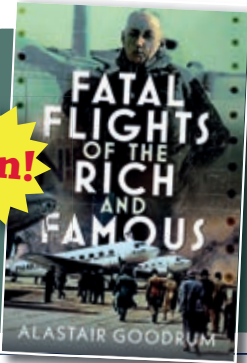


The Forces' favourite paper

Riddles of the jet-set deaths

See page 19

Win!



Bag the latest Gadd thriller

See R'n'R page 8

Win!



ROYAL AIR FORCE

Friday, July 10, 2026
Edition No.1636

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RAF NEWS



Brize recycling stars on the eco-catwalk



See pages 14-15

Weightlifting
Josh takes title again



● See p24

Boxing
Kennedy's 4 Nations win



● See p25

Swimming
Games gold bid for Kyle



● See page 27

Forces in £15bn budget bailout

Maiden voyage



ROCK LEGEND Bruce Dickinson joined Air Force photographer and Iron Maiden fan Sgt Robert Travis at the home of the UK's Chinook

Force at Odiham as the nation marked Armed Forces Day. The heavy metal singer (*left*) is a qualified airline pilot and holds the

rank of Honorary Group Captain in recognition of his work with the RAF and support for the British Military.

Staff Reporter

THE GOVERNMENT has pledged an extra £15 billion in defence funding to boost Britain's Armed Forces and secure the future for the Global Combat Air Programme.

The programme to build the RAF's sixth-generation fighter is to receive £8 billion over the next four years, while the UK's drone programme will receive £5 billion in funding.

Defence chiefs have pledged to raise spending on munitions and weapons to £11 billion, including long-range strike weapons, low-cost cruise missiles and one-way UAVs.

The announcement will see an increase in defence funding from £54 billion a year under the previous government to almost £80 billion a year by 2029, with the UK's defence spending increasing to 2.7 per cent of GDP.

The uplift will also create nearly 60,000 extra direct and indirect UK industry jobs by the end of the decade, taking forecasted defence spending-related jobs supported in the UK to more than half a million, the government said.

● Continued on page 2

BiteSize

“It is an incredibly humbling experience,,

Colin Bell
DFC, 105,
presents
inaugural
veterans
award
bearing
his name

See page 7

“People ask if I won’t be dancing anymore... darling, I’m just getting started,,

New Strictly
host Jojo will be
touring the UK next
year with his dance
show, *Finally Home*

See R’n’R page 4

“I’m so excited to represent Wales and the RAF at the Games,,

Swimmer
Cpl Kyle Booth
on his quest for
Commonwealth
glory this month

See page 27



Forces funding vow

● Continued from front

Among other measures outlined in the Defence Investment Plan is a £900 million investment to drive efficiency and reform of procurement programmes across the Services.

Military bases will see extra funding for security, with the delivery of new radars and sensors, direct energy weapons and counter drone systems and investment in AI technology.

Speaking after the announcement, Chief of the Defence Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Rich Knighton said: “This plan sets out how and where we will invest in defence over the coming years to deliver the Strategic Defence Review and build the integrated force the nation needs.

“It also reflects both the importance of national defence and the vital contribution our Armed Forces make every day to keeping the country safe.”



INVESTMENT:
The Global Combat Air programme is to receive £8 billion over the next four years

ROYAL AIR FORCE RAF News

RAF News

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This Week In History



1944
Meteor debut

THE RAF’S first operational jet aircraft the Gloster Meteor enters service with 616 (South Yorkshire) Sqn based at RAF Manston in Kent.



1957
BBMF evolves

THE HISTORIC Aircraft Flight forms at Biggin Hill. It is designated as the Battle of Britain Flight the following year, finally becoming the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight in 1973



1969
Wessex deployed

FOUR 72 Sqn Wessex helicopters deploy to RAF Ballykelly to support Army units following outbreaks of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland.

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

007 was inspired by the RAF

...but the real James Bond was a US-based twitcher

Staff Reporter

THE RAF is set to claim bragging rights in the Forces battle for ownership of fiction's most famous secret agent, James Bond.

The debate over the inspiration for author Ian Fleming's suave super-spy has raged for decades, with the Navy claiming ownership due to Fleming's Navy wartime role and Bond's fictional rank of Naval Commander.

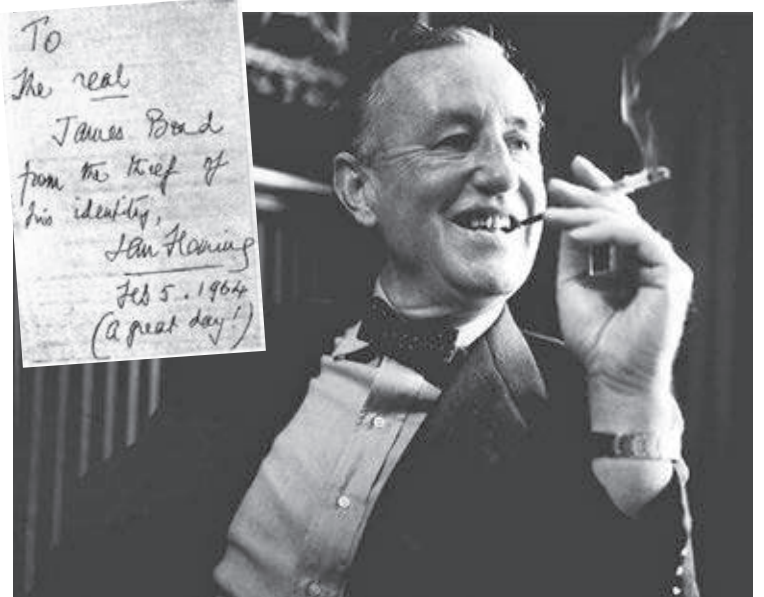
However, researchers at the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust revealed strong links with the RAF's 'Few'.

The brother of Hurricane pilot Sqn Ldr Charles Derek Whittingham, Jack Whittingham became a prominent screenwriter after WWII, was hired for a Bond movie that was never made but its plot became the basis of the novel *Thunderball*.

In another twist, researchers revealed that Battle of Britain Hurricane pilot Sqn Ldr Harry Eeles had a stepbrother named James Bond, who met Fleming in America after the war.

Now Sqn Ldr Eeles' son Air Force veteran Gp Capt Tom Eeles has shed fresh light on the Bond origins by disclosing the strong family connections with Fleming.

Widowed with three children, his grandmother remarried American Francis Bond in 1913. One of his sons, James, was educated at Harrow and Trinity College Cambridge, while the other, Peter, joined the RAF in 1939 and became an



SPYMASTER: Ian Fleming and the note he wrote to the real James Bond, inset

Ace – shooting down deadly V1 rockets.

James Bond later met Fleming at his Jamaican mansion 'Golden Eye', where the author presented him with a copy of his latest novel, *You only Live Twice*, which he personally inscribed with the dedication: 'To the real James Bond, from the thief of his identity'.

The family later auctioned the book at Sotheby's in 1996, after James's death, and donated the money to his widow, Florence.

Tom Eeles added: "We all knew James as Jim. He was tall, handsome and spoke with a strong English accent as a result of his British education and family. Fleming was entranced as

he was just like he imagined his fictional hero.

"Jim returned to the USA when he left Cambridge but kept very much in touch with his Eeles step-brothers and sister. He became a well-respected ornithologist and his book *Birds of the Caribbean* was where Fleming stole his name."

Also in the running for the British agent's true identity is wartime hero and secret agent Wg Cdr Yeo Thomas, who worked in Air Intelligence with the French Resistance.

He met Fleming a number of times during the war before he was eventually captured and tortured by the Nazis before escaping from Buchenwald PoW.

Home run for Reds after U.S. 250 tour



THE RED Arrows stepped up to the plate at Washington's National Parks baseball stadium, ahead of their historic fly-past over New York as the USA marks the 250th anniversary of Independence.

Trailing their trademark red, white and blue smoke, the Reds formed part of a Friendship theme to the sports fixture – celebrating the enduring relationship between the UK and US.

Following the flypast pilots took a bow in front of the packed crowd of baseball fans.

The team performed at Independence events across the States including displays at New York, Wisconsin, Maine, Maryland and Michigan.



IT'S A WRAP: H145s are now on firefighting duty in Cyprus

Jupiter hits Akrotiri

AKROTIRI'S 84 Sqn took delivery of two new Jupiter H145 helicopters as part of a £148 million programme to replace the Puma, retired from service last year.

A further two aircraft arrived in Brunei, where they will be operated by the Army Air Corps' 667 Sqn, completing the first part of the six-helicopter deal with Airbus.

The Cyprus-based Jupiters will carry out aerial fire-fighting, medical evacuation and surveillance duties, taking over from RAF Chinooks brought in following the withdrawal of the ageing Puma fleet.

The two-year delivery programme has been hailed a landmark for UK aircraft procurement and is expected to reduce costs across the service.

Mark Langrill, Director Rotary Wing and Uncrewed Air Systems at the National Armaments Director (NAD) Group, said: "Two years from contract signature to aircraft on the ground in Cyprus is a proud achievement for all involved.

"The H145 programme clearly demonstrates our ability to safely deliver a modern and reliable capability at pace whilst

providing value for money and meeting the needs of our Armed Forces.

"This can only be achieved by the collaborative efforts of everyone across the MOD and with support from industry."

The remaining two aircraft included in the deal are expected to arrive at Akrotiri and Brunei later this month.

Gp Capt J Brooks added: "Seeing the Jupiter HC Mk2 in Cyprus marks a significant milestone for Defence.

"The H145 platform delivers a modern, versatile capability that strengthens support to British Forces Cyprus, while contributing to the wider modernisation and rationalisation of our rotary-wing fleet."

The Airbus order will swell the RAF's Jupiter fleet to a total of 13 on training and operational roles and safeguard an estimated 250 UK jobs at Airbus in Oxford.

