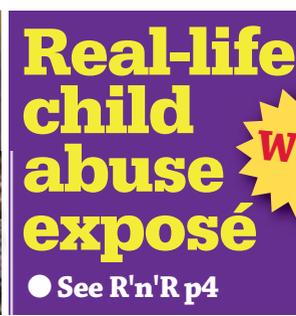


**The Forces' favourite paper**

**Win £255 boots**  
 ● See p17



**Real-life child abuse exposé**  
 ● See R'n'R p4




**ROYAL AIR FORCE**

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 Edition No. 1579 £1.20

# RAF News

**Amazing true story of the RAF's youngest ever Wing Commander**



● Win new DVD film about the remarkable, short life of Battle of Britain pilot Brendan Finucane

See pages 14-15

**Football**  
**El of a way to prepare**



● See page 25

**Gridiron**  
**Ironmen wanted**



● See page 27

**Alpine**  
**Hat-trick in Meribel**



● See page 28

# Dambusters ready to star on NATO Ex

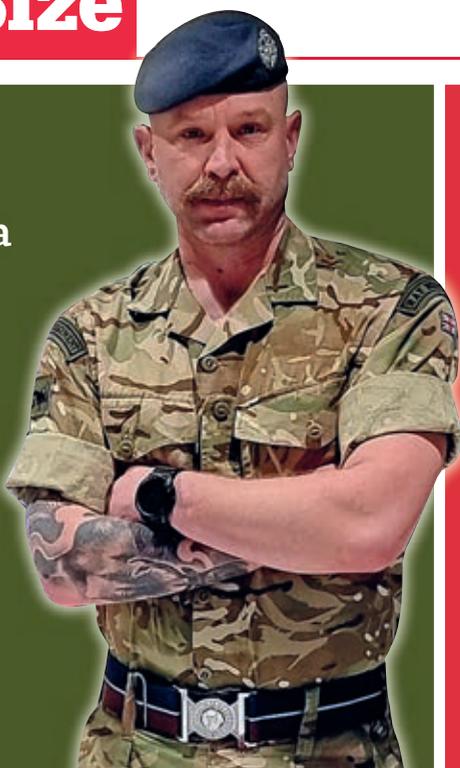


**THE DAMBUSTERS**  
 617 Sqn landed on the UK's flagship Prince of Wales carrier as RAF F-35 Lightning stealth fighters joined more than 90,000 Nato frontline fighters for the biggest military exercise since the height of the Cold War. ● See p5 for full story.

# BiteSize

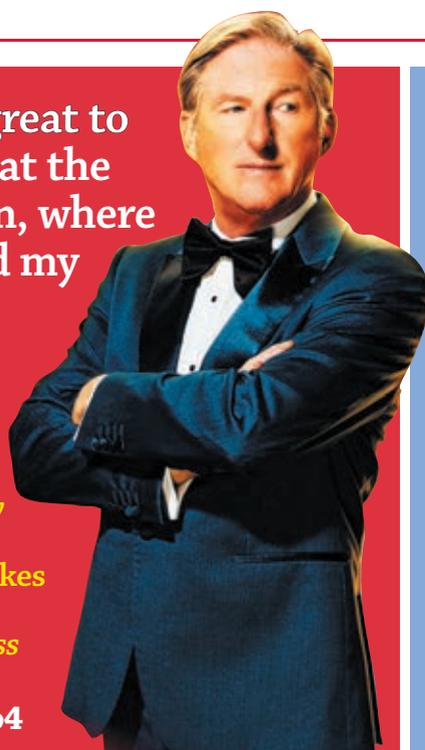
“I want to crack the stigma regarding mental illness,”

Health campaigner Gunner AS1 Dave Owen See p13



“It’s great to be back at the Barbican, where I started my career,”

Line of Duty star Adrian Dunbar makes his musical debut in *Kiss Me, Kate* See R’n’R p4



“I’m over the moon to win in my last year as skipper,”

Men’s ski team captain Cpl Barnaby Rudge on team IS victory See page 28



**ROYAL AIR FORCE**  
**RAF News**

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# Ukraine ammo pledge

## Staff Reporter

THE UK will spend nearly a quarter of a billion pounds throughout the next year to deliver urgently needed artillery ammunition to boost Ukraine’s reserves.

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps unveiled the Government’s latest military aid pledge as the war in Ukraine entered its third year.

The UK has been leading international support for the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) for 10 years since Russia first invaded Crimea in 2014, training more than 60,000 new recruits since 2015 and committing almost £12 billion in economic, humanitarian and military aid since 2022.

Mr Shapps confirmed delivery of an additional 200 Brimstone anti-tank missiles to the AFU, bringing the total number of Brimstone provided to Ukraine to more than 1,300.

He said: “Ukraine cannot win



this fight without the support of the international community. Nearly a quarter of a billion

pounds’ worth of UK funding will boost their critical stockpiles of artillery ammunition, while

the Royal Air Force completes a further delivery of advanced tank-busting missiles.”

## This Week In History



### 1941 Halifax debut

THE FIRST bombing operation by the RAF’s Halifax is mounted as 35 Sqn take part in a raid on Le Havre.

### 1975 Vietnam mission

A RAF Hercules evacuates civilians from Phnom Penh, Cambodia in the final hours of the Vietnam war.



### 1996 Rory bows out

RAF PILOT Rory Underwood plays his 85th and final rugby match for England. During his career he scored 49 tries.

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

# Former CAS slates bank over Battle of Britain Trust fiasco

## Malcolm Trigg

FORMER CHIEF of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Graydon has opened fire on the banks after an error by Barclays cost a Battle of Britain charity thousands of pounds in donations.

The Battle of Britain Memorial Trust, which cares for the National Memorial to The Few in Kent, had annual donations from hundreds of supporters 'returned to sender' when the bank insisted on creating a new account for the charity but failed to keep a promise to use the same sort code and account number.

The blunder, which was aired on national television, drew a strong attack by Sir Michael (pictured inset below), a former president and now life vice-president of the Trust.

Pointing out that 'countless' other charities had also had their accounts closed, he said: "The banks are a disgrace – the same banks that were bailed out by our money after their close to criminal profligacy with our money in 2008.

"The same banks that upped interest rates whilst doing little to increase interest to account holders. The same banks providing increasingly less service to customers and that are a nightmare to try to contact."

There was better news for the Trust as debanking victim and GB News presenter Nigel Farage urged viewers to donate to the charity to help offset the loss, estimated to be around £8,000.

The Trust's honorary secretary, Gp Capt Patrick



Tootal, told GB News that the 'de-banking' saga had left the charity, which runs the Battle of Britain Memorial at Capelle-Ferne, on Kent's famous white cliffs, struggling to balance the books since the start of the year.

He explained that at the end of a complex chain of correspondence after the trust became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) several years ago, Barclays assured the Trust that although it needed to give the charity a new account, it would retain the same sort code and account number.

At the turn of the year, though, the bank U-turned on that pledge, which meant that hundreds of standing order payments from Friends of The Few were returned by the bank to supporters who had used the 'old' bank details.

Patrick said he had been told by Barclays that the new account had something to do with anti-money laundering legislation, adding wryly: "I don't think

we do a lot of money laundering."

The Barclays blunder left Patrick and a small team of people having to write to supporters to ask them to use the new details, costing time and postage. "And, of course, it's much easier just to see a standing order go out of your account than it is to go to the trouble of setting up a new one, so we will inevitably lose a significant number of Friends," Patrick pointed out.

He told *RAF News*: "The response has been amazing, and while we are still determined that Barclays needs to compensate the charity for their ridiculous behaviour and the problems it has caused, we are delighted that so many people have contributed so generously."

"The Trust is a small charity that highlights the bravery and sacrifice of The Few and does so without any central or local government support, despite the fact that we look after a national memorial. We need all the help we can get, particularly at a time of year when visitor numbers are lower because of the weather."

● Readers can visit [battle-of-britain-memorial-trust.railseely.com](http://battle-of-britain-memorial-trust.railseely.com) to add their support to the charity.



BATTLE OF BRITAIN MEMORIAL: Tribute to The Few at Capelle-Ferne

## Chief hails RAF's Inter-Services winter sports stars



WATCHING THE ACTION: CAS, right, with Alpine athletes at Meribel

### Daniel Abrahams

CHIEF of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Rich Knighton, called the podium-creaking Inter-Services medal haul for the Air Force's Alpine stars in Meribel 'phenomenal' following three team wins.

The RAF came home with an historic first in the women's telemark and top spot in the men's ski and snowboarding. There were also 10 individual gold medals from the championships in the French Alps.

CAS added: "I am immensely proud of the RAF team at the Inter-Services Snowsports Competition in Meribel. It is the most successful year I can remember and was the result of hard work, skill and phenomenal teamwork."

"The support that the teams have from the RAF Winters Sports Committee, Central Fund and the sponsors has been invaluable. The team and their approach was a credit to the RAF. I offer my heartfelt congratulations to the individual and team winners in particular. Awesome."

The event saw Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Edinburgh, patron of the UK Armed Forces Winter Sports Association, present medals for the second year running.

RAFWSA chairman Gp Capt Mark Cunningham said: "This year's performance has been outstanding in every aspect. Our teams have exceeded all expectations and proved that the RAF and its people are the very best at what we do."

"The Inters are part of a five-year strategy to grow and develop our people and athletes, identifying new talent and developing depth in each of our squads for the future."

"Sport is a key element of the Service Offer and what we do is a key component of Service life."

"The Winter Sports Association is passionate about delivering Alpine sporting opportunity to everyone – grass roots beginners to racing – and the work for 2025 has already started and will continue to build on these amazing results."

● See page 28 for the full story.



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welfare break  
gave us the  
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we needed as  
a family.”**

**- Al Dyer**



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**In Brief**



**INSTRUCTOR:** RAF veteran Al Rosser takes up new post

## Al's in at Aerobility

FORMER RAF pilot Al Rosser has been appointed Chief Flying Instructor and Service Delivery Director for the charity Aerobility.

He joined the RAF straight from school and went on to complete three tours on the TriStar with 216 Sqn and one tour as an instructor on the Bulldog at Liverpool University Air Squadron.

Al said: "I grew up with my mum suffering from Multiple Sclerosis and it left an indelible mark on the way I speak to and interact with disabled people. I appreciate that everyone has something to give and that a disability never defines anyone."

Aerobility provides access to modified light aircraft and equipment, giving disabled people the chance to fly.

## Just the job

NINE OUT of 10 Service leavers find work within six months, figures released by the MOD reveal.

According to the survey, the number of economically inactive Service leavers fell to seven per cent, with most of those taking up training and further education courses.

A spokesman said: "Service leavers offer transferable skills which is important just now, with 80 per cent of UK businesses reporting challenges in finding the right talent."

# Lightning lifts NATO firepower



**LIGHTNING STRIKE:** UK's fifth-generation stealth fighters land on the Prince of Wales carrier

**Staff Reporter**

UK F-35 Lightning jets landed on the deck of HMS Prince of Wales as the RAF Dambusters prepare to spearhead Nato air operations on Exercise Steadfast Defender, the biggest war drill since the height of the Cold War.

The fifth-generation fighters will join more than 80 combat jets from across the 32-nation alliance – including F-18s, F-15s and Harriers – for five months of high-stakes war games.

More than 20,000 British military personnel have deployed across Europe as part of a 90,000-strong Nato fighting force.

US and Canadian warships joined Royal Navy vessels and submarines for maritime exercises in the North Atlantic while military chiefs play out realistic war-fighting scenarios along Nato's eastern flank.

Sweden will also be taking part in the exercise as the Scandinavian country moves towards full Nato membership.

An estimated 600 British military vehicles crossed the Channel earlier this month, including dozens of Challenger tanks.

The drills will test the Alliance's ability to counter enemy threats from land, sea

and air as well as space and the cyber realm, and to face down the 'Putin menace', UK Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said.

He added: "We are in a new era and we must be prepared to deter our enemies, prepared to lead our Allies and prepared to defend our nation whenever the call comes.

"Our adversaries are busily rebuilding their barriers. Old enemies are reanimated. Battle lines are being redrawn. The tanks are literally on Ukraine's lawn. And the foundations of the world order are being shaken to their core. We stand at a crossroads.

"Exercise Steadfast Defender will see our military joining forces with counterparts from 30 Nato countries, plus Sweden, providing vital reassurance against the Putin menace."



# Afghan hero Nick signs on

**Staff Reporter**

A FORMER Marine who became an expert on bushcraft and survival after battling mental illness signed on at Cranwell's Wall of Honour this month.

Nick Goldsmith was struck down with complex PTSD after four frontline tours in

Afghanistan at the height of Coalition operations.

After his drinking escalated he turned to practising the survival skills he learnt during training and created a safe haven in an area of woodland he bought.

He later set up Hidden Valley Bushcraft as a business and launched the Woodland

Warrior programme aimed at helping other veterans struggling with the condition, winning backing from military welfare groups and the Invictus Games foundation.

Nick was invited to share his experiences of frontline tours and the effects of PTSD with aircrew graduates at the Robson Academy of Resilience.





