jack's on a roll

102-year-old supervet pulls daredevil stunt and flies into the record books



ROLL OUT THE BARREL: WWII pilot Jack Hemings, 102, takes to the skies in vintage Spitfire before pulling aerobatic stunt. Below, Jack in his RAF uniform in 1948

Jo Lamb

Biggin Hill

A 102-YEAR-OLD RAF veteran has become Britain's oldest Spitfire pilot after flying the iconic World War II aircraft to mark two significant anniversaries.

Jack Hemings took off from Biggin Hill in one of its Heritage Hangar Spitfires for a special charity flight organised by Fly A Spitfire to honour the former Sqn Ldr, his WWII RAF service and the charity he co-founded in 1948 – Mission Aviation Fellowship.

He helped launch MAF, the world's largest humanitarian air service, with D-Day landings RAF veteran Stuart King, who passed away in 2020.

The flight also took place to mark the 80th anniversary year of D-day and to honour Stuart.

Before getting into the Spitfire cockpit to make history, Jack said: "I'm told it's a possibility I could enter the record books today, but I'm not interested in records, I'm just interested in getting in and going."

He clipped himself into the rear seat of the only surviving Spitfire prototype of any mark – the 1944 VIII trainer – flown by chief Spitfire pilot Barry Hughes. The supervet performed three victory rolls during the 20-minute flight.

On landing, he said: "I was surprised



by how heavy the controls were, but that's probably because I'm just a bit rusty. It was rather bumpy up there, but the overall experience was absolutely delightful."

Jack's son Adrian, who flew in a chaser plane, said he was immensely proud of his 102-year-old father and all he has achieved in his aviation career.

He added: "Dad had a few very bad crashes during the war and in MAF's

early days but thankfully today he landed very smoothly. We've been brought up on stories of his adventures across Africa in a tiny Gemini plane – but when you see footage from those times, it really is very impressive. Aged 25 he flew thousands of miles across uncharted territory, it's quite extraordinary."

Barry Hughes, who confirmed Jack had lost none of his touch for flying, said:

"It was a real privilege to fly Jack today."

The RAF's Chief Chaplain, the Venerable Dr (AVM) Giles Legood, was among the guests invited to celebrate Jack's amazing achievement.

He said: "It was wonderful to see this inspirational man fulfilling one of his dreams. It is much deserved. Having helped win the peace as a WWII pilot, Jack was a huge force for good in co-founding MAF, which has changed the lives of countless millions in delivering humanitarian aid."

Jack added: "It's not incredible being 102. You just get up every day and go about your business. It's the present moment which counts – and this one was very special indeed."

His historic flight earlier this month aimed to raise funds and awareness for MAF, which continues to deliver aid to the world's poorest and remote regions.

With Stuart, Jack made a pioneering survey flight which ended with them crashing into an 'undeveloped hillside' in Burundi. He revealed: "Neither of us were injured except a bruise and a cut on my little finger, but I have been called Crasher Jack ever since."

**// Our
welfare break
gave us the
quality time
we needed as
a family."**

- Al Dyer



FANCY A HOLIDAY ON YORKSHIRE'S EAST COAST?

Our holiday home is available for breaks all year round.

Why not apply to stay in our holiday home for serving RAF personnel and RAF veterans? Situated only a 15-minute walk from the traditional seaside town of Bridlington.

It's the ideal destination to visit for a holiday with kids or for some peace and quiet.

The four-bedroom chalet bungalow is suitable for wheelchair access, along with a disabled friendly bathroom. A real home from home, with everything you need for a memorable holiday.

To find out more and apply, visit: rafbf.org/thefolly

CALL 0300 102 1919



**Royal Air Force
Benevolent Fund**



**SCAN
ME WITH
YOUR
CAMERA**



The RAF Benevolent Fund is a registered charity in England and Wales (1081009) and Scotland (SC038109).

Tribute to medic who died fighting Covid

Tracey Allen

A FLIGHT SERGEANT who died aged 30 after she caught tuberculosis while helping medics during the Covid-19 pandemic has been remembered on what would have been her 33rd birthday.

The parents of Carriane Franks decided to mark the day with a 20.5-mile walk in her memory earlier this month, raising more than £5,400 for the RAF Benevolent Fund and charity TB Alert.

Chris and Beverley Franks, from Nottinghamshire, were joined by Carriane's friends and serving RAF personnel.

Due to a delay in diagnosis, Carriane passed away in 2021, following an eight-week stay in

hospital where her health rapidly deteriorated.

Bev said: "Just before Covid-19, she was posted to a hospital in London where she worked on the intensive care unit supporting her NHS colleagues with nursing care."

"Throughout the pandemic, Carriane continued to work in the hospital on the frontline caring for Covid patients and was one of the first nurses to work in the Nightingale Hospital in London."

Once the pandemic started to ease, she was promoted and returned to RAF Brize Norton, working on the Tactical Medical Wing supporting sick and injured military personnel.

Bev added: "Carriane started



MUCH-MISSED: Carriane with her Mum, Bev

to become ill in July 2021 – she was admitted to two hospitals within eight weeks. After many false diagnoses of both Covid and pneumonia, she was

finally diagnosed with TB. She died the next day."

● Go to: justgiving.com/page/bev-franks to donate.

In Brief



Spotlight on welfare

THE RAF Benevolent Fund and Greenwich Hospital have launched an 18-month probe into support for Air Force and Navy personnel and their families.

A spokesperson for the charity said: "The evidence collected will look at families' individual requirements and examine the impact of socio-economic trends."

"It will also investigate the effect of the changing nature of warfare on personnel and the specific needs of an increasingly diverse population."

An Advisory Board made up of RN and RAF welfare, family support and research staff will oversee the project, jointly funded by Greenwich Hospital and the RAFBF.

Rand Europe will conduct the research to examine changes in Forces demographics and the effect military life has on wellbeing, employment, finance and housing.

The final report will be published in 2025.

Call-up for Bravo vets



THE RAF Museum Midlands is collaborating with theatre company Highly Sprung to tell the story of the legendary Chinook Bravo November.

The Museum is looking for stories from personnel who served on the illustrious airframe, which survived a strike on the Atlantic Conveyor in the Falklands and went on to fly in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Bravo November was moved to the Museum, at Cosford, near Wolverhampton, in 2022, as the UK prepared to mark the 40th anniversary of the Falkland War.

● Email: amy.bertaut@rafmuseum.org

Typhoon gets Turbo power



FLT LT Dave 'Turbo' Turnbull is gearing up for a blockbuster Summer as the RAF's Typhoon display pilot.

The 32-year-old 29 Sqn flying instructor is stepping into the hot seat after tours in the Falklands, Iraq and Syria and across the Middle East and will be bringing some frontline fire power to the air show showdown with pilots from across the world.

Turbo joined the RAF as a direct entrant in 2010 after completing his A-levels and was streamed on fast jets after Elementary Flying Training.

He's no rookie when it comes to public

displays. He completed two seasons with BBMF and flew the Lancaster and Dakota during the D-Day 70th Anniversary in France.

He's honing his routine at RAF Coningsby ahead of being awarded his Public Display Authority.

He said: "It's such an honour and a privilege to fly the display this year. I'm standing on the backs of giants, really, who are helping me out with the display this year."

"There's a couple of new things coming up. I'm looking forward to the slow-speed pass, I think that will be good."

"There's some negative G-maneuvres, which although feel awful for me, hopefully will look good for the air show spectators."



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



Worcestershire Medal Service Ltd

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



56 Broad Street, Sidemoor,
Bromsgrove.
B61 8LL

01527 835375

www.worcmedals.com

sales@worcmedals.com



ADDICA

Promotional and Corporate Gifting

01527 509380

www.addica.co.uk

sales@addica.co.uk





QRA: Coningsby
Typhoons scrambled

Civvie scramble alert

Staff Reporter

RAF TYPHOONS were scrambled to escort a civilian passenger aircraft landing at Manchester Airport after communication with the airliner was lost.

A Scandinavian Airlines SK 4609 flight was travelling from Oslo to Manchester when it lost communication with air traffic control. A pair of Typhoons from

RAF Coningsby intercepted the jet and communications were later restored.

A RAF spokesman said: "Quick Reaction Alert Typhoon aircraft were launched this afternoon from RAF Coningsby to intercept a civilian aircraft that had lost communications.

"Communications were re-established, the aircraft was intercepted and safely escorted to Manchester."



Photo of the week

TECHNICIANS AT Akrotiri check a Typhoon following a long-distance bombing mission on Houthi sites in Yemen.

Typhoons and US F/A-18 Super Hornets on board the flagship US carrier USS Dwight Eisenhower in the Gulf destroyed underground weapons sites and locations used to launch missile and drone attacks on shipping in the Red Sea. PHOTO: ASI JAKE GREEN

Ink-rethink

Personnel chiefs relax tattoo rules to boost recruitment

Staff Reporter

High Wycombe

THE RAF is to follow the Army and Royal Navy and relax rules on hand tattoos to boost recruitment and retention.

Personnel chiefs hope the move will make the Service more attractive to new recruits as the Armed Forces battle it out with Civvy Street employers for the best of British talent.

Recent figures claim that more than one in five Brits now has body art and recruiters fear the hardline policy on hand tattoos could be ruling out talented potential recruits.

The RAF changed regulations to allow neck and eyebrow tattoos and a single finger tattoo that could be concealed by a wedding ring, in 2019, but maintained the ban on designs on the hands.

The latest ruling will keep the prohibition on all tattoos that are considered to be rude or offensive.

A spokesman for the RAF added: "The RAF has eased the restrictions on hand tattoos for both potential recruits and serving personnel.

"This change in policy is consistent with the RAF's inclusion policies, helps to ensure that we continue to be representative of the modern-day society we serve and aligns us with Royal Navy and Army policies.

"The previous policy prohibited any hand tattoos outside of a single finger tattoo, which could be covered by the wearing of any permissible ring.

"This meant that a number of potential recruits were ineligible to join due to having tattoos contrary to the policy.

"Easing the restrictions on tattoos for both potential recruits and serving personnel, whilst maintaining professional standards, is consistent with the RAF's inclusion policies, as well as reflecting the society that we live in and protect."



Royal Air Force In Concert

Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the RAF Music Charitable Trust

Lincoln Cathedral

7.30pm Saturday 11 May 2024

Compere: Melvyn Prior



Royal Hall, Harrogate

7.30pm Friday 28 June 2024

Compere: Howard Leader



Watersmeet, Rickmansworth

Royal Air Force Squadronaires

7.30pm Friday 15 March 2024

CAST, Doncaster

Band of the Royal Air Force College

7.30pm Thursday 19 September 2024

Palace Theatre, Newark

Band of the Royal Air Force College

7.30pm Friday 20 September 2024

Playhouse, Weston Super Mare

Central Band of the Royal Air Force

7.30pm Friday 27 September 2024

Assembly Hall, Worthing

Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment

3.00pm Sunday 29 September 2024

West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge

Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment

7.30pm Friday 4 October 2024

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



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



In Brief



LIFT-OFF: BAE launches new space systems course

BAE signs up space cadets

AEROSPACE GIANT BAE has launched the UK's first degree apprenticeship in Space Systems Engineering.

Applications are now open for the first intake of space degree apprentices who will work on a project to launch the group's first multi-sensor, low-earth orbit satellite cluster in 2025 to deliver intelligence to the UK military.

BAE director Doug Liddle said: "Space degree apprenticeships are a vital step to attract the next generation of talent into our space sector."



BOMBER HARRIS: Marshal of the RAF

Bomber's on target

RAF AIR Command has welcomed the 6,000th visitor to the wartime office used by Marshal of the RAF, Arthur 'Bomber' Harris.

The office was restored in 2014 and is open to the public by appointment.

Saudis spearhead Gulf security drill



ARABIAN FLIGHTS: XI Sqn Typhoons in formation during a training sortie. Inset left, Qatari F-15 joins the fight

Pete Singlehurst

Saudi Arabia

UK TYPHOONS have launched combat training sorties alongside allies in Saudi Arabia in the latest multi-national war drills to strengthen military ties in the Middle East.

Coningsby-based XI Sqn joined more than 60 fighter jets from Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, France, Greece and Pakistan to hone their war-fighting skills on Exercise Spears of Victory.

Operating from the recently completed air warfare centre at the King Abdulaziz Air Base, Typhoons carried out air-to-air combat drills and ground strikes alongside Saudi and Qatari F-15s, Tornados, French Rafale fighters and JF-17s operated by the Pakistani Air Force.

Sqn Ldr Hodgkinson, the UK Detachment Commander, said: "This is an extremely important training

opportunity for our force enablers to work alongside strategic partners in the region to demonstrate the combat air capacity of our highly trained pilots and engineers in the Typhoon Force.

