

**The Forces' favourite paper**

**Mod-ern man**  
Paul Weller new release beats Covid blues



● RnR p4-5

**Win**  
Surviving the dying days of the Reich



● RnR P3

**ROYAL AIR FORCE**

Friday **July 10** 2020  
No 1495 **70p**

# RAF News



## Battle of Britain 80th anniversary



See p14 to p18

**Netball**  
Shooting for the top



● Sport p23

**Rugby Union**  
Lockdown motivator



● Sport p26

## VIP Voyager Russia alert



### Staff Reporter

THE RAF'S newly-repainted VIP Voyager was scrambled from Brize Norton to support Typhoons tracking a long-range Russian aircraft skirting UK airspace off the Scottish coast.

The dual-role tanker and transporter, which was given a patriotic £1 million makeover to transport Prime Minister Boris Johnson and other British VIPs on foreign trips, refuelled two RAF combat jets during the operation.

The Russian aircraft was monitored by UK and Nato military chiefs from operations centres at Air Command and Boulmer in Northern England before it changed direction and headed for home.

Air Vice-Marshal Ian Duguid said: "The interception by our Typhoons of Russian military aircraft demonstrates our continuing resolve to police, protect and defend our airspace at all times"

● See p11 for Voyager makeover



**TANKS A LOT:** Voyager refuels RAF Typhoon





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“It shows the huge value of sport in the RAF to delivering operation capability”



Rich Fogden, deputy director RAF Sport, on its award-winning new film  
**pp24-25**



“It would be great for more veterans to talk to Forces vets who are living in care homes”

Former RAF medic Michelle Partington  
**p5**

“Everyone was at least 20 years younger than me”

Paul Weller on revisiting his old record label Polydor  
**R’n’R pp4-5**



## RAF News

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# Typhoons get Midas touch

**Simon Mander**

**BRITISH TYPHOON fighters have launched for the fifth time to intercept Russian aircraft off the Baltic coast.**

Lossiemouth-based 6 Sqn jets in Lithuania scrambled to track an IL-78 MIDAS air-to-air refuelling aircraft.

OC 135 Expeditionary Air Wing Wg Cdr Stu Gwinnutt said: “This interception is a continuing sign of why it is necessary to deploy the Nato Air Policing Mission here – to ensure all air users can conduct their activities in a safe and professional manner.”

The RAF is working alongside a Spanish Air Force detachment at Siauliai Air Base and a French Air Force unit at Amari Air Base in Estonia to react to any infringements on Allied air space.

The UK also leads the Nato Battlegroup deployed in Estonia and is supplying troops to the US-led Battle Group in Poland as part of the Alliance’s enhanced military mission in Eastern Europe.

**INTERCEPTORS:**  
RAF Typhoons close in on Russian Midas tanker over the Baltic during latest scramble from Lithuania



## This Week In History



**1944**

### RAF enters jet age

THE RAF’s first operational jet-powered aircraft the Gloster Meteor enters service with 616 Sqn, based at Manston in Kent.

**1957**

### Birth of the BBMF

The Historic Aircraft Flight is formed at Biggin Hill. It is rechristened as the Battle of Britain Flight a year later before a final name change to the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight in 1973.



**1969**

### Wessex Northern Ireland duty

The first detachment of Wessex helicopters is deployed to Northern Ireland to help combat sectarian violence between Catholic and Protestant communities.

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



## News

# Protector upgrade for Reaper rookies



**TRAINING UPGRADE:** The new protector UAV which will replace Reaper; inset above, the high-tech control centre used by crews who will operate the aircraft  
PHOTOS: MOD

## Simon Mander

**ROOKIE REAPER** crews will train Stateside under a new system introduced as the RAF prepares to upgrade its fleet to operate the more powerful Protector aircraft.

Personnel selected to fly and operate Reaper will spend six weeks at the General Atomics' Flight Test and Training Centre in North Dakota learning basic operations.

Courses will initially run in parallel to those at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico – home to the largest Remotely Piloted Air System training school in the world.

39 Squadron Commander Wg Cdr Colin Welsh said: "This is a huge win for us.

"Using RAF and General Atomics' instructors enables us to have complete control over the

syllabus and training objectives at every stage of the course, negating the need for a conversion to UK specific tactics, techniques and procedures."

Students will then progress to Creech Air Force Base in Nevada and join 39 Sqn, which has absorbed the Flight which previously taught the UK aspects of operating Reaper, for more advanced training.

After their combat work-up

personnel can fly operational sorties without supervision.

A similar training system will be used for the new Protector aircraft which will enter service in the early 2020s.

Protector can operate for up to 40 hours, offers improved combat and surveillance capability and can support search and rescue or disaster response missions in the UK.

## News bulletin



**SADDLE UP:** Cpl Dan and pals hit the road; below, lockdown rower clocks up the miles

## Caterers serve up charity bid

WITTERING CATERING aces have netted more than £1,000 to help children with a rare illness after chef Cpl Dan Gordon's son was struck down with the disorder.

A team of 34 fundraisers hit the rowing machines and bikes to help the Williams Syndrome Foundation which provides support to families struggling with the illness which causes learning difficulties and facial disfiguring.

Dan, whose son Henry was born with the condition, said: "The foundation provides medical experts that you can turn to.

"Families can meet up and share their experiences. It's been brilliant, without them I don't know what we would have done."

The team covered more than 3,000 miles to raise the funds.

● Go to: [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/swo-to-crow](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/swo-to-crow)



## Diddy's dandy in Akrotiri

**DIDDY THE** Shetland pony and his stablemates are back in business after donations flooded in to help the Akrotiri Riding Club, hit by a coronavirus funding crisis

They issued a cash appeal to feed and exercise their 12 horses when social distancing rules halted their usual fundraising activities.

The club's back in the saddle after donations from the RAF's Equitation Association and Central Fund.

Riding Club spokeswoman FS Louisa McDonough said: "Running a welfare facility this large is challenging at the best of times but during lockdown it was almost impossible. The future now looks bright thanks to the donations."



**GOOD NEIGH-BOURS:** Diddy and pal in Akrotiri

## Reds head Forces Day



THE RED ARROWS painted the grey Scarborough sky red, white and blue after the town lost the honour of hosting this year's Armed Forces Day national event due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The Hawk jets flew over Leeming and Catterick before soaring over

the resort's castle, where earlier a small group of Armed Forces representatives held a flag-raising service.

Armed Forces Day 2020 was celebrated largely on social media after lockdown rules prevented people from attending ceremonies.





# Battling Covid's no joke for Johnny and combat vet Michelle

**Tracey Allen**

**FORMER AIR Force combat medic Michelle Partington teamed up with comedian Johnny Vegas as part of an army of UK volunteers fighting the coronavirus.**

Michelle was the first woman to work alongside combat troops on the frontline in Afghanistan and saved the lives of dozens of injured troops during her 22-year career with Medical Emergency Response Teams.

Now she's volunteered for duty with the Royal British Legion helping elderly vets in care homes. She also worked with the homeless at a YMCA and a Salvation Army hostel in St Helens, Merseyside.

Millie winner Michelle said: "I relocated to Merseyside for a few weeks. The pub I stayed in was running a shop for key workers and I helped them with deliveries.

"Johnny Vegas was doing a lot of volunteer work there too, making PPE deliveries. He's a lovely man – he put so many smiles on people's faces."

As part of her latest mission PTSD sufferer Michelle also helps keep elderly veterans' spirits up by making phone calls

and writing to them. And she's calling for more military veterans to volunteer for duty to help those worst hit by lockdown and self isolation.

She added: "It would be lovely if more veterans volunteered to help out by corresponding with vets in care homes.

"They are isolated and many are scared because they have lost quite a few people. A lot of them don't have anybody

so to receive a regular letter or phone call would be great."

She added: "Armed Forces veterans have so many skills – we're trained for crisis, we are good at looking out for each other and stepping in when the need arises."

Michelle now runs her own company, Mentis Training & Consultancy, specialising in mental health issues.



**VOLUNTEERS:** Comedian and actor Johnny Vegas; inset above, Michelle Partington; and, left, in her RAF days

## Britain's shrine to The Few facing battle for survival

**Tracey Allen**

THE BATTLE of Britain national memorial to The Few is facing a fight for survival as the Battle's 80th anniversary is marked this month.

Richard Hunting, chairman of the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust, revealed that having to close the Capel-le-Ferne site because of the coronavirus crisis has had a 'devastating impact' on the memorial's future.

He said: "It is a crisis – we are running out of cash."

A crowdfunding campaign launched last month to bring in an immediate £20,000 has raised £21,600 to date. The target has been increased to £50,000.

Mr Hunting said it costs around £240,000 a year to run the famous

Kent site, which, apart from donations, is earned through the memorial's Scramble Experience, shop, café and car park – all closed for more than three months.

As well as being unable to make money, the Trust has had to spend around £10,000 making the site 'Covid-secure', ready for possible reopening on July 13.

Mr Hunting added: "It's unthinkable that the site could close permanently. We plan to stay there forever – that's the whole point of a memorial.

"This year is particularly significant because it is 80 years since the Battle of Britain, on July 10, 1940.

"We need the public's support to help the charity continue its work."

● See p18 for Trust appeal



## Jobs help for female vets

A FORCES charity has launched a new programme to boost job opportunities for female veterans.

The move comes as research by the Forces In Mind Trust reveals female veterans are more than twice as likely to struggle financially – 20 per cent compared with nine per cent for male vets – and face more barriers to employment than men.

The research also shows that, unlike their male counterparts, female Service leavers often undervalue their experience and are put off applying for jobs they are suitable for. Go to: [rfea.org.uk](http://rfea.org.uk) for more information.





# OF SUPPORT TO OUR RAF COMMUNITY



**SSAFA is proud that 2020 marks the 30th anniversary of our Personal Support & Social Work Service**, providing practical and emotional support to serving RAF personnel and their families.

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For more information, visit: **[ssafa.org.uk/RAFSocialWork](https://ssafa.org.uk/RAFSocialWork)**

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charity

 **ROYAL  
AIR FORCE**



# Pilots' 3,000-mile Atlantic row bid for battling kids

**Simon Mander**

FOUR COMBAT pilots have signed up for a trans-Atlantic rowing challenge to raise cash for a charity which helped an airman's daughter recover from leukaemia.

The line-up of battle-hardened airmen was confirmed by Air Force endurance athlete Wg Cdr Phil Holdcroft, whose seven-year-old daughter Isla is now clear of cancer after support from children's charity Starlight.

The battlefield helicopter pilot and Green Beret has completed seven operational tours in Iraq and Afghanistan but says the Talisker Whiskey Atlantic Challenge is the toughest ordeal he has faced to date.

"We want to test our leadership, teamwork, guts and stamina in an event like no other and raise money for Starlight," he said.

He is joined by Wg Cdr Jamie Buckle who, as Officer Commanding IV(AC) Sqn, is responsible for training all fast-jet pilots.

Buckle added: "I worked with Phil Holdcroft through the darkest days of his daughter's fight with leukaemia.

"As a father it was heart-wrenching to



**MISSION:** Wg Cdr Holdcroft with Isla, who has now recovered from leukaemia

helplessly watch this battle. I was privileged to be able to run three marathons in three days for Starlight in the first year of her remission."

Also joining the crew is Typhoon veteran Sqn Ldr Sonny Roe, who has flown missions over Libya, Syria, Iraq and the Baltic States, as well as defending the UK against Russian and terror threats on Quick Reaction Alert duties.

The fourth team member is Commando-trained,



**TYPHOON PILOT:** Sqn Ldr Sonny Roe

## Talisker Whiskey Atlantic Challenge



**BUCKLE UP:** Fast-jet flying instructor Jamie Buckle joins crew

hope to discover in their lifetime. Bring it on."

Around 30 teams take part in the Talisker Whiskey Atlantic Challenge in December, rowing more than 3,000 miles from the Canary Islands to Antigua.

It is billed as the world's toughest rowing event and boasts an international field of competitors.

The last RAF team to attempt the treacherous crossing lost their rudder in a storm and were dramatically rescued by a 20,000 ton cargo ship as their supplies ran out after six weeks at sea, in 2014.

battlefield helicopter pilot Flt Lt Chris Carrington-Smith, currently a flying instructor on the RAF's newest training aircraft.

He said: "Fewer than 1,000 people have rowed the Atlantic,

which makes it pretty elite.

"It's an immense challenge and it demands peak performance in both teamwork and individual resilience. We will learn more about ourselves in 30 days than most people could



**IN THE MONEY:** 98-year-old fundraiser George Sutherland

## Cash rolls in for super-vet

AIR FORCE super-vet George Sutherland, 98, has increased his fundraising total for a veterans' club in Belgium to over €134,700.

George smashed his €100,000 target to save the club, Talbot House, from closing permanently, with a sponsored walk on the 75th anniversary of VE Day. The club had to shut its doors in March due to the Covid-19 crisis.

The former Leading Aircraftman was born in Poperinge, West Flanders and was invited to officially reopen the club in his home town last month.

Go to: GoFundMe to donate.

# Big-hearted marathon man who went the extra mile for others dies, aged 34

**Tracey Allen**

MORE THAN £13,000 has been raised in tribute to ultramarathon runner and charity crusader Cpl Jon Ward, who has died suddenly aged 34.

The popular airman passed away the day before he was due to take part in a 100-mile event in Scotland for the Samaritans.

He had hoped to raise £500 for the charity – the total as RAF News went to press stood at £13,296 after friends and running mates, including John Anderson, completed the circular trail, renamed the Jon and John Moray Way Challenge.

Tributes have poured in to the superfit airman who raised thousands of pounds for the RAF Benevolent Fund during his lifetime.