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# Strikes target Red Sea terror

## Latest raids smash Houthi drone & missile launch sites



### Staff Reporter

Akrotiri

UK AND US jets destroyed drone and missile launch sites used to attack shipping in the Red Sea in the latest night strikes against the Houthi terror group.

Four Typhoons supported by two Voyager tankers operating from Akrotiri launched Paveway precision bomb strikes on military targets during the coalition raid on eight sites.

The latest operation is the fourth strike against Houthi rebels responsible for continuing attacks on merchant and military shipping in the Red Sea region.



Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said: "It is our duty to protect lives at sea and preserve freedom of navigation."

"That is why the RAF engaged in a fourth round of precision strikes against Houthi military targets in Yemen."

In the most recent incidents drones targeted the British-owned MV Islander and the MV Rubymar, forcing the crew to abandon the vessel.

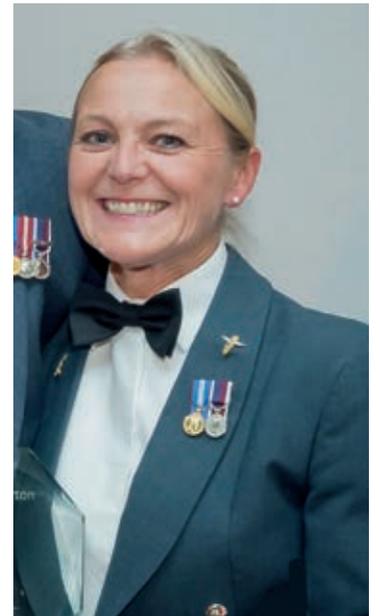
The mission follows detailed intelligence analysis which identified sites used in long-range drone strikes, the MOD added.

A spokesman said: "In line with UK



standard practice, a rigorous analysis was applied in planning the strikes to minimise any risk of civilian casualties and, as with the previous strikes, our aircraft bombed at night to mitigate further any such risks."

### In Brief



MILESTONE: WO Yvonne Conway celebrates 40 years' service

## WO marks anniversary

WARRANT OFFICER Yvonne Conway celebrates 40 years' service with the RAF this month.

Since signing up in 1984, the medical training officer has served all over the world including frontline tours in Iraq with the aeromed teams flying injured personnel back to the UK.

She was promoted to Warrant Officer in 2004 and opted to become a full-time Reservist in 2008. She is currently based at Brize Norton as the station's Community Support Officer.

Yvonne said: "The RAF has given me so many amazing job opportunities with the various trade roles, the ability to travel, undertake an overseas posting and participate in unit sports and Force Development expeditions."

"My transition from Regular to Reserve Service was seamless and I would definitely recommend joining the RAF Reservists to personnel looking to leave the Service in the near future."

## Vets count family cost

RESEARCH BY Defence Discount Service has revealed that 75 per cent of veterans feel they are not sufficiently recognised or rewarded by society for their service, despite many sacrificing key family events.

The survey of 11,500 veterans found 40 per cent missed occasions such as Christmas, anniversaries, weddings, funerals and even the birth of their own children.

## Atlas on an Arctic Roll

30 SQN transport aces operating the Atlas A400M have been awarded a top commendation after braving Arctic conditions during allied war games at Nato's most northerly air base.

The Brize Norton crew deployed to Bardufoss in northern Norway for cold weather training during Exercise Arctic Phoenix, rehearsing aeromedical procedures in

extreme combat conditions.

The Royal Air Force's Global Enablement Commander, Air Cdre Jamie Thompson, presented the squadron with the award at Brize.

30 Sqn's Flt Lt Barrett said: "The exercise was vital to understanding our medical equipment capabilities in the extremes of the cold weather environment."



EXTREME: 30 Sqn Atlas crew braved harsh conditions during training at Bardufoss in Norway



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**LANDMARK:** Serving personnel join Normandy veterans Stan Ford and John Roberts

## D-Day heroes remembered

**FORCES CHIEFS** honoured three of the RAF's forgotten D-Day heroes as the nation prepares to mark the 80th anniversary of the Allied invasion.

Czech pilot Miroslav Moravec, Danish airman Kaj Birkstead and Belgian pilot François Venesoen were among the 13 names added to the Normandy Memorial Wall to mark the 100 days until the landmark anniversary of the landings.

Normandy veterans Stan Ford and John Roberts were also presented with plaques bearing their names, which will be added to the Portsmouth memorial.

Moravec fled his Czech

homeland and joined the RAF following the Nazi occupation. He died taking off from Appledram Airport for a patrol flight over the invasion beaches in Normandy.

Danish pilot Kaj Birksted served with the RAF's 11th Flying Group and directed the fighter pilots protecting the landing beaches from the air, continuing in the role throughout the liberation and for the remainder of the war.

Also honoured was François Venesoen who served with 350 (Belgian) Sqn and who was believed to have been killed during a D-Day patrol.

Defence Secretary Grant



**KAJ BIRKSTED**



**CASUALTY:** Miroslav Moravec

Shapps said: "We must never forget the sacrifices made on D-Day and the selfless courage of the veterans of Normandy.

"It's hard to imagine a more noble act than risking your life to defeat tyranny and oppression. I'm proud that the Armed Forces will lead the nation in tributes to the heroes of Normandy in Portsmouth in June."

## Photo of the week



**RED ARROWS** photographer Cpl Phil Dye captured this image of the RAF aerobatic aces flying across the Highlands en route to Lossiemouth ahead of their blockbuster 60th season.

# US Eagles join UK crew on Arctic sub-hunt drill

### Staff Reporter

Keflavik, Iceland

**RAF AND US Navy Poseidon crews launched sub-hunting drills in the Arctic Circle as the UK's nine-strong fleet approaches full operating capability.**

Lossiemouth-based CXX Sqn joined the US Navy's Golden Eagles squadron during training missions across the North Atlantic from Keflavik air base in Iceland, during Exercise Icelandic Falcon.

CXX Squadron's Sqn Ldr Barber said: "This is a high value training event providing crews with the opportunity to work closely with our allies in the North Atlantic theatre.

"We worked closely with the US Navy to conduct Anti-Submarine Warfare training missions to improve our interoperability and ability to operate in cold climates.

"The RAF Poseidon engineering team has done a great job in ensuring the jet performed as expected throughout the detachment and the air and ground crews gained a huge amount of experience from this deployment."

Iceland's Keflavik Airbase is regarded as the historic home of anti-submarine warfare and played a crucial role in the Battle of the Atlantic in World War II.

CXX Sqn became the most successful submarine hunting unit with 14 U-Boat kills together with a further three shared sinkings protecting the Atlantic Convoys.

Two of the RAF's Poseidon P8 maritime patrol aircraft acknowledge the UK's wartime links with Iceland. ZP803 is named Terence Bulloch, after WWII's most successful sub-hunting pilot, while P8 stablemate ZP804 is named Spirit of Reykjavic.



# Ukraine Top Guns eye F-16 after UK training

UKRAINIAN PILOTS and ground crew trained by the RAF are set to graduate to supersonic F-16 fighters after completing basic training with RAF instructors in the UK.

The first intake of six experienced combat pilots received Nato-standard English language training in the RAF's Grob aircraft ahead of fast jet training on the F-16.

A further 10 Ukrainian trainee pilots are currently going through elementary flying training in the UK.

Britain is among a number of Nato allies to sign up to the Air Capability Coalition for Ukraine to bolster the nation's Soviet-era air force and bring Ukrainian pilots closer to a Nato standard approach to flying, an MOD spokesman said.

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps added: "I am proud of the support the RAF is providing to the next generation of Ukraine's combat air pilots and ground

crew, who will be the first line of defence in protecting Ukraine's skies.

"The UK has been instrumental in building Ukraine's air defences since Putin launched his full-scale invasion, providing hundreds of missiles and munitions, as well as radar and weapons systems.

"While Ukraine was highly vulnerable to attack from Russian aircraft, drones and missiles in the early months of the invasion - with support from the UK and our allies, its Armed Forces are now able to intercept and destroy the overwhelming majority of incoming ordinance - protecting their civilian population and vital infrastructure.

"Together we're now going further by ensuring Ukraine has a credible air force in the future, formed around the highly capable fourth-generation F-16 fighter jet."



**COMBAT AIR POWER:** Six Ukrainian pilots are stepping up to F-16 after RAF flying training



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Sgt Robert Small

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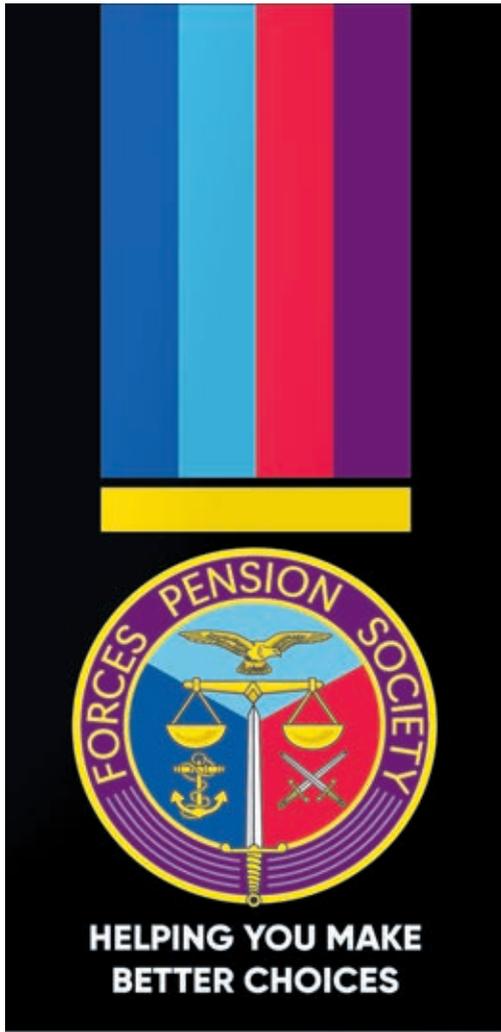
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# Tailored guidance to suit you



WHETHER your RSS (Remediable Service Statement) relates to Deferred Choice (leavers post 1/10/23) or Immediate Choice, (those who left pre 30/9/23), you'll probably be aware of the MoD guides available online.

In our experience at the Forces Pension Society, the choices you face, between opting for your legacy scheme benefits, or AFPS15, may not always be straightforward. What you really need is guidance tailored to your individual circumstances and requirements.

Our Forces Pensions Consultants are skilled in tailoring guidance to arm you with the information you need to make the best possible decision for yourself and your family. After all, you only have one shot at getting it right.

We received a record 20,000+ pension enquiries last year, and many of our 66,000 Members have already been in touch this year after receiving their RSS.

Forces Pension Society CEO, Maj Gen Neil Marshall, said: "As those impacted by the AFPS15 Remedy receive their RSS notices, we see many intricacies arising which make apparently straightforward decisions, complex. Our expert Forces Pensions Consultants are trained to take all aspects of your circumstances into account and to respond with accuracy and clarity.

"The result is that time and again, we receive feedback from our Members saying

## Pension choices may not always be straightforward



● Neil Marshall, CEO, Forces Pension Society

that (often) for the first time, they feel they understand their pension and now feel better informed to make the right choices.

"We always say, it pays to understand your pension. And, as pension values increase, individual worth increases too, meaning there's more at stake in assessing your best options. Many still underestimate the real

value of their pension. But we're here to provide the guidance that will help secure your future financial well-being."

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



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**In Brief**



**BACK TO YOUR ROOTS:** Wg Cdr Walker digs deep to mark centenary

# Reserves digging in

**CARDIFF-BASED 617 Sqn marked 100 years of RAF Reservists with a tree planting ceremony in the Welsh capital.**

Wg Cdr Olly Walker was joined by veterans and civic leaders for the ceremony, which also celebrated the 10th anniversary of the squadron's reformation.

He said: "Our roots here will continue to deepen, nurtured not just by the skill and dedication of our members but the support of veterans' families, former members and the broader community in Cardiff and across our home county - the historic County of Glamorgan."



**HOT SHOT:** AVM Marshall on the firing range at Honington

# On target at Honington

AVM SURAYA Marshall was on target on the Honington shooting range as she carried out the Suffolk station's annual inspection.

Honington chiefs showcased the capabilities of the RAF Regiment along with Agile Combat Employment drills supported by a visiting Atlas A400M.

A spokesman said: "We gave AVM Marshall first-hand experience of its Military Air Policing Operations capabilities before she viewed the ever-increasing range of ground training facilities, including the close-quarters battle range."

# UK Wedge pledge goes Down Under

**UK CREWS training to operate the RAF's new E-7 Wedgetail surveillance aircraft joined forces down under with their US and Australian counterparts.**

Air chiefs from the three countries previously signed an agreement to work together to develop the Boeing Early Warning and Command platform in 2022.

Flt Lt Adam Beasley, an RAF exchange officer and E-7A Wedgetail mission computing system asset manager, said: "These engagements supporting the working group's fleets is a move towards further cooperation."

"My position here reflects the drive towards the establishment of a cooperative programme under the E-7 joint vision statement."

"In the short term, the joint intent is cooperation on the E-7 Wedgetail's introduction to service for the RAF and USAF; in the longer term, to cooperatively pursue a common interoperable capability."

The visit comes ahead of the arrival of the first of three E-7s at Lossiemouth later this year, which will be operated by 8 Sqn.