"Now, as much as ever before, we strive for excellence in air dominance – collaborating with Allies who have come together in a demonstration of their commitment to stability in the broader Middle East.

"The welcome at King Abdulaziz Air Base and the support in country has been fantastic and the facilities here will allow us to really make the most of this opportunity.

"We look forward to a busy deployment, operating at a high tempo alongside our international colleagues; I am confident the whole detachment will learn a great deal from the exercise."

A US detachment provided a mixed unit of National Guardsmen for ground support activities, including fire fighters,



security and logisticians to support the exercise.

Spears of Victory is also being supported by transport, tanker and airborne early warning aircraft, plus helicopters.

Data aces keeping UK jets flying

KEEPING ROYAL Air Force Typhoons flying thousands of miles from their home base is a test for Coningsby engineering aces, writes Pete Singlehurst.

Ground Support specialists, working from a forward deployed facility at the Saudis' state-of-the-art Air Warfare Centre at King Abdulaziz Air Base, play a key role delivering capability, analysing real-time data during simulated combat sorties.

The GSS network allows engineers to access the data and highlight any issues that have occurred during the flight.

Rectification Controller Sgt and how it is performing.

Shaw said: "The GSS system is critical for our work here, it is a bit like when you take your car to a garage and the mechanic plugs a computer into it to find the fault, but that is a simplification – it does so much more.

"The data from the GSS system gives us a detailed understanding of the jet and how it is performing. "This is the big difference between a modern jet such as the Typhoon and a legacy jet such as the Tornado, that I first worked on when I joined.



"We are still the hands-on engineers who have to carry out the maintenance and fix the jets, but it is the system that points us towards the issue."



Hayley hits jackpot

Crusading Cpl nets £100k for Forces mental health support

Staff Reporter

MENTAL HEALTH campaigner Cpl Hayley Court has smashed her fundraising target after netting more than £100k for Forces personnel battling conditions like PTSD.

The Brize Norton-based Reservist set up Healing Military Minds in 2019 to raise funds for Combat Stress.

Since then cash from charity events has seen her double her own original fundraising target and earned her a string of welfare awards.

She was named Oxfordshire Reservist of the Year, won the Combat Stress fundraising title and made the shortlist for the prestigious Pride of Britain award.

The last HMM event, a glamorous ball

and auction, raised more than £20,000 in one night.

All the money raised has been used to cover the cost of life-changing specialist mental health treatment and support provided by Combat Stress.

Former RAF regular Hayley has served for 32 years and says she set up the charity after witnessing the devastating impact of post-traumatic stress disorder and other trauma-related mental health problems on those around her.

She said: "Having personally seen the devastation that post-traumatic stress disorder can inflict on those I served alongside, I've always felt so compelled to do something to help."

"When the Covid-19 pandemic hit and fundraising dramatically slowed, I decided that I had to act to help this



CAMPAIGNER: Cpl Hayley Court set up Healing Military Minds to support personnel battling mental health conditions. Inset below, Hayley hosts the recent HMM fundraising ball

incredible charity continue being there for those in need, and so Healing Military Minds was born.

"Four years later, I'm sitting here just overwhelmed and unbelievably proud that

we've actually raised so much, and have been able to make such a difference.

"But HMM is not done yet, and hopefully this will be the first of many amazing milestones."

RAF SPORTS LOTTERY



WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH OUR £10,000 WEEKLY JACKPOT?

More chances to win, now with up to 6 tickets and still only £1 per ticket! Exclusively open to all serving and former serving RAF personnel.



"The RAF Central Fund provides vital funding to the Sports Associations each year and the charity's grant programmes not only support me but also my fellow Winter Sports instructors and students alike. Through grants for new member engagement, the RAF Winter Sports Alpine Association has managed to substantially reduce the cost of lessons and equipment for beginners. None of my progression would have been possible without the assistance of the RAF Central Fund or the Association on so many levels."

Chf Tech Chris Edgar - RAF Winter Sports Alpine Association's Chief Snowboard Instructor

- 1ST PRIZE**
£10,000
- 2ND PRIZE**
£3,000
- 3RD PRIZE**
£2,000

Support your RAF charity by playing today at: www.rafcf.org.uk

Do you know the real value of your Armed Forces pension?

Join us. Find out.

Many of those serving have little idea of the real value of their Armed Forces pension, or how much they would need to pay into a private pension to gain a similar income. As an example, a fixed annual pension of £15,000 would cost around £300,000 at 2024 values. What's more, your service pension rises in line with inflation. And, of course, the longer you serve, the greater your pension value.

That's why we caution anyone thinking of leaving, to find out the facts before they decide. Staying for the optimum period and choosing the right point in time to leave can make great difference to your future income.

So join us and find out how to get the most from your pension.

Independent, not-for-profit

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

Visit: forcespensionsociety.org/join-now/

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

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

IT PAYS TO UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF YOUR PENSION

Forces Pension Society

68 South Lambeth Road, Vauxhall, London SW8 1RL.

T:020 7820 9988 E: memsec@forpen.co.uk www.forcespensionsociety.org



SCAN ME

OUR CURRICULUM TAILORED TO YOUR EXCELLENCE

Pioneers of Outdoor Education
5 Star Equestrian Arena
High Academic Challenge
Bespoke Scholarship Opportunities
Working School Farm

Register here...



01889 590217



enquiries@abbotsholme.co.uk



abbotsholme.co.uk



ABBOTSHOLME

Fresh thinking since 1889

OPEN MORNING: 9TH MARCH 2024



STONYHURST ST MARY'S HALL



Creating men & women *for others*



Scan the QR
code to book a
private visit



CEA families will pay no more than 10% of fees
Co-ed 3-18 | Boarding & Day | Jesuit, Catholic School



www.stonyhurst.ac.uk/forces

Reds letter day



New-look Arrows mark diamond anniversary with Canada tour

THE RED Arrows unveiled their new look as the team prepares to mark its 60th anniversary with a landmark five-week tour of Canada.

The UK display aces will be one of the star attractions at events across the country as the Royal Canadian Air Force celebrates its centenary.

Preparations for the air show season are underway at the team's home base of Waddington and the Reds are promising to deliver a show-stopping display which will feature the iconic 'Diamond Nine' formation, not seen since 2021.

Red 1, Sqn Ldr Jon Bond, said: "The whole team is focused on celebrating 60 display seasons in the best way possible."

"We will be performing our trademark Diamond Nine formation in our diamond year, for families to enjoy across the United

Kingdom and further afield. I hope our new team and exciting show will have the same impact on those watching in 2024 as it did on me as a young person – to be inspired through what teamwork can achieve and spur a lifelong passion for aviation."

"We've already been inundated with well-wishes and messages, letting us know how much people are excited by the prospect of the new display at airshows this season."

The Red Arrows were formed in 1964 and performed their first display at Little Rissington in 1965 – heralding the inaugural display season.

Since then, almost 5,000 shows

have been completed in 57 countries in front of hundreds of millions of people and at everything from country fairs and major airshows to international events and state occasions.

The anniversary artwork, applied on the side and tailfin of the team's aircraft, acknowledges the Diamond Season and includes outlines of two Red Arrows Hawk jets, trailing patriotic colours.

Sqn Ldr Bond added: "The logos are a subtle, yet stylish, nod towards the team's heritage but are also a reminder that our aim is very much to inspire for the future."



Museum backs jobs drive

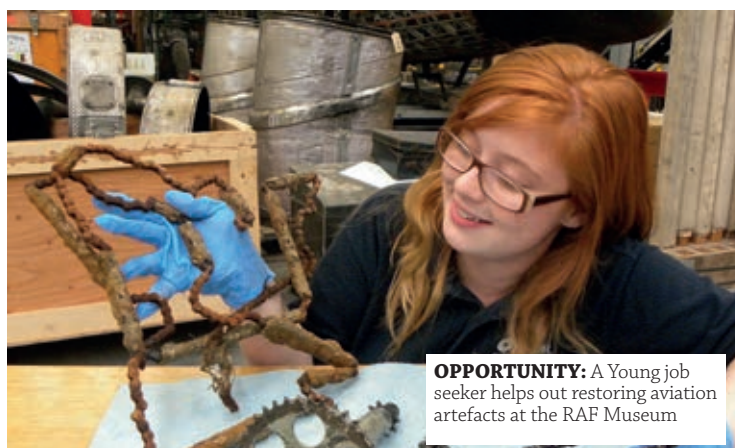
THE RAF Museum has joined a UK-wide drive to give young people a better chance of succeeding in the job market.

Air Force heritage chiefs signed up to the Movement to Work scheme to offer training and work experience for young job seekers.

The museum is providing training and work placements at its London and Midlands sites.

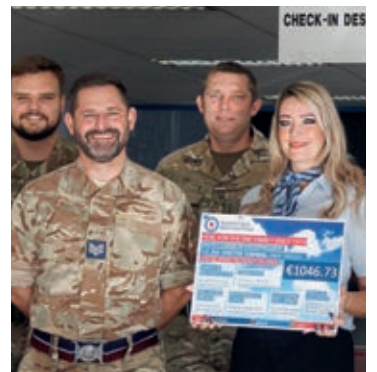
Museum apprentice manager Sophie Millward said: "We hope to break down barriers into museum working through work experience placements, traineeships, internships and apprenticeships."

"We are furthering our commitment to social mobility by providing exciting experiences and helping to level the playing field for young people."



OPPORTUNITY: A Young job seeker helps out restoring aviation artefacts at the RAF Museum

In Brief



FUNDRAISER: RAFFB team at the Akrotiri terminal

Cheque in at Akrotiri

FUNDRAISERS AT the airport terminal at Akrotiri netted more than £1,000 in donations from Forces personnel heading back to the UK.

The team set up collection points in the departure areas for coins and notes to support the RAF Benevolent Fund.

Organiser WO John Mills said: "It's an overwhelming response from passengers, who will often be detached from their own families, who choose to part with their change and foreign currency to support others. We'd like to say thanks for your generosity."



APPEAL: The UK will mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day in June

D-Day call

AIR FORCE chiefs are looking for D-Day veterans and their families to help mark the 80th anniversary of the Normandy landings, in June.

The date is expected to be marked with events and celebrations across the UK and the RAF has issued a call for anyone with links to the Allied operations to get in touch.

A spokesman said: "The RAF want to generate awareness of the Normandy Landings, which ultimately tipped the course of WWII in the Allies' favour."

"Veterans and their families will be at the core of our media campaign, and we are especially interested in speaking to individuals who have a link to someone who took part"

● Email: ACAS-Media-Projects@mod.gov.uk

Feature

Falcons chute



It all Stacks up for RAF's arty airborne ambassadors



TURNING A frontline military skill into a show-stopping performance art takes skill and intensive training.

Freefall jumping from 10,000ft, the RAF's chute-ing stars, The Falcons, are honing their routine over the US West Coast as they prepare to take the summer airshow season by storm.

Like the Red Arrows, the Falcons are airborne ambassadors, showcasing British military expertise worldwide, performing at airshows across the UK and Europe and dropping in at key national and military events.

The cool winter climate in California gives the team the ideal conditions to perfect the signature moves that have won them a world-wide reputation as one of the world's premier free-fall units.

Led by Commanding Officer Flt Lt Jen Littler, they are in the middle of their final Stateside training exercise, Falcon Stack, at the Skydive Perris Centre, before returning to the UK to put the finishing touches to their routine.

Flt Lt Littler said: "We conduct most

of our training overseas in order to guarantee good weather. We spend 10 weeks in California, jumping eight times a day focusing on freefall and canopy control.

"We then come back to the UK and practise the display with typical UK weather conditions of wind and low cloud.

"As CO, my role comes with a huge amount of responsibility but also a lot of pride. We are highly professional, dedicated individuals who strive to ensure the Falcons deliver dynamic parachute displays whilst representing the RAF at home and on the global stage."

The complex moves, such as the carousel, snake and head-spinning criss-

cross formations, have their origins in combat skills used by Britain's elite frontline units.

Each member of the team is also training to become a military freefall instructor and will leave the Falcons to join a training squadron supporting operational airborne forces.

Display parachutist Sgt Andy Lynch is in his second year with the team, after signing up as a PTI. He said: "Our unique selling point is that we get to land in front of the crowds and engage with them face to face after we have displayed.

"At this point we can discuss the skills we have gained through our service, talk about the unique experiences it has given us and explain the wide range of trades that the RAF has to offer.

"The feeling of anticipation before every jump is still there, which is a good thing as it keeps you switched on and doesn't allow complacency to slip in.