Chinooks currently on standby to support Cyprus emergency services as the island braces for the outbreak of wildfires caused by soaring temperatures will hand over duties early next year.



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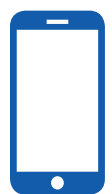
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Bulletin



JOIN THE CLUB: Fred Flintstone and Barney Rubble take to the water

Rubble rouser

SERVICE WATERSKIERS donned fancy dress as they took to Queensford Lakes at the annual RAF championships in Oxford.

Mad cap competitors took the plunge in Flintstones costumes as they showcased their moves during training sessions.

A spokesman said: "With talent continuing to develop across all levels and strong momentum carrying into the remainder of the year, the Association looks forward to building on our success and challenging once again for top honours at the Inter-Services."

Voyager flies in aid as quakes rock Venezuela

Staff Reporter
Brize Norton

VOYAGER CREWS flew UK search and rescue teams into Venezuela as severe aftershocks rocked the country following the biggest earthquakes in its history.

Almost 2,300 people were killed when twin quakes struck, while tens of thousands are still missing.

Venezuelan and international rescue teams continued to search rubble for survivors of back-to-back quakes, which measured magnitude 7.2 and 7.5 on the Richter scale.

The latest tremors, registering 5.1, shook the capital city Caracas and devastated the port of La Guaira as rescue crews fought to save thousands trapped under the remains of collapsed apartment buildings and offices.

UK teams joined the international rescue effort flying in specialist search teams, tracker dogs and vital life-saving aid on board the RAF transporter.

Military personnel worked alongside government and aid



AID MISSION: Life-saving supplies are loaded onto Voyager at Brize Norton

agencies to prepare the aircraft as specialist teams flew into the disaster-stricken country from Brize Norton.

101 Sqn's Wg Cdr Prager said: "The Royal Air Force's ability to

rapidly deploy people, equipment and humanitarian aid worldwide is central to the UK's response to international crises such as the Venezuelan earthquakes.

"This latest humanitarian

deployment demonstrates the professionalism of our personnel and underscores the vital role of strategic air mobility in delivering timely, life-saving support to those most affected."

Saving lives on the Eastern front

Staff Reporter

AIR FORCE medical evacuation specialists are honing their life-saving skills alongside 2,000 Nato personnel during realistic battlefield training in Estonia.

The Aeromed staging unit deployed to Nato's Eastern front to give Forces medics high-level training in combat conditions alongside allied nations.

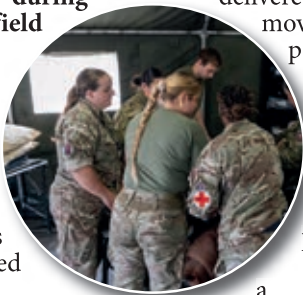
The drill, dubbed Vigorous Warrior, is one of the largest multi-national exercises in the Nato calendar involving military and civilian healthcare specialists from 32 countries.

Aeromed commander Sqn Ldr Netherton said: "Vigorous Warrior provided the

opportunity to exercise the Royal Air Force Aeromedical Staging Unit's capabilities in a complex, multinational environment.

"Alongside partners, we delivered seamless patient movement from the point of injury through to strategic evacuation out of theatre, putting the Operational Patient Care Pathway into practice."

Flt Lt Thompson, a Reserve Medical Support Officer from 612 Medical Reserve Sqn, added: "This exercise has provided a valuable opportunity for me to observe the wide range of nationalities and capabilities involved and understand how each element contributes to achieving Nato's wider mission."



Reds take to the Ayr

THE RED Arrows will be performing their show-stopping display at the Ayr Festival of Flight in September.

The RAF aerobatic aces, currently on tour in the USA to mark the 250th anniversary of Independence, will be headlining the two-day event, organisers have confirmed.

The Serco logo is positioned in the top right corner of the page. It consists of the word "serco" in a lowercase, white, sans-serif font. A small red horizontal bar is located directly beneath the letter "o".

The people behind the mission

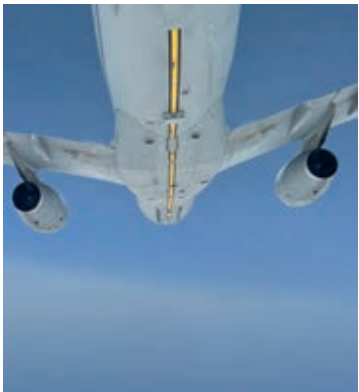
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Bulletin



FUELLING FIRST: French A330 tanker moves into position during NATO drill

French nail Rivet Joint

A UK River Joint has been refuelled by a French Air and Space Force A330 multi-role tanker for the first time.

The surveillance aircraft took on fuel during the multinational Exercise Ravitaillement – designed to test interoperability amongst Nato crews.

A spokesman for 51 Sqn said: “By aligning procedures, tactics and trust across Nato partners, we proved our ability to operate as one cohesive force, while laying the foundation for deeper integration and agility in future operations.”

Ding-gong!

WWII hero Colin ‘Dinger’ Bell honours veterans with awards



Tracey Allen

THE WORLD’S last living WWII Mosquito pilot Flt Lt Colin Bell paid tribute to UK veterans with an award that bears his name.

The 105-year-old, who earned the DFC and completed 50 bombing missions with 608 Sqn, flew into the bestsellers list earlier this year with his blockbusting memoir *Bloody Dangerous*.

Now Air Chiefs have inaugurated the Colin Bell Award and asked him to make the first presentation at the recent Veterans In Defence ceremony at the International Bomber Command Centre.

The specially-designed Mosquito trophy was presented to Reservist Flt Lt John Skinner for his exemplary career and contribution to the Air Mobility Force, delivering 40 per cent of the UK fleet’s exercise programme in 2025.

Speaking at the awards ceremony, Colin said: “It is an



FINALIST: Rachel Bradshaw

incredibly humbling experience, and a memorable occasion, reflecting great credit both on those who established the award, and those submitted for consideration.”

Also nominated for the Bell Trophy were Draken electronic warfare training specialist Mervin Green for his service across the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and Nato, and Rachel Bradshaw for her outstanding commitment to welfare and the wellbeing of personnel.

Veterans in Defence Champion AVM Mark Flewin said: “It was a real honour and privilege this year to launch the award to recognise exceptional service within the veteran community.

“Being able to introduce Colin was very special for both the Veterans in Defence (Air) Network and for those shortlisted for the award, who had the privilege to meet him in person.”



FINALIST: Merv Green



WINNER: Colin Bell presents Flt Lt Skinner with the first ever Bell Trophy at the IBCC

Poseidon team goes with the floe

Laura McGarvey

Lossiemouth

A CREW from 42 (Torpedo Bomber) Sqn have flown the first UK Poseidon flight to the North Pole as part of the Poseidon Qualified Weapons Instructor Course.

Known as Exercise Midnight Warrior, the course deployed to Evenes Air Base in Norway to train alongside allies from Norway, Germany and the Netherlands to conduct operational sorties.

As part of the deployment, the trainees practised operating at higher latitudes en route to the North Pole, providing challenging navigation and environmental conditions.

Hoping to graduate from the course alongside his four colleagues in October this year, QWIC Trainee Flt Lt S Lee said: “Exercise Midnight Warrior was a true test of platform mastery for the five students of the inaugural P-8 Qualified Weapons Instructor Course.

“Whilst it was a demanding fortnight, the experience was immensely rewarding, strengthening our skills, fostering international cooperation and showcasing the exceptional



POLE POSITION: P-8 crews deployed to Evenes Air Base in Norway. Inset left, Flying over Arctic ice floes during training sortie

capabilities of the P-8 platform in challenging environments.

“Conducting the first-ever UK P-8 flight to the North

Pole offered some of the most breathtaking flying of my career, flying over the stunning Norwegian fjords and Arctic ice.”

The exercise is the latest drill designed to test crews in extreme conditions in the North Atlantic and High North from remote locations.



Kids back Airplay

THE RAF’S Airplay scheme for youngsters has scored a 99 per cent approval rating from Forces families.

A report reveals that the RAF Benevolent Fund’s national youth programme, which operates from 24 MOD sites, netted more than 35,000 attendances last year, winning overwhelming support from users.

RAFBF Director Air Cdre Simon Harper said: “Airplay remains a vital and uplifting lifeline for parents, children and young people across the RAF Family.

“The positive impact it has on our young people and families strengthen well-being, resilience and connection across our community.”



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Bulletin



BRIZE TRIP: Swedish crews check out a 99 Sqn C-17 Globemaster

Nato's need for Swede

MEMBERS OF the Swedish Air Force landed at Brize Norton as part of a Nato programme to learn about airfield operations at a UK main operating base.

The two-day visit would strengthen ties between the RAF and one of the Alliance's newest member nations, a station spokesman said.

Capt Anna Obrovac of the Swedish Air Force said: "This has been a very valuable visit where we were able to meet several counterparts and share mutual methods of working."

"It has given us the opportunity to discuss both similarities and differences in the way we operate our airfields, and we are looking forward to further collaboration in the future."

Tanks a lot

Civvie crews join Voyager to lift capability on Ops



Staff Reporter

BRIZE-BASED VOYAGER crews and their civilian counterparts from defence contractor AirTanker are working side by side to strengthen operational capability across the UK's air mobility fleet.

The collaboration brings together military and civilian crew on the Voyager tanker and transporter aircraft to support global operations, air chiefs said.

10 Sqn's Officer Commanding, Wg Cdr Brook, said: "This partnership is a clear demonstration of how our whole force approach delivers operational advantage."

"By working closely with AirTanker, we are strengthening resilience, increasing flexibility, and ensuring we can respond effectively whenever and wherever we are needed."

Paul Kimberley, Chief Operating Officer at AirTanker, said: "This represents a practical step in how we continue to develop the Voyager Force, with the potential for civilian pilots to support military crews when demand requires."

"Most importantly, it reflects how the RAF and AirTanker partnership continues to adapt in a considered and pragmatic way, ensuring the capability is ready to respond when needed."