Cpl Ward was posted from Lossiemouth last year to work at the Armed Forces Careers Office in Glasgow. An RAF Lossiemouth spokesman said: "Jon was selfless,

courageous, kind and genuine and epitomised RAF values at their core. He was the first to give back to his community."

Cpl Ward completed more than 100 marathons in 2018 to celebrate the RAF's centenary and last year he became the first person to run the entire North East 250 route – a trail designed for motorists visiting the area.

The Benevolent Fund's Air Vice-Marshal Chris Elliot said: "Jon was always thinking of others and did so much to support charities, including the RAF Benevolent Fund. His endurance running feats were an indication of his determination to do whatever he could to support his community.

"He will be greatly missed by all who knew him and we are thankful for all he did to support our charity."

Go to Jon's fundraising page at justgiving.com to donate.



**CHARITY CRUSADER:** Cpl Jon Ward with some of the medals he won after completing 100 marathons to mark the RAF Centenary in 2018; inset left, Jon after finishing another event to raise funds for the RAFBF

PHOTO: CONNOR TIERNEY







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News bulletin



**OPENING TIME:** Museum sites at Cosford and Hendon attract 900,000 visitors a year

## Museums move out of lockdown

RAF MUSEUMS at Cosford and London have reopened in time for the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

The sites, which boast the largest collection of Air Force aircraft in the world, will host visitors from July 6 following changes to Government coronavirus advice.

But both venues will ask people to pre-book their arrival time at: rafmuseum.org and obtain a free timed ticket, to manage the crowds.

Director of Visitor and Commercial Development Barry Smith said: "We are incredibly happy to welcome our visitors back and have a range of measures to ensure a safe and great day out for the whole family."

New social distancing measures include a one-way system and a limit on numbers in each building.

The sites attract 900,000 visitors annually.



**OVER AND OUT:** RAF fly out of Camp Bastion at the end of the Afghan conflict in 2014

## Brits baffled

MORE THAN half of Brits don't know what the military actually do when they're not in combat, according to a survey.

A study of 2,000 adults found one in 10 thought fighting wars is the Armed Forces' only purpose.

More than 30 per cent had no idea the military are often involved after terror attacks and national disasters such as floods and the recent pandemic, according to the poll commissioned by Forces broadcaster BFBS.

# Robo-ops

**Gunners eye quadcopter to boost security at UK and frontline airbases**

**SKY EYE:** RAF Regt Gunner scans the horizon on a patrol near Camp Bastion during conflict in Afghanistan; inset right, SkyRanger drone; inset below, RAF capability chief Air Marshal Andy Turner checks out the new kit at Honington

### Simon Mander

**GUNNERS ARE pioneering the use of remotely piloted air systems to protect RAF airfields from intruders in Britain and beyond.**

Honington-based Force Protection personnel have already used the reconnaissance technology to help recover an Army Air Corps Helicopter following a forced landing.

And now they're hoping to get the go-ahead to extend the system.

Senior Operator Flt Lt Rob Clarke said: "By embracing technology today we are engaged in becoming world leaders in Air Force protection development and continue to advance the use of RPAS alongside commercial and technical improvements."

Since 2019, the kit has been located at four air bases and flown by RAF Regiment personnel.

Capable of operating in bad weather, both day and night, the air vehicles can switch between high definition, 30x zoom, electro optical and infrared cameras in order to locate intruders.

Flt Lt Clarke said: "Unique in Defence, our system has been fully integrated into segregated airspace and operates alongside the F35, Typhoon and A400M."

The use of Remotely Piloted Air Systems for Force Protection originated in Honington in 2017.

The idea was backed by the RAF's Rapid Capability Office, which funded trials of three different commercial off-the-shelf

pieces of kit. Extensive testing conducted by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory found the Aeryon SkyRanger to be the most suitable platform.

The electrically powered Canadian-built vertical take-off and landing quadcopter requires no launch equipment and has a top speed of 50 kph over a 5km range.

Now senior Regiment officers hope it will pass Military Aviation Authority approved trials of extended visual line of sight flying to increase its operational reach.

Senior Operators and Remote Pilots undergo an initial one-

week Civil Aviation Authority approved course then specialise in airfield security.

Honington's Force Protection Centre is currently designing tailor-made training to enhance their ability to protect personnel and aircraft at home and overseas.

Chief Instructor WO Ian Galloway said: "In my 36 years' service it's rare to just find something that I know simply works; the Force Protection RPAS is that piece of equipment."

"In trials we were able to find enemy intruders in a matter of seconds, thereby greatly reducing the risk to UK personnel and its assets."



# Reaper team's badge of honour

### Simon Mander

MISSION INTELLIGENCE coordinators working on the UK's remotely piloted Reaper aircraft have received the royal seal of approval after being awarded their Airborne Specialist Badges.

The honour follows the recent presentation of Iraq and Syria campaign medals to personnel flying remotely piloted aircraft in recognition of the contribution they make on global operations.

One of those receiving the coveted brevet at Waddington, nicknamed 'Stanners', has served with the Reaper Force since 2011.

He said: "Being granted the

Airborne Specialist Flying Badge is the culmination of a lot of hard work over a long time. Thanks to commanding officers, at both XIII and 39 Squadron, the success of intelligence co-ordinators during the conflict in Afghanistan and current operations in Iraq and Syria has been rightfully recognised.

"It's great to see the Intelligence Trade professionally expanding and moving further into aircrew roles. My job is the most challenging, enjoyable and rewarding role I have had in my RAF career."

Stanners joined XIII Sqn as a LAC in 1991 and has clocked up more than 3,000 hours on the Reaper platform.





# Crew View

# Op Azotize



**Wg Cdr Stu Gwinnutt, CO, 135 EAW  
1 Gp Intelligence Surveillance  
Target Acquisition and  
Reconnaissance Force HQ,  
RAF Waddington**

“I’m responsible for providing everything that the 6 Sqn Typhoon Detachment needs to provide Quick Reaction Alert operations with a team of 150 personnel. I’m also responsible for Defence Engagement activity with our Nato partners and Lithuanian hosts.”



**Sgt Sunita Jackson,  
Communications  
Technician, 90SU, RAF  
Leeming**

“I manage the Information Support systems for Op Azotize, ensuring they are running correctly and any issues and faults are rectified as soon as possible.”

A DETACHMENT of four RAF 6 Sqn Typhoons is currently policing Nato skies over the Baltic states from Siauliai Air Base in Lithuania. *RAF News* spoke to some of the 150 personnel currently supporting the mission to safeguard the airspace and bolster Alliance defences in Eastern Europe.



**TYPHOON:** Previous Lithuania policing operation



**Sgt Luke Horrocks,  
Adventure Training  
Instructor, Robson Resilience  
Centre**

“As the detachment instructor my role is to help personnel develop their health, fitness and wellbeing. It’s been tough with Covid restrictions but we have gone from people only being able to train in their rooms to most of the restrictions in Lithuania being dropped, apart from social distancing.”



**SAC Aaron Galloway, Logistics  
Supplier, 502 Ulster Sqn  
RAuxAF**

“I am part of the supply group and we all know ‘you can’t fly without supply’. I am enjoying the relaxation of local Covid restrictions and getting out to see the local area and enjoy its many delights.”



**Sgt Scott Fisher, Aircraft  
Technician – Avionics, No. 41  
Sqn, RAF Coningsby**

“As Guard Commander I am responsible for the 24-hour security of assets, aircraft and transport. This task has been complicated by Covid restrictions, however morale is high amongst my team and we will endeavour to achieve our operational goals.”

PHOTOS: SAC Iain Curlett

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# VIP Voyager flies the flag



A VOYAGER tanker has shed its grey RAF livery for a patriotic paint job for its role flying British VIPs across the world.

The aircraft, dubbed 'Vespina', returned to Brize Norton after a refurbishment costing nearly £1m at Marshall Aerospace in Cambridge.

But before taking on board any Royals or Ministers it was business as usual for the new-look transporter, now proudly

displaying the Union Flag alongside RAF roundels – refilling F-35 Lightnings and Typhoons.

Project chief Air Cdre Simon Edwards said: "It has been a privilege to be involved.

"I am delighted to have seen it delivered so quickly and efficiently, together with our industry partners. The aircraft's new paint scheme will better reflect its prestige role, which we are proud to undertake."

## Forces Covid role revives calls for National Service



### Staff Reporter

THE MILITARY'S high-profile role in Britain's battle against the coronavirus has boosted support for the return of National Service, according to a survey by Forces charity chiefs.

The poll by Armed Forces charity SSAFA reveals that two out of three Brits now back the reintroduction of military service, axed in 1963.

Just over half would support a mandatory two-year stint in the Armed Forces, believing that it would reduce crime and instil a sense of pride in young people.

More than 70 per cent of those polled said the UK has become less patriotic since World War II while 57 per cent thought national pride was linked to military life.

SSAFA's chief executive, Sir Andrew Gregory, said: "The pandemic has shown again the adaptability and dependability



**NATIONAL EMERGENCY:** Puma crews on Covid duties in Scotland; above left, Forces personnel carry out virus tests; inset above recruits at Halton

of our Armed Forces. They have demonstrated, yet again, selfless commitment, respect for others and much more, all of which are core to service in the British military.

"While serving and beyond, those who serve bring skills and values from their time in the military back into the wider society."



**MERCY MISSION:** Aid supplies loaded up onto C-17 at Brize Norton

## Brize delivers on UK Africa pledge

### Simon Mander

VITAL MEDICAL supplies to help Africa fight the coronavirus have been airlifted by the RAF.

A Brize-based C-17 transporter funded by the Department for International Development took off for Ghana carrying a field hospital to be used by frontline aid workers to save lives.

The mission follows a UN request after disruption to commercial flights caused by the pandemic sent the cost of carrying cargo soaring.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said: "I'm proud that while dealing with Covid we have the generosity of spirit to provide such support to Ghana and other countries."

The field hospital can care for 92 people and is part of a £15 million UK boost for the UN World Food Programme to support its coronavirus response.

International Development Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said: "No one is safe until we are all safe."

"These flights will play a crucial role in the global battle against coronavirus, helping to stop the spread of the disease globally."

The hospital, which weighs approximately 130 tonnes, will be transported to Ghana's capital Accra in five flights.

The UN will then arrange for the facility to be built where demand for medical treatment is greatest.

Up to £1.2 million of British aid cash has been made available to pay for the military flights.

The UN has humanitarian relief hubs in Guangzhou (China), Liège (Belgium) and Dubai (UAE), close to where supplies are being manufactured – alongside regional centres in Ghana, Ethiopia, Malaysia, Panama, South Africa and Dubai.





# COVID-19: WE ARE HERE TO HELP

In these challenging times, we're here to support serving personnel, vulnerable veterans and their families.

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**[rafbf.org/covid19](https://rafbf.org/covid19)**



# Kit change as 84 Sqn feels the heat

HELICOPTER CREWS gearing up to fight fires in the sweltering Cyprus summer have a new look to keep them cool.

Akrotiri-based 84 Sqn personnel have swapped their traditional flying suits for a new two-piece Future Aircrew Clothing System with lightweight boots as they continue to operate daily despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

Heat has always been a big cause for concern for the unit, which limits the risks by scheduling training flights for the cooler parts of the day and organising rest days to help the crews recover from higher fatigue levels.

The squadron recently attended Cyprus' annual Exercise Icarus firefighting training, which simulates wildfires that are then extinguished by airborne firefighting crews.

Officer Commanding Sqn Ldr Alan Ross (pictured right wearing the new kit) said: "It provides a brilliant opportunity for 84

Sqn to meet and train with our Cypriot friends in the Police, National Guard and Forestry Commission at the start of the firefighting season."

The unit's Griffin HAR2 helicopters have been serviced with some receiving D checks – the deepest level of inspection – so they can withstand the demands of call-outs.

Throughout the winter crews have also practised their Search and Rescue skills to keep them ready for any emergency.

Last year 84 Sqn dropped more than 200 tonnes of water to keep fires under control and responded to road traffic accidents and searches for missing persons both on land and at sea.

Sqn Ldr Ross said: "84 Sqn's fire-fighting capability could not be achieved without our Civil Service staff, operations assistants, military aircrew and civilian engineering team pulling together 24/7/365 to protect people and save lives."

**COOL CAMMO:** 84 Sqn's Sqn Ldr Alan Ross showcases new two-piece flying suit brought in to help crews fighting Cyprus flash fires stay cool. *Left, traditional Air Force 'onesie'*  
PHOTOS: CPL PHIL DYE



**FIREFIGHTING:** 84 Sqn Griffin



**IN: Cammo two-piece**



**OUT: RAF onesie**



**ONLINE FLYPAST:** BBMF Spitfire, Hurricane and Lancaster will feature

## BBMF star in Few tribute

UNIQUE FOOTAGE of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight in action will feature in an online commemoration of the bravery and sacrifice of 'The Few' in 1940.

The Battle of Britain Memorial Trust was forced to close the car park and visitor centre at its Capel-le-Ferne home because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

To mark the 80th anniversary of the epic battle for Britain's skies, the Trust will be hosting a virtual celebration on YouTube and its Facebook page on July 12.

The event comes ahead of hopes to reopen the Kent memorial on July 13.

The online event will include exclusive footage of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, music from the Band of the RAF Regiment and an introduction from President of the Trust, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Dalton.

Go to: [www.youtube.com/c/BattleofBritainMemorial](http://www.youtube.com/c/BattleofBritainMemorial)

# Nato force gets a Luft



## Simon Mander

**BRITISH AND German Typhoons refuelled over the North Sea as part of a Nato push to form an integrated international fighter force.**

Coningsby-based XI (Fighter) Sqn jets joined Luftwaffe Eurofighters and Tornados in the latest multinational Air Group Exercise.