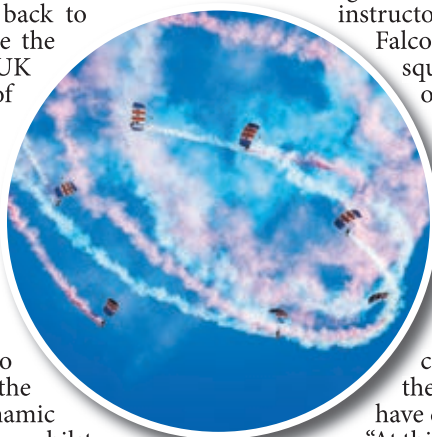
"We put maximum commitment and effort into every show. With up to 10 parachutists jumping this season the red smoke trails will look even more prominent in the skies above the crowds."

Putting the Falcons show on the road also requires survival equipment technicians, drivers, medics and photographers. They have also introduced a master of ceremonies to take ground engagement to a new level.

Hours before the team get the green light to jump from their usual ride – a Dornier 228 – the drop zone co-ordinator carries out weather and safety checks.

Survival Equipment Technician Cpl Dan Edwards said: "When I joined up with the Airborne Delivery Wing I was taken to see the Falcons conduct training as part of the welcome visit. I was hooked immediately and wanted to be a member.

"Planning a display starts months in



e to thrill



CO: Flt Lt
Jen Littler
PHOTO: AS1
LEAH JONES

advance. I keep my toes on the ground so the team can conduct the display safely."

In the air, the excitement of big display is what drives the Falcons. Sgt Lynch said: "During the display we rarely look at the crowd as we are focused on what we are doing."

"It's not until we land that you realise how big some of the crowds are and how receptive they are to us and our unique display. It definitely gets the heart racing as you can hear them cheering the closer we get to the ground."

"The displays abroad are always great as we get to see different parts of the world and

jump into some beautiful places. But nothing beats a home crowd."

● The Falcons will be launching their 2024 season on April 25 at RAF Brize Norton.



REAL FLARE:
Sgt Paddy
Guillois during
display in
Switzerland
last year



SURVIVAL
EQUIPMENT
TECH: Cpl Dan
Edwards



FORMER PTI:
Sgt Andy Lynch

IT²EC

9 - 11 April 2024
ExCeL, London

Register Now

Advancing defence training through technology

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

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

Sponsorship and exhibition enquiries:

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


In association with

NTSA

Headline Partner

BAE SYSTEMS

Lanyard Sponsor

 **4C STRATEGIES**

Organised by

 **CLARION**
EVENTS

Sqn Ldr Cecil Parsons, DFC

Obituary

Australian bomber pilot inserted special forces during covert missions

DFC 'Boz' Parsons dies at age of 105

SQUADRON LEADER Cecil 'Boz' Parsons, who has died aged 105, flew heavy bombers over Germany and then against the Japanese in the south-west Pacific region before becoming a farmer and a schoolmaster in his native Australia.

Known as Boz, he, was born into a farming family on September 12, 1918, in the western district of Victoria. After joining the militia, he transferred to the RAAF and trained as a pilot in Canada under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.

Parsons began flying operations in July 1941 as the second pilot of a Halifax bomber with 35 Squadron based in Yorkshire. Over Kiel at 20,000 feet the aircraft was coned by searchlights and the captain began to take evasive action, during which he lost control. The bomber entered a steep dive as the captain tried to jettison the bombs as he ordered the crew to bale out. Parsons and the navigator exchanged a 'no-way' glance as he grabbed the four throttles and closed them. To his surprise, the bomber levelled out at 11,000 feet. His presence of mind and quick reactions saved the situation, but not before the unfortunate tail gunner left and landed in Kiel Harbour in mid-winter.

Whitley Bomber

Parsons transferred to 58 Squadron to fly as the second pilot of a twin-engine Whitley bomber. In September 1941 he attacked Brest, where the German battle cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau were based. Shortly afterwards, after an accident returning from a public house in the dark, it was two months before Parsons returned to flying.

Of his many operations in the 'Flying Coffin', as the Whitley was known, none was to be more dangerous than the Berlin raid of November 7/8, 1941 when, in an operation which many felt should

never have been mounted, the attacking force sustained a 12.5 per cent loss rate, due partly to the atrocious weather, with icing in cloud and adverse winds, resulting in several Whitleys running out of fuel on the way home. Parsons' aircraft landed at an airfield on the north coast of Norfolk, virtually out of fuel. Winston Churchill's comment that: "There is no need to fight the weather and the enemy at the same time," led to a suspension of raids on Berlin until January 1943.

Captain

Parsons flew his first operation as the aircraft captain on December 7/8 when he attacked Dunkirk. After take-off, and at just 150 feet, he had to exert strong forward pressure on the control column to keep the nose of the heavily-laden bomber from rising, and resulting in a loss of airspeed, which could have caused a fatal crash. A glance out of the cockpit revealed that the flaps had dropped to an angle of 60 degrees from the 10 degrees set for take-off. There was no point in blaming the inexperienced second pilot who had selected the wrong lever, so Cecil instantly raised both the flaps and the undercarriage himself, and the Whitley staggered into the air.

After many raids against targets in the Ruhr, Parsons was rested and became a bombing instructor. When Bomber Command launched its first 'Thousand Bomber' raid on May 30/31, 1942, against Cologne, crews from the bomber training units were used to make up the numbers. Parsons flew a Whitley on this raid and the two that followed against Essen and Bremen. At the end of his tour in late 1943, he headed back to Australia having twice been mentioned-in-despatches during his time in Bomber Command.

On his return to Australia in 1943, he converted to the four-engine long-range B-24 Liberator bomber. He was



MISSIONS: Boz attacked German targets in Europe and Japanese interests in New Guinea and Java

attached to the USAAF 380th Bombardment Group operating from an airfield near Darwin in Australia's Northern Territories. As captain of an all-Australian crew, he attacked Japanese targets in New Guinea and in Java, some sorties over 12 hours long. For their long-range bombing efforts, the 380th received the coveted United States Presidential Citation. Having completed eight operations, Parsons and his crew received the award.

With American forces advancing in the Pacific, the Parsons crew transferred to 24 Squadron RAAF operating from the Northern Territories.

His first operation was to drop supplies to the army on Batanta Island in western New Guinea. This set the pattern for many of his operations. The most vital was Operation Perch to drop special forces of 'Z' Force behind enemy lines. The mission was highly successful and attracted widespread praise. In due course, he was awarded the DFC for his outstanding work inserting special forces on clandestine missions.

Parsons flew more than 20 operations before he joined a training and test flying unit. At the end of the war, back in command of a Liberator, he flew

the most satisfying and rewarding operations, those to bring home Australian prisoners of war.

After leaving the RAAF, he flew with a small company delivering mail and medical services in the Northern Territories before taking up farming on the Yorke Peninsula, South Australia.

In later life, he returned to his old school at Geelong as a senior master. He kept flying his own Piper Arrow until he was 94. Accompanied by his son, he returned to London in 2012 to attend the unveiling of the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park by HM Queen Elizabeth II.

A Coat of Arms and Surname History Scroll for **YOUR** family name.

**GREAT
GIFT!**

Discover the fascinating origins of your surname plus the earliest-known coat of arms for a bearer of the name, with this beautiful printed scroll.

Ever wondered about the story of your own name? **Hall of Names** has the history of more than a million surnames and you can see your own surname's history faithfully reproduced on high-quality A3 parchment paper. A full colour rendition of the name's earliest-known coat of arms also features at the top of each scroll to create a real talking point. If there is a motto, this is usually in Latin with a translation at the end of the scroll. With attention to detail, the surname history is extensively researched and includes fascinating facts and intriguing details about your chosen surname.

Look what you can find out!

- Name origins
- Spelling variations
- Early movements
- Lands owned
- First migrants to the New World
- Notable bearers of the name
- Passengers on the Titanic
- Convicts to Australia

Beautiful border graphics complement the coat of arms and relate to the name's country of origin. Each surname history scroll comes with an individual certificate number and a gold seal. In addition, a bibliography of sources is printed on the reverse. These beautiful scrolls are a real talking point, and the perfect gift or keepsake to celebrate a family name. Plus, the scrolls are available unframed or in your choice of two stunning quality frames, hand finished in our UK workshop.



RAF News SPECIAL OFFER!

Readers of **RAF News** are entitled to 10% off any Coat of Arms and Surname History Scroll.

Framed: Was 39.99, now £35.99
Unframed: Was £24.99, now £22.49

*Your discount is automatically applied

HALL^{OF} NAMES
Your history revealed

Order today by visiting
www.hallofnames.org.uk/raf

01984 632120



Tim Morris

Vauxhall Grandland (from about £29,000 otr)

Motoring

Grand designs



Vauxhall Grandland

Pros

- Well-styled
- Plenty of space inside
- Generous kit list as standard
- Cost-effective to run

Cons

- So-so build quality
- Noisy engine
- Mediocre auto box
- Rear visibility poor

Verdict

A mixed bag. It's a spacious family wagon that holds its own in the crossover fight. Prices, for the base model start at around £29k but can soon spiral with higher spec. Our test car weighed in at a hefty £46k. It's not the most memorable car in its class, but you won't lose it in a car park.

PHEV won't get left in car park

A VERY long time ago, in a different century, I was sent a Vauxhall to test. I took it to the coast, parked it in a multi-storey car park and promptly lost it.

It hadn't been stolen, it was just so dull that I couldn't remember what it was. After wandering up and down rows of parked cars for a while, pressing the key fob, I did what any other sane Englishman in the 90s would do. I went to the pub, had a couple, then called a cab home.

My point is that Vauxhall has historically had the ability to make cars that are so perfectly practical, there's nothing special about them, at all. The manufacturer had largely stamped out vehicles that were this dull by the end of the 2000s, but the old Grandland

X remained, dare I say it, a bit uninspiring. Fortunately, the latest model is a totally different beastie.

Exterior

Let's start with the profile. The Grandland's mission is to emulate the higher stance of a small 4x4 without losing its car-like qualities and it achieves this with the help of some clever lines.

The contrasting roof and side windows draw the eye to the top half of the car, neatly defined by a slow sloping contour that runs from the rear light, over the front arch and down to the lowest part of the front bumper. Angular detailing in the lower part of the doors break up what would otherwise be a very flat-sided affair. A range of smart

alloy wheels help to complete the picture.

At the front, it wears Vauxhall's familiar 'Vizor' face, with sporty vents in the bumper. The bonnet features more contoured styling that gives it character and makes it easy to place in tight spots. The overall effect is greater road presence.

Interior

The Grandland's cabin is a generally nice place to be. It's not exactly what you'd call plush, but the most visible surfaces are covered with soft-touch plastics, gloss-black inserts and chrome-effect trim. Some of the controls and the lower-level cubbyholes feel a bit 'economy' but the overall effect works. There's plenty of space, front and back.

Our test car was the GSe, the middle trim level, and it came with beautifully stitched Alcantara sports seats that provide good adjustment.

The dashboard is well laid out, with climate controls that are easy to operate. The 10-inch touchscreen infotainment system, with built-in sat-nav, has sharp graphics. I did find it had a tendency to ignore commands unless you gave it a good hard jab, but the physical shortcut buttons under the screen fixed most of that.

On The Road

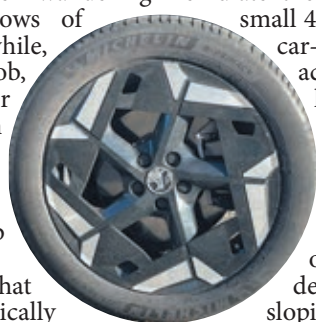
Our test car was the Grandland GSe 1.6 Plug-in Hybrid, Electric Vehicle (PHEV). It's 296 bhp, with 74 bhp of that from an electric motor powering the rear wheels. The stats are 0-62mph in 6.1 seconds and a top end of 146mph.

Claimed economy is 192mpg but I managed just 50, though I do have a heavy right foot.

The steering on the new Grandland has been recalibrated and comes with a new suspension set-up. This helps with the ride quality and reduces body roll, although the steering still lacks much sensation of connection to the road.

The 8-speed gearbox could be better. It's slow to respond when manoeuvring and when you're asking a lot of it on winding roads. Around town it's pleasant enough though, complemented by light steering and good front visibility.

Just get used to using your mirrors and trusting the sensors when you reverse. Rear visibility isn't the Grandland's strong suit.



Pensions set to rise 'significantly'

Armed forces pensions poised to increase for second year running

The Forces Pension Society welcomes the Government's decision to increase Armed Forces pensions in line with the Consumer Prices Index for another year.

It means this year's increase will be 6.7% and follows last year's uplift of 10.1%.

For those serving, there will be an even better deal than last year, with an increase of 7.7% in line with average weekly earnings (AWE), compared with 7% last year.