SUPPORT ACT: AirTanker Chief Pilot Capt Steve Richards (left) joins 10 Sqn's Flt Lt Gary Drysdale on board a Voyager at Brize Norton



Get set for Summer

THE RAF Museum Midlands has launched its Summer Camp, giving youngsters a week of aviation-themed fun.

The venue has lined up a host of activities designed to inspire the next generation of aviators with engineering challenges exploring robotics, cyber-security and how artificial intelligence works.

Open to youngsters aged 11 to 13, the programme will be

running throughout July and early August.

A spokesman said: "The RAF Summer Camp offers a fun and engaging way for young people to develop valuable STEM skills, build confidence and work collaboratively, while exploring the fascinating worlds of aviation and technology."

● Go to rafmuseum.org/midlands for details.

Jodie honours charity debt

Tracey Allen

A VETERAN'S daughter hit the fundraising trail to thank the charities that helped save her father's life.

Former Air Traffic Controller James Oddie suffered a brain haemorrhage which left him with severe sight loss and mobility problems. Sight Scotland Veterans and the Lothian Veterans Centre stepped in to help the 52-year-old airman fight his way back to fitness, providing rehabilitation programmes and equipping his home with specialist lighting.

Daughter Jodie took on the Edinburgh Half Marathon to support the Forces welfare teams who helped him get back to work. She said: "A year ago, I never imagined he'd be where he is now. He's regained his independence, his confidence has returned, and he's enjoying life again thanks to the support from Sight Scotland Veterans."

"They have given him his life back. I wanted to raise money for the staff, volunteers and fellow veterans who have supported him every step of the way. It has meant so much to all of us."



News

Heat is on for Rainbow run



LET US SPRAY: Station firefighters keep the crowds cool as UK heatwave sees temperatures hit 35°C at St Mawgan's annual fundraising Rainbow Run
PHOTOS: CPL TOM CANN



Tara Stiles

RAF St Mawgan

ORGANISERS OF this year's fundraising Rainbow Run called in St Mawgan firefighters to keep the crowds cool as temperatures topped a sweltering 35°C.

The Cornish station has hosted the event for the last 12 years, helping to raise more than £1 million for the Children's Hospice South West since its launch in 2014.

Station Commander Wg Cdr Gareth Elliot fired the starting pistol as more than 1,400 runners took on the 5km route passing through paint stations to add some colour to the event.

He said: "The Rainbow Run is a wonderful example of how our station and our community come together with energy, colour and purpose to support such a meaningful cause."



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Big Cats out of the bag for RIAT '27

VINTAGE WARBIRDS from Nato's Tiger Association will be storming the skies over Fairford as the Royal International Air Tattoo roars back for 2027.

Organisers are promising a blockbusting line-up for next year's event after the cancellation of this month's show due to USAF operations in Iran.

Among the headline displays will be the Tiger Tornado and Starfighter flown by veterans of the Tiger Association, which will be marking its 50th anniversary.

RIAT operations chief Peter Reoch said: "The 50th anniversary is a brilliant opportunity for us to celebrate the heritage and enduring spirit of the Nato Tiger Association.

"The Tiger community is renowned for its energy and colour, and our visitors can look forward to an unforgettable experience."



TIGER TREAT: Nato Tiger Tornado and Starfighter will be on display at RIAT Next year

Vets call

MILITARY CHARITY chiefs are leading calls for better healthcare and financial support for the UK's veterans.

Help for Heroes issued its People's Promise campaign claiming growing global insecurity is taking its toll on Service leavers.

Campaign director Rob Marston said: "As we face growing instability across the world, we are asking even more of our Armed Forces.

"We cannot continue to do that while failing to provide the same sense of security to those who leave service.

"Most go on to build fulfilling lives, but too many are still being let down by inconsistent systems, delays in care, financial insecurity and barriers to support."

Bulletin



Very warm reception

Emma Stacey
RAF Wittering

CIVIC LEADERS, local business chiefs and Forces personnel at Wittering braved a record-breaking heatwave as the station hosted its annual formal reception.

Organisers relaxed the dress code as temperatures surged to more than 30°C, allowing guests to stay cool as the station showcased its frontline role.

Station Commander, Wg Cdr Joan Ochuodho, said: "We are always grateful for the opportunity to meet in person and thank the many members of our local community, civic leaders and charitable organisations who support us.

"The Annual Formal Reception provides a valuable moment to celebrate our shared achievements, commitment and partnerships, while recognising the vital role RAF Wittering and its personnel play in operations and exercises worldwide."

Brize fleets on the move

Crews to operate from
Boscombe & civ airports



FULLY MOBILE: RAF Air Mobility Force will be relocating to sites across the UK

Staff Reporter
RAF Brize Norton

UK TRANSPORT crews based at Brize Norton are to launch global missions from Boscombe Down and civilian airports at Stansted, Prestick and the East Midlands as major resurfacing work takes place at the Oxfordshire station.

The move will be a test of the UK's C-17, Atlas A400M and Voyager fleets' ability to operate from dispersed locations until September next year, supporting worldwide operations and exercises.

A400 Atlas and C-17 Globemasters will operate primarily out of MOD Boscombe Down, with occasional use of Bournemouth Airport, while the A330 Voyager fleet will fly from Prestwick, East Midlands and Stansted airports.

The runway upgrades come as the UK

launches Carrier Strike Group operations in the High North and prepares to take part in key international air combat exercises in Australia and the USA.

A RAF spokesman said: "We have been actively testing and refining our ability to operate in a dispersed, agile way, across multiple locations, through structured exercises including Exercise Agile Warrior.

"This approach means the Air Mobility Force can maintain its full operational tempo even when works are ongoing at any single site. The RAF does not rely on any one location to deliver its mission.

"We continue to assess the global security environment but the nature and timing of any potential crisis or conflict

remains, by definition, uncertain.

"That is precisely why this programme of resilience-building, including the dispersal model being developed alongside this work, is so important.

"These works are part of a long-term investment in Defence infrastructure that directly supports the UK's ability to respond rapidly to emerging threats and crises anywhere in the world."

Aircraft and crews are expected to relocate later this month and return to the Oxfordshire airbase in September 2027.

Airfield improvement works is part of a wider programme to modernise the Brize site and ensure its use as the Service's air mobility hub for decades to come, station chiefs said.



RAF 'rubbish' is by eco-de



OLD CARGO netting, parachutes and a load of used cans sound far from glamorous but two award-winning designers have transformed waste material from RAF Brize Norton into unique, show-stopping, high fashion clothes.

Environmental and sustainability pioneers VIN + OMI joined forces with the Oxfordshire station to create fabulous garments that lit up the catwalk at London Fashion Week 2025 and 2026. They included a bright red dress, made from an old parachute, modelled by national treasure and former *Great British Bake Off* judge Prue Leith.

Now VIN + OMI – who have more than 25 years experience in the sustainability field, focusing on social impact projects worldwide – are in discussions with Brize for Phase II of their waste products into fashion project.

Vin explained: “We have always worked with lots of different large institutions and corporations. We have a studio not far from Brize Norton and we had an amazing response when we approached the station.”

He added: “The rejected parachute was interesting to work with because it had the pulleys and strings still attached to it, so the challenge was trying to shape something so large and

to keep the idea that it used to be a parachute. We didn't want to detract from its original form. It was all sculpted and sewn together by hand and it walked very well. “Our purpose is whatever you've got we'll try to work with it. With the aluminium cans it was one person's consumption of Diet Coke



ROYAL APPROVAL: Omi and Vin with HM The King

cans that we used – there were quite a lot – and we turned them into a thin metal mesh to then create a dress.

“This follows on from our project in Birmingham a few years ago where the homeless were paid to collect metal cans for us, which gave them a sense of purpose, and we used the cans to turn into fabric.

“We just want to find creative ways to engage with waste and rubbish and also get people to think that they need to be responsible for their waste and rubbish.”

The cargo netting was turned into a contemporary ballgown showcased at London Fashion Week earlier this year.

Vin explained what was planned for Phase II of the collaboration with the RAF. “We have a lot of tents put aside and we're looking at rejected uniforms and finding a way to utilise those on a regular community basis,” he said.

“We'll be working with a community organisation to repurpose those waste garments into something like tote bags or things they can sell for charity or give back to the RAF in some way.”

The company's HQ is in Norfolk and it has studios in the Cotswolds, Scotland, New York and China. Vin and Omi create all the designs and employ people to make the garments and to do rubbish collection. They have won a NESTA award for innovation in design, research and their unique business model.

The duo also work with a lot of students around the UK, and the world.

“We have a large education programme and the students will get involved with working with the RAF waste and learn different properties of the composition of the textiles or the cans and work out what they can do with it, and also input their ideas,” Vin added.

“We have a holistic approach to large organisations and work with whatever they've got. We work a lot with the leading art supplies brand Daler-Rowney and we have worked with King Charles for the past seven years. He's

THE GREAT BRITISH TAKE-OFF: Former TV judge and chef Prue Leith models VIN + OMI gown made from an old Brize parachute at London Fashion Week

by Tracey Allen

s highly-Brized esign pair

Fashion gurus team up with transport station to repurpose old cargo nets and parachutes

NET ZERO:
Ballgown
made from
old cargo
netting



AVANTE GARDE: Vin and Omi

pretty good at throwing odd things at us to work with.”

These include nettles from the Highgrove estate – VIN + OMI made 12 nettle garments for a groundbreaking show at the Savoy Hotel in 2019, they created the world’s first dress made from butterbur, a plant growing on the side of the lake at Sandringham, and also designed a dress from horse hair clippings from the Highgrove estate. They even turned holly from Sandringham into suits worn on the catwalk by Prue Leith and journalist Dylan Jones.

It was by chance that the design duo came to work with Prue – Vin explained that she was often on the same train as they were when travelling to their Cotswolds studio, as Prue has a home in the area, and Omi approached her.