**COLLABORATION:** UK, US and Australian teams meet at RAAF's Williamtown airbase



RAAF Project Director Gp Capt Darren Spee said close cooperation will deliver wide-ranging benefits.

He added: "Future advanced AEW&C will bring some exciting

capabilities to us. Developing it with our partners will share development costs and provide economies of scale that will make it affordable."

The E-7 Wedgetail is currently

operated by the RAAF, Turkish Air Force and Republic of Korea Air Force. The US and NATO have recently chosen Wedgetail as their E-3 Sentry replacement.

# Gunner does a runner



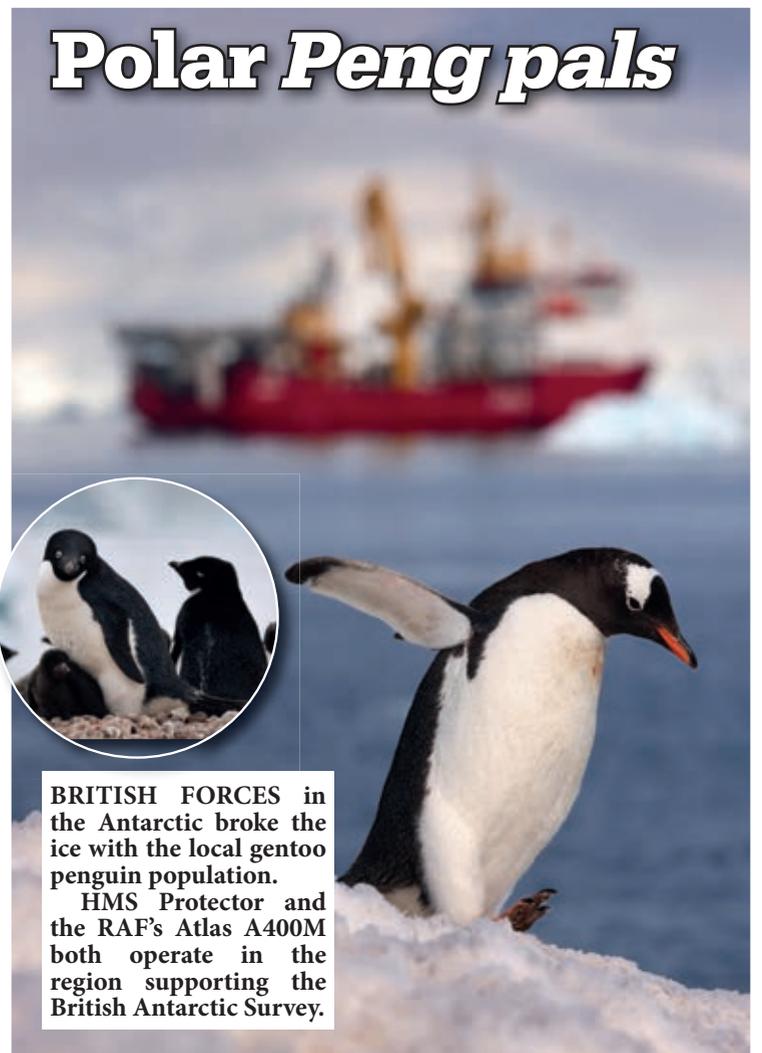
**GUNNER DAVE Owen is hitting the fundraising trail to support the charity which helped him battle mental health problems.**

He'll be taking on the 26-mile London Marathon in full military kit and carrying his 30kg bergen in a bid to net £20,000 for military welfare group SSAFA.

AS1 Owen said: "I ticked all the boxes: middle-aged male who refused to talk. I fell into depression and anxiety, and nothing seemed to help until I reached out to SSAFA. I don't know where I'd be now if I hadn't been able to talk to them."

"I want to crack the stigma surrounding mental health and get people talking. "Us military lot are terrible for not talking about what's going on mentally. I just want to say that if you are suffering you need to reach out, and SSAFA is a great place to start, if you are in the military or are a veteran."

# Polar Peng pals



**BRITISH FORCES in the Antarctic broke the ice with the local gentoo penguin population.**

HMS Protector and the RAF's Atlas A400M both operate in the region supporting the British Antarctic Survey.

Feature

# PADDY AIR POWER

**B**RENDAN 'PADDY' FINUCANE was a remarkable man. At just 21, the World War II fighter ace became the youngest Wing Commander in RAF history. The fearless Spitfire pilot was awarded the DSO, DFC and Two Bars – but his story isn't as famous as it should be.

A powerful new film by twin brothers Ian and Dominic Higgins should change that. Released on March 11 in time for St Patrick's Day (on March 17), *Shamrock Spitfire*, tells the fascinating true story of Finucane's short life.

Ian said: "We could not understand why he was not more well-known – and that became the driving force for us to make the film."

The West Midlands-based brothers, who wrote the screenplay, took three years to complete the film that stars Shane O'Regan as Paddy – one of the first Irish men to enlist in the RAF, despite the fears of his English mother and the disapproval of his father who had been involved in the Irish Rebellion and had served under Éamon de Valera.

Taking part in the Battle of Britain, Paddy proves himself to be a natural born fighter pilot. Shortly afterwards he is given command of 452 Australian Squadron that went on to become legendary.

Even before it's released, *Shamrock Spitfire* has garnered 51 awards, including nine at the Paris Film Awards, Best War Film at the Oniros Film Awards in New York and Best Biographical Film at the World Film Festival in Cannes.

Known for their feature films about real people – such as *7 Days: The Story of Blind Dave Heeley*, *All That Remains* and *Finding Fatima* – the brothers discovered Finucane's story online.

Dominic said: "He was such

## True story of Irish man who became RAF's youngest ever Wg Cdr aged 21



WE HAVE copies of *Shamrock Spitfire* to win on DVD. For your chance to own one, tell us:

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What are the names of the two brothers who directed the film?

Email your answer, marked *Shamrock Spitfire* DVD competition, to: [tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk](mailto: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 22.



MEDALS: DSO & DFC and 2 bars

an incredible character, the more we found out about him, the more we wanted to tell his story. His family was the first port of call to us, we didn't want to make the film without their blessing, they were incredibly supportive."

Producer John Dawson added: "His story is a timeless catalogue of courage and loyalty to all who both knew or were related to him. Everything has been done honestly and sympathetically to both inform and pay homage to this young man who achieved more in his 21 years than most can do in a lifetime."

Ian agreed: "You have to keep reminding yourself that he was

only 21 when he achieved so much."

The brothers met Brendan's nephew, named after his uncle, who introduced them to historian John Donovan from Hornchurch Museum, where Paddy's RAF uniform is currently on display, on loan from the RAF Museum, London. Paddy had been promoted to Wg Cdr and to lead the Hornchurch Wing in June, 1942.

Dominic said: "John is a walking encyclopaedia of everything to do with Paddy Finucane – he gave us the confidence to go forward with this story."

"When we had a screening in Birmingham recently, a lot of the Finucane family were present and at the end of the film Brendan walked up to us, gave us a big hug and said 'you've brought him



back.' That was a highlight for us."

In 1936 the Finucanes moved from Ireland to Richmond, Surrey. The film reveals Brendan's tender romance with local girl Jean. The couple became engaged but, tragically, he never came home to marry her – his Spitfire was shot down during a mission over France in July, 1942. Attempting to fly back to England over the English Channel, he was forced to ditch his aircraft into the sea around eight miles off Le Touquet. Almost 22, his body was never found and he remains missing in action.

Ian explained: "We discovered Jean wasn't her real name, it was Joan, and at first we could find no connection to any relative. We received an email from her daughter, in Australia – it was great because she was able to



SCRAMBLE: Scene from the film

By Tracey Allen



**ACCOMPLISHED FLYER:** Though landings weren't always so easy for Brendan Finucane



**STORYTELLERS:** Ian and Dominic Higgins direct during filming of Shamrock Spitfire, starring Shane O'Regan as Finucane, below



provide a lot of information about Joan and Brendan's relationship."

Joan later married a Flying Officer from New Zealand and settled with him there.

Dominic said: "For us the film was a three-way love story – Brendan and Joan had a very special relationship, but Brendan's first love was always flying, that was the heart of the story."

The film includes exciting flying and aerial combat scenes, created by the brothers using CGI.

"We studied hours of footage taken from actual World War II gun cameras in a bid to create a feeling of authenticity in the battle sequences," Ian explained. "We didn't want the CG imagery to look too clean and perfect, so we also emulated the look of a live action camera trying to capture the action as it's happening, which gives a certain energy to

those scenes. If you want to bring a dogfight to life, CGI is really the only option.

"Some of the footage we looked at was shot from Brendan's plane by his wingman, a Canadian called Butch Aikman. It was incredible to see footage actually shot by some of the characters in our story."

Although flying was something Brendan was born to do – Ian said 'it was almost a crusade for him' – he didn't have the most auspicious start and, at first, was well-known for making disastrous landings.

Ian said: "Also, when in charge of the Australians he had a reputation for bad landings and the squadron became known as 'Brendan's

demolition squad."

"He is such an inspirational person because of that – the only reason the RAF kept him on was because he was so tenacious and so determined to succeed, even though he was terrible at landing planes."

More than 2,500 people attended Finucane's memorial at Westminster Cathedral. His name is inscribed on the Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede and is included on the Battle of Britain's Memorial on London's Embankment as one of The Few.

● *Shamrock Spitfire* is available on DVD and digital on March 11, including on iTunes, Amazon, Google, Rakuten and Virgin.

# Royal Air Force In Concert

Celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the RAF Music Charitable Trust

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Compere: Howard Leader



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Royal Air Force Squadronaires

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## 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

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# Pilgrim's

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## Grab these £225 boots

RAF NEWS has teamed up with Italian footwear manufacturer AKU to offer one lucky reader the chance to win a pair of Pilgrim GTX Combat boots worth £225.

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AKU is well known in both military and civilian circles for quality craftsmanship with a 100 per cent traceability guarantee for all components used in its collection of award-winning footwear.

The unisex Pilgrim GTX Combat

boots have been tested in the field by operatives from around the world and are held in high regard for reliability and performance. Suitable for wearing at work or on weekend treks, the Pilgrim GTX Combat boots offer out-of-the-box comfort despite the miles you put in.

The company was founded in the early 1990s by Galliano Bordin – the son of shoemakers. Its historical headquarters is in Montebelluna, near Venice. The company now has more than 400 employees and its products are sold around the world.

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● Go to [aku.co.uk](http://aku.co.uk) for more details.



**ROCK STAR:**  
Heather

# Burns nurse soars to new heights on Ex Escalada Eagle

AIR FORCE medic Cpl Heather Bennett took time out from her duties at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham's specialist burns centre to test herself by taking the RAF Adventure Training challenge in the Escalada mountains of Andalusia, Spain.

Under the expert eye of adventure training instructor WO Pete Hamilton she joined other rock face rookies on Exercise Escalada Eagle to hone her physical and mental agility.

She said: "Burns patients often require complex and intensive care, including frequent wound dressings, pain management and emotional support.

"The environment can be intense, with long hours, high stress situations and emotionally taxing.

"Taking up the rock climbing experience in Spain was a decision fuelled by curiosity,



**COACHING:** Cpl Heather Bennett with instructor WO Pete Hamilton

adventure-seeking and a desire for personal growth.

Heather added: "The allure of exploring breathtaking landscapes while pushing my physical and mental limits was another attraction.

"Taking part provided a much-needed respite from the demanding role of being a nurse. Amidst the hectic schedule and emotional intensity of my job, adventure training offered a valuable opportunity to decompress, recharge and focus

on personal wellbeing.

"I had to engage in a completely different type of challenge requiring concentration, physical exertion and problem-solving skills unrelated to my clinical practice. The shift in focus was rejuvenating and helped prevent burnout.

"Physically, it demanded strength, agility and endurance. Mentally, it required focus, problem-solving skills and the ability to manage fear and anxiety. Each climb presented its own set of obstacles, forcing me to adapt and strategize in real time.

"Climbing offered a much-needed break from the demands of nursing, allowing me to recharge both physically and mentally.

"This rejuvenating experience ultimately enhanced my ability to continue providing compassionate and effective care to patients on returning to work."

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# Former chief of Strike Command, Sir John Day, dies at age of 76

**A**IR CHIEF MARSHAL Sir John Day, who has died aged 76, became the Commander-in-Chief of Strike Command during the early operations in Afghanistan and in the build-up to the Iraq War in 2003.

After starting his training as a pilot with the London University Air Squadron, Day joined the RAF in 1966 and completed his training on helicopters when he joined 72 Squadron at Odiham in Hampshire to fly the Wessex on transport support operations and in co-operation with Army units.

After training as a flying instructor, he instructed on the Jet Provost at the No 1 Flying Training School at Linton-on-Ouse, near York, before assuming command of Oxford University Air Squadron.

He returned in 1980 to the support helicopter force as a flight commander when he joined 18 Squadron at Gütersloh, the RAF's most forward base in West Germany. Operating from dispersed and self-contained sites in the surrounding countryside, the Wessex helicopters provided support to No 1 (British) Corps.