The uplifts will begin in April 2024. Commenting on these increases, Maj Gen Neil Marshall, CEO of the Forces Pension Society said: "With everyone serving now on AFPS15, which is one of the most beneficial of public services pensions, this news will have a positive impact on the well-being of our Armed Forces personnel.

It will increase the individual worth of everyone across the military community. "It's appropriate that those who continue serving should see their financial worth



● Neil Marshall, CEO, Forces Pension Society grow over time. The equivalent value of their pensions in the private sector would run into substantial six-figure sums.

"For our part, at the Forces Pension Society, it's gratifying to see our efforts in championing Armed Forces pensions being recognised so emphatically, with

our membership numbers rising to record levels."

● The Forces Pension Society is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that serves as a pension watchdog for the whole military community. For further information about how guidance from our Forces Pensions Consultants might support you, visit forcespensionsociety.org



SCAN ME



**CHAMPIONING
ARMED FORCES PENSIONS
SINCE 1946**



**ROYAL
AIR FORCE**

RAF News

The Forces Favourite Read

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

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

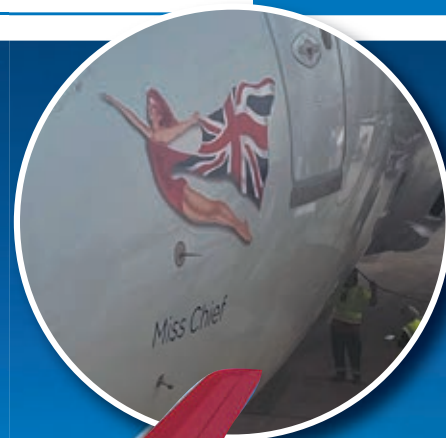
To discuss your advertising in **RAF News** please call or email:
T: +44 (0)7482 571535
E: edwin.rodriques@rafnews.co.uk

RAF News
The official voice of the Royal Air Force



Tim Morris

The 40-year-old Virgin



STUFF OF DREAMS: Boeing 787



INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL can be a minefield. Between war zones, political conflict and a volatile economy, there's always something to worry about.

Air traffic controllers are set to strike again during the peak summer months because, bombshell news, they want more money. That, my friends, is a lot of chaos before we even get off the ground.

Then there's the question that I get asked most often, 'which airline is best to fly with?' It's a difficult one to answer because it depends on your personal priorities. For example, is cost more important than comfort? How long will you be in the with? All of these elements are likely to alter your perception of what is a good, or bad, airline experience.

So, let's start with that aviation nemesis, the long-haul flight. Here you need to give things a bit more thought because 10 hours is a long time to suffer a bad flight.

There are many airlines vying for your business in this category, including some of the budget carriers, so which can you trust? To answer that we'll be covering objective reviews of many airlines as we bumble around the planet. This week we start with the red giant, Virgin Atlantic.

Owner Sir Richard Branson has always been savvy when it

comes to brand creation and Virgin Atlantic is instantly recognisable. The vivid uniforms and the ostentatiously painted jets are just the start. The whole image is fun and cheeky, heavily publicised by Branson's well-oiled media machine.

It wasn't always so. Back in 1984 Virgin was a fledgling airline, an underdog in the aviation fight. It typically operated older aircraft on limited routes, and yet it still attracted the coolest of customers, from musicians to film stars.

Some 40 years on and Virgin Atlantic is one of the world's top carriers, priding itself on luxury and attention to detail. You can choose from Economy, Business and Upper-Class, with the latter being Virgin's flagship product.

With the cost of two passengers flying return to Miami weighing in at around £11,000 however, we're guessing that you'll be more interested in what you get for your money in Economy.

Route

The airline flies to 35 locations, across five continents, with routes recently added to the Maldives and Turks & Caicos.



We flew two return routes from London Heathrow to Florida, USA. The first was from LHR to Orlando, the second, LHR to Miami International. Flight times were around 10 hours and eight hours, respectively.

Equipment

On both flights we were fortunate enough to find ourselves on Virgin's flagship aircraft, the Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner. Virgin currently operates 17 of these, worldwide, and each one has a different name, to keep things fun.

G-VNYL is called Penny Lane, G-VSPY is Miss Moneypenny, G-VWHO is Mystery Girl, and so on. Our run out to Orlando was aboard Miss Chief, G-VOOH, and it was a comfortable experience. Seat sizes in Economy are rated as 'up to 17 inches' wide, with seat recline of 5 inches. 'Premium' will give you 8 inches.

Legroom varies, depending on price, and that's where you're going to get caught for the upgrades. As standard, you're looking at around 33 inches, which is pretty generous.

Mood lighting was a funky purple and engine noise was well-suppressed for such a large aircraft. Electronic window blinds,

an intuitive infotainment system, a large choice of media and a brilliant 'Tailcam' that allows you to see where you're going add to the experience. Watching the runway approach as you come in to land is fantastic.

There's plenty of room to move around the cabin thanks to the aircraft's sheer size. The Dreamliner is a stonking 206 feet long, with an equally impressive wingspan of 197 feet. It can cover around 7,635 nautical miles with all tanks full and cruises at 567 mph. A hop across the pond to the USA is therefore an easy run for this big beast.

Service

Attention to detail is what makes Virgin stand out. The vivid uniforms, the warm smiles and the personal touch. From the moment you arrive at the desk in the airport, you know that you're going to be looked after. Staff make you feel welcome instantly and seem genuinely happy to be there.

Boarding the aircraft on the run to Orlando, families were greeted by smiling crew who were wearing Mickey Mouse ears. The look on children's faces was sheer wonder.

The crew were incredibly helpful. On the return flight from Miami, there were spare seats in the centre aisle. The cabin crew kindly offered to

allow us to lie down and get some sleep if we wanted to. I could not fault the service.

Food & Drink

The trolley service was fast and efficient, with a good choice of beverages. The food was tasty and well presented. Afternoon tea was a real highlight, breaking up the last part of the flight with a tasty snack. This came in a box that explained the history of the afternoon tea tradition. Wonderfully British and a brilliant detail.

Down Sides

It's very hard to fault the Virgin experience, especially on the 787, and I would say that the biggest danger is finding yourself on a smaller aircraft for the long-haul.

The return flight from Orlando was such a case. There I faced an 8-hour run with my knees pressed into the back of the seat in front and an entertainment that had been borrowed from 1995. The crew were surprisingly grumpy too.

Overall

If you're planning to spend 10 hours, or more, in the air then you want to choose an airline you can trust. None is fault free, especially when it comes to Economy class, but Virgin is a taste of that gold standard service, without the £10k Upper-Class price tag.



FARNBOROUGH
INTERNATIONAL

EXHIBITION &
CONFERENCE
CENTRE

27 MARCH 2024

www.dprte.co.uk

1800+
attendees

170+
exhibition
stands

60+
speakers



CONFIRMED KEYNOTE SPEAKERS INCLUDE



JAMES CARTLEDGE MP
Minister of State, Minister
for Defence Procurement



ANDY START
Chief Executive,
DE&S



VICTORIA COPE
Commercial Director,
Enterprise,
Defence Digital



ANITA FRIEND
Head of DASA



ALLEN ANTROBUS
Chair of the Security
and Defence Committee,
UK Space



SIMON DAKIN
Head of Integrated
Battlespace Operating
Centre, DE&S



EWAN SIME
Procurement &
Supply Chain Director,
Land



JONATHAN MORLEY
Director, Material
Availability Services,
Babcock International

DP RTE 2024 WILL FOCUS ON THE MAIN EVENT THEMES BELOW

Science &
Innovation

Digital &
Technology

Infrastructure
& Estates

Market
Engagement

Procurement
Act

Supply
Chain

Register today for your complimentary MOD/Public Sector Ticket www.dprte.co.uk

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



RUGBY UNION

A bad day at office as IS draws nearer



SEAT OF LEARNING: Cambridge proved a real university challenge for the RAF

PHOTOS: SBS

Cambridge University	39
RAF	20

THE GAUNTLET has been thrown down to the Service's men's rugby union stars following a tough 20-39 defeat to Cambridge University at Grange Road.

Head coach FS Justin Coleman did not hold back after the poor display saw the RAF lose out across the pitch, with a try in each half from AS1 Kieran Prescott,

supported well by the boot of Cpl Mark Williams, being among the few highlights.

"It was pretty much a bad day at the office, which we need to absorb and take on board," said Coleman. "This game was a reality check for some players who were eyeing the Inter-Services squad on where they are and what they must work on and the level they need to reach to make that happen.

"We struggled up front – fitness wise we got blown away, we had

some strong backs, but we didn't get front-foot ball to play off. Line-out wise, we didn't really function, so it cost us across the park."

The team next face Leicester Tigers at Westleigh Park on February 21, after *RAF News* goes to press.

Coleman said: "The lads can go and work on the stuff we have given them, and we can see where they are when they return.

"Ownership needs to be taken by the players, there is frustration from the guys playing a good

level at their clubs each week, and some of the new guys have been found wanting, as the gap from what they know to this level is vast. They need to up their game.

"In terms of experience, fitness and game management, this is a tough place to be.

"We shouldn't have buckled at this stage, but in a way it's good it's happened so early because we have time to fix it.

"We spent three hours analysing the game and we have made our points clear after that.

"There is a lot of heartache, sacrifice and graft needed to win the IS and we have spoken about it, and we, the coaching staff and some of the players, know what's coming – tougher challenges are coming."

"Players will be selected, players won't. We will do this in the best way we can. Players need to do everything they can to make sure they are not the guy who is told, 'Thanks, but no thanks.'"

● Go to [@rafrugbyunion](#) on Instagram to follow the team.

FOOTBALL



ON GOOD FORM: RAF SRT have won their last five games

So far, so good for Kuchta's men

THE SERVICE'S men's footballers are exactly where manager WO Andy Kuchta wants the team as the SRT prepare for their training week in Spain.

With just one defeat in 14 matches – and with 24 goals scored in the last seven games – the gaffer is feeling positive.

Kuchta, whose side are gunning for a hat-trick of IS wins, said: "It's been a good build up. We are strong, we have had a good season so far.

"We have played 7 games so far this season, won 4, drawn 2, lost 1 and scored 24 goals.

"We are going well, averaging about 4 goals a game. The lads are bright, with plenty of goals in them. Defensively, we are very sound and consistent. We are confident, not cocky, but we are as well prepared as we can be. Everyone is up for this and taking nothing for granted."

Kuchta was speaking after his side's 2-1 win over Oxford City, making it four wins in a row having already beaten Cirencester Town, Yaxley and Calne Town, who they thumped 6-1.

The team will again be led by Sgt Mike Campbell who with strike partner AS1 Joe Spalding, are peaking at just the right time. Having led the team to IS victory last year, Campbell is once again being asked to lead from the front – something he has done for his Service and UKAF for several years.

Kuchta said: "Mike is a born leader, he is big game player and he is ready to lead the charge again."

The RAF will play three opponents while away on their Spanish camp, including an International Academy U21s side.

Kuchta said: "The weather will be warm, not boiling, but we will have to manage our training loads, our recovery rates. We have everybody at good fitness levels – those of a League Two performance standard, so it is all where we want to be. We have no injury worries, so I hope that lasts."

● Follow the RAF SRT on Instagram [@raf.srt](#).