Vin said: “They hit it off immediately. We’ve become firm friends and she’s walked in six of our shows now – it’s an odd marriage but it works.”

They have also worked with other celebrities including Debbie Harry, who they describe as their ‘muse, collaborator and friend for many years’. Vin and Omi produced clothes for the singer’s live shows and she owns about 80 of their garments.

And they designed costumes for *Baywatch* star Pamela Anderson’s first panto. Vin explained: “We creatively directed and styled her in *Aladdin*. We like a bit of the ridiculous so we thought we’d dive into that one.”

● **GO to:** vinandomi.com for more information.



Advertorial.

“One foot in front of the other”: Elaine’s story of love, service and relentless strength

Elaine Paxton has always believed in teams.

Long before life tested her in ways she could never have imagined, she and her husband Adrian were already a winning side. Married for 32 years, together for 36, with two grown children, James and Katie, they built a life rooted in laughter, shared values and an instinctive understanding of one another. They called it Team Paxton.

Elaine served for five years in the Royal Navy as a telephonist, working in communications on busy air stations across England and Scotland. The military, she says, gave her confidence and resilience. “It taught me what I was capable of,” she reflects – lessons that would later prove vital.

Adrian served in the RAF. They met on an air station in Fife in December 1990. “He came past on a motorbike in green-and-white leathers,” Elaine smiles. “It was love at first sight.”

For years, life was good. They raised their children, worked hard, renovated their home together and laughed constantly. Then, in January 2022, everything changed.

At one in the morning, Adrian fell out of bed – completely out of character. “I knew instantly something wasn’t right,” Elaine recalls. Moments later, he couldn’t speak. When he stopped breathing, Elaine resuscitated him. Paramedics rushed him to hospital, but COVID restrictions meant she couldn’t go with him.

The next day came the call she will never forget: Adrian wasn’t expected to survive. Elaine was told to say goodbye. Standing by his bed, she turned – as she always had – to humour. “I told him I’d just bought him a £500 lifetime

membership to a distillery, and he’d only had it 17 days,” she says. “That wasn’t acceptable.”

Adrian survived. But the stroke left him severely disabled, initially unable to walk or speak. He spent 18 months in hospital. Elaine finished their house alone, grieving the life they once knew – yet certain that Adrian was still Adrian.

“When the hospital talked about a care home, I didn’t even contemplate it,” she says. “I told them, ‘Just watch me. He’s coming home.’”

Elaine challenged decisions, called meetings and refused to back down. “I was fighting for our life,” she says. From the outside, she appeared to cope. Inside, the weight was immense. “One night I went into the garden and screamed into the darkness. I had nothing left.”

Everything began to change when Elaine attended a local veterans’ breakfast club and met Jane, a Veterans Clinical Advisor for Help for Heroes.

“Jane asked, ‘What’s your story?’ and I told her everything,” Elaine says. “She told me, ‘You’re not alone. We can help.’”

Help for Heroes supported the whole family – arranging occupational therapy, counselling, respite and practical help. After being let down elsewhere, Elaine was sceptical. But the support kept coming. “It was the start of not feeling alone,” she says.

The impact was felt across Team Paxton. Adrian’s confidence began to return. His speech and mobility improved. Katie noticed the shift too. “Knowing Mum finally had people who understood made such a difference,” she says.



Jane, who served as an RAF nurse for 44 years, adds: “It’s not just about the veteran, it’s about the whole family. Elaine was exhausted and heartbroken when we met. Seeing hope return has been incredible.”

Life looks different now, but it is still full. They plan days out, holidays and small goals. Adrian is working towards baking and gardening again. Elaine is looking forward to getting back on her bike. There is laughter every day – and gratitude in the smallest moments.

Strength, she’s learned, isn’t loud. “It’s strength of mind. Strength of character. Showing up, every day.”

Her message is simple: “Find your people. You don’t have to do it by yourself.”

“One foot in front of the other. One step at a time. It’s Team Paxton – and it’s going to take more than this to bring us down.”

If you served and you think Help for Heroes can support you, please get in touch today.

Matcha? We'll beat ya!



TALE OF THE TAPE:
A delighted Flt Lt Harry Brierley and teammates AS1 Lucy Williams (left) and Sgt Cat Cory (right)

Personnel take on Japanese endurance challenge

Staff Reporter

SERVICE ENDURANCE stars took on teams from the UK's top universities and blue chip firms in one of the running world's most unique events... the 76-mile Japanese Ekiden relay race.

The Thames-side route took in some of the South East's most historic landmarks – starting and finishing in the Royal town of Windsor – and is a traditional Eastern test of resilience and teamwork.

The event also showcases the strong business, educational and military ties between Britain and Japan, said organiser Anna Dingley.

The Air Force drew on talent from across the Service, with Odiham fielding four of the 10-strong team.

Speaking after completing the final leg, 43 Sqn's Flt Lt Harry Brierley said: "It has been a privilege to captain the Royal Air Force team at UK Ekiden for the last two iterations of the race.

"Having worked closely with the Koku-Jieitai [Japan's Air Self-Defence Force], the race carries particular meaning for me.

"It was therefore an honour to take the tape – by some margin – at this year's race, although a technicality meant we were unable to emerge as official victors.

"We have been quicker year on year, however, and so, as word spreads about how incredible this race is, the depth of talent in the RAF should ensure we claim the win next time."

The UK event is now in its third year and also featured runners from 17 university teams, including the guest team from Ritsumeikan University in Japan, and competitors from six Japanese companies.

Lord Hugh Trenchard, the grandson of the RAF's founding father, is an ambassador for the event. He said: "As Honorary Air Commodore of 600 (City of London) Sqn, located just down the road at Northolt, I was also there to support the Royal Air Force team, which actually finished first in the corporations and communities group.

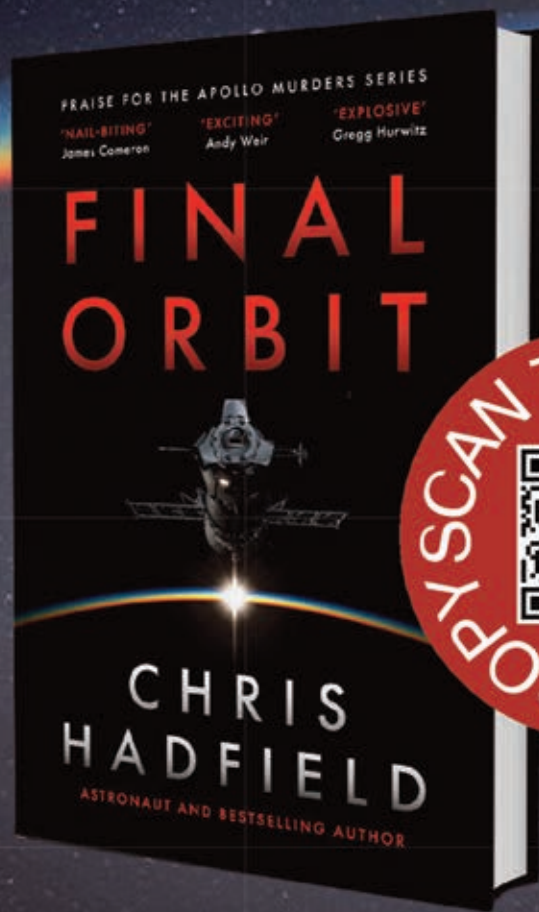
"Having lived and worked in Japan for more than 12 years, I am delighted that the British Ekiden has really taken off and also strongly welcome the support for the Ekiden given by the Royal Air Force and its impressive runners, ably led by Harry Brierley."

Top honours went to the Oxford University team, who overhauled the visiting Ritsumeikan Uni runners by just two seconds, with a time of 6 hrs and 49 mins. The RAF topped the Corporate and Community section with a time of 7 hrs and 33 mins.



BEAT THAT:
Japanese drums





'A terrific storyteller'
BOOKLIST

'A pulse-pounding adventure'
PUBLISHERS WEEKLY



Action-packed fiction informed by Chris Hadfield's real-life experience as an astronaut, pilot and Commander of the International Space Station

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Win!

Fatal Flights **Feature**

Jet-set tragedies

High-profile mysteries of aviation

BETWEEN 1919 and 2020, 23 prominent international celebrities died in aircraft accidents – at the height of their fame and often in mysterious circumstances.

In his new book, *Fatal Flights of the Rich and Famous* (pen-and-sword.co.uk), aviation historian Alastair Goodrum brings together the stories of these celebrity accidents, focusing on famous names including pioneering female aviators Amelia Earhart and Amy Johnson, film stars Carole Lombard and Leslie Howard, musicians Glenn Miller and Buddy Holly, boxer Rocky Marciano and racing driver Graham Hill.

The author said: “Mysteries and myths have grown up around some of these incidents and while some of these can be debunked, others will pose unanswered questions.”

He explained: “By 1937, Amelia Earhart was one of the most famous aviators – male or female – in the world. That is both a fitting acknowledgment of her career achievements and also to her mysterious disappearance on her final flight – an enigma that still surrounds her name today.”

She began her round the world attempt in Oakland, California on March 17, 1937 but that was called off after a crash – fortunately no one on board (Earhart, her husband George Putnam and navigators Capt Harry Manning and Fred Noonan) was hurt.

For the second leg, leaving from Oakland on May 20, it was just Earhart and Noonan. But they never reached their refuelling stop on Howland Island.

“The official US government line is that they ran out of fuel and were lost when the aeroplane crashed into a shark-infested sea,” Goodrum said.

Conspiracy theories later emerged including the ‘Japanese Capture Theory’ but the mystery of what happened to Earhart’s aircraft has still not been solved.

Amy Johnson, said the author, “Through sheer determination rose above all others to become one of the most inspirational of the twentieth century’s female aviators.”