In 1983 he assumed command of 72 Squadron based at Aldergrove in Northern Ireland. Its primary role was assistance to the civil power and supporting the security forces during the Troubles. This frequently involved flying sorties in the difficult and dangerous border country with the Republic, often in adverse weather. At the end of a demanding tour of duty, he was appointed OBE.

## Harrier

His career continued in the helicopter force when, in 1987, he became the Station Commander of RAF Odiham, the main operating base for the RAF helicopter force, where he had Puma and Chinook squadrons under command.

Following his attendance on the 1990 course at the Royal College of Defence Studies, he was promoted to Air Commodore to become the Director of Air Force Plans and Programmes in the MOD. In this key appointment, he managed the future RAF equipment programme and costings for the 10 years ahead.

When Day became the Air Officer Commanding (AOC) of the RAF's No 1 Group in 1994, he was responsible for the operations of his Tornado, Jaguar, Harrier and reconnaissance forces. To better understand the role of his offensive squadrons, he converted to the Jaguar and to the Harrier and flew the Tornado. He also had responsibility for the RAF's support helicopter force, which included the Puma and Chinook squadrons still heavily involved in operations in Northern Ireland.



ACM Sir John Day

On June 2, 1994, a Chinook helicopter carrying 25 passengers and a crew of four crashed on to the Mull of Kintyre, which was below safety altitude in cloud. All on board were killed. As AOC it was Day's responsibility to convene a board of inquiry into the accident. When he reviewed the board's conclusion, he judged that the accident had been caused by the gross negligence of the two pilots.

The judgement of the second reviewing officer, and of Chiefs of Air Staff, and of the wider RAF fully supported Day's finding of gross negligence, a judgement which subsequently attracted public controversy. Following numerous subsequent inquiries, the final review by Rt Honourable Lord Philip published on July 13, 2011, recommended the findings of gross negligence be 'set aside'. This was accepted by the then Secretary of State, Dr Liam Fox.

This appointment was followed in May 1997 by a further promotion to take up the post of Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Commitments) in MOD. His primary responsibility was to be the UK Director of Operations worldwide This included the deployment of British forces to

participate in the Kosovo campaign and the maintenance in Iraq of the two no-fly zones, one in the north and the other in the south of the country.

He was frequently required to brief the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, on the military options of intervention and operations. His clear, concise, and strong presentations were respected by Blair, who held him in high regard.

Day was appointed to his role at Strike Command in April 2001, where he commanded all the RAF's operational capability. The Strategic Defence Review had been announced three years earlier and many of the decisions were becoming established. These included Joint Force Harrier, the combining of four RAF squadrons and a Royal Navy Sea Harrier squadron, and the RAF's strategic transport force was being enhanced. Amongst other major measures, new air-launched precision weapons were being introduced.

Following the terrorist attacks against the Twin Towers in New York on September 11, 2001, US President George W. Bush declared a War on Terror. The likelihood of British involvement increased, and Day and his staff reviewed various contingency

plans for possible RAF participation in future operations.

On October 7, 2001, some Strike Command aircraft were committed to Operation Veritas, the support of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Operations were conducted against the Al-Qaeda terrorist organisation and the Taliban regime. Strike Command tanker aircraft provided air-to-air refuelling support to US carrier-based aircraft, and RAF reconnaissance and surveillance aircraft flew operational sorties.

In March 2002, Chinook helicopters deployed to Bagram airfield in Afghanistan to support 45 Commando Royal Marines. RAF transport aircraft flew regular resupply flights. This was the beginning of an increasing RAF commitment to operations in Afghanistan.

## Gulf

By the latter part of 2002, the situation in Iraq had deteriorated and the likelihood of a US-led offensive operation increased. Day prepared his squadrons for possible offensive action and by early 2003, some squadron detachments had been positioned in the Gulf region.

Operation Telic (Gulf War II) was launched on March 20, 2003, and RAF aircraft were in immediate action. Much of Strike Command's operational assets, under the command of the operational commander Air Marshal Brian Burrige based in Qatar, were heavily engaged in the operation together with six RAF Regiment squadrons and personnel drawn from other specialist RAF ground support units. Tornados and Harriers flew 1,353 offensive sorties backed by airborne tanker, reconnaissance and transport support aircraft during the campaign.

The offensive continued for a month when some of Day's forces began returning, but others remained stationed in the Gulf region.

Day handed over command of Strike Command to his successor at the end of July 2003 on his retirement from the RAF after 38 years of service.

He was appointed KCB (1999).

After retiring from the RAF, Day took up the position of senior military advisor at British Aerospace. He was the president of the RAF Rugby Union and for six years was chairman of trustees of the RAF Museum.

In July 2016 he joined the board of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight air ambulance, a cause that he had a special affection for, and in February 2017 he was appointed chairman of trustees.

Sir John Day died on February 9 and is survived by his wife Jane and two sons.



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Tim Morris

Audi TT RS Iconic Edition (from £85,515 otr)

Motoring

# Audi's TT RS Iconic lives up to its name



AUDI'S TT has been around for a very long time – the first time I drove it was back in 1998. It's gone through generation after generation since our first encounter and has evolved well with each.

At the top of the TT range in 2024 you'll find the TT RS, a very special version. To say it's quick is an understatement.

I first put the RS around the track when it was launched and marvelled at how Audi's engineers had transformed it into a pocket-sized R8. They hadn't shoehorned in a V10 but it didn't need it, it was light. It was so epically quick that you found yourself testing the laws of physics until the brilliant Quattro drivetrain reached the limits.

0-62mph in 3.7 seconds was a hoot and you can bet that I pushed it until the car topped out on the limiter at 155mph.

As you can imagine, the TT RS is a popular car. Audi even built a special version called the 'Iconic Edition', limited to 100 cars worldwide. Costing just over £87k each, I did question whether perhaps Audi had over-egged that particular TT but every car had been sold within hours, including our test car!



## Exterior

The RS looks like a TT with a body kit, simple. The obvious tell is the carbon fibre high wing, but the air ducts on the front bumper, special alloys and bespoke bucket seats all give it away if you look closely.

## Interior

Anyone who has driven Audi's R8 supercar will instantly recognise steering wheel and instrument set-up. The TT's infotainment screen is directly behind the steering wheel, which is good, meaning you don't have to divert your eyes to see it. I loved the customizable clock set-ups, particularly the G-meter. The dashboard is otherwise a supremely clean affair, with only a handful of labelled buttons. You find yourself cycling through a fair few menus to get things done with the infotainment system but you soon get used to it.

Drivers of most shapes and sizes will be able to get comfortable thanks to plentiful adjustment on the steering wheel and the driver's seat.

The cabin generally has solid, high-quality materials throughout. The buttons and switches all feel reassuringly weighty, operating with clunky German precision. Smart Alcantara and leather upholstery covers the supportive sports



seats and aluminium trim adorns the most obvious panels. It looks good.

## On The Road

The TT RS is an absolute scream and, in standard guise, is priced to make it the fastest thing out there for the cash. It will outrun a Porsche Cayman S! Let's just ponder that for a second.

0-62mph is achieved in 3.7 seconds manually but you'll go sub 3.5 if you use launch control. Once you're away, that Quattro drivetrain will keep you ahead on almost every surface.

Power is 395bhp, or a round 400PS. That is impressive enough but combine it with the torque and you've got a machine that's immensely hard to beat. It has a power band that stretches from 1,700 5,850 rpm. That's epic, by any standards.

It sounds damn good too, better than

## Audi TT RS Iconic

### Pros

- A scream to drive
- Stylish interior
- Great build quality

### Cons

- Only those in the know will understand its capabilities
- Does not look like a £90k car

### Verdict

The TT brings a smile to your face, in any guise. It's great to drive and so laid back that it's easy to live with day-to-day. A Porsche Cayman is a better bet if you want to show off, but if slipping under the radar is your thing, the TT RS is the weapon of choice.

anything else in the class. It has a rich roar that just keeps giving. It sounds expensive and fast, not overblown or shouty like some rivals. More supercar than Chav.

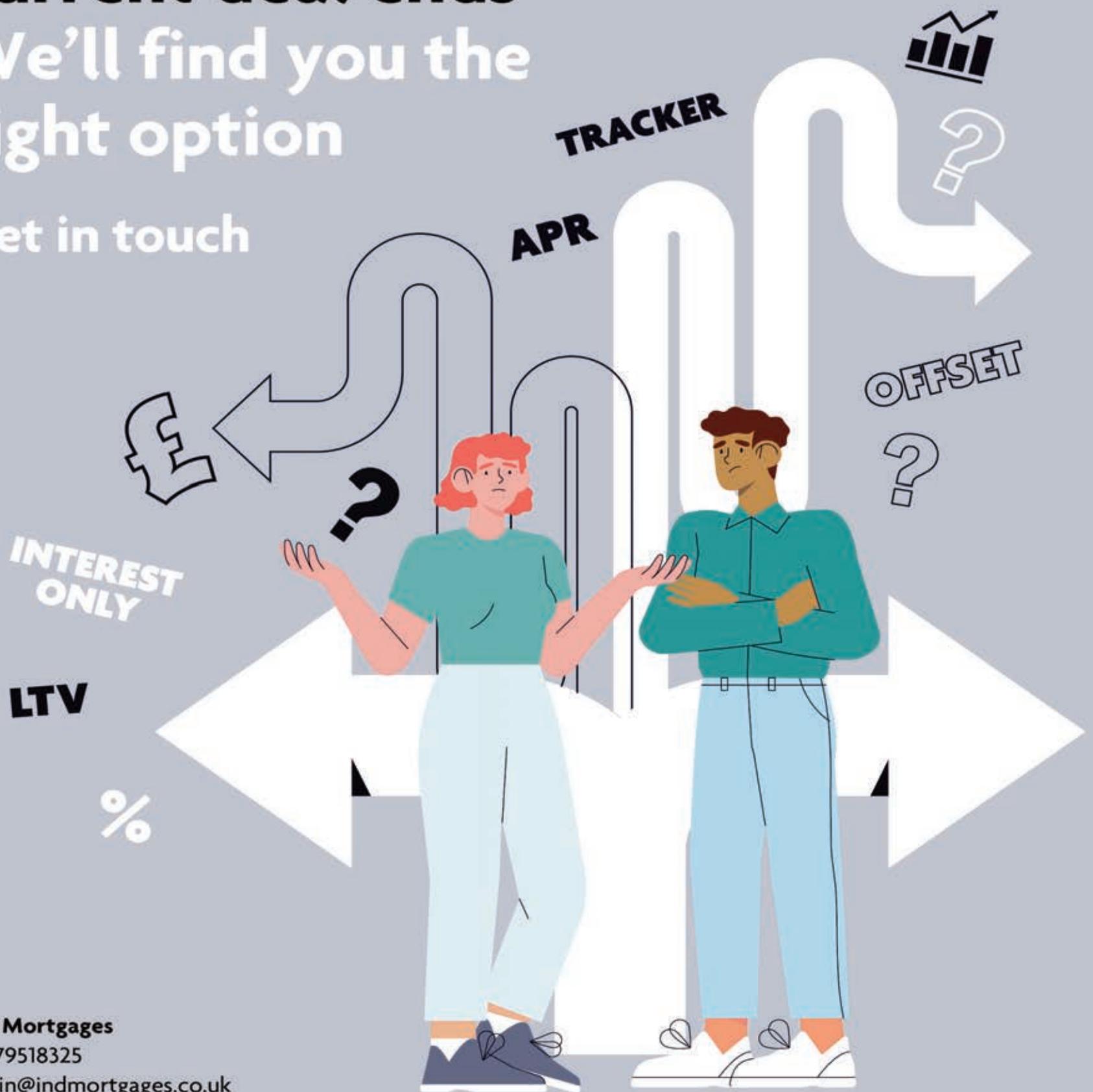
Does it drink? Oooooohhhh yesssss. Audi's official figure is a combined return of 34.4mpg but my average was around 18.

There's no Eco mode. You wouldn't use it if there was, so Audi made the right choice and binned it from the Drive Select menu. Any other silly questions?

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## GLIDING

# A sight for soar eyes



**TALK OF THE TARN:**  
Stunning Andes scenery enjoyed by RAFGSA members in Chile (inset above)



**NEW HEIGHTS** were soared and future expeditions secured as Service gliders returned from South America after Expedition Andean Condor 24.

The 10-day annual flying event saw a team of RAF Gliding and Soaring Association members scaling heights of 20,000 feet and travelling over 400kms in flying times of up to five hours.

RAFGSA chairman Gp Capt Carl Peters said: "The whole expedition went really well, the weather wasn't perfect, so on the flying side we didn't get into the big mountains as much as usual, but we still managed some flights there."

Peters, who was supported by AM Ian Gayle and Sqn Ldr Mark Williams in Chile, added: "The defence engagement side was also a huge success, and this aspect also helps make the future of the expedition sustainable."

It will lead to the return visit of four Chilean gliders this summer – the first since 2019 – with the aim of taking to the air from RAF Syerston with RAFGSA gliders and instructors.

Peters added: "The Andes make for fantastic gliding for us in Chile, while it is a completely different prospect when the expedition comes to the UK, because the Chilean gliders can find the rolling green fields of England can all look the same, making solo flights tricky."