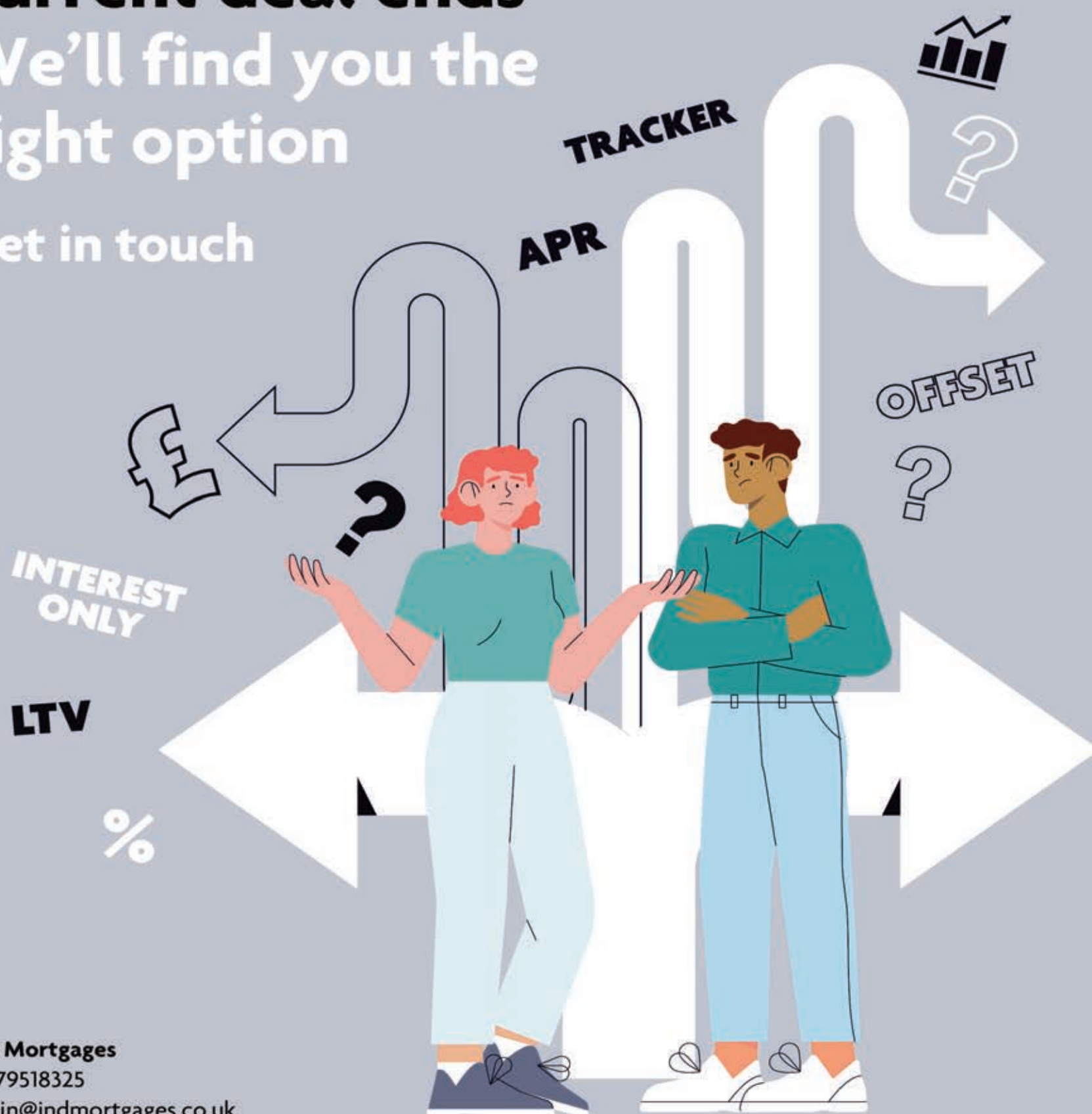
Would you like to see your sport featured in RAF News? Send a short report (max 300 words) and a couple of photographs (attached jpegs) to: Sports@rafnews.co.uk

Worried your mortgage payments will rise when your current deal ends

We'll find you the right option



Get in touch



JND Mortgages
07879518325
edwin@jndmortgages.co.uk

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

HOCKEY

The candy man can

Life's sweet for hockey ace Sanford

Daniel Abrahams

SWEET-TOOTHED Service hockey star AS1 Liam Sanford found time to talk to *RAF News* as he prepares to play at the Paris Olympics this July.

And he and his GB teammates will be going for gold fuelled by the sugary treats the Serviceman has handed out at internationals since his first cap in 2017.

He told *RAF News*: "Being selected for the Games is an amazing feeling, probably the pinnacle of my career. It's difficult to summarise going to an Olympics. Growing up, I watched them and was always so impressed by it."

This isn't Sanford's first Olympics, he played in Tokyo in 2020, with the team going out to India in the quarter-finals.

He said: "In Tokyo I was focused on the task at hand, competing and playing to the highest level I could, so I've found it wasn't until afterwards that I've appreciated the achievement."

"Also, there were Covid restrictions in place, so I still haven't had the 'full Olympic experience'. Hopefully, this summer I will."

The GB defender was a vital part in achieving 2024 Olympic qualification in Oman recently (see *RAF News* edition 1577) and feels the team are in a good place as they prepare for the Games.

"Our team is in an exciting phase of its development. There is belief and excitement that we can perform at a high level," he said. "Of course, it would be the

dream to win gold, but we must focus on the steps to get there, and we still have work to do."

Having tasted the bitterness of big tournament defeat, the Serviceman, 27, added: "I think as a squad we feel like we are performing at a level that now deserves the reward after World Cup, Commonwealth and Olympic knockouts."

"We are playing the level of hockey that should translate into rewards at these tournaments. It's

a great driver for doing better, but it's important that we focus on every game and keeping the high standards rather than having a focus on the outcome."

Sanford, appears in his RAF colours as often as his international challenges permit, notably winning the Inter-Services with the light blues in 2022.

RAF hockey runs in his family. He said: "I grew up in a military household, with my dad [Mark, WO Ret'd] being in the RAF and playing hockey. It

has become part of my identity. I'm really privileged to have the support of the RAF, who allow me to compete at the highest level."

Sanford is also acutely aware of the impact international selections have on RAF hockey. He said: "I know people have messaged the RAF Hockey Instagram account and myself privately about joining up and wondering how sport works in the military."

"I think it's important to showcase the support and opportunities the RAF offer."

I hope that I represent the service well and demonstrate the achievements possible whilst serving."

Sanford, who will begin Olympic training camps with GB at Bisham Abbey in June, won his first cap in 2017, when he began his ritual of taking a big bag of treats in for the team before warm-up. He will be hoping for the even sweeter taste of success in the City of Light this summer."

● Follow RAF Hockey on Instagram @rafhockey and GB Hockey @gbhockey.



SANFORD:
Helped GB
qualify for
Olympics

FOOTBALL

One down, one to go in U23 quest for IS crown

RAF U23s	2
Army U23s	0

"DELIGHTED WITH the overall performance from all the lads," said Sgt Danny Bartley speaking to *RAF News* after his team's 2-0 opening IS win over the Army.

He added: "We had a few injuries and some availability issues, but the lads were united and showed great togetherness."

"I thought overall we deserved

the victory and could've scored more. But we appreciate it's only half time and we have to regroup and prepare for the Navy now."

The U23s head coach had called for a result that matched his team's efforts over the last few years and it came at Tithe Farm Sports and Social Club Stadium, Rayners Lane after 15 minutes.

A cagey opening was broken when a long throw



CUP WINNER:
Team captain AS1
Adam Lamb with
Wg Cdr Neil Hope

out from the RAF defence saw AS1 Jake Staunton poleaxed by the Army keeper. Having won the penalty, it was AS1 Dean Higham who took the kick, and duly slotted home.

Staunton then had a gilt-edged chance to make it two, but could only send his free header just wide, with the keeper beaten as the half drew to a close.

After the break the visitors hit the bar, then the

post. Having failed to convert when on top, the RAF calmed the Army's fire with a superb second goal at the midway point of the half.

Great play on the Army left finally set AS1 Logan Buick through and, despite the attentions of an Army defender, he slotted home with aplomb and sealed the vital win.

● Follow RAF U23s football on Instagram @raffootballassociation.

Sport

World Cup & Games places beckon

SKELETON SPEED queen Flt Lt Nicole Burger has flame-grilled her debut in the sport. With a handful of races left, she remains in contention for next season's blue riband event.

Having just shaved 2.2 seconds off her Inter-Service race time during her last runs at Lillehammer, where she finished 15th, she is now ranked 55th – good enough to secure automatic 2024 World Cup selection.

The Servicewoman slides for South Africa and has enjoyed remarkable success in this season's European races and World Cup qualifiers.

She could also bag a Winter Olympics slot for her nation in Milan Cortina next year.

She said: "I am loving the way things are going and I want to keep achieving more and gaining points."

"Time off next year will be vital for me to achieve what now could be possible. The points-based system means sliders I am beating have an extra three to four races, so they can gain points – which is annoying as on sliding ability I am outdoing them in every race, so that's the big challenge for next year."

On the prospect of an Olympic slot, Burger (right) said: "It began as just a passing comment, but now RAF skeleton OIC Rhys Thornbury has started concocting a plan to



guide my races towards that possibility.

"I was basically doing this to do the sport, and now the Winter Olympics is becoming a reality."

Burger shocked her IBSF coach Dorin Velicu when she tackled the Winterberg track for the first time. Her opening run, which would ordinarily be started at the halfway point of a new track, was taken from the top.

Burger said: "Dorin asked me if I knew the course having

ALPINE

Old and new gunning



Daniel Abrahams

BEFORE THE snowy slopes and parks of Austria and the RAF Championships were even a vague memory, the Service's Alpine stars moved to Meribel in France to prepare for the season-defining Inter-Services competition.

Speaking following a bumper fortnight in Saalbach-Hinterglemm, women's ski captain Fg Off Kirsty Guest said: "The Champs was an excellent experience with a strong field of men and women. Due to the high-level of competition, it was really hard to select an IS squad. The difficulty is because we have such good skiers to choose between, which has resulted in us choosing a really strong team. This is quite exciting for us going into the IS champs this year."

Notable results from the women's championships were: Fg Off Guest winning the individual

IS Men's Ski Team
Cpl Barnaby Rudge (Captain)
AS1(T) Ricky Santamaria
Fg Off Dan Barton
Sqn Ldr Howard Fielder
Flt Lt Drew Macey
Sgt Gary Smith
Flt Lt Si Cook
Fg Off Oli Weeks
Plt Off Jed McNab

Giant Slalom (GS) and Slalom (SL) and overall women's title.

Women's ski stalwart, former captain and IS winner Sqn Ldr Claire Nixon came second in the GS and Cpl Mel Gaffey second in the SL.

Looking to improve on runner-up team finishes for both the men and women team in the IS, both took part in training runs with their Army and Royal Navy counterparts.

Fg Off Dan Barton won the overall men's title, while Fg Off Dan Barton individual men's GS.

IS Women's Ski Team
Fg Off Kirsty Guest (Capt)
Sqn Ldr Claire Nixon
Cpl Melissa Gadget
AS1 Anna Tod
AS1 Georgina Davis
Fg Off Ellie Brewer
Fg Off Amelia Grice

Fg Off Oli Weeks and long-term team captain Cpl Barnaby Rudge came second in both races.

Speaking about the Champs and upcoming Inters, Cpl Rudge said: "The Champs went well for us as a team, and it has set us up really nicely for the IS."

"The team very much selected itself this year, although it was incredibly close and there were a lot of guys just on the outskirts."

"Obviously, our hope and aim is to win the Inters. If we all perform as I know we can, then I'm fully confident we can do it."

Board here for Meribel

WITH JUST a three-medal return from last year's Inters, the snowboard fraternity were looking for a productive Championships to act as a springboard to greater things in France.

Snowboard women's captain Sgt Hannah Pringle said: "The Champs were great. We fielded the biggest female development squad in a long time."

"We managed to field 16 riders in the border cross for the first time ever. It's normally only eight, so it was huge step up."

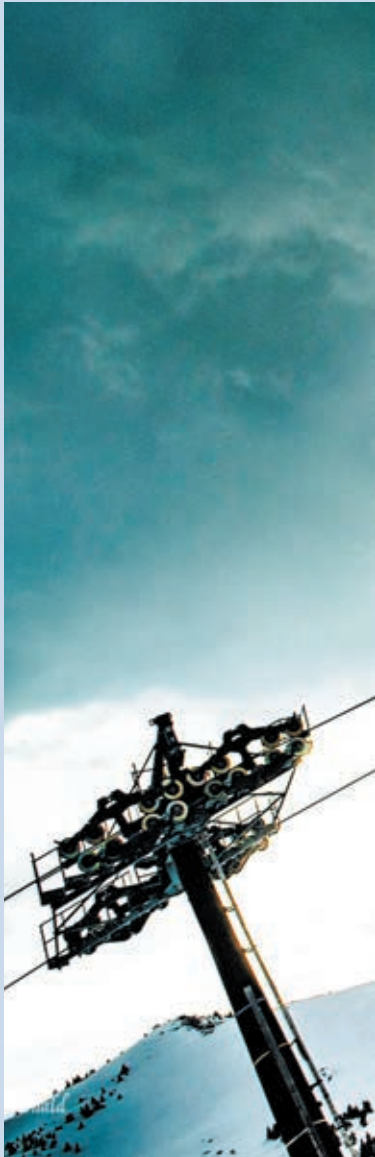
"We had three girls from the Australian Defence Force competing too, which helped push us that bit harder."

"We also came away from a great two weeks with no injuries, so I am touching wood things stay like that."

To highlight the growing numbers in the sport there is a new look to the IS squad, which had Pringle purring: "The women's IS snowboarding team this year is a mix of regular and new riders. Myself, Nat (Cpl Fields) and Bryany (Cpl Lowe) have been on the team together since 2018, the rest are new."

She added: "One to watch this year is Cpl Hayley Phillips. She is in the Part Time Reserve Force and was the UK national boat wakeboarding champion in 2013."