The Berlin-led training aims to ensure both Air Forces can conduct combined operations by 2023

and reach full operational capability in 2026.

Officer Commanding XI (F) Sqn said: "Exercise MAG Day provides the squadron with the opportunity to demonstrate our ability to fight in a complex environment with our closest allies."

US and Dutch F-16 fighters and Swiss Air Force F18 Hornets also took part with air-to-air refuelling conducted by RAF Voyager, a German A310 and A400M plus a US KC135 tanker.

An XI(F) pilot said: "Our participation provided an excellent opportunity to reinforce and hone our interoperability skills with key Nato allies to undertake multi-role missions, in this case involving 40 aircraft from five nations."

Chief of the German Air Force, Lt Gen Ingo Gerhartz, said the exercise allowed the Luftwaffe to operate 'shoulder to shoulder' with European allies and partners.



# How the RAF defeated the Luftwaffe



**ROBUST MACHINES:** A flight of Hurricane I fighters flown by pilots of 85 Squadron, RAF Church Fenton. Inset left, a Luftwaffe Dornier Do17 bomber is downed by the RAF

**A**FTER SPORADIC hit-and-run raids on the south coast by the Luftwaffe the RAF launched the Battle of Britain in earnest, attacking Nazi bombers over the Channel on July 10, 1940.

Buoyed by victory in France, Hitler issued his famous War Directive No. 9 – ordering the destruction of the Royal Air Force within a week to pave the way for an invasion of Britain.

With the Luftwaffe bomber force back to full strength the first wave of German air attacks began in earnest on July 19, with raids on Dover.

RAF losses were heavy. During July, 11 Group lost 64 day fighters and more than 40 pilots but brought down 54 Nazi bombers, 12 Stukas and 45 Messerschmitts.

The epic battle for British skies escalated as the Luftwaffe followed Hitler's demands for an all-out offensive against the RAF.

The Germans launched 1,485 bomber and fighter sorties on August 13, leaving Fighter Command to counter the attacks with just 727 aircraft.

Two days later the Nazis launched 90 bombers from Norway and Denmark, escorted by 34 Bf110 and Ju 88C bombers.

The RAF countered with five squadrons and 42 fighters – downing 16 bombers and seven Messerschmitts for the loss of just one Hurricane.

The attrition rate on pilots and aircraft soon rose. Heavy attacks a week later inflicted major damage on the coastal defences as primitive radar systems failed to detect the enemy onslaught accurately.

By now the RAF had shot down 350 Luftwaffe aircraft but lost 171 aircraft and 154 pilots.

Operating under false intelligence that the first phase of attacks had been a success, Nazi commanders launched



**EXHAUSTED:** Hurricane pilot

the second phase with 1,030 sorties escalating as the Luftwaffe followed Hitler's demands for an all-out offensive against the RAF.

The tempo and intensity steadily increased, with heavy attacks on Biggin Hill, Debden, Hornchurch, Croydon and Eastchurch overwhelming fighters with No. 11 Group.

Within another week, six of the seven stations were heavily damaged, disrupting communications links with the Fighter Command Operations Room at Bentley Priory, the sole source of target location information.

By the end of the first week of September, Fighter Command was in desperate straits.

Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding said: "The rate of loss was so heavy that fresh squadrons became worn out before convalescing squadrons were ready to take their place."

Reserves of fighters had dwindled from 518 to 292.

More critical was the loss of fighter pilots, reducing squadron manning from an average of 26 to just 16. Of a total of more than 1,000 pilots, only 500 had real combat experience.

and injuring 1,337. It was just the start. London was bombed on 57 consecutive nights, destroying and damaging more than one million homes and killing more than 40,000 civilians. However, German bomber losses continued to mount.

Two days later Goring made his final, fateful decision: to increase the awkward and unworkable close escorts of the bombers at the expense of the free-ranging and effective fighter sweeps. The lower altitudes and slower speeds necessary for the escorts to maintain station with the bombers gave the RAF fighters the advantages of speed, initiative, altitude and, above all, 'fighting spirit'.

The anticipated climax to the campaign came on September 15, with 277 bombers, escorted by 650 fighters, arrowing straight for London in a 10-mile wide stream of warplanes approaching in two large waves.

The RAF's 11 and 12 Groups responded with 336 defensive sorties. While they shot down only 16 German bombers and five escorts, after a month of attacks Fighter Command was still not beaten and air superiority over

South East England was no closer to attainment. Two days later Hitler postponed his planned invasion indefinitely.

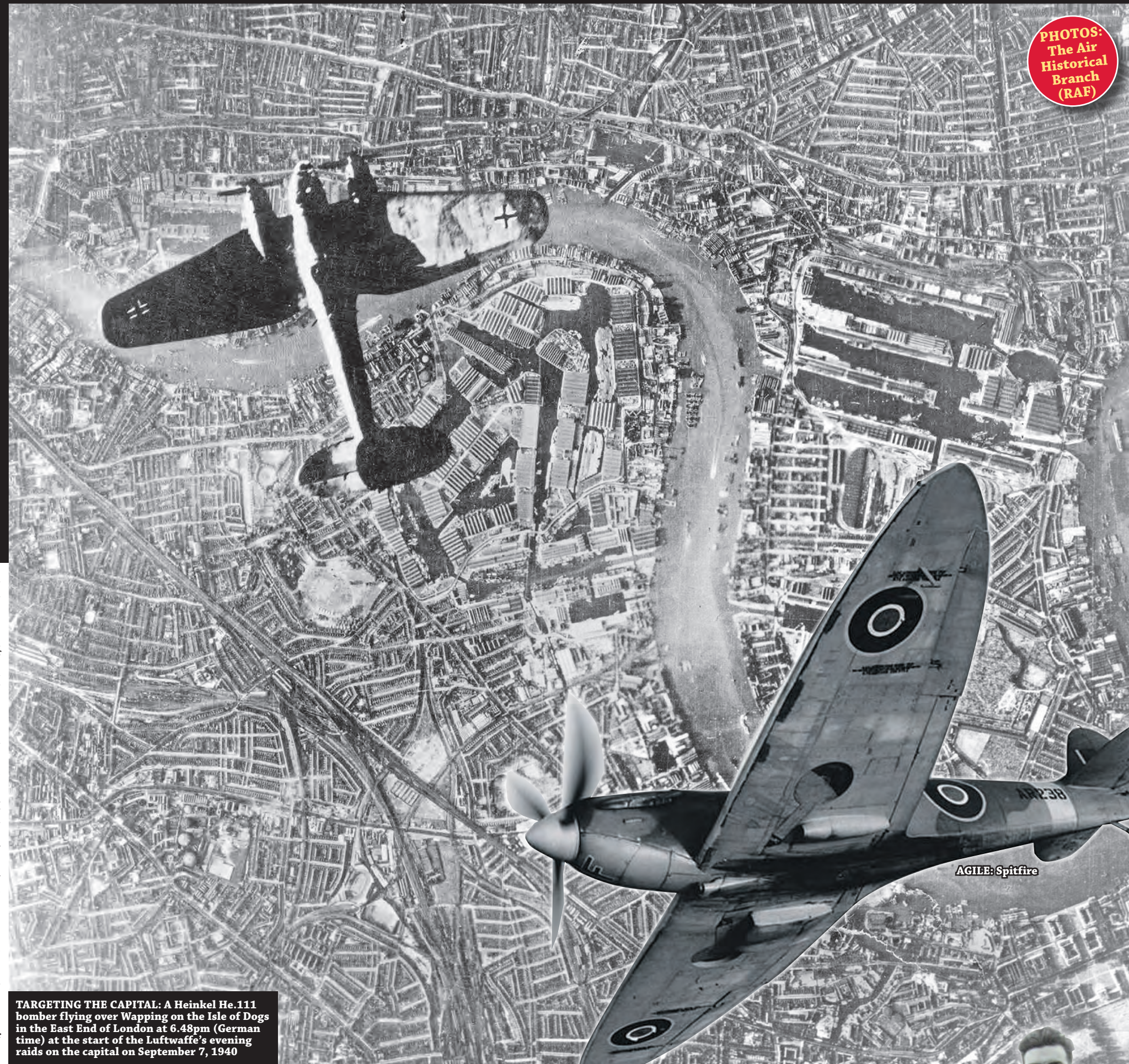
The air campaign continued with sporadic raids for the rest of the month, culminating in the final major daylight attack of the war which saw 173 bomber and 1,000 fighter sorties.

For the first time, RAF fighters significantly outperformed their adversaries, shooting down 16 bombers and 27 Bf 109s for the loss of 16 Spitfires and Hurricanes. Following this heavy loss, bombing raids steadily decreased and massed formations virtually disappeared.

The Battle of Britain officially ended on October 31, 1940. Sadly, and ironically, the last real casualty of the successful defensive struggle over South East England was actually its victor.

Because of Fighter Command's inability to defend against the Luftwaffe's night bombing attacks, ACM Hugh Dowding was relieved of his post

● **How the Spitfire and Hurricane managed to stop the invasion of Britain – see page 16.**



**TARGETING THE CAPITAL:** A Heinkel He.111 bomber flying over Wapping on the Isle of Dogs in the East End of London at 6.48pm (German time) at the start of the Luftwaffe's evening raids on the capital on September 7, 1940

**PHOTOS:** The Air Historical Branch (RAF)

**Hurricane pilot who won the VC**

**F**Lt Lt James Brindley Nicolson was the only fighter pilot during World War II to receive the Victoria Cross.

He joined the RAF in December 1936 and, after pilot training, was posted to 72 Sqn to fly the Gladiator. Assessed 'above average', he excelled in air-to-air firing.

In May 1940 he was posted to a newly-formed 249 Sqn flying Hurricanes, as a flight commander. Once the squadron had worked up to operational efficiency it moved south to Boscombe Down, as the Battle of Britain intensified.

On August 16 Nicolson took off on his first patrol with the unit, leading two other

Hurricanes towards Southampton at 15,000ft, where he spotted three Junkers Ju 88 bombers but could not catch them. Shortly afterwards, cannon shells thudded into his Hurricane as the formation was 'bounced' by Bf 109s. Both his colleagues were shot down.

Badly wounded and with his aircraft on fire Nicolson prepared to bale out, but a Bf 110 appeared in his sights. Abandoning any idea of taking to his parachute, he closed on the enemy aircraft, determined to destroy it. His bullets raked the Bf 110 and he continued firing as it tried to escape. –With flames enveloping his cockpit, and the skin peeling from his hands, he abandoned the

Hurricane and, after a struggle, managed to pull the ripcord of his parachute.

Suffering from severe burns and wounds, as he drifted down, 'friendly' soldiers fired on him, wounding him further. His doctors expected him to die, but he gradually recovered and in November it was announced he had been awarded the Victoria Cross.

By February 1941 Nicolson was back in the air as a fighter instructor, before heading for India where he commanded Beaufighter-equipped 27 Squadron for a year, flying ground-attack missions in support of the 14th Army; for his leadership and gallantry he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

He later served as a Wing Commander on the air staff of the 3rd Tactical Air Force and in April 1945 joined Headquarters RAF Burma. Anxious to experience the bombing operations he was responsible for tasking, he joined a 355 Squadron Consolidated Liberator crew for an operational sortie on May 2, 1945.

The bomber caught fire en route to the target and crashed into the Bay of Bengal. A search found two survivors, but Nicolson was lost.



**VC: Nicolson**



# R'n'R

## Announcements

- P6-7  
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Win action  
title on  
DVD ● p3

## Ballroom blitz – Gorka & Karen

● p4-5



# SIERRA. ALPHA. VICTOR. ECHO.



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<sup>†</sup>**Selected vehicles only. Eligibility criteria applies. See [ford.co.uk/militarysales](https://ford.co.uk/militarysales) for more information.**

Model shown is a Focus ST-3 5-Door 2.3L Ford EcoBoost 280PS with a 6-Speed Manual Petrol transmission with optional Full LED Headlamps. Fuel economy mpg (l/100km): Combined 34.4. \*CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 179g/km.

Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> figures with other cars tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load. \*There is a new test used for fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> figures. The CO<sub>2</sub> figures shown, however, are based on the outgoing test cycle and will be used to calculate vehicle tax on first registration.





## Books

### Twenty Days in The Reich

Fg Off Squire Scott (pen-and-sword.co.uk, £12.99)

Win!

# Last days of the Reich as a POW

**T**HERE WERE few places that you definitely did not want to find yourself as downed RAF crew in World War II, and Germany circa 1945 was high on that list.

That's the situation Fg Off Squire 'Tim' Scott and his fellow 9 Sqn crew members found themselves in, having bailed out of their badly damaged Lancaster following a mission to attack a viaduct in Arnberg.

In this thrilling and thoughtful story, which Scott expertly records in *Twenty Days in The Reich, Three Downed RAF Aircrew in Germany during 1945*, he builds the tension which starts when he is forced to bail out during his 31<sup>st</sup> sortie. Landing in a German village with Australian rear gunner Plt Off Jack Acheson and young buck Sgt Arthur Biles, 21, Scott clearly remembers much of the minutiae of this time in the collapsing Reich – from black bread to potato soup and discussions about cigarettes.

As the system of state and control falls apart amid Allied bombing raids, the trio are moved around by train and on foot with French and Russian POWs. Amazingly, they are shepherded by two German guards named Adolf and Karl. Scott flippantly talks about how close Adolf comes to death at the

hands of two Russian POWs, but he is saved by the group – not seeing the point in further death as the war is coming to an end.