The association has its annual expedition to Sisteron in the French Alps coming up. Gp Capt Peters said: "This is a great introduction to mountain flying for gliders with low experience, which can then lead on to the Chilean Andes, the biggest mountain range in the Himalayas."

● Follow RAF Gliding on Instagram @rafgliding.

## POWERLIFTING

## It's Lift-Off for the power athletes

THE SERVICE'S powerlifters shook off the cobwebs with an Intermediate Camp and Winter Lift-Off at Cosford.

AS1 Emily Cantley (Waddington) and Sgt Bill Dunn (Coningsby) took the honours in the Lift-Off competition – held under British Powerlifting Rules – with Flt Lt Rachael Robertson (Shrewsbury) second and Cpl Jas Lisney (Odiham) third for the women and Fg Off Will Arnold (Holding) runner-up and AS1 Jack Bamford (Brize Norton) third in the men's discipline.

AS1(T) Avnish Thaleswar said: "The Intermediates Camp is a natural stepping stone to progress through the sport or for those who have previous experience in lifting but need guidance from qualified coaches.

"These camps prepare the athlete for competition, educating them on the rules and giving them the best possible chance to achieve Personal Bests."

The two-day camp featured workshops by British champion Charlie Marillier.

Organiser Fg Off Joshua Davies said: "The Winter Lift-Off was a huge success with more than 80 personnel in attendance from across all three Services and the Civil Service.

"It was great to see a variety of athletes with experience ranging from novice up to Inter-Service."

● Follow RAF powerlifting on Instagram @RAFPowerlifting.



**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](mailto:Sports@rafnews.co.uk)**



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FOOTBALL

# We'll reign after Spain

## Med camp just the ticket

WRT HEAD coach Cpl Chris Hamilton is hoping Viva Espania will be the spark that ignites his side's Inter-Services hat-trick campaign after a series of delays.

With only one warm-up match – a 4-1 win over Solihull Moors last month – to build on, Hamilton believes the WRT's bond will be vital if his side are to win their third IS in a row after beating the Navy 3-1 and Army 4-1 last year to seal the championship in style.

He said: "We have had setbacks with matches being cancelled and we have had quite a few players missing due to out of areas and injuries.

"We are only now really getting things back together, which hasn't been ideal.

"Our training camps have been

at Cosford and have gone well. The Spanish camp worked well last year, it's a great set-up there, and it will be very important again, as we have been apart so much, but whatever the situation we will be ready.

"The girls all get on brilliantly, one thing they have is a closeness, we will never have to worry about that."

Hamilton, who has turned to Service football stalwart Sgt Cat Beaver as captain again, and has added FS Phil Morris to his coaching team, will hold six training sessions during the week-long Spanish camp with one fixture to be confirmed.

He added: "We know the Army and Navy will improve from last year, so we will be ramping things up in Spain, our opponents will not lie down, so this year will be a bigger challenge than the



INTERS ACTION: Sgt Charlie Arrowsmith and Cpl Rachel Howes in 2023 Navy game

PHOTOS: KEITH WOODLAND

previous ones, and they will want to knock us down.

"We have a siege mentality, the group are good. The Army has a new management team so that will be freshening things up for sure, and it is of course unknown to us. The Navy got a good win over the Army last year, so they are going to be aiming to go one better this time.

"Complacency will be our enemy, so we are very mindful that will not creep in."

The IS game against the Army is on March 5 at Aldershot Town's EBB Stadium.

RAF v Royal Navy is on March 20 at The New Saints FC's Venue Ground in Oswestry.

● Follow the team on Instagram @rafladiesfootball.



FOCUS: Cpl Philippa Wilson

RUGBY UNION

# Le Crunch fixture against France has X factor

## Daniel Abrahams

X MARKS the spot for this year's Le Crunch rugby union clash as the teams do battle at Saracens' StoneX Stadium.

The Service's rugby union stars will face the Armée de l'Air et de l'Espace (AAE) at the Gallagher Premiership side's Hendon ground for the mouth-watering annual fixture.

RAF head coach FS Justin Coleman believes the clash acts as the perfect dry run for his team as they prepare for the

Inter-Services in May.

"The French game has many aspects to it, but initially it is a good dry run for the IS for us: big stadium, increased pressure," he said.

"We normally play well over here and struggle away, but this year it seems they will be a good physical presence for us and are looking to travel well – similar to the Army and Navy – so we will treat it with the respect it deserves and go with a strong physical selection."

Speaking as his charges began

an IS warm-up camp for a match against National League Rugby 1 side Rams RFC at Reading Rugby Club Ground, Coleman added: "Hopefully there will be a decent crowd and good atmosphere.

"Like the Inters in a way we are flying blind, we will do as much analysis as we can, we have checked their socials and we know a few of their players from the International Defence Rugby Competition.

"We will do our homework – they are normally a good aggressive pack with a good

skilful kicking fly-half, so that is useful for us to know in the way of game preparation, but we will be looking to try things – we build as we go, so this can allow us to tweak things.

"There is an aspect for the youngsters to get a lead into this type of game with an international opponent, and things like the stadium, the dressing rooms; some of the lads may not have played at a stadium like this and it's interesting to see the mental pressure bigger games bring.

"We have worked with our sports psychologists with this type of thing and the approaches to take.

"The fixture has a lot of background noise but we are there to focus on the game and the build-up, similar to the IS.

"We will get a pitch walk on the day, prepare as usual and go out to win."

The game is on March 6, after RAF News goes to press.

● Follow RAF Rugby Union on Instagram @rafrugby.



DETAINED: British Police player is held up by RAF star during fixture last summer

PHOTO: SBS

# Women step up for IS

THE WOMEN'S rugby union team's IS build-up continued with a camp at RAF Henlow as the team adjusted on the fly after poor weather altered their plans.

Assistant coach Sqn Ldr Ian Cokayne said: "The intention was to finish the camp with a fixture against Lichfield Ladies; however, heavy rain in the Midlands resulted in the game being cancelled. Regardless, the camp was a great success."

Altering the schedule following the loss of the fixture, the team's coaches modified the programme to include more contact and defence than would be normal in a game week.

Cokayne added: "In truth, this will be beneficial as the squad move into the physicality of Inter-Service rugby."

The team was further bolstered with the return of Cpl Orla Proctor and Flt Lt Sarah Graham from injury, and Elite Athlete Scheme players Fg Off Sarah Bonar and Flt Lt Amy Cokayne were also in camp bringing their knowledge and intensity to the group.

The RAF play the Royal Navy in the Inter-Services in Plymouth on April 20.

● Follow RAF women's rugby union on Instagram @rafrugbyunion.

**Sport**



**CYCLING**

**ROAD WORK:** Cyclists get the miles in during Valley camp

# Gearing up for season

**THE SERVICE'S road cyclists shook off the winter blues with the association's final camp at RAF Valley, before kicking off a bumper racing season.**

The week-long camp saw 39 cyclists ride out using the roads of Anglesey and Holyhead, along with one larger ride that circled around Snowdonia, climbing up to Stwlan Dam and taking in other climbs in the area.

The Snowdonia ride saw the camp's attendees split into three groups, with one taking a 138km route, which comprised 2,000m of climbing, while the second group's route was over 115km with 1,500m of climbing and the third group over 80km with 1,000km of climbing.

AS1(T) Laura Sheppard said: "The training camp was a great success as members old and new gained fitness and confidence in their riding abilities, training

as a group and practising race techniques over the course of the different riding sessions during the week.

"We were also given an insight into sports training, recovery and the mental aspect of competing."

While not on the roads, personnel also took part in gym sessions led by Cpl Will Lewis.

There were also sports psychology sessions provided by Cpl Darryl Loveland (High Wycombe), along with workshops by sports therapist Izzy Brider.

The camp was joined by a representative of Ryan Morley Cycle Centre, who gave talks on sport performance, nutrition and the importance of recovery.

The association, which announced its teams for its 2024 cycling disciplines (see below), will hold a further camp in Mallorca this month.

**ICE SPORTS**

# ON TRACK

## Ice stars in push for St Moritz gold

**Daniel Abrahams**

**RAF BOBSLEIGH coach and former Service team and GB brakeman Cpl John Baines found time on the eve of this year's Ice Sports Inter-Services to talk to RAF News.**

Baines, who shone for GB at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics in both two and four-man bob, has been part of the RAF selection and coaching set-up since spring last year, which has seen personnel travel from Bath University's training track to St Moritz in Switzerland.

Baines said: "The transformation the team have gone through is nothing short of a bobsleigh odyssey, from novice to a competitor on the icy tracks of the world's most prestigious bobsleigh courses, it really is remarkable."

"The selection process is held at Bath, as it is the UK's only push-start track, and the athletes undergo rigorous testing."

Personnel are put through sprints over 30 metres, followed by the crucial push-start drills.

Baines said: "This phase is not only about physical prowess but also about technique, teamwork and determination, with athletes' performances meticulously ranked."

A novice camp followed in Sigulda, Latvia, to expose personnel to their first taste of the challenges of the ice tracks.



**BAINES:** Olympian



Here, under the guidance of Baines and other seasoned coaches, sliders learned, as Baines said: "The nuances of driving and pushing a bobsleigh at speeds that demand precision, courage and split-second decision-making."

From there they are now on the cusp of competing in St Moritz, which Baines describes as the cradle of bobsleigh.

"For me my first IS was in 2009 and it was a pivotal moment in my career. That first race wasn't just a competition; it was the beginning of everything," he said.

"The Inters gave me a tangible goal, a starting block to push off from towards the world stage. They taught me to aim high, laying the foundation for my World Cup bronze and my participation in both the 2-man and 4-man events at the 2014

Olympics for Team GB.

"I hope my example can be some sort of inspiration, this year's team should let the Inter-Services be their launchpad, they should aim for the stars, work tirelessly and remember, every push on the ice is a step towards their Olympic dream."

Pointing to GB and Winter Olympic hopeful Cpl John Stanbridge and Jamaican Olympic driver L/Cpl Shanwayne Stephens, Baines added: "These individuals are not just competing; they are representing

## 2024 cycle teams

WITH THE pedals spinning to halt from the Valley training camp, the RAF cycling association has announced its super six teams to do battle for honours in 2024:

**Women's Development**

- Harriet Haywood Flt Lt
- Lauren Gault Flt Lt
- Kerry Fisher Flt Lt
- Emily Crawford Flt Lt
- Zoe Catherall AS1
- Emma Duckett Sqn Ldr
- Melanie Heaton Sgt
- Jen Burns Cpl

**Women's Main**

- Sarah Toms Cpl
- Laura Sheppard AS1(T)
- Megan Walker Flt Lt
- Sue Pugh Sgt
- Tina Hartnell Sqn Ldr
- Kat Robinson Cpl

**Men's TT Development**

- Ian Swinscoe FS
- Sam Murray AR
- Daymian Underhill-Rose Cpl
- Cameron Leslie AS1
- Dan Ramsbottom Flt Lt
- Rob Grantham Cpl
- Gaz Poulson Sqn Ldr

- James Davies Flt Lt
- Ash Steventon Sqn Ldr

**Men's TT Main IS Champs**

- Adam Baker Cpl
- Rob Willcocks Sqn Ldr
- Mike Barnes Cpl
- Dan Watts Sgt
- George Westall AS1
- Will Lewis Cpl
- Scott Hill FS

**Men's Road Development**

- Josh Bond Cpl
- Dunc Walkey Flt Lt
- Liam Richardson AS1
- Sam Marriot AS1
- Ian Lee Cpl
- James Coates AS1
- Mark Daly Flt Lt
- Kieran Kirk AS2
- Ronan O'Leary Fg off

**Men's Road Main**

- Ed Calow Flt Lt
- Danny Hedley AS1
- Rich Summerbell Cpl
- Euan Campbell Cpl
- Craig Robinson Sgt
- Will Duncan Cpl
- Tom Whitworth AS1
- Matt Wright Flt Lt
- Ross Mallen WO

**ALPINE**

# Hat-trick triumph at Meribel

**Continued from back page**

of two skiers during training, saw captain Fg Off Kirsty Guest win the DH, Super Combined and Slalom, with a runner-up spot in the Super G, placing the team third overall. There was also an impressive fifth for AS1 Anna Ford in the Super G Combined.

Guest said: "The girls had incredibly strong performances throughout. Every one of them achieved results they wanted."

"We will now refocus, starting with our camp from May 4-14."

The snowboarding women fielded a team half made up of development boarders, so to secure a silver in the slopestyle proved the quality coming through for Sgt Hannah Pringle's team, who ended up third overall.

She said: "Even though we didn't win, we still left on a high with what has been achieved this season."

Men's captain Chf Tech Martin Boon saw his charges take gold in the SBX through Sqn Ldr Paddy Morris, with Flt Lt Chris Harrington coming third, Cpl Sam Brown second in the PGS, with Morris taking gold again in the slopestyle, with Cpl Sean Davey third.

Morris took the individual title, ably supported by Davey, who came third, on their way to the team title.

Boon said: "The team put an excellent performance forward, their determination and passion showed in every event. Everyone was proud of their team and their individual performances."