Gunning for greater glory in 2024 and bolstered by a bumper championship, men's boarder captain Chf Tech Martin Boon said: "The RAF Champs went very well. The weather was on our side, everyone was in great spirits. He had some excellent training opportunities put on by the winter sports committee."



"The squad learnt how to react to competition pressures, how to help manage themselves and how to love their nerves. We had a couple of injuries and broken bones, but everyone else is well and happy."

"I'm confident going into Meribel, though we could have done without members dropping through injury, but then that's the side effect of progression and pushing the limits."

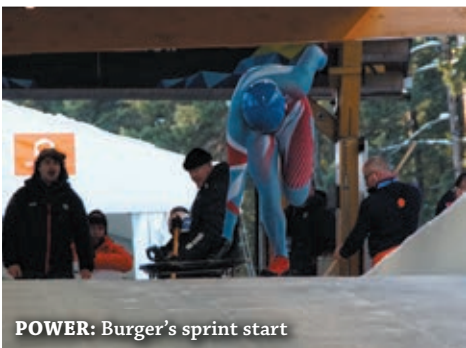
completed the run, I said ‘no’ – there were a few raised his eyebrows for sure.”

As a small nation slider, Burger receives an ISBF coach as part of the federation’s support. She also receives video analysis and feedback from the UK courtesy of Thornbury.

Next up for the RAF speedster is Innsbruck, before the two-week Inter-Services championships in St Moritz, and then two World Cup qualifiers at the North American track of Lake Placid.

For Burger the IS championships not only come at the right time, but the track will provide the exact riding opportunity she needs.

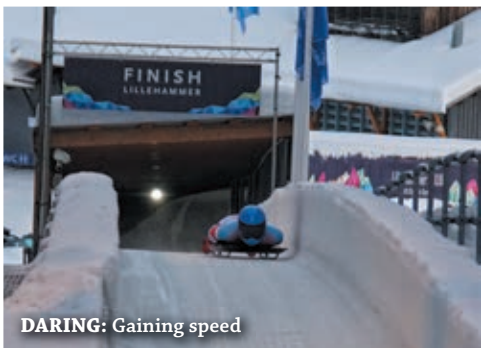
She said: “It’s perfect as it sits between



POWER: Burger’s sprint start



ATHLETICISM: Boarding



DARING: Gaining speed

my last race and then my next and also the track is long and high speed, which is similar to Lake Placid.

“St Moritz has 19 corners and Lake Placid has 20 and, of course, I will be with the Royal Air Force coaches who I can

work with on finessing all aspects of my racing, plus it will be great to get amongst the RAF team.”

for IS glory on slopes



Planning to make their mark

THE NEWEST of the disciplines to take to the slopes in both Austria and France, having won the IS for the first-time last year, Telemark was creating another piece of history at the Championships as the association would be selecting the largest women’s team since its conception.

After several years of competing, the men’s team were also beginning a rebuilding programme.

Women’s captain Sqn Ldr Clare Thomas said: “What made the RAF Champs so special for me was how many new faces we had telemarking, and the level of interest just keeps going up.

“More people than ever joined our ‘tele tasters’ sessions and some even stayed with it for their remaining days as they caught the bug.

“Our grassroots programme is

also starting to really bear fruit; AS1 Jemima Cheetham being one to watch from it.”

Thomas added: “It was a proud moment being able to select the team ready to head out as the returning Inter-Services champions.

“Our real excitement though, is in how much stronger the women’s team has become, with Wg Cdr Lex Smyth bringing across her alpine racing experience, it’s really encouraged us all to up our game and challenge each other.

“We head to Meribel with great optimism.”

Men’s captain Cpl Steve Fryer said: “Training in Landgraaf, Holland, earlier in the season put us in touch with Nederland Telemark, who have some great instructors who supported us throughout the year and came to

IS Women’s Boarding
Sgt Hannah Pringle (Capt)
Cpl Natalie Fields (Dep Capt)
Flt Lt Emily-Rose Nixon
Cpl Bryany Lowe
Cpl Hayley Phillips
Cpl Charlotte Wolverson

“The team we have chosen has the speed and decent spread in slopestyle to make sure the other teams aren’t given an easy ride.”

IS Men’s Boarding
Chf Tech Martin Boon (Capt)
Sqn Ldr Patrick Morris
Flt Lt Chris Harrington
Cpl Sean Davey
Cpl Adam Wolley
Fg Off Laury Parayre
Cpl Sam Brown
Cpl Darrell Manning
AS1(T) James Richardson
AS1(T) Max-Romeo Bridgey

IS Men’s Telemark
Cpl Steve Fryer (Capt)
Sgt Cam Howie
Wg Cdr Rob Print
Flt Lt Rafe Higson
AS1 Mitchell Taylor

IS Women’s Telemark
Sqn Ldr Clare Thomas (Capt)
Wg Cdr Lex Smyth
Flt Lt Sarah Shave
Flt Emma Tadman

week one of the champs with us.”

He added: “The fact that four of our seasoned racers are unavailable this season and we’re still managing to deliver a team is incredible.

“To have that depth was unthinkable previously and shows the progress and development of the team over the past 10 years.”

5 pages of the best of RAF Sports action



FLAG BEARERS:
Sqn Ldr Kathy Morten (left) and AS1 Alex Naughalty with the RAF ensign after winning the England Indoor Hockey Super Six tournament last year. Far left, keeper Morten playing for the Service and, below, Naughalty in action for the pair's club, Buckingham, with who they will represent England in Turkey this month

Daniel Abrahams

RAF HOCKEY fans will be seeing double at this year's European Indoor Hockey Championships in Istanbul after the selection of Sqn Ldr Kathy Morten.

Morten, the RAF and UKAF women's team goalie, will be joining Service team indoor and outdoor captain AS1 Alex Naughalty at the tournament as part of their club team Buckingham, as they represent England in the event.

Morten said: "I've been playing RAF Hockey since I was 19 and this run of success for the Service has been a long time coming.

"Playing at events like the indoors in Turkey can only help bring a greater level of knowledge and the lessons learned can only help in the future.

"Alex has been a breath of fresh air; we can only be inspired by her. We had ways of playing before she arrived, and these have changed. We are adapting to reach greater heights and we want to keep raising our game.

"Everything learned at Buckingham is brought back to the RAF, so it is with an event like Turkey."

Pair fly the flag for RAF Hockey

They represent England with club in Euro indoors



Morten, who was part of the RAF Sports Award team of the year in 2023, added: "A lot of countries in Europe have a better indoor hockey set-up, in England it's a bit niche, so adapting to formations teams play in and getting to grips with their tactics will be a real challenge.

"The Irish team who are also present are made up of a lot of their international players, many whom I have watched over the years, so it will be great to face them.

"Buckingham are a small club, so this is taking a lot of commitment from all of us and we are determined to make the most of it.

"I love indoor hockey, it's my bread and butter. I am mindful when I am on court, it is intense, there is no thinking about anything

else, you are there locked in and it is really physical.

"Our team has been working well with a strength and conditioning coach. I have played national league hockey for 15 years and never been at this level of preparedness.

"The constant improvements a Service and club level mean that on my return from Turkey I will have to fight for my place in the RAF set-up, nothing is a given and that's how we all like it."

● Follow RAF hockey on Instagram @RAFHockey.

ISSN 0035-8614



08 >

Announcements

- p6-7
Puzzles
- p8

R'n'R



**Win DVD
and CD of
punk legends
live ● p3**

**Gorgeous gowns –
Westwood at the
Palace ● p4-5**



Royal Air Force
Benevolent Fund

BUILDING STRONGER FAMILIES

- It's our free **online platform** exclusively for RAF personnel and their partners.
- Covering a range of **self-directed topics** tailored to life in the RAF.
- The course can be **accessed anonymously**, either as a couple or separately.
- It aims to equip you with the **communication skills and strategies** to get the best out of your relationships.

We also provide relationship counselling and mediation support.

Find out more and register:
rafbf.org/families



The RAF Benevolent Fund is a registered charity in England and Wales (1081009) and Scotland (SC038109).



DVD Review
The Damned: Final Damnation
Fabulous Films Ltd/Fremantle Media Enterprises



Return to 70s punk heydays




ANARCHIC: The Damned, featuring shorts-sporting Captain Sensible

WIN THE DVD

WE HAVE copies of this two-disc set (rrp £24.99) which includes the DVD and a bonus live CD, up for grabs. For your chance to own one, tell us:

What is the name of The Damned's lead singer?

Email your answer, marked Damned 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 March 8.



FINAL DAMNATION is a live tour-de-force gig by legendary punk band The Damned, featuring their best and thraasiest songs of the 70s, including *Smash it Up*. Filmed at London's Town and Country Club on June 13, 1988, the performance has now been re-released as a must-have DVD, plus a bonus CD of the live recording.

Whilst billed as a reunion, it was, at the time, actually a farewell tour. In 1987, the end was nigh for The Damned; their record label had dropped them, and lead singer Dave Vanian, Roman Jugg (guitarist), and the late Bryn Merrick (bassist) were heading in another direction musically. However, drummer Rat Scabies convinced them to perform one last tour, inviting back original founding members Brian James (guitarist) and Captain Sensible (bassist/guitarist).

Every minute of this sell-out, anarchic, sweat-soaked gig is captured here; pre-concert footage of spiky-haired punks rallying outside the venue makes you feel like you might actually be in 1976. DVD extras include candid comments by band members Brian (as well as an extra full interview with him), Captain, Rat, Damned biographer Carol Clerk and ex-manager Roger Armstrong.

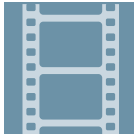
The first half of the set sees the original line-up of Dave, looking every bit like an Addams Family version of Elvis, Rat, Brian and Captain, saunter on stage to rapturous applause then pelted with beer cups. Dave's distinct baritone delivery of *See Her Tonight* kicks off mosh-pit pogoing action aplenty. With Brian's aggressive-guitar riffs, Rat's frenetic machine-gun drumming (once again, he sets his kit alight) and Captain's bass (and customary tomfoolery), the band blitz through most of the first album *Damned, Damned, Damned*, featuring earliest hit *New*

Rose and Neat, Neat, Neat.

Brian departs for the second half. Captain switches to lead guitar, and they are joined by the then-current members of Roman on keyboards and Bryn on bass, continuing through the third album, *Machine Gun Etiquette*, with hits such as *Love Song* and *Smash It Up*; there is certainly no let-up in the proceedings. Brian rejoins for the encore of *Looking at You* by MC5 and *The Last Time* by The Rolling Stones.

Fortunately, this farewell gig became more of a hiatus; in 1990, Dave and Rat were back with a new line-up, lasting until 1995. Then, in 1996, Dave reunited with Captain Sensible to reform another incarnation of The Damned before Rat rejoined in November 2023. The band has announced a 12-date UK tour for December 2024, opening in Newcastle and finishing at London's Roundhouse.

Review by Mark Ottowell
5 roundels out of 5



Film Review
Liberation (15)
In cinemas now

German refugees nobody wanted



CONFICTED: Head and host Jacob (Pilou Asbæk) with son Søren (Lasse Peter Larsen)

APRIL 1945 – the war is almost over but Nazi rule perseveres in Denmark, where more than 200,000 German refugees have arrived looking for shelter. Residential colleges are instructed to house these large groups of civilians, including many children, wrongly informed that the occupying forces will provide food and medicine, they are abandoned sick and hungry.

Ryslinge Folk High School is the setting of this story, where over 500 Germans have arrived. Head of the school Jacob (Pilou Asbæk) is commanded to make room for them by the *Wehrmacht*, whilst the board of directors insist that he must not share any resources. This becomes extremely challenging when the elderly and very young

begin to die, diphtheria spreading through the numbers, made worse by the cramped living conditions of the gymnasium where they are being housed.

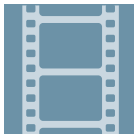
Liberation is about the extreme difficulties of a place in transition, the moral complexity of trying to help those in need without jeopardising the safety of others. Jacob, along with his wife Lis (Katrine Greis-Rosenthal), cannot sit idly by while people are dying but members of the resistance, who are readying themselves to revolt, do not take kindly to sympathisers. Any help offered to these refugees is seen as aiding the German war machine.

The film is largely told from the point of view of Jacob's boy Søren (an impressive Lasse Peter

Larsen). Like many kids his age, he resents the influx of the starved and destitute now in his home. There is a particular viciousness to the children, as they turn on Søren for his father's perceived betrayal. This retribution is an echo of the ideas playing out among the resistance. Birk (a brilliantly conflicted Morten Hee Andersen) is a student at Ryslinge – vengeful after his father is killed by Nazis he becomes an impassioned member of the resistance, and seeing Jacob as a traitor, will try to convince young Søren to turn against him.