The first woman to fly solo



PERISHED: Avro chief designer Roy Chadwick, left, died on the Avro Tudor aircraft below, whilst Amy Johnson – top left in India – went missing on an Air Transport Auxiliary flight in an Airspeed Oxford I. Film star Leslie Howard, above with actress Norma Shearer, was killed when a civilian aircraft he was travelling on was shot down by the Luftwaffe in June 1943



Win copy of book

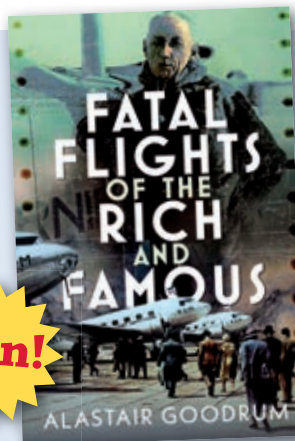
YOU COULD win a copy of this fascinating book. For your chance to own one:

Name one of the famous aircraft Roy Chadwick designed.

Email your answer, marked Fatal Flights book competition, to:

tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: **RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by July 24.**

Win!



from London to Australia, she went on to serve in the Air Transport Auxiliary in World War II and while flying Airspeed Oxford I, V3540 from Prestwick in Scotland to No.15 Service Flying Training School at RAF Kidlington, Oxford, went missing on January 5, 1941.

Goodrum said: “By 5pm with no word from Amy, back at White Waltham [ATA’s HQ] they were getting very worried. What happened next shows she was certainly off-course. It suggests

her being unable to find a gap in the cloud cover and baling out having judged she had flown as far as possible without finding a gap, but before reaching the sea.”

Witnesses claimed they saw a woman drifting in the sea and others claimed there was a second ‘person’ in the water some distance away from the ‘woman’, Goodrum explained.

Lt Cdr Walter Fletcher, captain of the HMS Haslemere which was nearby, dived into the freezing water to attempt a rescue.

Goodrum said: “He was pulled unconscious from the water and died later in hospital having never regained consciousness. For his bravery that day he was posthumously awarded the Albert Medal.”

Goodrum added: “A valise bearing her initials ‘AJ’ and containing Amy’s possessions including clothing, her log-book and other personal documents, was picked up from the sea near the aeroplane wreckage. The mystery second person – a body for which was also never found – spawned controversy and conspiracy theories, none of which have been definitively resolved to this day.”

“The body of First Officer Amy Johnson CBE (37) was never found and she is commemorated on the Runnymede Air Forces Memorial to the Missing.”

The book also looks at the tragic death of Roy Chadwick, chief designer for the Avro Company, who died in an aircraft accident, aged 54.

Goodrum said: “Roy was responsible for, or involved in,

the design of over 200 aeroplanes for Avro...of which the most successful include the Lancaster, Shackleton and Vulcan.”

He was killed on August 23, 1947 when the prototype of Avro Tudor 2 G-AGSU crashed during take-off from Woodford Aerodrome.

Goodrum explained that it wasn’t unusual for Chadwick to join the flight test crew “since he made a habit of flying regularly as a flight observer, acting as a ‘detective’ interpreting information coming from the test pilots.”

The cause of the crash was stated as crossed aileron controls.

“This, it was alleged, was attributed to the actions of a person carrying out work in the fuselage of the aeroplane that required the disconnections of the aileron controls,” said Goodrum.

He added: “Many accolades were expressed for the life and work of this design genius...It is to the iconic Avro Lancaster, though, that Roy Chadwick’s name will remain linked forever.”



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Tim Morris

The Queen Mary **Travel**



**ART DECO
OPULENCE**



**QUEEN
MARY'S
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**RADIO
ROOM**



**LONG BEACH
SETTING**

THIS WEEK, our travels take us aboard one of the world's most famous ocean liners, the RMS Queen Mary. Now permanently moored in the Southern California sun, it offers guests the feeling of being on a luxury 1940s cruise, without having to set sail.

Floating History

The Queen Mary is a maritime legend and this year the old girl is 90. Since her maiden voyage in 1936, she has clocked up a staggering 1,001 trans-Atlantic trips between England and America.

At 1,019 feet in length, weighing 81,000 tons, the ship was one of the largest, fastest vessels of her time. This size and speed was put to good use during the World War II, when she became a troop transport ship, achieving a world record for carrying the greatest number of passengers. The record of 16,600 people aboard one vessel at the same time remains unbroken. The ship also won the Blue Riband, twice, during her service, for achieving the fastest trans-Atlantic crossing times.

Location

These days, the Queen Mary is the most iconic landmark on the Long Beach skyline, a 1930s Cunard oceanliner, maintained as a floating hotel. This is a popular tourist attraction for history buffs, art deco enthusiasts, and lovers of all things paranormal (the ship is purportedly haunted and offers paranormal tours, a popular Halloween event called Dark Harbor, and other ghostly gatherings). Happy hour with live music in the Observation Bar is a particular treat, and the ship recently opened a speakeasy, which you can only access by finding the password on Instagram.

The Californian coastline is hard to beat for year-round sun and Long Beach sits in the perfect spot. Turquoise waters, great waves for surfing and one of the most vibrant cities in the world, right on the shoreline, create something not to be missed.

Relax

Chill out in your art deco suite, with a warm sea breeze blowing in through the port holes, and soak up the timeless ambiance. Stroll along the promenade deck, with the huge funnels (smoke-stacks)



**STAY IN THE
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**PRIME
location**



**QUEEN
MARY**

towering high above you and the Long Beach skyline shimmering off the port-side, bathed in a perfect orange sunset. Visit the bridge, then move down a deck to grab an afternoon cocktail in the Observation Bar.

This beautifully preserved art deco space formerly served as the First-Class Lounge and you can sip your drinks with a commanding view of the ship's bow section. The bar offers a "Meet Me at the Mary" Happy Hour every Tuesday, karaoke every Wednesday, live jazz and blues every Thursday, and its Friday Night Live events, with live bands playing. Er, each Friday.

Using The Mary as a base, Long Beach is a very short drive away, with beaches, attractions and excursions all within easy reach. Alamitos Beach, near downtown, is well worth a visit, with a mouth-watering Argentinian restaurant right on the sand (Gaucho Beach - gauchobeach.com).

Within a few minutes of here you'll find laid-back sightseeing cruises and whale/dolphin-watching trips, the latter being a must for a relaxing afternoon on the water.

Adventure

From volleyball on the beach to jet-ski excursions to Catalina Island, there's something for the bravest adventurer nearby.

Onboard the Queen Mary, there are experiences that will interest, entertain and terrify you, depending on your choice. The 'Glory Days Historical Tour' delves into the ship's expansive past, including her groundbreaking construction, her time as a troopship during WWII, and, of course, her glory days as the world's most luxurious ocean liner.

The Queen Mary Art Tour showcases the ship's unique artistic style, highlighting elegant murals, intricate woodwork and decorative elements that reflect the cultural and creative spirit of the 1930s. If you love art, it's a must, as you discover recurring themes and hidden stories behind the ship's design.

Finally, experience a more haunting side of the Queen Mary after Midnight with 'The Graveyard Tour'. On this chilling adventure, you'll take a 2-hour journey through various areas of the ship that are rarely seen by the general public. Explore the legends behind some of the ocean liner's most notorious spectres

and decide for yourself whether the ship is really haunted.

Eat

The Promenade Café, aboard the Queen Mary, offers a relaxed, all-day dining experience with a menu that ranges from classic American dishes to contemporary options. Guests can enjoy their meals while taking in stunning ocean views, making it a perfect spot for any time of day.

The Chelsea, on the opposite side of the ship, offers a more formal, elegant dining experience. Specialising in exquisite chowder and fresh seafood, this fine dining destination provides an intimate atmosphere with breathtaking ocean views. Whether you're enjoying a leisurely dinner or savouring a glass of wine from the ship's curated selection, the Chelsea provides guests with a refined evening experience.

Stay

The Mary has a range of cabins to choose from, ranging from a 'standard stateroom' to a 'full suite' (priced from \$132 per night in July).

Our accommodation was the, amazing, 'Churchill Suite' where Sir Winston, himself, stayed. A portrait of the great man hangs between the portholes, with the

Long Beach skyline beyond. The Mary is often referred to as the ship of beautiful woods, due to the beautifully crafted woodwork, and this is shown off, to great effect, in the Churchill Suite. It truly is a stunning place to stay, steeped in history and charm.

The art deco bathrooms add to the allure, with 1930s taps that once allowed guests to choose between bathing in salt water or fresh water. There are also buttons that would have summoned a steward, or stewardess. If you were to make a version of the popular TV show *Downton Abbey* at sea, this is where you'd shoot it!

Downsides

Very few, but you're staying aboard a floating museum, so some furnishings/trim are a little tired, when you look closely, and the suite didn't come with any complimentary tea, or coffee. Also, there is no aircon because it hadn't been invented yet, which you'll just have to deal with. (It's cool onboard anyway - I don't think it will bother many).

Visit

- 1126 Queens Hwy, Long Beach, CA 90802
- Instagram: @thequeenmary
- Website: queenmary.com





GENESIS (THE very posh arm of the Hyundai/Kia group) is now well noted for delivering models that impress and the new GV70 doesn't let the side down. It's a striking vehicle, with flowing lines and design cues that rival the best premium alternatives in class. At first glance, it's a dignified affair and, between you and I, those looks perfectly match the calm driving experience it delivers.

Interior

The cabin is a very nice place to be and everything feels plush. It's packed with standard tech and everything is very well bolted together.

The driving position is extremely good, with plenty of adjustment, and the seats are really nice, hitting a fantastic mix between comfort and support. For an extra grand you can add the 'Comfort Seat pack' which gives you massage functions and extra side support.

Legroom in the rear isn't the best in class, but it's only going to trouble the 7 footers. Everything feels light and airy, largely due to the panoramic roof that's standard fit on most models. All trims get rear air conditioning as standard.