This act, balanced against their own personal risk, highlights the crazy situation the crew found themselves in.

Scott saves the most sobering parts of the book for the end, talking about how he watches the waifs and strays of the former German Reich Wehrmacht pushing bicycles and carts, having tried to fight the onslaught of Allied power.

Sipping tea at a NAAFI canteen, having been loaned 10 Francs by a French airman to buy it, is a poignant memory of home, coming 22 days after crash landing into the hellhole of a situation that was Germany in 1945.

3 out of 5 roundels

Review by Dan Abrahams

**TO BE in with a chance of winning a copy of *Twenty Days In The Reich*, just answer this question correctly:**

**What was Fg Off Squire 'Tim' Scott's squadron?**

Email your answer, marked *Twenty Days* book, to: [competitions@rafnews.co.uk](mailto:competitions@rafnews.co.uk) to arrive by July 24. Sorry, but we are currently unable to accept entries by post.



## DVDs

### Payback

Cert 15, Dazzler Media – out now on DVD and download



Win!



PAYBACK: Lots of shoot-outs

## Have a shot at winning DVD

**A**FTER SKIRTING death, debt collectors French (Scott Adkins, *Avengement*, *Doctor Strange*) and Sue (Louis Mandylor, *Rambo: Last Blood*, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*) get back to doing what they do best – cracking skulls and breaking bones – as they chase down the various lowlifes who owe money to their boss, Tommy (Vladimir Kulich, *The Equalizer*, *Vikings*) in the fast and furious *Payback*.

They're summoned to Las Vegas to collect from a dirty casino owner, who happens to be a vicious ex-lover of Sue's. Meanwhile, a notorious drug kingpin is on the warpath to kill French and Sue to avenge his brother's death.

Facing danger from all angles, the pair have no other choice but to fight their way out of an explosively dangerous situation.

Boasting intense action, sharp dialogue and laced with dark humour, *Payback* is helmed by Jesse V. Johnson, the acclaimed director of *Triple Threat* and *Avengement*.

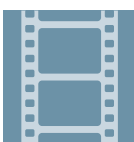


TRIGGER HAPPY: Film also features Louie Ski Carr

We have copies of *Payback* on DVD to win. For your chance to own one, simply send us the correct answer to the following question:

**Who stars as French in Payback?**

Email your answer, marked *Payback* DVD competition, to: [competitions@rafnews.co.uk](mailto:competitions@rafnews.co.uk) to arrive by July 24. Sorry, but due to the coronavirus pandemic we are currently unable to accept entries by post.



## Film review

### The Ground Beneath My Feet

Cert 15 – out now on digital download

# Real tension but this thriller isn't ground-breaking

**T**HE GROUND *Beneath My Feet* is an Austrian thriller that sees the downward spiral of a corporate consultant as she becomes paranoid to the point of delusion, keeping secrets that will eat away at her sanity and might just jeopardise the career and relationship into which she has invested everything.

Lola Wegenstein is one of a small team of hatchet men; though most are women in fact, including her boss with whom she is having an affair. An invasive job that can involve working 48 hours without sleep, living out of a suitcase in a hotel, she is pushed to breaking point when her sister Conny (Pia Hierzegger) is committed to an institution after another suicide attempt. For fear of bringing personal issues into an already

fraught workplace, Lola discreetly flies between the ward and the job to spin these plates.

Valerie Pachner's performance as the isolated Lola is riveting in its restraint, establishing a steely veneer that is quickly chipped away. Receiving calls from her sister who insists she is being abused, only to find out that she has no access to phones, Lola begins to question her own reality. With a shared history of paranoid schizophrenia, it dawns on Lola that she might be experiencing the same symptoms as her sister.

The horrorification of mental illness is an antiquated idea that can be problematic but the film is able to sidestep this trope by adding a degree of nuance and subtlety. The thriller elements of the film



are grounded in a real sense of fear and urgency, and the quality of filmmaking prevents it from feeling exploitative.

The genre elements seeded in the beginning are dropped in the second half however, leaving a much more restrained and ordinary drama. Though it dodges the pitfalls of psychotic women in the workplace and mental illness as a source of horror, unfortunately the beats stay the same and the film becomes blander as a result.

Three out of five

Review by Sam Cooney



TORN: Lola (Valerie Pachner) balances a stressful job with caring for her sister, Conny (top)





**TV**  
**The Luminaries**  
BBC One



**NEW LIFE:** But Anna (Eve Hewson, above) is soon manipulated by scheming Lydia (Eva Green, below left). Himesh Patel (top), also stars

## All that glitters isn't gold in BBC's new blockbuster

**EVE HEWSON** – the daughter of U2's Bono – stars in *The Luminaries*, the BBC's epic adventure mystery based on the Man Booker prize-winning novel of the same name.

Set on the wild West coast of New Zealand's South Island at the height of the 1860s gold rush, it's an intricately woven tale of love, murder, magic and revenge.

Novelist Eleanor Catton revealed that it took her five years to write the book and another seven to adapt it for the screen.

She said: "As a novelist I tend to write only one draft, constantly circling back to the beginning, and refining as I go; once I reach the end, the book is done."

"Screenwriting couldn't be more different. By the time we started shooting in late 2018, I had written perhaps 200 drafts of the first episode alone, and throughout the shoot, the scripts continued to change in order to fit the budget and the schedule, both of which got tighter by the day."

The six-part drama also stars Eva Green (*Casino Royale*, *Penny Dreadful*) and Himesh Patel (*Yesterday*, *EastEnders*).

The story begins in 1886 when Anna Wetherell (Hewson) travels to New Zealand to forge a new life.

Hewson said: "Anna is a mysterious character. You don't really know anything about her, and you never really find out her history or why she chose to travel to New Zealand or what she's possibly running from. She meets Emery (Patel), gets off the ship and then all hell breaks loose."

She added: "Every character is driven and motivated by gold in some way. In *The Luminaries*, gold really highlights human greed and the lengths they're prepared to go to, to get what they want, whether



**ANNA:** Finds herself in danger on South Island, New Zealand

it's fame or wealth or love or freedom.

"Gold represents different things to different characters. What's interesting about Anna is that she's the only person who doesn't really want anything to do with the gold."

Green plays scheming fortune-teller Lydia Wells. Hewson explained: "Anna has travelled to New Zealand to become someone else and Lydia represents the person that Anna really wants to be."

"Lydia has money, she has a wealth of knowledge and she's this beautiful put-together woman. Anna tries to become like her but Lydia plays off that and uses Anna's eagerness to manipulate her. That said, in its own way, Anna and Lydia's relationship is one of the main love stories of the show. They share this beautiful and bizarre love/hate relationship."

She added: "Getting to see Eva Green work was a real treat because I'm such a big fan of hers. I really took a lot of pleasure in watching her work every day. She embodied the role of Lydia Wells in a way that I couldn't have imagined before. She made it very easy for me."

■ *The Luminaries* continues on BBC One on Sundays at 9pm and is available as a boxset on BBC iPlayer.

## The Big Interview Paul Weller

With more than 40 years at the top and his new album out on cassette too...

# Weller's got it taped

**O**NE OF the UK's most successful songwriters, Paul Weller's 15th solo album, *On Sunset*, has just been released and the album's first single, *Village*, has been getting plenty of airplay.

The 'Modfather', who turned 62 in May, said he feels fortunate and contented. It seems he is very much at ease with himself these days, some distance from the widely perceived image of the 'angry young man' of his early career fronting The Jam.

In a career of more than 40 years he's managed to walk the line between classic rock, punk and new wave, through to 60s soul that inspired The Style Council, and later balladry that has attracted both critical acclaim and resonated with long-term fans.

His last recording two years ago, *True Meanings*, narrowly missed becoming Weller's fifth number one solo album.

While the unwelcome arrival of the coronavirus pandemic may have scratched out his latest round of UK gigs, he has been laying down new material in his Surrey studio, Black Barn.

Weller said: "I've actually been very focused being at home, doing a lot of writing, as well as some more recording in the studio. To be honest, when I am not working, I am at home quite a lot with my wife and kids as we've been home schooling."

"I haven't really been bothered by the lockdown, other than having to queue for food or medicine."

**B**eyond music, family is clearly a major priority, and he seems pleased at least two of his eight children, including daughter Leah, have shown real musical ability.

"I wouldn't say making music has got any harder. I think I'm actually enjoying the process and the writing a lot more now than I ever did before in terms of recording," he explained.

"I have a great respect and appreciation for it and seeing how the finished songs are," he added.



**SEEN IT ALL:** Weller has been having hits since late 70s

Weller co-produced the new album with long-term collaborator Jan 'Stan' Kybert, whose long list of credits include working with Oasis, The Verve and Massive Attack.

"I wanted to do an album that was soulful and also had an electronic edge to it. Most of the songs on it are quite uplifting, and to me it's a sunshine record," said Weller.

"With *Village*, like a lot of my songs, there's a lot of me in there, so there's a key idea, but then you make it broader to be about other people, you extemporise. So, am I contented? yes I am – I'm fortunate and couldn't wish for anything."

*On Sunset* features appearances from notable

guests including old friend Mick Talbot from The Style Council days, Slade's Jim Lea playing violin on the very 60s-influenced *Equanimity*, and several backing vocal tracks from indie outfit The Staves.

Weller revealed the album's title track was inspired by catching up with his eldest son in Los Angeles, which holds particularly strong memories for him as a teenager on his first tour of America.

He said: "I was out near the Whisky A Go Go Club in LA and hadn't really walked that area of the city since I was 19. A huge amount of time has elapsed since then, so it's a reflective song about that."

"It also became something else about being in a place in time looking for old friends and lovers and how everyone has moved on."

Connecting with the past clearly informed his choice of record label, Polydor, for which he had gained an initial flush of success alongside Bruce Foxton and Rick Buckler as fresh faces recording with The Jam.

Weller explained: "We approached Polydor as we really liked what they have been doing lately and they have some great acts. It's a very different world there now though."

"It was a little weird this time as everyone was at least 20 years younger than me, whereas when I was there before, it was the other way around and I felt that there were a lot of old men running around telling me what to do."

It's been 25 years since Weller released *Stanley Road*, perhaps his most autobiographical recording, named after the street where he grew up in Woking, Surrey.

The seminal album features some of his most cherished solo material including *The Changingman*, *Broken Stones* and *You Do Something To Me*.

"I can't believe it's 25 years old, but I still think it's a great record that stands up now," he said.

"It showed the progress made since that first solo album. It was a really creative time for me and I've some really fond memories of that period."



**MOD ICONS:** Weller, left, with The Jam in the early days

**W**eller has been noted for his passion for seeking out new music and offering assistance to like-minded acts.

He's still passionate about touring, and says his regular touring band, including Ocean Colour Scene's Steve Cradock, are 'chomping at the bit' to get back on the road. They're still at the mercy of conditions as to whether their autumn tour will be permitted due to coronavirus.

The present musical landscape is a very different one from Weller's youth, but what has changed the most?

He said: "Where do I start? Well, streaming for one, that has changed everything. Someone told me the other day that a band had a number one with 7,000 sales. But streaming is where it's at, it's not something that you can ignore."

"I could have a mini moan about things like that, but I don't want to sound like a grumpy old git. I think the main reason I haven't liked it is that people are not getting paid out of it, particularly up-and-coming bands, meaning it's getting hard for them to make a living now."

"I've never believed that music should just be free as some people do. So, it's good to see that vinyl is still out there even if it's not in great numbers, and I'm going to be releasing my album on cassette as well."

■ Go to: [paulweller.com](http://paulweller.com) for more information. Interview by Neill Barston



**TV**  
**A House Through Time**  
BBC Two

## New Leeds sought on old lives



**A** FOURTH series of BBC Two's award-winning history show *A House Through Time* has been commissioned – with presenter David Olusola heading to Leeds in 2021.

He will return to journey through the lives of residents within a single house in the city, bringing to light the stories of previously unknown individuals and uncovering what life was like for them.

The search for a new house in Leeds has already begun, and with the city's close ties with the Civil War, pioneering industrial-age connections and technological advancements, the team expects to find no shortage of drama for series four, said the Beeb.

Professor Olusoga, pictured left and inset right, said: "Leeds is a fascinating city that I am fortunate to have close personal ties with, so I am particularly looking forward to learning more about its history."

"My parents lived there during the 1960s and I have family in Leeds today. I am excited at the prospect of coming back to a city that I studied in

and called home during the 1990s, a city I've been fond of ever since."

Production company Twenty Twenty would like help in the search for the perfect house to be the focus of series four. If you know a historic property in Leeds that could be the location for a multitude of fascinating revelations, contact: [ahousethroughtime@twentytwenty.tv](mailto:ahousethroughtime@twentytwenty.tv)

Commissioning editor Simon Young said: "Having visited houses in Liverpool, Newcastle and Bristol in the first three series, I'm thrilled that David will delve into the rich history of Leeds next."

Executive producer Mary Crisp added: "We're excited to uncover the fascinating history of Leeds, and in particular its remarkable industrial story. The show is about regular people, living extraordinary lives because of the time they lived and the circumstances they found themselves in."

"If you know a house that could fit the requirements for series four, please get in touch."



**Theatre**  
**Firedance**  
UK tour

New dates

## Dance pair keeping the flame alive



**STRICTLY PROFESSIONAL:** TV dancers Gorka Marquez and Karen Hauer smoulder

**S**TRICTLY COME *Dancing's* Karen Hauer and Gorka Marquez are returning to set the stage alight in 2021 with their Latin spectacular *Firedance*.