Liberation is an interesting and nuanced story well told, with a brooding tension, upheld by great performances.

Review by Sam Cooney
4 out of 5 roundels



Film Review
All of Us Strangers (15)
In cinemas now

The ghosts of his past

TAKING PLACE in a newly-built and mostly abandoned London tower block, Adam begins a casual relationship with a younger man in the building that will have him trying to reconcile his sexual identity and come to terms with the past.

Having lost both of his parents in a car crash at 12 years old, Adam (Andrew Scott) is still navigating the trauma. Writing a screenplay that delves into his childhood, this act of reflection becomes a visceral experience, a kind of time-travel, as he visits his old family home in Croydon and finds there the living memory of his parents.

Transported to the 80s, the kitchen, his bedroom, as well as his mother and father, are just as they were. Jamie Bell and Claire Foy play the parents revived, arrested in time and so now in fact younger than their son. Confused as to where he has been all this time, Adam must catch them up and confront his old hang-ups, though their family dynamic remains somewhat intact.

Adam is, not surprisingly, confused by the reality-blurring



PARTNERS: Adam (Andrew Scott) and Harry (Paul Mescal) in *All of Us Strangers*

tangibility of this experience – his neighbour and new boyfriend Harry (Paul Mescal) will try to offer support, but the path will take some haunting turns.

Andrew Haigh's *All of Us Strangers* is a story of grief and love, examined in isolation – a feeling magnified by the setting of an empty high-rise in a densely populated city, where very few people are seen, and half of whom are ghosts.

There is a lot built on this simple concept, and the lead actors' performances do very well to draw out the complexity of emotion despite the hardly subtle writing.

Review by Sam Cooney
3 out of 5 roundels



Theatre
Drop the Dead Donkey
UK tour

**News
update**

Original cast of *Drop The Dead Donkey* tour

THEY'RE BACK – 30 years since the launch of the smash-hit TV series, the original cast of *Drop The Dead Donkey* have reunited to stage the show live for the first time.

Susannah Doyle, Robert Duncan, Ingrid Lacey, Neil Pearson, Jeff Rawle, Stephen Tompkinson and Victoria Wicks are together again as the Globelink News team – now on a national tour.

Drop The Dead Donkey: The Reawakening! is written by the same team – Andy Hamilton and Guy Jenkin (*Outnumbered*) – that created the much-loved sitcom and exposes the underside of the broadcasting industry in all its riotous glory.

The BAFTA and Emmy award-winning television comedy is reimagined in this brand new topical commentary on the cutthroat world of 24-hour news.

Pearson made his name as the show's womanising Dave Charnley, with Tompkinson as cynical and unscrupulous reporter Damien Day, Doyle as Joy Merryweather, the newsroom's humourless, rather scary assistant, and Duncan as management-speak spouting



NINETIES NEWS: The original cast of *Drop The Dead Donkey* have reunited

Globelink CEO Gus Hedges.

Sadly, two of the original cast, David Swift, who played veteran news anchor Henry Davenport, and Haydn Gwynne who starred as assistant editor Alex Pates, passed away – Swift in 2016 and Gwynne in 2023.

Hamilton and Jenkin said: "We're overjoyed to be working again with the original cast of *Drop The Dead Donkey*, after a brief hiatus of about 30 years.

"It's hugely enjoyable watching those seven funny, flawed

characters from Globelink News being plunged into the cut-throat world of modern 24-hour newsgathering and trying to navigate their way through the daily chaos of social media, fake news, and Interim Prime Ministers."

The tour runs until June and visits venues including Cambridge Arts Theatre, Milton Keynes Theatre, Leicester Curve and The Alexandra Birmingham.

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



FAST SHOW FAVES: (l-r) Paul Whitehouse, Charlie Higson, Arabella Weir and John Thomson, with Simon Day inset below left

Fast Show hits road after 30 years

THREE decades after *The Fast Show* first burst onto our TV screens, it's going on tour. Charlie Higson and Paul Whitehouse are reuniting with Simon Day, John Thomson, Arabella Weir and Mark Williams for 13 shows across the UK next month.

This celebratory live tour has been described as 'a huge treat' for fans of the multi-award winning quick-fire TV sketch show, providing behind-the-scenes insight into some of their favourite

characters and catchphrases as they come alive on stage once again.

The cast will chat together about how it all began, how they made the TV show and created the characters and the fun they had doing it. This will be interspersed with performances of some of their best-loved sketches, monologues and songs, with on-screen inserts and a tribute to their former collaborator, the late, great Caroline Aherne.

Favourite characters returning include Ted and Ralph, Jesse, Swiss Toni, Does My Bum Look Big In This?, Dave Angel, Jazz Club, The Suits You Tailors, Ron Manager, The Mad Painter, Rowley Birkin, Bob Fleming, Competitive Dad, Professor Denzil Dexter, and The Girl Who Boys Can't Hear.

The tour kicks off at Stoke-on-Trent's Regent Theatre on March 18 and finishes at the Brighton Dome on March 21.

● **Go to:** ticketmaster.co.uk for more information about *An Evening With The Fast Show*.



Best of



DAPPER: Winston Churchill buys a poppy in November 1943 and, inset below, smoking cap featuring tribute to the wartime PM's wife Clementine, made by milliner Stephen Jones

Blenheim highlights fashion icons...from Churchill himself to Winehouse's shoes

A MAJOR exhibition celebrating iconic British designers is to be staged at Blenheim Palace. The 300-year old UNESCO World Heritage site – close to the RAF's largest station, Brize Norton – will host *Icons of British Fashion* from March 23 to June 30.

The show will feature exhibits by world-class designers and labels, including Vivienne Westwood, Jean Muir, Bruce Oldfield and Turnbull & Asser.

A spokesperson said: "Each room along the visitor route in the Palace will pay homage to a British fashion icon, starting in the Great Hall with designs on display by the late Dame Vivienne Westwood and creative partner Andreas Kronthaler.

"Marking the 150th anniversary of the birth of an icon, Turnbull & Asser unveils a captivating collection inspired by Sir Winston Churchill's traditions, sartorial choices and disposition through attire.

The spokesperson added: "Starting with Churchill's acclaimed siren suit, considered one of his favourite garments during the war, we introduce a curated tribute capsule with specially-designed elements. The Birth Room will feature a guiding motif of elegance

and comfort that characterised Churchill's style, while prestigious outdoor-themed hues will command The India Room."

Milliner Stephen Jones has designed a special smoking cap paying homage to Churchill, Blenheim's very own fashion icon, as 2024 marks the 150th anniversary of his birth at the Palace, his family's ancestral home.

Inspiration for this traditional velvet cap featuring his embroidered initials, button and tassel were taken from Churchill's iconic siren suit and slippers. Within the lining, the cap features a hand-embroidered clementine in honour of his wife, Clementine.

Vivienne Westwood will present a selection of avant-garde looks, synonymous with the British fashion house, tracing her long-term collaboration with creative partner and husband Kronthaler. They will include gowns, corsets and capes handcrafted in their London atelier.

Zandra Rhodes will be exhibiting her work in the Palace's Red Drawing Room. The dresses on show will celebrate her 50-year career of experimentation with vibrant statement textile prints. Vintage mannequins will be staged and dressed in an array of Rhodes' exquisite and colourful printed



Edited by Tracey Allen

British



FAR FROM PLANE: Amy Winehouse in the colourful de Havilland pop art shoes created for her UK tour

garments, as if in the middle of a fabulous party.

Terry de Havilland became a fashion phenomenon in the 1970s – the brand was featured on the cover of *Playboy* in 1974 and provided the signature shoes for the cult classic *Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Both these designs will be on display at Blenheim.

The brand crafted a bespoke, hand-painted pair of Zap Pow pop art shoes for the late Amy Winehouse's UK tour, and one of the three original pairs will be a highlight of the exhibition.

Kate Ballenger, Keeper of Palace and Collections, said: "We are privileged to collaborate with such incredible British designers and celebrate the creativity within the UK's fashion industry. Blenheim Palace has a rich history of its own in British fashion having hosted

fashion shows, photoshoots and catwalks attended by high society and royalty.

"Our Palace is the perfect backdrop to showcase the lasting impact of British fashion on the global stage over the years and we can't wait to open our doors to the public on March 23 and finally show everyone what has been years in the making."

The exhibition also includes designs by Stella McCartney, Alice Temperley, Lulu Guinness and Barbour, creators of the much-loved wax jackets.

Admission to the *Icons of British Fashion* exhibition will be free with any valid Blenheim Palace ticket including Palace, Park and Gardens, Annual Pass or a Privilege Pass.

● Go to: blenheimpalace.com to book tickets.



Theatre
Fawlty Towers
Apollo Theatre, London



AT YOUR SERVICE: (l-r) Manuel (Hemi Yeroham), Polly (Victoria Fox), Basil (Adam Jackson-Fox) and Sybil (Anna-Jane Casey)

Return of the towering great of classic comedy

FIFTY YEARS since it was first recorded at BBC Television Centre in 1974, *Fawlty Towers*, dubbed 'the greatest British sitcom of all time' has been adapted for the West End stage by John Cleese and will open at London's Apollo Theatre Shaftesbury Avenue on May 4.

Cleese, who co-wrote the original TV series with his then-wife Connie Booth and starred as the inimitable Basil Fawlty, has written a two-hour play based on three of the original TV episodes – *The Hotel Inspector*, *The Germans* and *Communication Problems*. Cleese said: "What a thrill to be bringing *Fawlty Towers* to the West End for the first time – nearly 50 years since the show was first recorded. We've been involved in the casting process for some time, being constantly reminded of what a wealth of acting talent we have in Britain – sorting the very, very, very good from the merely very, very good."

"Finally, we assembled a top-class group of comedy actors who will bring the show to the Apollo Theatre. I've adapted three of my favourite episodes for the stage and written one huge finale, which will bring together the endings of all three episodes."

"I do hope some of you will come to the Apollo to laugh together. And laugh. And laugh....."

Directed by Caroline Jay Ranger (*Only Fools and Horses The Musical* and *Monty Python Live*), the show stars Adam Jackson-Smith as Basil, Anna-Jane

Casey as his formidable wife Sybil, Hemi Yeroham as hapless waiter Manuel, Victoria Fox as long-suffering staff member Polly and Paul Nicholas (*Just Good Friends*) as eccentric guest The Major.

Following a tip-off that hotel inspectors may be visiting and eager to impress, Basil attempts to ingratiate himself with guests that he suspects are there to critique the establishment. The situation

is further plagued by a party of Germans and the deaf and dotty guest-from-hell, Mrs Richards, whose infuriating complaints prevent him from hiding a gambling win from the ever-vigilant and bossy Sybil. Together they run their hotel with a little help from the unflappable Polly, and very little help at all from Manuel, the trainee waiter from Barcelona who is the butt of Fawlty's frustration.

Fawlty Towers was first broadcast on BBC Two on September 19, 1975. It went on to win many awards and plaudits including two BAFTAs for Best Situation Comedy and in 2000 was voted the best British programme of all time in a British Film Institute poll. Set in a fictional hotel in Torquay, just 12 half-hour episodes of the classic comedy were made.

The sitcom is based on a real-life hotel owner, Donald Sinclair. Cleese came up with the idea

for the character of Basil Fawlty when he stayed at Sinclair's Gleneagles Hotel in Torquay and became fascinated with his incredibly rude behaviour.

● The show runs until September 28. Go to: FawltyTowersWestend.com for ticket details.



ORIGINALS: Cleese (Fawlty) with Connie Booth (Polly), left, Prunella Scales (Sybil) and Andrew Sachs (Manuel)



Your Announcements

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

Deaths

BALL Flt Lt J.A. Ball passed away on January 21, aged 83. RIP.

FREESTONE-WALKER Arthur (pictured below). Squadron Leader serving in RAF 1968-2001. Passed away January 31 at the age of 81. Loving husband of the late Pamela, father to Sian, father-in-law to Derek, brother to the late Jean, Joan and John, brother-in-law and uncle. The funeral service will be held at Springwood Crematorium-Rosemary Chapel, Springwood Avenue, L25 7UN 1 on Friday, March 1 at 3pm.



ORR Tom WO. Died peacefully in sleep in Bedford aged 89 after short illness. After long service retired to Cardington with wife Isabel who died 2011. Loved and missed by all including Brenda Elizabeth and Mike (children) and Sorrel, Stanley, Alysse, Adam and Aimee (grandchildren). Ashes to be scattered at Tom's favourite spot in Johnstone, Glasgow in the spring.

ROSE Michael former Sgt and Cabin Crew sadly passed away on January 10 in John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford aged 82. Having served over 22 years in the Royal Air Force his wonderful stories of his travels whilst on 10 Sqn, RAF Brize Norton will stay with us forever. In loving memory of a caring dad, granddad and great-granddad who will be sadly missed.