The dashboard has recently been revamped and you now get a giant 27-inch horizontal OLED touchscreen. This runs the full width of the dash, combining the infotainment display with the instrument binnacle. It can be configured in a number of ways and looks impressive.

Genesis has given some serious thought to this latest version of the car and adopted the 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' strategy in places. The, simple to operate clickwheel remains mounted on the transmission tunnel, which makes operation of the system easier on the move, and the separate climate control panel remains housed in a nicely designed section of the dash.

Unfortunately, my gripe from the previous model hasn't been fixed however. That is, simply, that the GV70 has a rotary gear selector that sits around an inch from the rotary infotainment clickwheel. On the latest car, I still found myself going for reverse, but shifting rapidly into Radio 2!

On the road

Around town, the GV70 is a silent companion that deals well with the endless speed bumps and pot holes, but it's on the



GV70
Refined power

BOOST BUTTON:
Instant power



GRIBE: Gear and radio dials are too close



CLASSY: Interior space is cosseted

winding country lanes that you really appreciate it. The steering is nicely weighted and it traverses winding, undulating roads with ease. There is a fair bit of body roll but it's all well-controlled and predictable. You soon find the car's limits and learn where to back off.

It rides reasonably well, with road and wind noise well contained. Active noise

cancellation helps to suppress road roar further. Double glazing adds extra insulation in the cabin. The onboard tech is impressive, with features like 'Road Preview' scanning the road ahead for imperfections and setting up the adaptive dampers to tackle them before you get there. It works well.

Off tarmac, you can choose from three different terrain

modes (Snow, Mud or Sand). The same AI-powered 'Auto-Terrain' feature analyses the ground ahead, in real time, and automatically adjusts the car for clearance/traction. Again, it's surprisingly effective.

In terms of performance, it's rapid, thanks to a 483bhp dual motor, mated to a 84kWh battery. That's the same oomph delivered by the Kia EV6. For the GV70, we're talking 0-62mph in 4.2 and a top speed of 146mph. Genesis claims a range of 298 miles on a charge but I didn't get anywhere

near that, though my right foot isn't the lightest. Colleagues have done better.

I was far too fascinated with the 'Boost' button on the steering wheel, that channels every ounce of power the car can muster directly to the wheels, in 10-second bursts. I also liked the fact that Genesis has added a simulated six-speed gearbox with a fake rev limiter. Boys with toys, eh?

Pros

- Much oomph on tap
- Serene and comfortable
- Premium outer
- Plush inner

Cons

- Some details look cheap up-close
- Not best in class for range
- Pricier than some rivals

Verdict

The Genesis Electrified

Genesis GV70

GV70 is an incredibly well-designed motor car. It's thoughtfully crafted, quiet, refined, comfortable and jolly rapid, certainly for a hefty SUV. It's undercut by plenty of rivals, many of which offer more range, but it cruises like a big player and looks impressively expensive to the naked eye.

BMX

Doing battle in the same final a first for RAF pair

Daniel Abrahams

THERE WERE podium and semi-final berths galore for the Service's BMX stars at the South Regional and British Cycling National Series' rounds four, five and six in Gosport.

Sgt Matt Haywood and Cpl Chris Taylor took to the coastal track for the regional series, with Haywood taking first in round four's moto one and third in moto two despite snapping his chain at the bottom of the start hill. A second in moto 3 got him through to the semi-final, where he took a second and sealed a place in the A Final.

Taylor had a good day also, taking second in moto 1, first in moto 2 and third in moto 3. In the semi-final he took third and secured a place in the A Final

alongside Haywood.

With both RAF riders in the same final for the first time, it was Haywood who took the honours with a third. Taylor finished fifth.

Haywood said: "With the Summer Series now well under way, there is still plenty of racing to come from the team, with the USA in our sights for later in the year."

Rounds five and six of the British Cycling National Series kicked off next, with Sgt Haywood racing both days of the event and Cpl Taylor on the Sunday, racing in the Grand Vets.

In some tricky conditions due to the wind, Haywood pushed hard to make the A Final, taking third in moto 1, third in moto 2 and fourth in moto 3, transferring into the semi-final.

The aviator was let down by



DOUBLE BUBBLE: Both RAF riders made A Final at Gosport
PHOTO: BILLY WRIGHT

a poor start in the semi, being squeezed out to fifth and missing the A Final by 0.03 of a second.

In the B Final he had a better start, hitting the front down the start hill and maintaining until he crossed the line ninth.

Fourth in moto 1 and third in moto 2 saw Taylor flying, before injury forced his withdrawal.

Haywood started the next day well, with a first in moto 1, third in moto 2 and second in moto 3, securing a semi-final

spot, where he finished third and secured a place in the A Final.

The poor starts returned though, with Haywood falling back to eighth into the first corner, finishing seventh.

CYCLING

Bowled over by decade at MK's National circuit



OPEN FIELD: RAF riders are joined by civilians

SERVICE CYCLING celebrated a decade of racing at Milton Keynes Bowl with the five-race series closing out the season in style.

An association spokesperson said: "It was a fantastic day of racing and a fitting way to mark a decade of RAFCA events at the National Bowl."

Held fortnightly from April to June to promote RAF cycling, the races took place on Wednesday afternoons and were open to military and civilian riders alike. Different races at each event catered to all abilities.

The final race day saw riders taking on the 1km traffic-free oval loop, with a short climb each lap to help break up the closed circuit.

The handicap advantage didn't last long as the stronger competitors quickly closed down the field, before a series of tactical attacks kept the racing fast and competitive throughout.

Sqn Ldr Vicky Webb took the women's crown, followed by Cpl



COMPETITIVE: Women's race

Kat Robinson and Flt Lt Georgie Maguire, while Wg Cdr Richard Fawkes took the fourth category race, with Sqn Ldr Mark Sharrock second and Cpl David Thompson third. Sgt Rich Summerbell came

runner-up in the 2/3 category race, sandwiched between civilian rider Adam Caton first and Hudaifa Cox third.

● See RAFcycling on Facebook to follow RAF Road Cycling.

To see your sport featured in *RAF News*, send a short report (max. 300 words) and a couple of photographs (attached hi-res jpegs) to: Sports@rafnews.co.uk

Sport



MEN'S PODIUM: Josh, centre, with Sgt Luke Thompson, left, and Cpl Chris Craig



TOP MAN: Cpl Josh Hibbs wins championship again

Bish, bash, bosh – it's got to be Josh

OLYMPIC WEIGHTLIFTING
Daniel Abrahams

RECORDS TUMBLED at the RAF's Olympic Weightlifting Championship at Cosford, with a record field vying for Inter-Service selection later in the year.

Cpl Joshua Hibbs took the men's title with a superb afternoon of strength, lifting 262kg in total at 78kg body weight. Sgt Luke Thompson was second (239kg @75.6kg) and Cpl Chris Craig third (248kg @87.2kg).

Hibbs' lifts secured back-to-back championship wins for the young aviator (pictured inset).

Hibbs retains men's crown and Steph leads the women

The women's competition was an incredible show of power and grit, with Cpl Stephanie Pye coming out as winner lifting 154kg total at 58kg body weight.

The entire women's podium was different than in 2025, as Cpl Georgie Jenkins took the silver medal (161kg @64.8kg) and Flt Lt Chloe Windsor won bronze (154kg @60.4).

The day of action saw personnel fight for a place on the RAF Inter-Service team to compete against the Army and Navy in November.



FIRST LADY: Cpl Stephanie Pye



WOMEN: Steph, centre, with Cpl Georgie Jenkins, right, and Flt Lt Chloe Windsor

FENCING

Elsa and Warwick at the cutting edge



CHAMPION AT ARMS: Flt Lt Warwick Mitchell-Gough (right) receives his trophy from RAFFU chair Sqn Ldr Niall Dowse

SNQ LDR Elsa Phillipson and Flt Lt Warwick Mitchell-Gough stormed to the Women's and Men's Champion at Arms titles at the RAF Fencing Championship at Cosford.

The dynamic duo cut a swathe through an impressive field at the well-attended four-day event, leaving Mitchell-Gough to say: "What an unforgettable experience. The competitive energy from everyone was amazing, and walking away with the Champion at Arms title made it even more special."

While Phillipson, added: "The Champs are always a great event with quality competitive fencing yet a friendly atmosphere, with lots of socials. Anyone who's ever considered fencing or wants to find a welcoming new sport to keep fit and meet some lovely people, I'd



EPEE: Winner Cpl Liam Deneley (centre), alongside second-placed Sqn Ldr Dominic Walden (left) and AS1 Jay Kitchen, third

always recommend giving it a go. "One of my favourite things about fencing is that it's truly open to any age or ability, because everyone develops their own personal style. We have coaching available at every event, so beginners are always welcome to join at whatever event

they can make it to." Along with cutting-edge action, the event included dedicated competition-focused coaching, inter-station team events and individual contests across sabre, foil and epee, forming the RAF's key selection event for the UK Armed Forces Inter-Services competition. RAF Fencing Union Chair Sqn Ldr Niall Dowse said: "The competition saw fencers from across the RAF compete within all the disciplines of foil, epee and sabre over three days, with each competition thoroughly enjoyable and hard-fought. This year saw praise for how well-run and smooth the event was and particularly the welcoming atmosphere for all ranks and experience levels." **Email: AIR-RAFFencingUnion@mod.gov.uk to find out more.**

BOXING

4 Nations glory for golden girl Amelia

Kennedy leads the RAF 3-medal haul

Daniel Abrahams

SERVICE BOXING'S brightest stars became history makers comprising the full UKAF team and producing an unrivalled three-medal haul at the prestigious Four Nations Tournament.

Following on from their National successes, AR Amelia Kennedy (*below*) won gold in the 54kg category and Sgt Cam Lewis picked up silver at 80kg, while Cpl Carys Mainwaring took bronze in the 60kg class.

Association spokesperson Cpl Benjamin Bailey said: "Across the tournament, the RAF trio delivered outstanding performances on the national stage, competing against some of the best boxers in Great Britain and Ireland.