Having completed a handful of the shows before the tour was halted due to the coronavirus crisis, the couple will be turning the heat up again with rescheduled dates next spring. They have also added a host of new shows – including at London's Royal Festival Hall on February 26.

*Firedance* features a live band with Latin musicians, a dance ensemble performing Argentine tango, flamenco, contemporary, paso doble, samba and salsa and includes popular songs including *In the Air Tonight*, *Sway*, *Bad Romance*, *Sweet Dreams*, *Relight My Fire* and *Bamboléo*.

The making of the production was recently documented in a BBC Four programme *Danceworks – Firedance: Latin Fever*, showcasing the intricacy, skill and physical demand behind the show. You can still catch it on the BBC iPlayer.

Karen said: "I can't wait to bring *Firedance* on tour across the UK in 2021. The passion, warmth and excitement from the audiences who saw it in 2020 was absolutely incredible and I know the whole team can't wait to be back onstage very soon."

Born in Venezuela and having grown up in New York from the age of 10, Hauer is best known for her performances on *Strictly*. Joining the series in 2012 she has been partnered with household names including Westlife's Nicky Byrne,

Hairy Biker Dave Myers, Mark Wright, Jeremy Vine, Will Young, and *Sunday Brunch* chef Simon Rimmer. In 2019 she reached the semi-finals with comedian Chris Ramsey.

Gorka said: "I had such a great time on the *Firedance* tour; the audience, Karen, our fellow dancers and team made it a truly memorable experience so the bar has been set for 2021. I can't wait to return."

Originally from Bilbao, Spain, aged 11 Marquez attended ballroom and Latin dance classes, where he quickly excelled and became one of the top dancers representing Spain across the world.

His *Strictly* debut saw him paired with *EastEnders* star Tameka Empson. In 2018 he was partnered with TV star Katie Piper after having waltzed singer Alexandra Burke to the final the previous year.

■ Go to: [firedancelive.co.uk](http://firedancelive.co.uk) for tour dates and ticket details.



**LATIN PASSION:** Venezuela-born Karen





## Your Announcements

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

### Seeking

I am looking to regain contact with Stuart Taylor who was based at Brize Norton approx 1997-2002, worked in the electrical/mechanical ground side. Possibly 216 Sqn, 101 Sqn or 10 Sqn. He will be 49/50 now. Lived in Blackpool in the 80s. Worked briefly at the Tower around 1987. Lost touch during Brize days due to house/job change. If you can help reconnect please email: Marie at [whiskymac73@gmail.com](mailto:whiskymac73@gmail.com)

### Reunions

**SINGAPORE** Armed Forces Reunion. Were you seconded from the RAF to the SAF at RAF Tengah between 1971-75? If so please contact Peter Priscott for a 50th anniversary reunion in August 2021. Email: [peterpriscott@aol.com](mailto:peterpriscott@aol.com) or call: 01842 878554.

**237 OCU.** Due to the coronavirus outbreak, the eighth annual 237 OCU Groundcrew Reunion will now be held on Saturday, September 5 from noon at The Compleat Angler, 120 Prince of Wales Road, Norwich, NR1 1NS. Ex-237 OCU members of all trades and any era welcome. Just turn up and join in. For more information, please search for 237 OCU on Facebook, email me at: [237OCU@gmail.com](mailto:237OCU@gmail.com) or contact Si Roberts at 1 Manor Gardens, Carnoustie, Angus, DD7 6HY or please call: 07546 400085.

**158 Squadron Bomber Command.** The 158 Association is very active and we want to contact any veteran or relative of a veteran. We are planning a reunion and memorial service for autumn 2020. Please contact: KevB@silenicus.com.

**RAF Bawdsey Reunion Association.** Due to the coronavirus pandemic we have, regrettably, had to cancel the annual reunion lunch planned for Saturday, June 6. Those who have booked a place and paid their fee will have their money refunded. We have provisionally planned the next reunion for Saturday, June 5, 2021 and look forward to seeing our friends again then. In the meantime we wish you all a safe and healthy time during this unprecedented period. If you have any queries please email: [doreen.bawdseyreunion@btinternet.com](mailto:doreen.bawdseyreunion@btinternet.com) or you can call: 07513 301 723.

**COASTAL Command Officers' Reunion,** October 10, 2020. Please contact Ray Curtis, call: 01264 735349 or email: [hjn3@btinternet.com](mailto:hjn3@btinternet.com)

**ASSOCIATION** RAF Women Officers Annual Reunion. All RAF Women Officers are invited to attend the Annual Reunion Lunch at the RAF Club on Saturday, October 10. We meet for pre-lunch drinks from 11.30 followed by lunch. All will be made very welcome, especially new members of the Association. For further details about the lunch or the Association of RAF Women Officers, please contact Sue Arnold on: 07740 865685 or email: [suearnold474@gmail.com](mailto:suearnold474@gmail.com).

**THE** RAF Locking 119/219/404 Apprentice Entries 50th Anniversary Reunion will be held on October 23 and 24. An informal evening on October 23 will allow ex-apprentices to gather before the formal dinner on October 24. The formal event will take place in the ballroom of the Weston-super-Mare Winter Gardens, BS23 1AJ, for all RAF Locking 119/219/404 Entry Apprentices and wives/partners. For further details please contact Barry Cox at:

[barrycox124@hotmail.com](mailto:barrycox124@hotmail.com).

### Cranwell memories

**THIS YEAR** is the centenary of the RAF College Cranwell, pictured below, and it is in the process of collecting memories from people who may have lived or worked there in any capacity. If you would like to share your stories and memories please email: [crn-sce-generalenquiries@mod.gov.uk](mailto:crn-sce-generalenquiries@mod.gov.uk) or write to: Media and Communications Office, RAF College Cranwell, Sleaford, Lincolnshire, NG34 8HB.



### Operation Manna



**THE INTERNATIONAL Bomber Command Centre** in Lincoln needs your help to tell the story of Operation Manna, for its 75th anniversary year. It saw nearly 12,000 tons of food dropped to the Netherlands, saving almost one million

people from starvation. Were you a farmer who helped with supplies? Did you help with loading the aircraft? Do you remember the fleets of aircraft flying from Lincolnshire's stations between April 29 and May 8, 1945? Was your family saved by the Operation? Was a member of your family a Food Dropper? To share memories contact the IBCC at: [info@internationalbcc.co.uk](mailto:info@internationalbcc.co.uk) or write to: Op Manna, IBCC, 13 Cherry Holt Road, Bourne, Lincs, PE10 9LA.

**VITAL AID:** Below, left, a Lancaster being loaded with food by 115 Sqn personnel at RAF Wrating Common

### Museum appeal

**BENTLEY PRIORY** Museum is seeking volunteers for its project 'Defending Britain from Nazi & Nuclear Threat'. It will record and share the memories of RAF and WAAF personnel who worked in the top secret bunker at RAF Bentley Priory, focusing on the Battle of Britain in 1940 and the Cold War from 1945 to 1991.

The project will be launched this year to mark the 80th anniversary year of the Battle of Britain and the 30th anniversary of the reunification of Germany in 1990. It will include a temporary and permanent exhibition, resources for schools and family activities during school holidays. Volunteers are needed to support research, carry out oral history interviews and co-curate the temporary exhibition. Initially these tasks can be carried out remotely. Please email the Museum at: [collectionproject@bentleypriorymuseum.org.uk](mailto:collectionproject@bentleypriorymuseum.org.uk) if interested.

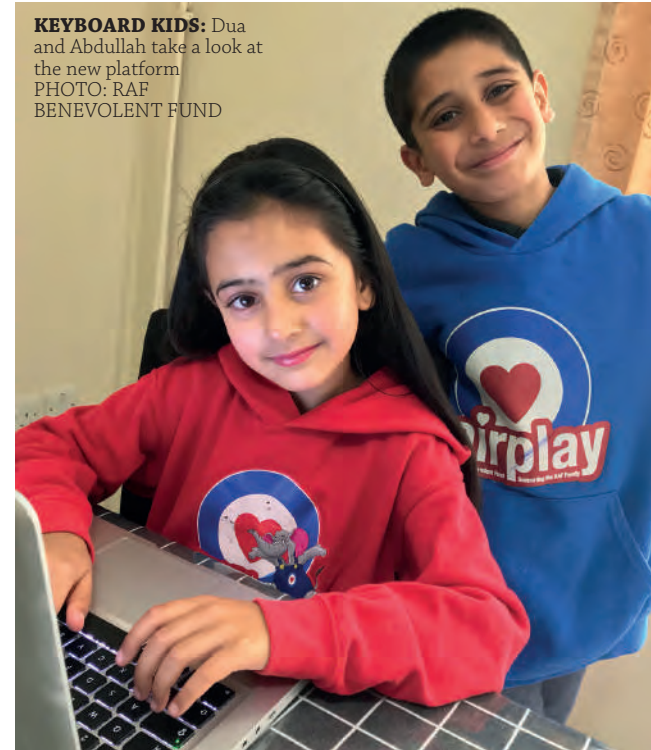
■ The museum is keen to hear from anyone who worked in the bunker, or has any memories or photographs of it they would like to share.



**TOP SECRET:** Above, the World War II Operations Room at Bentley Priory Museum PHOTO: IWM

### Spitfire 10K

The annual Spitfire 10K will return to the RAF Museum,



**KEYBOARD KIDS:** Dua and Abdullah take a look at the new platform PHOTO: RAF BENEVOLENT FUND

## Airplay goes digital

THE RAF Benevolent Fund has brought forward the launch of an online resource for young people and children isolated at home under lockdown restrictions. Airplay Digital was due to be introduced later this year but is available now.

It allows Airplay youth workers to reach children who might live away from RAF stations or overseas and involve them in activities. It also enables them to be there for youngsters facing the challenges of being part of a military family, like parents being deployed or having to move schools.

The platform includes ideas on activities for young people, weekly themes and challenges, a noticeboard for sharing photos and posts and monthly focus groups.

Alison Wyman, the Fund's head of Strategy and Programmes, said: "We are only too aware of the challenges young people

face and Airplay Digital gives our youth workers the opportunity to continue to engage with them during these challenging times and beyond."

Airplay Digital forms part of the charity's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Airplay is a multi-million-pound service providing youth work programmes and activities on RAF stations for children aged eight to 18, alongside Ben Club which supports ages five to eight. To provide the service, the Fund works with the charity Action for Children.

The RAFBF has launched several initiatives in response to the Covid-19 crisis including grants to stations to spend on resources for RAF children during lockdown, an online application form for support of up to £750 and 'Check and Chat' calls for socially-isolated veterans. ■ Go to: [rafbf.org](http://rafbf.org) to find out more.

London on August 29 and RAF Museum, Cosford on August 30.

### Pathfinder Lodge

**PATHFINDER LODGE** Number 7255 was founded by members of Pathfinder Force, RAF Bomber Command 1942-1945 and consecrated in 1953. The lodge meets four times a year under the auspices of the Metropolitan Grand Lodge of London in Duke Street, St James's, SW1 and dines at the RAF Club in Piccadilly.

If you are interested in joining please email David Sudbury: [d.sudbury46@btinternet.com](mailto:d.sudbury46@btinternet.com).

### Catering Association

**MEMBERSHIP** is open to serving or former Warrant Officers or Flight Sergeants in Trade Group 19 and to former RAF Catering Officers. Please email: [janedjones6@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:janedjones6@tiscali.co.uk) or you can call: 01487 823480 for more information and an application form.



## Your Announcements

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

## Tribute to star rider

**TRIBUTES** HAVE been paid to Forces Equitation star and Combined Services equestrian veteran Cpl Barry Tarr, known as 'Jack', who died on June 20, aged 71.

Jack served in the RAF from 1966-1980 as an Aircraft Technician and was based at Stradishall, Akrotiri, Coningsby and Cosford.

Described as an amazing horseman, he learnt to ride at Akrotiri Saddle Club while serving in Cyprus.

He represented the RAF on many occasions and in 1978 his team won The Queen's Cup and Queen's Plate at Royal Windsor Horse Show – the first time a non-mounted regiment had done so. He also represented the UK Armed Forces.

Forces Equine founder Debi Heath French said: "Jack was simply one in a million. He supported Forces Equine for many years at Hickstead and was always on hand behind the scenes with advice and guidance."

"He was a lovely man and championed Forces Equitation. In recent years he even attended,



**ROYAL SMILE:** Jack Tarr is presented to The Queen at Royal Windsor Horse Show in 1978

showing support to the RAF Equitation Association Championships at Cranwell. "Our thoughts are with Jack's family. RIP Jack, we shall miss you."

After attending the UK Armed Forces Show at Addington Manor, in April 2018, Jack wrote: "It is hard to believe that it was only 40 years ago that I was fussing about my start times, falling off in the collecting ring,

mending tack as my turn into the ring was called."

He added: "To be given the chance to help at these events brings back so many happy memories for me. To see the inter-Service rivalry and especially friendships that develop at such events is a reminder of what a special time in one's life it is to be in HM Forces."

His funeral was due to be held on July 8.



**PROJECT DEVELOPERS:** Sqn Ldr Richard Lewis (far left) and Flt Lt Rosie Brooks (far right) both have experience of caring for someone with dementia. Dr Prema Nirgude (front left) and James Kew-Moss (centre back) from the RAF Association and Natasha Howard (front right) from Alzheimer's Society PHOTO: ©PHIL GREIG

## Online help for carers

A NEW website to help dementia carers serving in the RAF has gone live.

The RAF Association has teamed up with Alzheimer's Society and IT company CGI to launch the first phase of its new Navigating Dementia project.

The hub – [dementia.raf.org.uk](http://dementia.raf.org.uk) – links RAF carers with other carers and families affected by dementia and steers them towards further

resources and support.