**Go to Instagram @rafwsaa for details about the ski training camp in May and the Alpine sports association in general.**



**BROTHERS IN ARMS:** Fg Off Ollie Weeks hugs men's ski team captain Cpl Barnaby Rudge

# FOR GLORY



IT'S BACK: RAF Luge

NO. 1: RAF Skeleton

"WE BACK ourselves; we win as a team or we lose as one," said Flt Lt Jonny Anderson, RAF Bobsleigh team manager speaking from St Moritz.

The bullish words are shared by all three Service team spokesmen as the season reaches Inter-Service time in Switzerland, on the ice track regarded as the best in the business.

Former GB star Anderson believes his teams are in for a medal haul with the women looking to sweep the board, having won last year's event at Lillehammer, Norway, while the men, performing without two of their big guns, are aiming for podium slots in a championship that will be decided, as Anderson says, "by the ones who blink first."

The luge team are also gunning for a cleansweep, according to coach Off Cdt Luke Farrar.

"We have a lot of new sliders this year, but we are looking at winning in both disciplines – all the medals in all the races," he said.

Skeleton OIC Flt Lt Rhys Thornbury said: "We have a really good squad, and we are aiming to improve on last year's clean sweep, so we'll be pushing ourselves harder."

Speaking about the Swiss venue and his team's aims, Anderson added: "It's great to break the norm but with new tracks are new challenges, and

logistically speaking St Moritz throws up several."

He added: "The girls are in a strong position with AS1 Emily Cantley, who won fastest brakewoman in 2023, now here driving and our number one. They are looking for team gold."

"It will be closer for the guys, although we are without Cpls John Stanbridge and Alex Cartegena, while L/Cpl Shanwayne Stephens will be in an Olympic face-off with Army slider Neil Gleeson. So, it will be too close to call, but it will be a great competition and we will be looking to give our athletes the best opportunity we can to win this thing."

Farrar added: "We have a lot of new sliders due to work commitments. I would normally be sliding but I start my commission at Cranwell, and others are also missing."

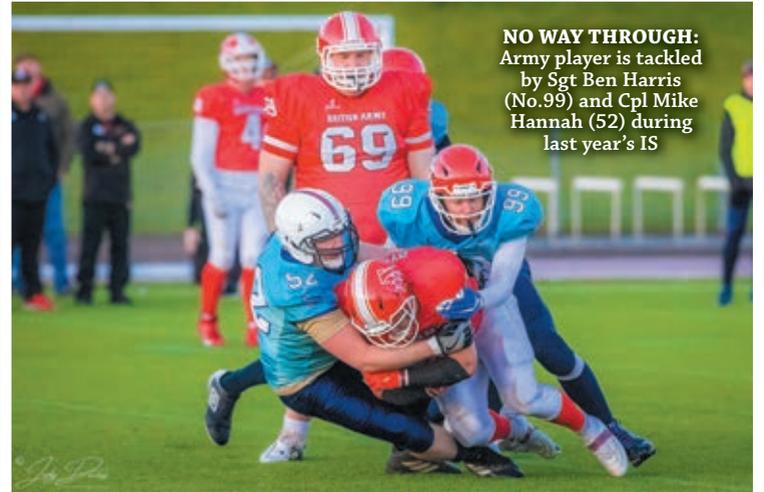
"Life and work have moved us around, but our professional set-up means new stars are coming through and doing so with the right attitude."

● Follow RAF Ice Sports on Instagram @raficesports.



OLYMPIC FACE-OFF: L/Cpl Shanwayne Stephens

## GRIDIRON



NO WAY THROUGH: Army player is tackled by Sgt Ben Harris (No.99) and Cpl Mike Hannah (52) during last year's IS

# Ironmen wanted for IS crown fight

THE RAF'S Gridiron stars are looking for new blood to ensure they retain their Inter-Services crown after taking the inaugural title last year.

The Mustangs – who beat Army Jackals 41-18 to take last year's championship, after a 24-6 win over the Royal Navy – are holding the first of a series of camps at RAF Northolt on March 18-22.

Assistant head coach and general manager Sgt Paul Wakeford said: "We are looking to expand the team and to find some new talent. This camp is not just the start of the year, but the chance to introduce some rookies to the game and players from other sports who may be looking to try something new or who simply just caught the bug after our win last year."

The association was using RAF Wittering as its Home of Sport, but work to pitches at the station has meant a move to Northolt.

Wakeford said: "We didn't want to wait around when it came to getting the camp set up, so we are delighted that Northolt came in to help us. Their facilities are great for the camp, with break-out areas to discuss things once we are off field. It will be a great camp and we are grateful to them."

He added: "We have another camp in a few months, which will

be focused on the main team. Things will be a lot harder for us this time... the Army weren't overly happy with last year's outcome. They were expecting to win the whole thing, but we have a great core of talent who actually played the sport, so we called on that experience, but that can only carry you so far, we need a change of course and to introduce new blood."

As for the reaction to the camp's announcement, Wakeford said it has been nothing but good.

"We've had a positive response from new players, plus those who turned up last year are all back and up for it."

"Because we are Inter-Service champions people know we are serious, they know we mean business and that this is a sport to be part of now."

"I have heard from people who play other sports, who may be on the periphery of their current sport, they are now looking at us with interested eyes, so they can come along and be a part of something that is winning, they can hone their skills and we can hone anyone with an athletic background."

"We have a great coaching staff, we can get the basics of the sport into them."

● Email: rafamericanfootball@gmail.com for details on the camp.



QUARTERBACK: Sqn Ldr Cameron Stewart

the RAF on the world stage, with eyes set on the ultimate goal, the Olympic Games.

"This year's journey has been about more than just physical training; it has been a testament to the spirit of the Air Force – commitment, teamwork and the relentless pursuit of excellence."

"For these RAF athletes, the journey from novice to Olympian is a dream within reach, fuelled by hard work, determination and the inspiring legacy of those who have slid down the icy tracks before them."

### HISTORY-MAKER:

Women's Telemark team member Flt Lt Emma Tadman, who finished fifth overall



### TESTING COURSE:

Boardercross competitors



GUEST OF HONOUR: Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh presents downhill gold medal to RAF women's ski captain Fg Off Kirsty Guest, who won three events

# 5 pages of the best of RAF Sports action



## ALPINE

# Hat-trick at Meribel

## Women's Telemark landmark and joy for ski and boarder men

### Daniel Abrahams

THE SERVICE'S Alpine sports stars scooped an historic first among a hat-trick of team wins on the slopes of the French Alps following a stellar Inter-Services championships.

The landmark first Telemark women's team win was backed up by Cpl Barnaby Rudge's first men's team title as captain after eight years battling to take the top spot, while the men's snowboarders blasted their way to gold led by captain Chf Tech Martin Boon.

The telemark triumph at Meribel was spearheaded by captain Sqn Ldr Clare Thomas, who retained the individual title 12 months after becoming the first RAF woman to win it.

She said: "The women had a cracking competition and an epic week. It was a challenge to podium, but we put in some superb performances to take the title. I'm so proud of us all!"

In a transitional year the men's

team saw Wg Cdr Rob Print secure bronze in the GS event, and fifth, a best finish in the male combined event, with Sgt Cameron Howie coming 10th overall.

After securing a stylish team win in the men's ski event, a delighted Cpl Barnaby Rudge said: "I was quietly confident that we could go there and win but to take three out of four events and come a close second in the one we didn't win is massive."

"I can't remember a year when the Army didn't win a single event and to beat them by as many points as we did was incredible. To go and win in the style that we did in what was my last year as skipper, well, I'm over the moon."

Fg Off Ollie Weeks, in his debut IS, took four individual titles: downhill, slalom, GS and Individual Combined, placing second in the SG and Super Combined.

The women's team, who suffered the loss

Continued on p26-27



JUBILATION: Women's Telemark team members celebrate their historic first. Left to right, captain Sqn Ldr Clare Thomas, Ft Lt Sarah Shave and Wg Cdr Alex Smyth



BOARD MEDALLISTS: SBX winner Sqn Ldr Paddy Morris, centre, with third-placed Ft Lt Chris Harrington, right



TOP TEAM: (l-r) Skiers Sgt Gary Smith, Plt Off Jed McNab, Ft Lt Dan Barton, captain Cpl Barnaby Rudge, Fg Off Ollie Weeks and Ft Lt Si Cook on the podium, with Sophie Duchess of Edinburgh, right, patron of the UKAF Winter Sports Association



**Announcements**

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Puzzles
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# R'n'R

**Win!**



**Win true life  
drama on  
DVD ● p4**

# Fairy tale romcom – Pretty Woman

● See  
pages  
4-5



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

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# Oscar nominees

# R'n'R

## Film Review

### The Zone of Interest (12A)

In cinemas now

# Life next to death camp

**A**USCHWITZ IS the immediate background and backdrop to the home life of its architect Rudolf Höss in Jonathan Glazer's skewed observational film *The Zone of Interest*, loosely based on the 2014 novel by the late Martin Amis.

Situated right on the border of the concentration camp, very few direct references are made to the atrocities going on next door. Instead we watch Höss (Christian Friedel) leave for work and observe how his wife Hedwig (Sandra Hüller) keeps her home – with the aid of Jewish maids – and how his kids play in their large garden; all the while the

chimneys roar and people scream from the other side of the fence.

It is a strange kind of horror, not often depicted in cinema, constantly implicated whilst watching seemingly ordinary people carrying out ordinary household tasks, the evil that sits just under the surface, revealing itself in moments that are expected and yet shocking.

Höss is shown to hold a great deal of respect as commandant among the Nazi commanders, attending meetings about how to create the next improved death chamber, the film leans into the human struggles one faces when preparing for a promotion, or having to relocate away

**THE STAR-STUDED** ceremony for the 96<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards – better known as the Oscars – takes place on March 10.

Nominations for best picture include *Anatomy of a Fall*, *The Holdovers* and *The Zone of Interest*. The *Holdovers*' Paul Giamatti is up for Best Actor in a Leading Role and his co-star Da'Vine Joy Randolph for Best Actress in a Supporting Role.

Sandra Hüller is in the running for Best Actress in a Leading Role for *Anatomy of*

*a Fall*, with the film's Justine Triet and *The Zone of Interest*'s Jonathan Glazer listed for Best Directing.

*The Zone of Interest* is up for Best Adapted Screenplay and Best international feature film, with *Anatomy of a Fall* and *The Holders* for Best Original Screenplay.

You can watch the ceremony on ITV1 and ITXV with a new companion show hosted by Jonathan Ross, starting at 10.30pm on March 10.

See our reviews of the films here.



**COMMANDANT:** Höss (Christian Friedel)

task to the audience, to show a familiar side of the persecutors and patrons as opposed to the default mode of identifying with the victims. Focusing on the domestic banality, it reveals a different and much more uncomfortable kind of malevolence. It would appear at first that Höss and his wife function so easily due to their ability to shut out and ignore the heinous mass murder next door, however a few slips of the veil reveal that they have fully embraced their part.

A brilliantly made but nonetheless challenging art film that gives another dimension to evil.

**Review by Sam Cooney**  
4 roundels out of 5



**DOTING MUM:** Hedwig in her home next to Auschwitz

from your family, or deal with physical health. These scenes are deliberately challenging, knowing that you will be unable

to compartmentalise from the ghastly acts that are happening all around.

Glazer presents an interesting

## Film Review

### Anatomy of a Fall (15)

Out now

# The fall-out following suspicious death of a husband



**THE WIFE:** Sandra (Sandra Hüller) is in spotlight

**A**FRAUGHT and complex marriage is put on trial when a man is found dead in front of his chalet, having fallen from the attic. Discovered with a fatal head injury, it may have resulted from a knock during the fall – or maybe just before.

Although we see the moments around his death, we do not yet have the context. This will be drawn out in the courtroom, where the film spends most of its runtime. Sandra (Sandra Hüller) is a successful German novelist living in France with her partially-blind son Daniel (Milo Machado Graner), family dog Snoop, and until now, her husband Samuel (Samuel Theis) – but the relationship certainly had issues, as the prosecution will make evident.

Sandra is suspected of killing Samuel for various reasons: the circumstances around the incident itself, their history of violent exchanges, and going as deep as the resentments that they harboured for one another.

The courtroom scenes are less stagey than is common in films. By comparison

this feels conversational, almost intimate, but nonetheless pointed and combative. Witnesses are brought to the stand and cross-examined, but when evidence is presented, or an anecdote described, we see the moments play out. One particular fight is viewed almost in its entirety, and it feels painfully lived-in.

The performances of the central cast are phenomenal. Samuel is only seen briefly in flashbacks, as someone struggling severely with work-life demands – whether he is suicidal or not will be debated. Daniel is 10 years old and witnesses the entire trial, every revelation fracturing the idea of his family. Sandra is the one in the spotlight, under scrutiny, her resilience almost working against her. The centre of the film, she enriches the text deeply though we cannot be sure if she is telling the truth.

*Anatomy of a Fall* is a riveting courtroom drama, expertly played.

**Review by Sam Cooney**  
4 out of 5 roundels



## Film Review

### The Holdovers (15)

Out now

# School's out – but not for unfortunate Angus

**A**LONELY and vindictive tutor at a New England boarding school draws the short straw in looking after the students who will remain on campus over Christmas – as if this wasn't punishment enough.