"With three RAF athletes representing their respective countries as the sole UK Armed Forces competitors, the success of the team highlights the continued growth and strength of the RAF Boxing Association.

"Performances at this level demonstrate that RAF boxing is operating

at one of its highest standards in recent history and continues to go from strength to strength."

Semi-finals day saw Cpl Mainwaring, representing Wales, facing England's multi-national and European champion Ella Lonsdale.

In a composed and technically strong performance, the aviator matched her highly experienced opponent throughout, only narrowly missing out on victory.

Next up, Lewis faced Welsh boxer Jacob Parry, with the aviator making an immediate impact, applying relentless pressure from the opening bell.

A powerful right hand in the first round resulted in a knockdown. Lewis repeated this in the second round with a body shot, which saw the referee stop the contest and secured the aviator a place in the final.

In her bantamweight final, Kennedy fought a high-quality contest against Scotland's Stephanie Kernachan, with the aviator edging the bout with a 3-2 split decision, demonstrating her class and ring intelligence to claim gold.



PRIDE OF THE NATIONS: England's AR Amelia Kennedy (*right*) and Sgt Cameron Lewis, with Cpl Carys Mainwaring for Wales

Lewis returned to the ring for his final against five-time Senior Elite Irish champion and former Olympic hopeful Kelyn Cassidy.

Facing a skilled and awkward southpaw, Lewis once again applied consistent pressure in a competitive bout, narrowly missing out on gold to a 4-1 split decision.

Lewis, who hopes to turn professional by the end of the year, told *RAF News*: "For me, that medal represented far more than simply reaching a final. Growing up and learning my trade in Widnes, boxing on local shows and working my way through the amateur ranks, representing England on the international

stage was something I had always dreamed about.

"To stand on the podium wearing the England vest and competing against elite opposition from across the home nations was a proud moment for myself, my family, my coaches and everyone who has supported my journey.

"Away from boxing, I continue to serve as a Royal Air Force Air Traffic Controller, balancing the demands of an operational military role with the commitments required to compete at elite level. The discipline, resilience and professionalism demanded by both careers have played a major

role in my development inside and outside the ring.

"I am also proud to represent my home town of Widnes, the Merseyside and Cheshire region, the Royal Air Force, and TS Boxing Stable, under coach Terry Spencer. The support I have received from all of these communities has been instrumental in helping me reach this level.

"While the amateur chapter is coming to an end, my ambitions within the sport continue. The experiences gained this year have reinforced my belief that I can compete at the highest level, and I now look forward to the next stage of my boxing journey."

GLIDING



HIGH-FLIER: AS1(T) Lefley-Kemp

Making Brad

JUST A year after joining the RAF AS1(T) Bradley Lefley-Kemp was showing off his gliding skills above a packed Cosford Air Show crowd of 55,000.

Lefley-Kemp, 22, started his gliding journey in August 2018 with former Trent Valley Gliding Club at former RAF Kirton-in-Lindsey and flew solo

in January 2019. He said: "To have been selected as the 2026 glider aerobatic display pilot for RAF Cosford Air Show has been such an incredible and humbling privilege.

"It still feels surreal, after all this is a dream you have as a kid, to perform at an airshow; you never think you are going to live the dream."



COSFORD: Brad's show-stopping display

To see your sport featured in *RAF News*, send a short report (max. 300 words) and a couple of photographs (attached hi-res jpegs) to: Sports@rafnews.co.uk

Sport

GOLF

Not so green now



SHOWING HOW IT'S DONE: RAF Development golfers in Gainsborough

'Rookies' get in the swing of things to win Inter-Services

Staff reporter

THE SERVICE'S up and coming golfers blasted their way to a first Development IS win at Thonock Park Golf Club in Lincolnshire.

Cpl Scott Richardson said: "Winning the Championship for the first time is a huge moment for RAF Golf and something the whole team is incredibly proud of.

"We've put a lot of work into developing the squad, and it really showed in how composed and disciplined the players were throughout the competition.

"The Army and Navy pushed us hard, but the team stepped up at key moments and delivered when it mattered.

"It's been a privilege to lead such a committed group, and this result is a testament to the effort and professionalism of everyone involved.

"Hopefully this will build momentum as we look ahead to continued success at the Inter-Services in September at Moortown."

The competition format saw five foursomes matches played in the morning followed by 10 singles in the afternoon, with 15 points up for grabs.

The aviators had four rookies in the team this year on both days, while FS Rob Wride and AS1 Jake Kirkby led the team off in the morning pairs and newbie Fg Off Fin Nichols – who won both his individual matches – led off the singles.



The aviators beat the Navy 10-5 and the Army 11.5-3.5 to storm to glory.

● Follow RAF Golf on Instagram @rafgolfofficial.

TROPHY TIME: Cpl Scott Richardson with the Development Inter-Services Cup

STRONGMAN

Strength in numbers as RAF sweep board at Strongman event

Daniel Abrahams

SERVICE SPORT was lifted to new heights as aviators were crowned Strongman and Strongwoman champions for the first time at Napfest in High Wycombe.

The annual music and community event held near Air Command saw history made – the Service's inaugural hosting of the competition outside a military base and the aviators rising to the challenge to win both strength titles.

Event OIC and head referee Sgt Stephen Winter said: "The day couldn't have gone better. The venue at Napfest was incredible, the support from RAF High Wycombe was fantastic and the athletes put on an outstanding show for a lively crowd.

"Beyond crowning RAF champions, the

competition successfully raised the profile of Strongman and Strongwoman sport within Defence, showcasing the physical robustness, resilience and determination that underpin military service. The future of RAF strength sport looks exceptionally bright."

The Service's dominance in the Tri-Service event was highlighted no better than in the women's novice event, which saw a RAF 1, 2, 3, with Fg Off Alexis Newton-French, Cpl Georgia Wall and Fg Off Neve Smithson taking the respective podium spots.

The men's event saw aviators take the top-two spots through Sgt Lewis Prentice and Sqn Ldr Mark McGachy, with the Army's Capt Dave Ridge in third.

The male U80kg event went to RM Sgt David Clarke, while AS1 Connor Poole continued his impressive form, taking the



WOMEN'S CHAMP: Fg Off Alexis Newton-French



MEN'S CHAMP: Sgt Lewis Prentice on the stones

Male Open event over Cpl Dan Bromwich. AS1 Benedict Newton won the best lift trophy and best endeavour nomination.

An estimated 4,500 festival visitors watched the day's action unfold as the 24 competitors battled it out across four categories: Men's Novice, Women's Novice, Men's Under 80kg and Men's Open.

Athletes were tested in sweltering

conditions across four demanding events designed to assess strength, endurance and determination: axle deadlift, log press, the odd object carry medley and Atlas stones.

Significantly, 70 per cent of the field comprised RAF personnel, highlighting the continued growth of Strongman and Strongwoman sport within the Service.

To see your sport featured in **RAF News**, send a short report (max. 300 words) and a couple of photographs (attached hi-res jpegs) to: **Sports@rafnews.co.uk**

5 RAF Sport

pages of



Josh retains weights crown

See p24

SWIMMING

Games spot for swim star Kyle

Daniel Abrahams

SERVICE SWIMMER Cpl Kyle Booth is, in his own words, set for “an exciting summer” after being selected to represent Wales at this month’s Commonwealth Games.

PTI Booth, who competed at the previous Games in Birmingham, is hoping to shine in the Glasgow event, which starts on July 23, in the 50m and 100m breaststroke.

The aviator’s selection is made extra special as 2026 is also the Service’s swimming association’s 100th anniversary.

Booth said: “I’m extremely excited to represent both Swim Wales and the RAF at the games. It has been a long journey to reach this point, which makes the opportunity even more special.

“I genuinely believe I would not be in this position without the support of the RAF, and in particular my role as a Physical Training Instructor (PTI).

“Having competed at the previous Commonwealth Games, I am fortunate to have experience of the environment and demands that come with a major multi-sport event. I hope to draw on those experiences this time around, allowing me to be better prepared and perform to the best of my ability when it matters most.”

Booth, who could also be selected for the men’s medley relay and mixed medley relay teams, qualified for the games via the recent British Championships.

He said: “In the lead-up to the Championships, I had only been back in consistent pool training for around three weeks because of work commitments. Given those circumstances, confidence was probably the biggest thing I was



BOOTH: Commonwealth Games place for Wales

lacking heading into the trials, which makes the outcome even more rewarding.”

Sqn Ldr Trevor Down, RAFSA Chair, said: “The RAF Swimming Association is delighted and immensely proud that Cpl Kyle Booth has been selected to represent Wales at this year’s Commonwealth Games. In this centenary year for RAF Swimming, his achievement is a fitting addition to our proud legacy, joining the ranks of distinguished national and international representatives.”

● Follow RAF Swimming on Instagram @rafswimmingassociation and the Commonwealth Games @glasgow_2026.



RUGBY UNION

Not a Baa-d day at the office

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY Union star Flt Lt Sarah Bonar ticked off another life goal after performing for the Barbarians women against Wales at Twickenham.



With World Cup, Inter-Service and Six Nations appearances under her belt, the Scotland ace (pictured) called selection for the Baa Baas “one of those

bucket list things” as she took to the home of English rugby for the 34-17 defeat.

“Growing up, I always idolised the Barbarians. They are a team made up of players from around the world that just go out there and have fun playing their rugby,” she said.

“The values of the Barbarians are that of enjoyment and

gelling different cultures and styles of play to go and have fun and put on a performance.

“It’s a shame about the result but to put on a competitive match against an international side was unreal to be involved in. The week itself was incredible, probably one of the best weeks of my rugby career so far. To play amongst incredible players from around the world was awesome.”

CRICKET



IN FORM: There was a half-century for RAF captain Cpl Emilee Steele

IST20 rained off as heavens open

TWO HARD-FOUGHT T20 matches against the MCC would have been the perfect preparation for IS T20, but the Service’s hopes were washed away along with the tournament.