Rory O'Connor, the Association's director of welfare and policy, said: "Caring for a parent with dementia when not living close to them is an issue many RAF families face."

"We aim to strengthen connections to other RAF families with similar experiences, enhance resilience, and improve understanding of how to

support someone affected by dementia."

Research by Alzheimer's Society shows an estimated 70,000 people with an RAF background have dementia.

The Society's Colin Capper said: "Getting access to crucial face-to-face support services is difficult for many carers, particularly during the current pandemic. "This online hub will make the world of difference."



**Search UKSF on MODnet**  
[SFTC-UKSF-Recruiting@mod.gov.uk](mailto:SFTC-UKSF-Recruiting@mod.gov.uk)

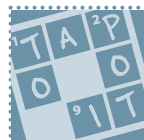
### How to use our service

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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## Crossword

No. 277

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

### Across

7. Amalgamated Manchester or Leeds, for example (6)
8. **And 22 Across.** Our shy fling may be what a pilot records (6,5)
10. Put boss out where he'll be picked up (3,4)
11. Cut up his US fish dish (5)
12. Eccentric person's Russian plane? (4)
13. In our time the German snake appears (5)
17. Dark varnish from country (5)
18. Wow! I go round state (4)
22. **See 8 Across**
23. Alistair to prohibit first-class return to republic (7)
24. Half love lovely tourist destination (6)
25. Biblical dancer goes from South Africa to Togolese capital (6)

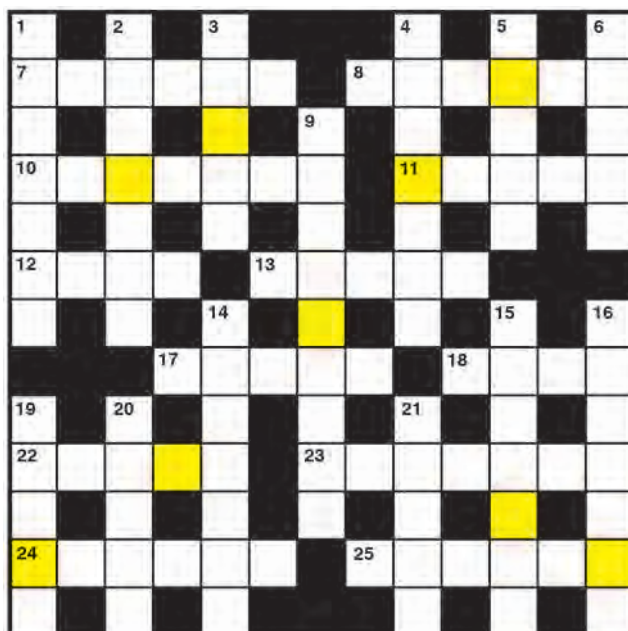
### Down

1. Sheilas and fellas think this remote (7)
2. Without star sign, evangelists on RAF assignment (7)
3. Little Cooper thrives in Scottish city (5)
4. Abscess examined by second antiseptic inventor (7)
5. Winning trees at end of street (5)
6. An advantage once more (5)
9. Tool first man takes to Cumbria station (9)
14. Rob managed fire (7)
15. Sounds like an enthusiast, Thomas flew RAF plane...(7)
16. ...while Roy gave up this RAF plane (7)
19. First sergeant has overseen victory's early push (5)
20. Scorches Scottish poet (5)
21. A good vessel for a U-turn, presumably (1-4)

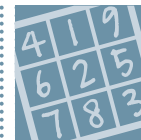
### Solution to Crossword No. 275:

**Across** – 7. Needle 8. Braise 10. Officer 11. Sheep 12. Bomb 13. Stool 17. Peony 18. Plea 22. Alarm 23. Insider 24. Odiham 25. Region  
**Down** – 1. In Doubt 2. Perfume 3. Clock 4. Bristol 5. Aimer 6. Tempo 9. Britannia 14. Red Meat 15. Aladdin 16. Warrant 19. Baron 20. Cabin 21. Ashes

Plane – Phantom



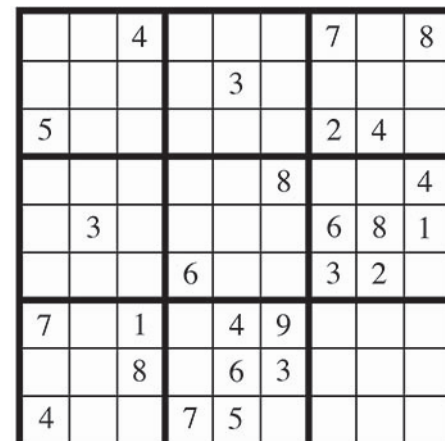
Due to the coronavirus pandemic we are currently unable to accept Crossword and Su Doku entries by post, so for the time being, please complete them just for fun. We will resume sending prizes for winning entries as soon as possible



## Su Doku

No. 287

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.



### Solution to Su Doku No: 286

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



## Events

### Car Park Party

Summer tour

# It's drive-in party time

**THE FAMILY'S summer plans may be looking a little different this year – with a party from the comfort and safety of your car.**

Described as 'the UK's only live touring event' and 'a socially distanced and safe entertainment experience', Car Park Party is an outdoor 'drive-in' event bringing together comedy, karaoke and theatre.

The two-day event takes place at various venues throughout England, including Henley-on-Thames from July 9-11; intu Merry Hill, near Birmingham, from July 23-24; and Chelmsford City Racecourse from July 31-August 1. It will also be staged at Down Royal Racecourse, Belfast, from August 7-8.

Rachael Jackson, general manager at intu Merry Hill said: "We're



delighted to be hosting Car Park Party. It's a unique opportunity for our visitors to get out and experience live entertainment."

At Merry Hill the show starts with a sing-along evening concert from the Massaoke Band, who play favourite anthems, with giant screens projecting lyrics so everyone can join in.

Families are also in for a treat during the daytime on Friday when *Horrible Histories: Barmy Britain* brings live theatre to the car park, whilst Friday evening will feature some of the UK's top comedic talent, supplied by the world-famous Comedy Store and including Hal Cruttenden, Suzi Ruffell and Dane Baptiste.

■ **Go to: [carparkparty.com](http://carparkparty.com) for more details and to book tickets.**

**TV REGULAR:** Suzi Ruffell is a familiar face from telly comedy shows



**LAUGHS:** Comics Dane Baptiste (top) and Hal Cruttenden are among stars performing



## Book Review

### Life of Action II

Mike Fury (Bench Press, £29.99 in hardback. Also in softback and on Kindle. Visit [mikefury.net/shop](http://mikefury.net/shop))

# Real-life film action heroes

**THEY ARE** the lifeblood of action movies, but film fans hardly ever get to hear from the daredevils who risk life and limb to add the thrills and spills to the silver screen.

Now comes the second instalment of *Life of Action* by Mike Fury, that gives a voice to the stuntman and woman collective. A gripping read, it gets behind the scenes, giving the reader an unusual insight into the motivations of these professionals and what it takes to plan and carry out the stunts that live long in the memory, along with what drives them to work on some of the most amazing stunts in the biggest blockbusters – from Bond to Indiana Jones.

Fury said: "Much like the first volume, this book is a real labour of love and I know there are hugely passionate film fans who admire these artists and their work just as much as me. Having worked in the film industry for many years I've witnessed and come to understand the incredible hard work, creativity and often great personal risk that goes into entertaining an audience. Many of these stories are funny, sad, moving and inspiring, and

hopefully give an insight into this crazy and unusual business."

The list of interviewees makes the book a must-read, along with unique and exhilarating stories. It also includes some brilliant photographs from James Bond movies, *John Wick*, *The Raid* and *The Expendables*, to name a few.

The last look into this side of films was in the light-hearted 1978 movie *Hooper*, starring Burt Reynolds, but unlike that, *Life of Action II* covers the serious side of the business.

Fury talks to filmmakers, actors and stuntmen and women, with 26 interviews in total including Zoe Bell from Quentin Tarantino's *Death Proof* and *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*, Frank Grillo of *Captain America: Civil War*, *Wheelman* and *The Purge: Anarchy* and Cale Schultz of *John Wick: Chapter 3 – Parabellum*, *Atomic Blonde* and *Logan* fame.

No slouch in action movie and stunt work himself, having worked on *Avengement*, *I Am Soldier* and *Confine*, Fury provides a thrilling and entertaining book, that delivers rare insight.

**4 out of 5 roundels** ●●●●

*Review by Daniel Abrahams*





# Why RAF's pilots had air superiority in the Battle

## The agile superstar

**S**YNONYMOUS WITH the Battle of Britain, the Supermarine Spitfire was outnumbered by the Hawker Hurricane and scored fewer 'kills'.

The Hawker and Supermarine fighters were both armed with eight 0.303in (7.7mm) machine guns and powered by the 1,030hp Merlin II or III engine, but the Spitfire was lighter, smaller and considerably faster.

The Hurricane's conservative design helped ensure the RAF had large numbers of easily-maintained, rugged fighters when it needed them most, but the Spitfire's technological superiority and potential for development made it a machine of the future and one of the most successful fighter aircraft ever built.

Manufacturer Supermarine built flying boats and racing floatplanes for the Schneider Trophy competition, in which Britain ultimately triumphed with the Supermarine S.6B.

Company designer Reginald J. Mitchell first penned the Type 224, a disappointing monoplane that lost out in competition with the Gloster SS.37 biplane.

Convinced he could do better, he set to work again, drawing on his experience with the racing seaplanes to create the radical new Type 300, based on the innovative Rolls-Royce PV.12 engine, which matured as the Merlin.

## The unsung hero

**O**FTEN IN the shadow of the stylish Spitfire, the Hawker Hurricane was the result of Hawker chief designer Sydney Camm's genius and determination in the face of Air Ministry conservatism.

Officials doubted the structural integrity of the new monoplane layout, preferring the trusted biplane configuration for its predictable behaviour and manoeuvrability.

The contemporary Gloster Gladiator, Fiat CR.42 and Polikarpov I-15 series were among the latest and highest-performing biplane fighters from Britain, Italy and the USSR, but although their airframes were more advanced, in design and fighting philosophy they were merely an extension of World War I concepts.

Camm was convinced that the performance of a heavily-armed monoplane, powered by one of the new generation of high-power aeroengines, would more than compensate for its lack of manoeuvrability compared to a biplane.

The design showed promise and the Air Ministry drew up specification F.37/34 around it. The prototype flew for the first time on March 5, 1936.

Mitchell died on June 11, 1937, while this work was underway, and it was Supermarine's former chief draughtsman Joe Smith, promoted as chief designer, who saw the fighter into service.



**THE FEW:** Three Spitfire pilots with 19 Sqn based at Fowlmere, Cambs, gather to confer after a mission in September 1940. (L-R): Flt Lt WJ 'Farmer' Lawson, Sqn Ldr Sandy Lane (OC) and Flt Sgt GC 'Grumpy' Unwin



Power came from the Rolls-Royce PV.12, which would mature as the Merlin. The first prototype flew on November 6, 1935, by which time official interest was sufficient for specification F.36/34 to have been drawn up around it.

Ultimately, more than 14,000 Hurricanes were built in Britain and Canada.

Later Hurricanes mounted 12 0.303in machine guns, four 20mm cannon, pairs of 40mm anti-tank guns and bombs; the type also pioneered operations with rockets, paving the way for the Hawker Typhoon attacks that proved devastating when the Allies returned to Europe in 1944.

The RAF fought through the 'Phoney War' and the Battle of Britain with the Hurricane Mk I.

The aircraft entered service in

By September 1939, 10 Spitfire squadrons were operational and 19 were ready to engage the Luftwaffe during the Battle of Britain.

Although outnumbered by the Hurricane, the Spitfire was more effective, accounting for 529 enemy aircraft, including 282 Bf 109s, while the Hurricane downed 656 machines, 222 of them Bf 109s.

The standard eight-gun armament was never really adequate in combat, especially against bombers with self-sealing fuel tanks and armour protection, and several undoubtedly made it back to base damaged, when a cannon-armed fighter might have finished them off. A handful of cannon-armed Spitfire Mk IB aircraft were issued to 19 Sqn during the Battle, but the weapons jammed frequently.

With the more powerful Merlin XII installed, the Spitfire Mk II also emerged during the Battle of Britain, entering service with 611 Sqn in August 1940.

The majority were of the Mk IIA with eight machine guns, but the Mk IIB was also built, with 20mm cannon. Subsequent Mk II variants were produced for long-range escort missions as the RAF turned to the offensive, and for air-sea rescue.

Early in 1941, trials with Mk I airframes modified to take the yet more powerful Merlin 45. These aircraft were effectively to Mk V standard and it was with this type that the Spitfire began to show its true versatility.

Despite its deficiencies, the Hurricane destroyed more enemy aircraft during the battle than all other defences combined, its rugged, simple structure withstanding damage and making for relatively easy repair.

With Spitfire production still ramping up, Hawker's bold decision to build Hurricanes regardless of official doubts ensured that the RAF had as many fighters as possible to resist the German onslaught of summer 1940.

Flt Lt James Nicolson remained in the cockpit of Hurricane Mk I P3576/GN-A after the aircraft had been hit on August 16, 1940.

With the aircraft burning around him he manoeuvred to engage and shoot down a Bf 110 to earn the nation's highest honour – the Victoria Cross (see pages 14-15 for the full story).



No account of the Battle of Britain would be complete without a tribute to the heroic pilots who turned the Nazi tide. Between July 10 and October 31, 1940, aircrew from the UK, Poland, New Zealand, Australia and other allied nations fought the first major military campaign conducted entirely in the air. These are the top 10 Aces, as recorded by the Air Historical Branch.