Set in 1970, Alexander Payne's *The Holdovers* – the nickname for the children who will stay at school over the break – is a film from another time. The look, pace and even the trailer all lend themselves to a cinematic feeling of the 70s. It is cosy filmmaking, warm and inviting but also very funny and with a lot of heart.

Paul Giamatti plays Mr Hunham – or 'Wall-eye' as he is nicknamed on account of his lazy eye – a disciplinarian who lives on campus by himself and delights in the torment of his students. The boys in his care are a rag tag bunch of kids left behind; if they didn't have abandonment issues before, they will now as the cantankerous Hunham intends on keeping the regular school schedule throughout the holidays.

Angus (Dominic Sessa) is at the centre of the film, a bright but cocky young man who is shouldering a complex depression, and that's before he lands in the crooked crosshair of Wall-

eye. Offsetting the tension among this makeshift family, is Miss Lamb (Da'Vine Joy Randolph) the school's cook who will make meals for everyone out of whatever ingredients have been left over. Reeling from the loss of her son serving in Vietnam, she does not give much away, but provides a vital maternal balance.

Stuck together in the confines of an empty school, these warring personalities find their own harmony, not without great resistance, and make *The Holdovers* a delightfully enjoyable film, tinged with sadness, that should be played for many Christmases to come.

**Review by Sam Cooney**  
Four out of five roundels



**ODD COUPLE:** Angus (Dominic Sessa) and Wall-eye (Paul Giamatti)

# R'n'R



**Theatre**  
**Kiss Me, Kate**  
 Barbican Theatre, London

## Dunbar does his Duty

**A**DRIAN DUNBAR (*Ridley, Line of Duty*) makes his musical theatre debut this summer in the classic show *Kiss Me, Kate*. For a strictly limited 15-week season at London's Barbican Theatre, Dunbar will appear as Fred Graham, with Broadway musical superstar and Tony Award winner Stephanie J. Block (*Into The Woods, The Cher Show, 9 To 5*) making her West End debut as Lilli Vanessi/Katharine.



**BIG NAMES:** Stars Dunbar and Block

This new production of Cole Porter's musical masterpiece premieres at the Barbican on June 4 and runs until September 14.

Directed by Bartlett Sher (*The King and I, South Pacific* and *To Kill A Mockingbird*), it has a company of more than 50, including a full-scale orchestra, and features Porter classics such as *Another Op'nin', Another Show; Brush Up Your Shakespeare; Tom, Dick or Harry* and *It's Too Darn Hot*.

Dunbar said: "I'm so delighted to be returning to the stage this summer to my spiritual home at the Barbican – where I started my career at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama – especially in this Cole Porter classic with the wonderful creative team including Bart Sher and Stephanie J. Block. Summer 2024 just got a lot brighter."

Producer Howard Panter added: "I'm delighted to be working with Adrian, Stephanie and Bart to bring this classic,

hilarious, golden-age musical comedy to the Barbican this summer. Cole Porter's timeless masterpiece has everything you want: it's fun, infectious and pure entertainment. It will be the perfect summer treat for London audiences this year."

Block said: "Look... when asked to bring a Cole Porter classic to the Barbican stage under the care and vision of Bart Sher, one must say 'yes!' There are so many 'firsts' to this opportunity, and at this stage of my career, 'firsts' are not the norm. How wonderfully scary and challenging and thrilling."

"I cannot wait to dive into this timeless classic and put a fresh stamp on it alongside the incredible Adrian Dunbar. Mark my words, this *Kiss Me, Kate* will most definitely not be just another op'nin', another show."

● **Go to:** [KissMeKateMusical.com](http://KissMeKateMusical.com) for ticket information.



**DVD**  
**Sound of Freedom (15)**  
 Out now on DVD, Blu-ray and digital  
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## Federal agent who took on the child traffickers

**J**IM CAVIEZEL (*The Passion of the Christ, The Thin Red Line*), Mira Sorvino (*Mighty Aphrodite*) and Bill Camp (*12 Years a Slave, The Killing of a Sacred Deer*) star in this gripping drama – a global box office sensation – that's based on an incredible true story.

After rescuing a young boy from ruthless child traffickers, federal agent Tim Ballard (Caviezal, inspired by the real-life Homeland Security agent) learns that the boy's sister is still captive and decides to embark on a dangerous mission to save her.



With time running out, he quits his job and journeys deep into the Colombian jungle, putting his life on the line to free her from a fate worse than death.

We have copies of *Sound of Freedom* on DVD to win. For your chance to own one, tell us:

**Who plays federal agent Tim Bannon in the film?**

Email your answer, marked Sound of Freedom DVD competition, to: [tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk](mailto: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 22.



**Theatre**  
**Pretty Woman**  
 UK and Ireland tour

# Ore's a Happy Man in latest venture

**S**TRICTLY COME *Dancing* winner Ore Oduba is back on stage – starring in the musical of the smash-hit film *Pretty Woman*, now on a UK and Ireland tour.

Oduba plays Happy Man/Mr Thompson in the stage version of the movie that made Julia Roberts a superstar. *Love Island* winner Amber Davies leads the cast as Vivian Ward, the role played by Roberts, and Oliver Savile (Luca in *Ted Lasso*) plays Edward Lewis in the role Richard Gere made famous in the 1990 film. They star alongside *Six: The Musical* queen Natalie Paris as Kit De Luca.

The romantic comedy tells the story of how unlikely soulmates Vivian and Edward overcome all odds to find each other... and themselves. Roy Orbison's classic song *Oh, Pretty Woman* inspired the film, which features a score by Bryan Adams and Jim Vallance (*Summer of 69, Heaven*).

According to his wife Barbara and daughter Kathleen, director of the film and co-writer of the musical Garry Marshall would have been thrilled to learn of its ongoing success. He passed away in 2016, aged 81, after working on the production with

the movie's writer J.F. Lawton. "Had someone told him it would be such a hit around the world he wouldn't have believed it. Not only did it make it to Broadway, it's bringing joy to so many people in so many other places," said Barbara.

In the late-50s Bronx-born Marshall landed a job writing gags for Rat Pack funnyman Joey Bishop. He broke into TV on the writing staff of *The Tonight Show* before adapting Neil Simon's *The Odd Couple* for the small screen. He created *Happy Days* in 1974, then spin-offs *Laverne & Shirley* (starring his sister Penny) and *Mork & Mindy*.

He went on to direct films including *Young Doctors in Love, The Flamingo Kid, Overboard* and *Beaches* before *Pretty Woman* gave him the biggest hit of his career. Set in the late-80s, it was conceived as a much darker story, with LA streetwise sex worker Vivian (Roberts) struggling with a cocaine addiction and Edward (Gere), the rich businessman who hires her for a week, abandoning her at the end.

Garry worked closely with screenwriter Lawton to refashion it as a fairy tale romcom in which



**VERSATILE:** Presenter, actor and *Strictly Come Dancing* judge



**WORLDS APART:** Businessman Edward (Oliver Savile) and Vivian (Julia Roberts)

Vivian falls for Edward's charms and she rescues him right back.

Marshall decided to make Vivian a more resilient character than she was in the preliminary draft.



Dancing winner Ore Oduba is back in musical theatre as Happy Man/Mr Thompson



... (Vivian) and sex worker Vivian (Amber Davies)

romcom ever, with a worldwide gross of \$463.4 million.

Turning the movie into a stage show was Barbara's idea. Garry went on to direct the *Runaway Bride* and *The Princess Diaries*.

"But I kept saying to him 'You know, this could be a musical' and he'd say 'Yeah, OK' but nothing happened. Finally, maybe 15 or more years later, he and J.F. started writing together one day a week," Barbara explained.

Marshall said of the rewrite: "The original *Pretty Woman* was terrific and a hit but I always felt that creatively I didn't do justice to Richard Gere's character. So, in the musical we have some great new moments for Richard's character. As much as he changed Vivian's life, she changed his life. That wasn't totally clear in the picture, so we make that much clearer."

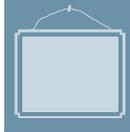
The original production played at Chicago's Oriental Theatre in March 2018, with Roberts in attendance.

Barbara said: "She was very cute. We were sitting together during the show and she would lean over and say 'I wrote that line.'"

She added: "Now people come to this musical wearing the clothes, like the famous red dress or the trench coat with the same Julia outfit underneath, in the high boots and blonde wigs."

"They bring their husbands and boyfriends, who then end up really enjoying it too. There's a lot there in the storytelling that's really beautiful and romantic and uplifting, and I think everyone can connect to that."

● ***Pretty Woman: The Musical* is at Milton Keynes Theatre from March 19-30. Go to: [uk.prettywomanthemusical.com](http://uk.prettywomanthemusical.com) for tour details.**



## Galleries

### Tate Britain

Sargent and Fashion



**BROUGHT TO LIFE:** Spanish dancer Carmen Dauset Moreno's portrait, *La Carmencita* (1890), and dress she wore for the sitting. PHOTO: © TATE (JAI MONAGHAN)

# Sargent: War artist with the X factor

**T**HE SUMPTUOUS new blockbuster exhibition *Sargent and Fashion*, now on at Tate Britain, London is a triumph, writes Tracey Allen.

This major show is dedicated to the great portrait painter John Singer Sargent (1856-1925).

"It reveals his ground-breaking role as a stylist, fashioning the image his sitters presented to the world through sartorial choices," said a Tate Britain spokesperson.

Staged in collaboration with the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the exhibition features 60 works, including rare loans as well as works drawn from Tate and MFA's extensive collections.

"These are shown alongside more than a dozen period dresses and accessories, many of which were worn by his sitters. Several of these garments have been reunited for the first time with Sargent's portraits of their wearers, offering a fresh perspective on the most celebrated portraitist of his generation and the society in which he worked," the spokesperson added.

Many of the celebrated artist's most famous paintings are included; his infamous portrait of socialite *Virginie Amélie Gautreau, Madame X*, (1883-4) considered scandalous at the time as it originally showed one diamond strap of her black evening dress falling from her shoulder, plus the striking portraits *Dr Pozzi at Home* (1881) depicting the aesthete surgeon Samuel-Jean Pozzi in a flamboyant red dressing gown and Turkish slippers, *Lady Agnew of Lochnaw* (1892) and *Lady Helen Vincent, Viscountess d' Abernon* (1904).

Sargent's dramatic image of *Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth* (1889) is exhibited alongside Terry's dress and cloak, as well as *La Carmencita* (1890) showing 21-year-old Spanish dancer Carmen Dauset



**CONSIDERED SCANDALOUS:** *Virginie Amélie Gautreau, Madame X*, (1883-4) strikes sultry pose wearing strappy gown © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Arthur Hoppock Hearn Memorial Fund

Moreno, who performed in music halls across the United States, Europe, and South America.

The spokesperson explained: "For the first time, visitors have the chance to view this stunning portrait next to the dancer's sparkling yellow satin costume. Together, this collection of paintings and garments offer a new generation and those already familiar with his work the chance to discover and reconsider Sargent and his enduring influence."

And the regalia worn by *Charles Stewart, sixth Marquess of Londonderry at the Coronation of Edward VII* (1904) is reunited with the painting to show how the artist conveyed both rank and personality through clothing. He had declined a commission to paint the Coronation two years earlier.

During World War I Sargent became an official war artist for the Allies and went to the front in northern France. His time there resulted in his monumental painting *Gassed*, on permanent display at London's Imperial War Museum.

He lived in Tite Street, Chelsea, where he was a friend and neighbour of Oscar Wilde. Sargent died in his sleep at home in London in 1925, aged 69, after a heart attack.

● ***Sargent and Fashion* runs until July 7. Everyone aged 16-25 can visit all Tate exhibitions for £5 by joining Tate Collective. Go to: [tate.org.uk](http://tate.org.uk) for details.**



**DANDY:** Surgeon Samuel-Jean Pozzi depicted in red dressing gown and Turkish slippers in *Dr Pozzi at Home* (1881) © The Armand Hammer Collection



## Your Announcements

You can email photos for announcements on this page to: [tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk](mailto:tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk)

### Deaths



**WO Barry Pullen**

**PULLEN** Barry, MBE (retired TG11 Warrant Officer) died on December 22, 2023 aged 77. Widower of the late Christine Pullen.

Much-loved Dad to Liz, partner of Caroline and wonderful Grandad to Leah and Daniel. Barry's funeral was held on Friday, January 26 at The Parish Church of St John the Baptist, Barnack with Ufford, followed by the committal at All Saints' Churchyard, Wittering. If you would like to contact Liz (his daughter), please email: [lizpullen70@gmail.com](mailto:lizpullen70@gmail.com)

### 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](mailto: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 this month.

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 the website: [tg11association.com](http://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).

**124 Entry Apprentices** – RAF Cosford, 1974-77. 50th anniversary reunion. Members will be meeting at The Limes Country Lodge Hotel, Earlswood, Solihull on Saturday, October 12 with an informal buffet luncheon to follow on in the evening of Sunday, October 13.

For further information please email: [nigelcooper1@live.co.uk](mailto:nigelcooper1@live.co.uk) or call/WhatsApp on: 07986 200137.

We have currently managed to locate and contact more than 30 of our 49 original members so a great time is assured.