Reunions

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

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

Associations

THE next quarterly social lunch of the RAF (National Service Association) Southend Group will be on Wednesday, March 20 at The Castle, Hadleigh, Essex. All RAF veterans and guests are invited. For details and bookings please contact the Area Organiser Ron Spack, tel: 01268 779697.

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

RAF Physical Training

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

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

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

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

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



US airframe restored

THE LONG-TERM in-depth restoration of the North American Harvard II B in Newark Air Museum's on-site workshop (pictured above) continues and recently work has been undertaken on preparing to refit the restored nose cowlings to the fuselage, says *Howard Heeley from the Museum.*

"The previous owners had modified the cowlings fixtures and fittings, which has been challenging the museum's team of volunteers. However, a recent glimpse into the workshop indicates that progress is being made.

"The airframe being restored is 42-12417 (Dutch AF B-163 and RCAF FE930) and the restoration programme is now well underway, with rumours of a potential reassembly being made sometime this year," he added.

● Go to: newarkairmuseum.org for opening times.

Run helps raise thousands



MORE THAN 20 RAF personnel from 54 Signals Unit, 1ISR Wing, based at RAF Digby, completed a month-long physical challenge under the name 'Team 54', in aid of the RAF Benevolent Fund.

The team also held other fundraising initiatives bringing their total to more than £1,530. This takes Team 54's overall fundraising amount, for the last three years, to over £8,000.

Museum hosts ATA talk

TO MARK International Women's Day next month, Air Transport Auxiliary historian Richard Poad, from the ATA Museum in Maidenhead, will be giving a talk entitled *Women of the ATA at the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum in the Oxfordshire*



Museum's grounds, Woodstock. Tickets to the talk, at 3pm on March 10, priced £10, include general admission to the museum and all galleries (normally £6.50).

The galleries are open from 2pm to 5pm.

● Go to: sofo.org.uk/visit-us for more details and to book online or call: 01993 810 210.

INSPIRATIONAL: ATA girl Molly Rose – a flying scholarship for young women has been set up in tribute to her

How to use our service

There is no charge for conventionally-worded **birth, engagement, marriage, anniversary, death, in memoriam seeking** and **reunion** notices. For commercial small ads contact Edwin Rodrigues on: 07482 571535. We cannot, under any circumstances, take announcements over the telephone. They can be sent by email to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk. Please note that due to the coronavirus pandemic we are currently unable to accept notices submitted by post.

Important Notice

The publishers of *RAF News* cannot accept responsibility for the quality, safe delivery or operation of any products advertised or mentioned in this publication. Reasonable precautions are taken before advertisements are accepted but such acceptance does not imply any form of approval or recommendation. Advertisements (or other inserted material) are accepted subject to the approval of the publishers and their current terms and conditions. The publishers will accept an advertisement or other inserted material only on the condition that the advertiser warrants that such advertisement does not in any way contravene the provisions of the Trade Descriptions Act. All copy is subject to the approval of the publishers, who reserve the right to refuse, amend, withdraw or otherwise deal with advertisements submitted to them at their absolute discretion and without explanation. All advertisements must comply with the British Code of Advertising Practice. Mail order advertisers are required to state in advertisements their true surname or full company name, together with an address from which the business is managed.



Your Announcements

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



REMEMBERING:
GEF colleagues
with the memorial
bench for Tony and
Jamie. Inset: the
inscription

Bikers' Brize tribute

TWO YOUNG airmen who died in motorcycle accidents have been remembered with the unveiling of a memorial bench at RAF Brize Norton.

Jnr Tech Tony Payne, who was 27, and Cpl Jamie Tutt, 26, were on separate ride-outs with friends when they tragically lost their lives.

Tony was a General Technician Mechanical working at the

Ground Engineering Flight based at Brize Norton and Jamie was a General Technician Electrical Instructor at the No 4 School of Technical Training based at MOD St Athan.

Tony died in August 2006 and Jamie died four years later in August 2010. Both men were members of the Trade Group 5 family.

FS Chris Revell said: "Past and

present members of GEF at Brize Norton have held annual charity football matches for the last 17 years to remember Tony and Jamie, whilst raising funds for the National Association for Bikers with a Disability."

Forces charity SSAFA provided funding for the memorial bench, which has now been placed inside the recently-refurbished crew room in GEF.

Fun for young flyers

DISABLED FLYERS from charity Aerobility enjoyed a unique day of flying in the Avion Airbus A320 Flight Simulator recently at Avion's Flight Training Centre, based at Luton Airport.

Aerobility students and staff were able to take the controls themselves and have a simulated flight – something that usually only airline pilots get to do.

The youngest of the group to fly was Sammy, 16 (pictured below), whose passion for aviation was a lifeline during difficult times with his mental health.

He said: "This was unlike



anything I've ever done before. It was such an incredible experience, it feels so real. It was really fun."

The simulator experience was donated by Avion to The Aviatrix Project, an organisation that works to raise awareness, particularly amongst women and girls but also people from diverse backgrounds, about aviation as a potential career choice.

The Aviatrix Project then donated it to Aerobility, said a spokeswoman for the charity.

Founded in 2015, Avion supplies full-motion flight simulators and pilot training to an international customer base.

Wouter Hollenga, Avion's marketing and sales officer, said: "It was truly a pleasure to see the Aerobility team experience and enjoy our Airbus A320 Simulator. Their enthusiasm and genuine joy reminded us of the profound impact aviation can have."

Aerobility provides access to modified light aircraft and equipment for anyone, with any disability, to experience flying.



ROYAL AIR FORCE

RAF News

The Forces Favourite Read

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

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

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

RAF News
The official voice of the Royal Air Force



Prize Crossword
No. 355

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

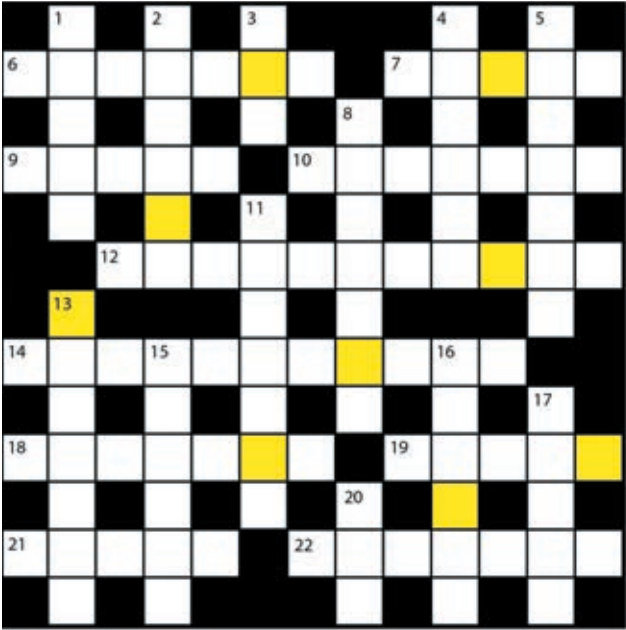
- Across
- 6. See 22 Across
 - 7. Second part returns to band (5)
 - 9. Sovereign for Orbison and Gore (5)
 - 10. Mediocre journalist spotted blade (7)
 - 12. World commander on RAF plane (11)
 - 14. Which gem boy changes at station (4,7)
 - 18. Organising drink consumed at male gathering (7)
 - 19. Without a muscle gains nothing but colour (5)
 - 21. See 22 Across
 - 22. And 21 Across, 6 Across. SAM's explosive when expanded (7,2,3,7)
- Down
- 1. I'm involved in conspiracy against high-flier (5)
 - 2. Hammer a bargain, we hear (6)
 - 3. Drink makes man lose head (3)
 - 4. Poles unpopular with Dracula (6)
 - 5. A flare's blown up French planes (7)
 - 8. Catastrophe to put lick of paint back on brown study (3,4)
 - 11. Bowing to your first Boeing design (7)
 - 13. Novel lies? (7)
 - 15. Has embraced horse I give food (6)
 - 16. Wanting gamble involving referee (6)
 - 17. Number of times Tom was in challenging environment originally (5)
 - 20. Coat from Corfu Regiment (3)

Name: _____

Address: _____

RAF word: _____ Crossword No. 355

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 March 8.
Prize Crossword No. 353 winner is: Mrs Ann Dunridge, Carterton, Oxon.



Solution to Crossword No 354:

Across – 6. Sorties 7. Carve 9. Aside 10. Newborn 12. Double Rotor 14. RAF Barkston 18. Harrier 19. Speed 21. Heath 22. Alberta

Down – 1. Copse 2. Studio 3. Sea 4. Bamboo 5. Everton 8. Release 11. Aborted 13. Manager 15. Berets 16. Osprey 17. Perth 20. Fly

RAF station – *Fylingdales*

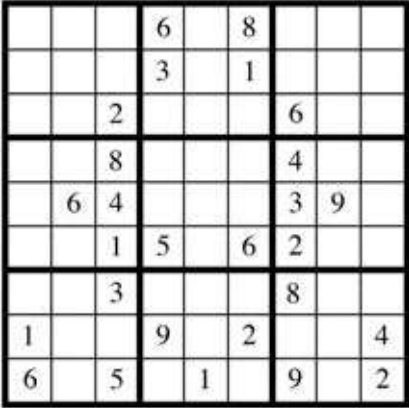


Prize Su Doku
No. 365

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 March 8.

The winner of Su Doku No: 363 is: O.P. Hartree, Wargrave, Reading.



Solution to Su Doku No: 364

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



Theatre Review
2:22 A Ghost Story
UK tour (222aghoststory.com)

THERE'S BEEN so much buzz around this play, after its West End debut starring Lily Allen, then Cheryl, that hopes were high for the touring production. And punters haven't been disappointed. Written by Danny Robins (*The Battersea Poltergeist*, *Uncanny*), it's an edge-of-the-seat, scary, supernatural thriller and when I saw it at the High Wycombe Swan recently, it had the audience, including me, enthralled.

The story centres around two couples – Sam and Jenny, who have just had a baby, and the first dinner party guests – Lauren and Ben– they've invited to the new home they're renovating. Lauren is Sam's old friend from uni days, but Sam doesn't take to her new partner Ben, a builder, and thinks he's not good enough for her.

Jenny is tired, and scared – she thinks their house is haunted. While Sam's been away working she's convinced she hears footsteps in baby Phoebe's room, and someone crying, at 2:22 in the morning. She persuades everyone to stay up until then so she can prove that she's not imagining it.

A huge ticking digital clock dominates the set as the couples bicker and argue and insights into their relationships are revealed. Sam (George Rainsford, *Casualty*, pictured right) is very opinionated and pompous, he likes the sound of his own voice. Jenny (Fiona Wade, *Emmerdale*) is worried, exhausted and frightened. Sam is sceptical of his wife's fears, and attempts to explain them away by being rational. Jenny's family are Catholic and she



IN FOR A LONG NIGHT: Fiona Wade (Jenny), Jay McGuinness (Ben) and Vera Chok (Lauren)

Spirited production



resents the fact he rejects her beliefs. Lauren (Vera Chok, *Hollyoaks*) is a psychiatrist but has her own issues to deal with, and her younger boyfriend Ben (Jay McGuinness, *The Wanted*, and former *Strictly* champion), is from a different social class to the others and clearly remembers the yuppified street where Sam and Jenny now live when it was part of a solidly working-class area. All the cast work seamlessly

together, the tension never drops for a moment, and former boy band star McGuinness shows he really can act. When the chilling denouement is revealed – I confess, I didn't see it coming – I felt myself go cold all over. This is a cleverly-written, thought-provoking play, interspersed with plenty of comedy and makes for a thoroughly enjoyable night out.

Review by Tracey Allen
4 out of 5 roundels ●●●●



Film
Hamlet (12A)
In cinemas, Feb 27

One night only

A NEW adaptation of *Hamlet*, starring Shakespearean titan Sir Ian McKellen, is heading to UK cinemas for one night only on February 27. The screening includes an exclusive recorded Q&A with McKellen and director Sean Mathias.

A tale of revenge that has stood the test of time, Shakespeare's classic tragedy is reimagined for the modern day as a gripping psychological thriller. Transcending the confines of the stage in a uniquely modern spin, the film utilises nearly every room of the Theatre Royal Windsor to transform it into the immortal Elsinore Castle, from basement dungeon to roof-top battlement.

McKellen (*inset*), reprising his lead role as Hamlet, a man who descends into madness as he seeks vengeance against his uncle for the apparent murder of his father, leads a stellar cast including Steven Berkoff, Frances Barber, Jonathan Hyde, Jenny Seagrove and Francesca Annis.