By Simon Mander

# Battle of Britain Top 10

## 1. Sgt Josef Frantisek (Czech): 17 kills

JOSEF FRANTISEK was born in 1912 and joined the Czechoslovakian Air Force in the 1930s. After the fall of Czechoslovakia in 1938 he escaped to Poland and joined the Polish Air Force. After Poland fell, he escaped to France and after the fall of France arrived in the UK. Although Czechoslovakian,



he opted to stay with the Poles and joined No. 303 Squadron at RAF Northolt. He claimed 17 enemy aircraft (11 of them fighters) becoming the Top Allied Battle of Britain Ace before being killed in a crash on October 8, 1940. An unruly pilot, he favoured breaking formation and embarking on solitary 'lone wolf' missions.

## 2. Plt Off Eric Lock (UK): 16½ kills

ERIC LOCK was born in Shrewsbury in 1920. He joined the RAFVR in 1939 and served with No. 41 Squadron, seeing intensive action throughout the Battle of Britain; about two thirds of his claims were enemy fighters. He was shot down and badly injured on November 17, 1940 and was in hospital until May 1941. He returned to flying in July 1941, with No. 611 Squadron, and made several more claims. He was killed over France on August 3, 1941 and has no known grave.



## 3. Sgt James Lacey (UK): 15½ kills



JAMES 'GINGER' LACEY was born in Wetherby, Yorkshire, in 1917. He joined No. 501 Squadron as a Sergeant Pilot and fought in the Battle of France in May and June 1940. During the Battle of Britain he claimed more than twice as many enemy fighters shot down as bombers, and was himself shot down twice. He left the RAF in 1967 and died in 1989.

## 4. Fg Off Brian Carbury (NZ): 15½ kills

BRIAN CARBURY was born in Wellington, New Zealand, in 1918. He travelled to the UK and joined the RAF in 1937. He claimed several victories over the winter of 1939-40, and in August 1940 entered the Battle of Britain with No. 603 Squadron.

He would claim four times as many enemy fighters destroyed as enemy bombers during the Battle, and unusually received the Distinguished Flying Cross and a Bar during that period. Later he became an instructor and left the RAF in 1944. He died in 1962.

## 5. Plt Off Robert Doe (UK): 15 kills

ROBERT 'BOB' DOE was born in Reigate, Surrey, in 1920, and joined the RAFVR in 1938. During the Battle of Britain he claimed 12 victories (10 of them enemy fighters) with No. 234 Squadron before transferring to No. 238 Squadron and claiming several more. On October 10, 1940 he was shot down and injured, not returning to operations until the end of the year. On January 3, 1941

he was severely injured during a crash landing and underwent reconstructive facial surgery. He returned to flying again in May 1941. Doe was posted to the Far East in December 1943, taking command of No. 10 Squadron Indian Air Force, which he commanded for the rest of the war in Burma. After the war he held several staff posts before retiring in 1966. He died in 2010.

SPITFIRE:  
Battle of  
Britain icon



## 6. Fg Off Witold Urbanowicz (Poland): 15 kills

WITOLD URBANOWICZ was born in Poland in 1908 and joined the Polish Air Force in 1930. After the fall of Poland in 1939 he escaped to France and then the UK, joining No. 145 Squadron in August 1940. He made several claims and within a few weeks was posted to No. 303 (Polish) Squadron at RAF



Northolt. Here he continued to build his score, claiming roughly equal numbers of enemy fighters and bombers shot down. In the autumn of 1943 he flew briefly with US forces in China, claiming two Japanese aircraft destroyed. He left the Air Force in 1945 and returned to America, where he settled down. He died in 1987.

## 7. Plt Off Paterson Hughes (Aus): 14 kills (3x½ kills)

PATERSON HUGHES was born in New South Wales in 1917. He joined the Royal Australian Air Force in 1935 and transferred to the RAF in 1937. He flew with No. 238 Squadron during the Battle of

Britain, claiming 14 enemy fighters shot down, and sharing claims on three enemy bombers. He was shot down and killed on September 7, 1940 and is buried in St. James' churchyard, Sutton, Hull.

## 8. Plt Off Colin Gray (NZ): 14 kills (2x½ kills)

COLIN GRAY was born in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 1914. He joined the RAF, after several attempts, in 1938. He flew with No. 54 Squadron, claiming his first victory in May 1940. During the Battle of Britain almost all his claims were for enemy fighters. He remained on operations until early 1942. He was posted to the Middle East to command a squadron in January 1943, and later commanded a wing in Malta, continuing to add to his score. At the end of the war he was a Station Commander, and held staff posts until his retirement in 1961. He returned to New Zealand and died there in 1995.



## 9. Flt Lt Archie McKellar (UK): 14½ kills

ARCHIBALD MCKELLAR was born in Paisley in 1912. After gaining a civilian pilot's licence he joined No. 602 Squadron, Auxiliary Air Force, in 1936. Mobilised in August 1939, on October 28 he shot down the first enemy aircraft to be brought down over British soil during the war. In June 1940 he was posted to No. 605 Squadron, which he took command of in late September. While fighting with the squadron he claimed roughly equal numbers of enemy fighters and bombers shot down. He was shot down and killed on November 1, 1940 and is buried in New Eastwood Cemetery, Glasgow.

## 10. Flt Lt Carl Davis (UK): 11½ kills

CARL DAVIS was born in South Africa of American parents, in 1911. He went to school in Britain, and joined No. 601 Squadron, Auxiliary Air Force, in 1936. He was mobilised in August 1939 and took part in an air raid on a German seaplane base at Borkum in November. He continued to fly with No. 601 Sqn during the Battle of Britain, with most of his claims against enemy fighters. He was shot down and killed on September 6, 1940 and is buried in St Mary's churchyard, Storrington, Sussex.



## Feature

By Tracey Allen

**T**HE CHAIRMAN of the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust says the charity is in crisis because of severe financial problems caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

With all its fundraising activities cancelled and the memorial at Capel-le-Ferne in Kent closed for three months, the Trust has turned to online crowdfunding to raise money.

Chairman Richard Hunting said: "Despite the fact that we look after the national memorial to The Few, the Trust receives no public funding of any kind, and we are simply running out of cash."

"It costs around £240,000 a year to run the site, and apart from donations we earn that money through The Scramble Experience, the shop and café and the car park, all of which have been closed."

"The closure has had a devastating impact. We had to furlough some staff but we need to keep some at work, and to pay them we are burning through our reserves."

The crowdfunding campaign's initial target was £20,000, needed to pay staff wages and other immediate bills, said Mr Hunting. It has raised £21,600 to date.

Once £20,000 was reached the Trust increased the target total to £50,000.

"We are optimistic that we will get the money. We are a national memorial and it would be nice if we could receive government funding but it's not likely. We rely on the goodwill of the public," he said.

"It's unthinkable for the site to close. We plan to stay there forever – that's the whole point of a memorial. We also rely on legacies encouraging people to remember what the Battle of Britain stands for."

"While we pay our respects at the memorial to 'The Few' who defended this country from invasion in 1940, we also pay tribute to the many – the groundcrew, WAAFs, Observer Corps and thousands of other people whose selfless and unstinting work allowed the aircrew to take the fight to the enemy."

"We need the public's support to help the charity continue with its work of keeping people informed and educated about the events of 1940 while also preserving the memory of The Few who took to the skies to protect this country in World War II."

**T**he memorial site, near Folkestone, features a statue of a lone airman looking out over the English Channel, and the Christopher Foxley-Norris Memorial Wall, on which the names of all the Allied airmen known

## Battle of Britain Memorial Trust in Covid cash crisis



**VIPS:** Prince Michael of Kent at a previous Memorial Day at the Capel-le-Ferne site with members of The Few including Tom Neil (left), Geoffrey Wellum (6th from left) and Paul Farnes (7th from left)

# Tribute to The Few needs help of many

## Crowdfunding bid for Kent centre to raise funds

to have taken part in the Battle of Britain are listed. There is also a replica Hurricane and Spitfire. The charity opened its Wing visitor centre in 2015.

The Capel-le-Ferne site was opened by The Queen Mother on July 9, 1993. It was established by fighter ace Geoffrey Page who was a founder member of the Guinea Pig Club, having been a patient of pioneering plastic surgeon Sir Archibald McIndoe.

Mr Hunting said: "For the first 25 years after opening we used to get lots of visitors who were members of The Few and that was part of the attraction. Now there is only one left and he is over 100 and frail."

"This year is particularly significant because it is 80 years since the Battle of Britain, on July 10. Normally we would have around 3,000 people on the site for Memorial Day, it's usually a very big event with a flypast by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. We had to cancel that this year and are having



**FIGHTER ACE:** Geoffrey Page (second left and also inset) helped establish Capel-le-Ferne site

a virtual Memorial Day on July 12 instead. It's been put together by one of our Trustees, AVM Ray Pentland, who was the RAF's Chaplain-in-Chief."

Mr Hunting explained that the Trust had been hit by a 'double whammy' caused by the Covid-19 crisis – not only has it suffered a major loss of revenue, it has also had to spend thousands of pounds making the site 'Covid-secure' for reopening.

He said: "We have been putting

in facilities such as Perspex screens and one-way routes. We have spent about £10,000 doing all that, none of which is paid for yet."

"An issue for us is many of our volunteers are quite elderly themselves and they feel a bit worried about coronavirus because they are more at risk than young people. Keeping our volunteers safe is extremely important to us."

He added: "Quite a lot of our visitors are older too, people over 50 tend to form the majority of



**MEMORIAL WALL:** BoB pilot William Walker

them although many bring their children and grandchildren."

Mr Hunting said it was hoped the site could reopen this month.

There are a number of 'thank you' gifts available in return for donations, which can be made at: [crowdfunder.co.uk/save-the-national-memorial-to-the-few](https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/save-the-national-memorial-to-the-few).

The virtual Memorial Day will be posted online, using the Trust's YouTube and Facebook pages. Go to: [battleofbritainmemorial.org](https://battleofbritainmemorial.org) for more information.



**VISIT:** Battle veteran Sqn Ldr Tom Pickering at Memorial



By Tracey Allen

Feature

# Fast-jet pilot, motivational speaker and author



**FORCE OF NATURE:** Flt Lt Amanda Wells sits on her Tornado with colleague Michel Dupont



**YEAR 2000:** Mandy on Op Bolton, her first mission



**2002:** After a sortie on Op Resinate South, Kuwait

# Mandy: A woman on a mission

**W**HEN MANDY WELLS joined the RAF in 1994 she had no plans to be a trailblazer – but she became only the UK's second woman to fly the Tornado GR4 operationally.

She flew 50 missions over Iraq with No 11 (AC) Squadron, patrolling the no-fly zone as part of Operation Southern Watch, and was one of just five female Tornado pilots in the Air Force.

Now a sought-after motivational speaker with an international client list, the former Flt Lt has written a book about her Service life that's picking up five-star reviews.

*An Officer, Not A Gentleman* tells the story of her determination to succeed at her dream job, overcoming plenty of obstacles on the way – including sexism.

She showed exceptional talent as a pilot early on. As an undergraduate she won a regional aerobatics competition, representing the University of Birmingham Air Squadron – beating three RAF-sponsored pilots.

On her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, her grandfather, Wg Cdr Frank Cuttill, who flew Oxfords and Harvards in World War II, proudly gave her his war medals.

At 6ft tall Mandy was an imposing figure – her nickname on the squadron was 'Big

Bird'. During her first term of officer training at Cranwell her boss told her 'although you are very Amazonian in nature, you are not particularly feminine'. She was ordered to 'be more feminine' and stop buying half pints in the bar – female candidates had already been advised not to drink pints.

Once on the squadron, she tried hard to be 'one of the lads.'

She said: "Looking back, I was probably trying to be a bit more blokey, swearing far more than I normally would. Before we went to the Gulf, I was certainly drinking too much because it was very much part of the culture. I was just trying to fit into the mould of a junior fast jet pilot, regardless of gender. I was very happy to join in, I'm a really sociable animal."

She added: "One time I noticed I had 'morphed' into a guy was when we were going to the States and I was wearing the same RAF 'uniform' as the boys – chinos, deck shoes, a checked shirt and a blazer. I thought 'I've become a man' – you don't realise you're doing it until you catch yourself."

**B**efore deploying, while at RAF Marham, Mandy had to deal with being confronted with pictures of naked women on calendars

and screensavers in the junior aircrew crew room.

She said: "I let this pass for a couple of days and then I surreptitiously changed them all to pictures of scantily-clad men. Surprisingly the next day they were all miraculously scenic landscapes."

A few months before going to Kuwait the squadron took part in Exercise Red Flag in Las Vegas. Mandy discovered that her friend Suraya (now Air Cdre Marshall, Commandant of RAF College, Cranwell) was also there, as a navigator with a Tornado F3 squadron. They were pals from university and officer training days.

The girls decided to have a night out in Vegas and, after downing cocktails, took part in a steamy dance contest in a nightclub to win \$1,000 dollars. They almost won and the next day Mandy found out the ground crew had all been at the club and seen her performance.

She said: "I seemed to have garnered a new-found respect. 'Welcome to the squadron' seemed to be the message."

"Suraya and I used to have fun – we're still good friends."

On the squadron in Kuwait in 2000 Mandy was the only woman – apart from one female ground crew – among 250 personnel.

She said: "I was their first female pilot and they weren't used to it. I wasn't used to it."

"A lot of people felt pressure to conform

– I think that's changed now. In the time I was on the squadron I saw it change from the older generation, the second tourists, to the new guys coming in – that felt like a breath of fresh air.