### Associations

**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 the website: [rafaarmourers.co.uk](http://rafaarmourers.co.uk) or you can

contact the committee via email at: [plumbersrest@outlook.com](mailto:plumbersrest@outlook.com).

**THE** Association of RAF Women Officers (ARAFWO) is a lively, friendly, world-wide networking group.

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

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

### RAFA vacancy

**DUE** to the recent retirement of our Branch Secretary, the result of a road accident, the Beccles and Southwold Area Branch of the RAF Association (RAFA), has an important vacancy to be filled at the earliest opportunity.

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

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

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

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

For further information please contact the Branch President, Brian Vousden, via email: [lancaster457@btinternet.com](mailto:lancaster457@btinternet.com), and also please see our website: [rafabecclesandsouthwold.wordpress.com/](http://rafabecclesandsouthwold.wordpress.com/).

## RAFA Cranwell concert

**THE ANNUAL** RAFA Cranwell Branch Bomber County Charity Concert will be held on Sunday, May 12 from 7pm to 10pm.

It will take place at the Masonic Rooms, Watergate, Sleaford, with music by the Miller Magic Big Band, a 17-piece swing orchestra, under the direction of Jim McQuade BEM.

Tickets cost £10 each and are available from April 1 from Moore & Scrupps Jewellers and Sleaford Jewellers, both of Southgate, Sleaford, in the foyer of Sleaford's Tesco Superstore from 10am until 4pm on Thursday, May 9, and on the door of the Masonic Rooms, from 6.30pm on the evening of the concert.

There will be a licensed bar,

available throughout the concert, selling beers, wines, spirits and soft drinks.

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

The concert is dedicated to the airmen of Bomber Command who took part in the disastrous Nuremberg Raid on the night of March 30-31, 1944.

This year the concert also celebrates the 80th anniversary of the D-Day Landings on June 6, 1944.

All profits go to the RAFA Wings Appeal Charity which helps and supports serving and veterans of the RAF and Air Forces of the Commonwealth, their spouses and dependants.

## Charity to launch new group for LGBT+ vets



**THE RAF Benevolent Fund** is launching a new Telephone Friendship Group for LGBTQ+ veterans in the RAF, to help improve loneliness and isolation within the veteran community.

It comes after the release of The Etherton Review last July, which highlighted how the LGBTQ+ community was treated in the Armed Forces before 2000 and the repeal of the so-called 'gay ban'.

A Northumbria University study released last year revealed that more than 84 per cent of LGBTQ+ veterans affected by the ban reported feeling lonely and more than 62 per cent socially isolated.

Contact: [support@rafbf.org.uk](mailto:support@rafbf.org.uk) if you would like to take part in the Telephone Friendship Group, or know anyone who may be interested.

## Home hosts open day

**THE** Royal Star & Garter Care Home in Surbiton is having an open day for veterans, families and friends on March 15 and 16, from 2 to 4pm.

The visit will include a tour of the Home, to include the in-house physiotherapy room, hair salon, garden, activities room and lounges. Those wishing to attend are asked to register in advance.

Mary, 99, whose husband served in the Navy, is now a permanent resident at the Home.

She said: "I like the singing activities. I do the exercise classes each morning, and Pilates sessions, and I'm steadier on my feet now. I'm very happy."

● To register go to: [starandgarter.org/openday](http://starandgarter.org/openday) or call: 020 8339 5100.

### 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](mailto:tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk). Please note that due to the coronavirus pandemic we are currently unable to accept notices submitted by post.

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# Get your kit on and go Commando

**THE RAF Commando Association is holding its inaugural event at RAF Brize Norton next month and is looking for new members.**

The Association has only recently formed and is open to all RAF personnel, from all branches, who have completed the Commando Course, or transferred in from other Services and are commando trained.

Wg Cdr Angus MacIntyre, Association Chairman, said: "The Association has two aims – to act as a hub for the veterans and those qualified as Green Beret Commandos in the RAF, and as a recruiting information hub for those wishing to undertake the course and then serve with the RAF Global Enablement Force, 3 Commando Brigade or the Special Forces Support Group."

The Association particularly wants to encourage female RAF personnel to attempt the course and be the first female RAF Commando.

He added: "The Royal Navy

has three women who have completed the Commando course, including a helicopter pilot. In the last two years the Army has got three women through pre-parachute selection, so we are behind the drag curve.

"We know we have women in the RAF who are fit and motivated and we would look to support any young woman keen to undertake the 11-week training course.

"Applicants from any branch of any rank would be supported.

"Trainees need to complete a one-week Commando Suitability Training pre-acquaint course run by 29 Commando Regiment RA, then a four-week pre-Commando course which is much more focused on techniques and training.

"On the last day of the course there is a formal assessment and if you pass you go on to the 11-week course, so it's quite a commitment.

"Any rank, from AS1 upwards could be accepted for training.



LIFETIME QUALIFICATION: RAF Commandos in training

"Having passed the course, we would expect people within two to three years, whatever branch or trade, to be moved into a post within the Global Enablement Force. Once you are Commando trained it is a lifetime qualification.

"Anyone interested should approach the Association and we will put you in contact with the training authorities in 29 Commando Regt RA.

"We are holding our association's inaugural event at Brize Norton on April 22 and

I encourage all members of the Association to attend if they can. And if you are not in the Association but are commando trained, please do come along anyway to meet us."

● Email: [AirRAFCdoAssociation@mod.gov.uk](mailto:AirRAFCdoAssociation@mod.gov.uk) for more details.

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# R'n'R



## Prize Crossword No. 356

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

### Across

1. Places out east of planet (5)
4. Naughty Saki hid West African shirt (7)
8. Greek letter in corner of RAF aircraft (7)
9. Fashionable record that starts clumsy (5)
10. Duck writer at golf event (4)
11. Thug read about relative (8)
13. Beams to elevate, by the sound of it (4)
14. American girl at a swimming event (4)
16. Falls over cad's case (8)
17. From Cordoba, Liam reached island (4)
20. Work Edward chose (5)
21. Alan loses his head over nothing, nothing from sheepish product (7)
22. Where a Highlander will cash in (7)
23. Artist uses it for comfort at end of April (5)

### Down

1. Queen furious at award (8,5)
2. Racket Novak owns is size eleven originally (5)
3. Santa's first present is a White Christmas (4)
4. Order we hear Turpin gave volunteers at end of conflict (6)
5. Torpedo Police leader and freshwater fish (5,3)
6. Apathy caused by a tinier error (7)
7. Bury top horse-race with wide-ranging result (13)
12. Spartan general's RAF aircraft (8)
13. Teacher returns German dish (7)
15. Wizard plane, presumably (6)
18. Some great lasagne on RAF aircraft (5)
19. Fairy-tale opening in days of yore (4)

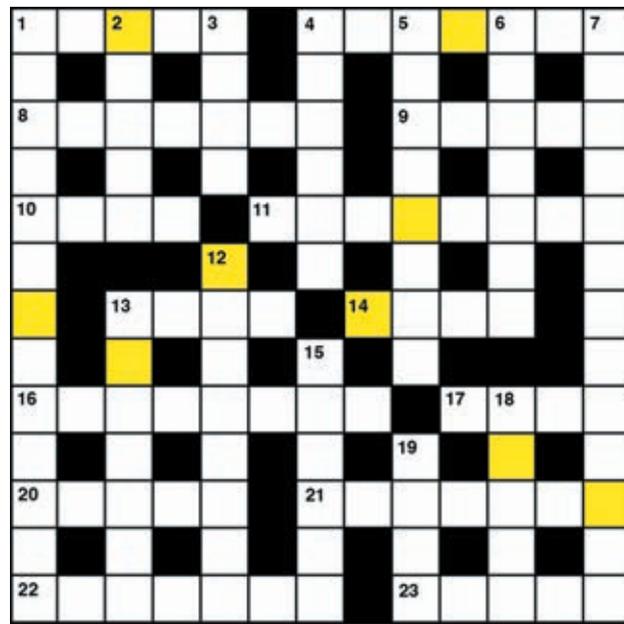
Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

RAF word: ..... Crossword No. 356

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 22. Prize Crossword No. 355 winner is: John Maw, Leeds.



### Solution to Crossword No 355:

Across – 6. Missile 7. Strap 9. Royal 10. Hacksaw 12. Globemaster 14. High Wycombe 18. Staging 19. Brown 21. To Air 22. Surface

Down – 1. Pilot 2. Assail 3. Ale 4. Stakes 5. Rafales 8. Bad Mood 11. Obeying 13. Fiction 15. Haggis 16. Bereft 17. Twice 20. Fur

RAF word – Frontline

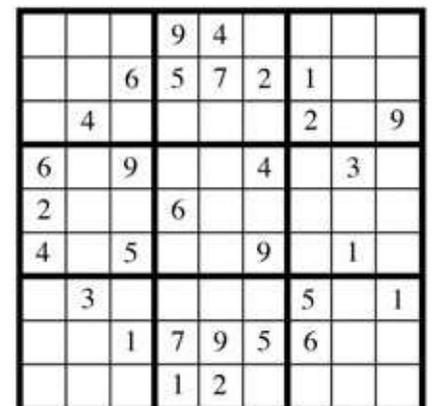


## Prize Su Doku No. 366

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 22.

The winner of Su Doku No: 365 is: Mrs L Hayward-Mudge, King's Lynn.



### Solution to Su Doku No: 365



## Film Review

**Wicked Little Letters (15)**  
In cinemas now

# Poison pen letters that split a town

**A** NEW FILM starring Olivia Colman is bound to prompt plenty of interest and *Wicked Little Letters* is no exception. Colman (*The Crown*, *The Favourite*) heads the stellar cast, which also features Jessie Buckley (*Wild Rose*), Anjana Vasan (*We Are Lady Parts*) and Timothy Spall (*Mr Turner*) in this entertaining tale of dark goings-on in the genteel seaside town of Littlehampton in the 1920s – based on a true story.

Colman plays pious spinster Edith Swan who appears to be the main target for a slew of foul-mouthed, obscene, anonymous letters that upset the community.

The culprit is strongly suspected to be Edith's unconventional neighbour Rose Gooding (Buckley), a feisty Irish single mother of a young daughter who has moved to the town after World War I. She scandalises the disapproving townsfolk with her unconventional behaviour – living with her new partner (Malachi Kirby, *Small Axe: Mangrove*), rabble-rousing in the pub, appearing barefoot in public and using bad language.

But all is not what it seems and there's fun to



LOATHE THY NEIGHBOUR: Edith (Colman) and Rose (Buckley)

be had working out who is the real author of the abusive missives. It's hardly a well-kept secret however, as the script (by writer-comedian Johnny Sweet) is inspired by a real-life court case that was extensively covered in the national press at the time.

Vasan is excellent as the county's first female police officer Gladys Moss, and Spall is thoroughly convincing as Edith's tyrannical father Edward. The supporting cast also have a high pedigree – Hugh Skinner (*The Windsors*, *WIA*) plays dim-witted Constable Papperwick, and there are memorable cameos from Gemma Jones (*Bridget Jones's Diary*) as Edith's broken mother, Dame Eileen Atkins (*Doc Martin*) and Joanna Scanlon (*After Love*, *The Thick of It*) as neighbours who are doubtful of Rose's guilt and, with Police Officer Moss, set out to catch the real author of the creatively swearsy letters.

Director Thea Sharrock's (*Me Before You*) latest feature is an immensely watchable film that, although very funny, casts a penetrating light on the disturbing reasons behind the secret scribbler's motivation.

Review by Tracey Allen

Four roundels out of five ●●●●



## Film Review

**Vindication Swim (PG)**  
Out now

# Mercedes' TWO epic swims

**R**ELEASED ON March 8 – International Women's Day – to celebrate the incredible achievements of Mercedes Gleitze, *Vindication Swim* is something of a niche film but it's a beautifully shot biographical drama that tells the inspirational story of the first British woman to swim the Channel – in 1927.

Kirsten Callaghan stars as the committed Mercedes, who refuses to be cowed by the prevailing attitudes towards women at the time – and prejudice because of her German parentage – and is determined to fulfil her long-held ambition.

She finally succeeds after seven unsuccessful attempts, and completes the gruelling challenge in 15 hours. But she is forced to make a 'vindication swim' to retain her record and her legacy after another woman, the glamorous Edith Grade (Victoria Summer, *Saving Mr Banks*) claims to have swum the Channel faster just a few days later.

Mercedes risks her life and attempts the swim in October, in unsuitable weather, urged on by her unlikely coach Harold Best (John Locke, *Poor Things*), a former Channel swimmer



CHANNEL SWIMS: Gleitze (Callaghan)

himself, who she has persuaded out of self-pitying retirement to be her mentor.

Impressively, Callaghan, making her film debut, took on all the extremely demanding sea swimming needed for the story herself, with no body doubles or green screens used.

The film is also a triumph for its precocious writer and director, 23-year-old Elliott Hasler.

Gleitze went on to become the first known person to swim the Straits of Gibraltar, established other swimming records and founded a charity for the homeless.

After retiring from swimming, she became a mother and housewife and, poignantly, chose not to reveal her past achievements to her family.

Review by Tracey Allen

4 roundels out of 5 ●●●●