"Society changes and what was acceptable as banter in those days no longer is. At the same time, you could argue that it's lost a lot of its camaraderie because of political correctness – there is a middle ground."

**M**andy explained: "I think it really helped on the squadron to know I had a boyfriend back at home. I realised I had to get the wives on board, I was going to be away for months on end with their husbands."

I made sure my boyfriend Craig, a Royal Navy pilot, came to functions. He never felt me going away was a threat and it helped them to know I had a very strong relationship."

Craig and Mandy were married in 2008 and the couple have two teenage sons.

Without doubt a pioneer and a high-achiever, Mandy said she and her fellow women pilots didn't feel they had to set an example as female high-fliers.

She said: "Bizarrely, we didn't think of ourselves as doing that. You don't feel you're holding the weight of 'women's lib' on your shoulders. You're just trying to do your best."

● *An Officer, Not A Gentleman* by Mandy Hickson (£9.99, amazon.co.uk).



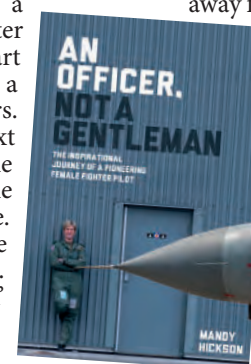
**PALS:** Officer training with Suraya (now an Air Cdre)



**YOUNG GUN:** With her university air squadron



**MANDY:** Mrs motivator







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Sport

5 pages of **RAF Sport** start here

● Brook's word is his bond. RAFRUW coach on his plans: P26

## NETBALL

# Netballers aim high

## Association begins search for shining lights to boost its future



COURT IN THE ACT: Main, below and above right, action from the recent Netball IS tournament at Aldershot

**SERVICE NETBALL is on the hunt for the brightest and best new committee members to ensure the association has a future to match.**

Having closed out the season with two defeats at the Inter-Services at the Aldershot Garrison Sports Centre at the beginning of March, they were on hand in the shape of FS Claire Bullen, (RAF Police), UKAF Netball coach, to collect the UKAF Sports Awards Team Award.

It has now started advertising for five posts to be filled with representatives for development, fixtures, fundraising, health and safety and a Deputy External Media on its social media platforms and across the wider RAF.

RAFNA chairwoman Wg Cdr Dawn Akyildiz said: "RAF netball needs confident, enthusiastic people to support our grass roots events and elite development squads. We know there are lots of talented people across the RAF who could bring the right skills to grow our association and we have begun our search for them."

Despite the season having finished, the new committee members, if in place, could be involved with upcoming RAF trials

that usually (Covid-19 dependent) commence in September, to start the 2020/21 season.

The association also holds training weekends throughout the season, with the Inter-Services tournament being hosted by the Royal Navy in Portsmouth next March.

A spokesman for the association said: "There is also a likelihood of an overseas tour in the next one to two years. The main aim for the association is to broaden the wider RAF netball family and bring in committee members who are not necessarily playing members of the squad. This will create more inclusion and also free up the players to fully concentrate on their

playing role during the season.

"It would be fantastic to involve some men in the RAFNA. With some professional male netball clubs now making big names for themselves and the growing number of male umpires and coaches, it would be great to extend this to some of our committee members as well."

Wg Cdr Akyildiz added: "Applicants don't need to play netball to contribute and support the RAF netball family, and benefit the Air Cadets, Reserves and Regulars."

● Visit the association's social media pages for more details: Facebook: [RAFNetball](#) and Twitter: [NetballRaf](#)



## RECORD BREAKER

## AC hits another record

### Canal and bridleway ride sets new mark for Challenge



RIDE ON: AC Doyle making headway during his latest record bid

**FORMER RAF Serviceman AC Paddy Doyle bounced back from a bad fall to complete his latest record attempt in the RAF 80k Hurricane Challenge.**

Doyle tackled the event carrying a 30lb backpack to earn himself another world record.

Following the fall – which happened during the early stages of his record attempt along the Stratford-upon-Avon, Grand Union Canals and Rowington Bridleway, Warwickshire – Doyle suffered from a sprained wrist, cut knee and a blow to the head.

Shaking off the fall, he

completed the low technical route in four hours, 47 minutes and 18 seconds.

He said: "The support team pushed me all the way, which helped me to stay focused from the fall I took."

"I had to cut out the pain and had to get to the finish line which I did, 13 minutes within the cut-off time."

Doyle has now totalled a career 685-documented sporting achievements, under eight different sporting categories, with 93 entries in the Guinness Book of World Records.



**Video award** Getting behind the face of RAF sport

Email: sports@rafnews.co.uk  
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# Sports win's a video nicey

Award is perfect start to Federation's campaign to raise profile of teams & fitness and value to Service

A HIGH-IMPACT video designed to kickstart an 18-month campaign to raise the profile of Service sport has walked away with a prestigious industry award.

The one minute 20 second video, entitled *RAF Sport – No Ordinary Team*, features sports including archery with Flt Lt Tom Barbour; rowing, with the women's team at Danesfield; Triathlon with Cpl Daymian Underhill and Flt Lt Sam Rose; and paragliding.

The video was created by the RAF Sports Federation and Clearhead Productions and won the highly regarded Silver Telly advertising industry award.

Rich Fogden, deputy director of RAF Sport, said: "Originally the video was to support the Sports Federation, but we quickly identified that it would have far greater value as part of a drive to increase awareness of the huge value of RAF Sport in the delivery of operational capability."

"The opportunity to work with the Federation and to produce

this great film with Clearhead was exceptional – we are delighted with it and very pleased for the company and this success."

The video, which was mainly shot at RAF Brize Norton, is to be shown across the Service,

**“There is so much talent in Service sport and I feel we have captured that successfully in the video”**

from recruits at Halton, to future commanders at Shrivenham along with potential sponsors of RAF Sport. It is also on YouTube, see link below.

Video director Adam Harridence said: "We wanted to highlight the real team ethic of RAF sport, the teams on the pitch and the ones working to enable that, off it."

"I was amazed and honoured to work with these athletes, not only

would they do whatever is needed to highlight not just their sports, but the organisations behind and their appreciation of that is deeply rooted."

"To win the award was great for us and for the Service as well. The video is to be the central point of an overall 18-month strategy, combining the Directorate of RAF Sport, Central Fund and Sports Federation."

"It will touch on recruitment and retention, what sport means to the Service and how sport makes people better prepared for life in the Service and out."

"I honestly do not think the public really understand the true breadth of impact sport has on Service personnel – there is so much sport and so much talent and I think we caught that successfully in the video."

● Visit YouTube link below for the *RAF Sport – No Ordinary Team* video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PWekSjNnMo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PWekSjNnMo)



**SCREEN STARS:** The RAF women's rowing team take to the water at RAF Danesfield; inset, deputy director RAF Sport Richard Fogden; below, triathletes Cpl Daymian Underhill and Flt Lt Sam Rose finish a long day filming at RAF Brize Norton  
PHOTOS: ADAM HARRIDENCE



**HANGING OUT:** Elite Athlete and GB Team archer Flt Lt Tom Barbour takes aim during the video shoot in a hangar at RAF Brize Norton  
PHOTO: ADAM HARRIDENCE

## RUGBY LEAGUE



## Regiment stars sporting new kit of alright for 2021 season

Centurion Fund comes up trumps once more for Gunners

THE RAF Regiment's rugby league team got a chance to show off its latest kit for the upcoming season during lockdown.

The kit, sponsored by the Centurion Fund, the RAF Regiment charity, is to be used for the 2020/21 season.

WO Shaun Griffith, chairman of RAF Regt RL, said: "The Centurion Fund has always been

there for us, throughout our long and rich history, we're extremely grateful for their support and for such a great-looking kit."

Team spokesman Sgt Stu Norrie-Bland said: "Bringing these strong Corps brands together in our design for this year has delivered a truly stunning kit, one we are rightly proud to wear and will hopefully have a

successful season sporting it for the side and Regiment."

Having seen most of their season wiped out by the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, the RAF Regiment RL team are likely to have to wait until the start of April 2021 to take to the pitch in their new kit.

● Follow RAF Regt rugby league on Twitter @RAFRegtRugbyLea



**ON THE BALL:** Top, L/Cpl Gaz Smith and Sgt Norrie-Bland pull together for new kit launch; left, Smith next to Sports Lottery banner and new kit; above, shirt sponsors on show



## Sport

### RUGBY UNION

# Lockdown-busting Brook gives union ladies a sporting chance

## Technology, togetherness & teamwork motivate PTI



**TEAM EFFORT:** Above, Brook with Fg Off Hollie Wilkinson, RAFRUW team sports therapist; right, the IS 2019 winning ladies team after their historic 23-14 victory over the Army; below, Brook at The Stoop, Twickenham, the new home ground for the RAF IS matches and home of Harlequins RFC



### Daniel Abrahams HQ Air Command

**HE HAS been one of the driving forces behind the success of RAF women's rugby union, now Sgt Ben Brook has upped his game during lockdown.**

The RAF PTI, based at the Defence School of Policing and Guarding (DSPG) Southwick Park, has been working as the RAFRUW's strength and conditioning coach over the past three years, during which time the team have risen to be Inter-Service champions for the first time. They were looking to successfully defend their title before the coronavirus lockdown.

Not one to let a simple universal pandemic stop him, Brook set to work maintaining the fitness of all the players and some civilian sports clubs too.

Brook, who has achieved a degree in Sports Science and a Masters in Sports Therapy since joining the RAF 12 years ago, said: "One of the first things I introduced was short series testing, such as

bench press, pull ups and so on. I transferred that to a spreadsheet and now the girls can see each other's results.

"The accountability has become a massive thing and they thrive on it. To be coaching at such a high standard with players like this is brilliant for me.

"I also started giving out awards for special effort, this way, not only the fittest win, the ones who have made a specific gain after being given a target win the award. This has also been well received."

Brook also provides players with remote programmes for their position and individual needs, using their phones.

The use of technology has been a lifeline in breaking the boredom of lockdown, Brook said. "We weren't going to achieve a lot of actual rugby training, but I wanted to introduce something worthwhile.

"The once a week group meet ups on Zoom have given a communal side to things. It's been a laugh and keeps people occupied in a beneficial way."

While the players use the heart

rate straps provided by the RAF Central Fund, Brook couples this with the Strava and Volt phone apps to monitor fitness.

He added: "Working with such talented and professional players is something special for me, but to see the development players move from non-rugby playing to where they are has seen me develop as a PTI.

"The RAFRUW set-up is so brilliantly tuned – the girls simply have to turn up and play, it's at that point, which is amazing."

Having international players and being involved with matches against Germany and South Africa has given him greater challenges as a PTI.

His son's rugby club and Llantwit AFC, *see other clubs right*, were the first to benefit from his increased level of training expertise as Brook began to offer his talents to teams as they struggle during lockdown.

He said: "So many clubs are struggling during this time, so I offered to work with them on their fitness.

"I hold once a month calls, I set



targets and plans, the players get to ask about training plans they have heard about and I can advise them.

"The feedback has been great. I just wanted to use my knowledge and share it."

● Follow RAF women's rugby on twitter [@RAFRU\\_Women](#)

### Lockdown clubs Brook has coached:

Llantwit AFC, Bath Ladies Rugby, Lichfield Ladies Rugby, Witney Angels Ladies Rugby, Nelson Belles Ladies Rugby, Fairford RUFC, Carrick RUFC, Danby Hockey Club.

PHOTOS: SBS



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**Sport**

## Brook opens doors in lockdown

● Sport P26



## Kit of alright for Regt rugby

● Sport P25



## Video thrilled the RAF stars

● Sport P24-25



### CYCLING

# Cyclists cramming in VR league action



Room with a phew...

#### INDOOR LEAGUE:

Main, Flt Lt Jonathan Gwynn sporting his RAF colours during a workout; above, Flt Lt Fie Padbury equipped with towel over the handlebars; inset left, Flt Lt Aaron Gwilliam is wired for sound and speed during a ride

#### Daniel Abrahams

HQ Air Command

**SINCE THE start of the Covid-19 UK lockdown RAF bike fans have been in a league of their own – with a Virtual Cycling competition for athletes.**

With all sporting events cancelled since March, the potential loss of the vital spring season saw Chf Tech Ian Swinscoe, RAFA E-sports Cycling Secretary, leap into action, forming the first-ever virtual military road cycling

league, which sees the RAF and Army battling for the coveted Inter-Services title, albeit virtually.

Swinscoe said: “We had undertaken winter training using online platform Zwift. Zwift is by no means new, it allows its users to interact, train and, importantly, compete in a virtual world.

“I had been tasked with devising and identifying training opportunities and potential competitions for members, but the lockdown simply escalated the timeframe.

“Realising there was a unique opportunity at hand, a league for all RAFA members was created to help them participate and interact, no matter where in the world they were deployed.”

Group rides are now a weekly feature, as well as participation in regular and challenging online racing events, with all categories of riders catered for.

The situation has also led to a closer relationship with sister Services being struck up.

The RAF teams have taken part

in the virtual Army Cycling Road Race Series (eACRRS).

Another major achievement being introduced is the allocation of a dedicated time slot by Zwift for the UK Armed Forces to race within, meaning the Inter-Services Road Race and Time Trial will also go ahead.

Swinscoe added: “The continuation of the IS, albeit virtually, ensures that healthy competition between the three Services is supported and maintained.

“I feel we have proved that our cycling community is resilient and ready to deal with whatever is thrown at it.”

The online platform also allowed the association to undertake VE Day commemorations with a 75km ride being held, which saw 35 riders join in.

There has also been a charity 100-mile indoor ride in support of RAFA 100.

● Follow RAF cycling on Twitter @RAFcycling



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