Torrential rain saw the two-day Inter-Services at Arundel, West Sussex abandoned, with no rescheduled date yet decided.

The only action a healthy crowd saw on the opening morning was to watch the downpours as the covers remained firmly on.

With a festival of cricket planned around the competition itself, including catering, hospitality and games for travelling schoolchildren, organisers had a keen eye on the sky to check for breaks in rain, but each brief pause in precipitation lasted only a matter of minutes before the event was abandoned.

Before the Inter-Services, the RAF women had faced an MCC team in a double-header at Vine Lane, Uxbridge, which saw captain Cpl Emilee Steele in fine hitting style.

The aviators pushed Marylebone Cricket Club all

the way in two T20 defeats, with Steele, appointed captain of the Air Force for the season, already repaying the selectors’ faith with two half-centuries so far.

Her first came in a 66-run haul against Hitchin in May and she continued that form against the MCC at Vine Lane. Opening the batting, Steele hit 54 runs from 52 balls before Army star Connie Cant, playing for the MCC, caught her from Enakshi Rajvanshi’s delivery.

Cpl Aimee Jepson added 28 runs as the RAF ended their innings on 125-7, but the MCC blasted through that total in 18 overs, with Steel taking two wickets and FS Lucy Farmer taking one with the ball, as MCC won by six wickets.

The second match of the day also saw the MCC win, by 22 runs, after the RAF went into bat with Steel and Jepson establishing a good partnership before they were out in consecutive balls in the 11th over.

The RAF maintained a solid batting order, totalling 114, but it was not enough against the strong MCC outfit.



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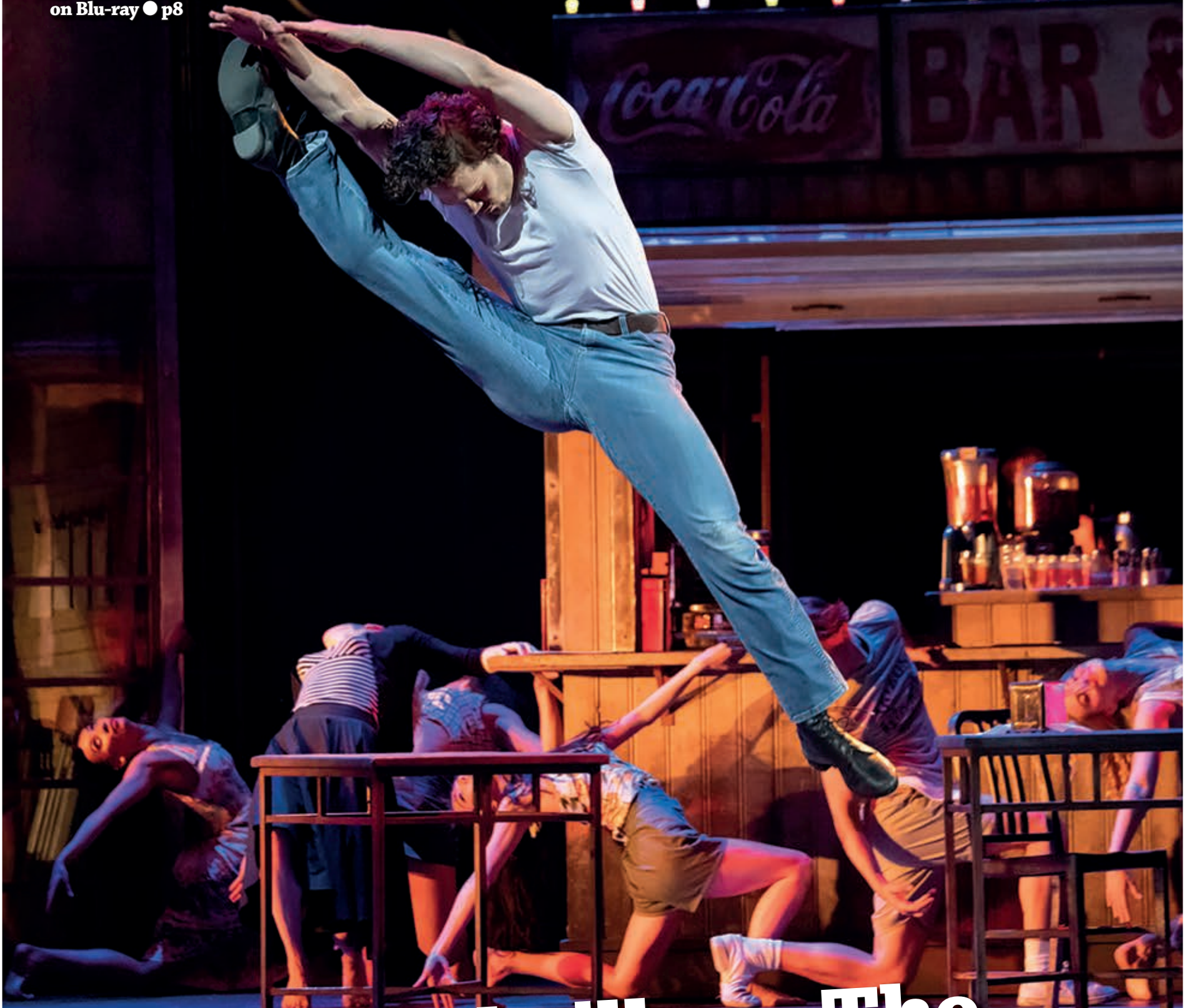


Win!

Win hit BBC drama
on Blu-ray ● p8

**= DINO'S =
= DINER =**

R'n'R



Dance thriller – The Car Man on tour

● See
pages
4-5

Film reviews: page 3 + Announcements: page 6 + Puzzles: page 8

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Exhibitions

Agatha Christie: A World of Mystery

British Library, London, Oct 30 to June 20, 2027

Clues to the making of literary giant Christie

A MAJOR exhibition exploring the life and work of celebrated crime writer Agatha Christie opens at the British Library in London on October 30, running until June 20, 2027.

Agatha Christie: A World of Mystery marks 50 years since Christie's death and will go behind the books to explore how her life, travels and interests informed her work and the creation of her iconic characters.

"Through personal objects belonging to Christie, many of which have never been displayed before, visitors will gain unprecedented insight into her writing process and explore her impact on crime fiction," said a spokesperson.

Displays and a major events season celebrating Christie's influence on literature will accompany the exhibition at libraries across the UK.

"As well as examining the origins of iconic fictional creations like Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple, the exhibition will take visitors on a journey through Christie's upbringing, her interests and travels and how she adapted her novels for the stage, through five

immersive sections filled with items from her personal life, including her typewriter (*below*), professional and personal correspondence with other writers, family photographs and notebooks and typescripts for novels," the spokesperson added.



The exhibition has five sections – 'The country house', 'The dispensary', 'The train', 'The dig' and 'The theatre'.

During World War I Christie volunteered as a nurse and pharmacy dispenser, honing a knowledge of drugs and toxins which would later prove invaluable to a crime writer. Visitors will explore a dispensary filled with the poisons that crop up in her work, displayed with the study notes for her pharmaceutical exams taken in 1917 and her WWI Service record.

On leaving the dispensary visitors will board an Orient Express-inspired train carriage evoking the glamour and intrigue of 1920s travel. And after leaving the train they will find themselves at the site of an archaeological dig in the 1930s, a time that marked Christie's second marriage to archaeologist Max Mallowan



SIGHTSEEING TOUR: Agatha Christie relaxing in Tajoura, Libya, 1955. Agatha and her second husband, archaeologist Max Mallowan, had invited Agatha's daughter Rosalind and grandson Mathew to join them on a tour of the ancient sites of Leptis Magna and Sabratha
© The Christie Archive Trust

and her most prolific writing period.

The final section is the glittering West End of the 1950s exploring Christie's work adapting her novels for stage productions that delighted post-war audiences looking for escapism and intrigue, making her the most successful female playwright of all time.

Agatha Christie: A World of Mystery has been made possible with support from Great Western Railway.

Lucy Rowland, the exhibition's lead curator, said: "The biggest exhibition held in the UK in almost 25 years to celebrate Christie's writing, visitors will see over 100 items from different periods in her life. Her impact on crime fiction as a genre has been immense."

● Go to: bl.uk for more details.



Film

The Last Viking (15)

In cinemas now

'John Lennon' and the bank robber's millions

AFTER SERVING 15 years in prison, a bank robber heads straight for his brother, hoping to recover the millions he buried before his arrest, only to discover that he has forgotten where it is – and now believes himself to be John Lennon.

Anker (Nikolaj Lie Kaas) is a brute whose prime concern is locating the cash, and so he has little inclination to be sensitive to his brother's condition. Manfred (Mads Mikkelsen) is our first clue to the tone of *The Last Viking*. Curly-haired and bespectacled, he is despondent and doesn't pick up on social cues. Not to undersell his neurodivergence: he will call strangers ugly and has a penchant for stealing dogs.

Trying to break through the delusion proves futile. Called by the wrong name, Manfred is liable to jump out of the nearest window. With no other options, Anker finds himself indulging the fantasy, attempting to reunite 'John Lennon' with the rest of the Beatles – other patients with similarly elaborate delusions.

There is a recognisable quality that runs through Anders Thomas Jensen's films, including previous title *Riders of Justice*. Featuring many of the same actors, they tend to revolve around a high-concept premise, with an especially black sense of humour. The violence is presented like



OH BROTHER: Anker, right, with delusional Manfred

Three-Stooges-style slapstick, but when someone is hit with a frying pan, you feel it. Sometimes played for laughs, other times for shock.

The film's more wince-inducing moments are embodied by another Jensen regular, Nicolas Bro, who plays one of Anker's former accomplices, Friendly Flemming. Having squandered his share of the robbery, he now wants the rest, adding menace to an already chaotic situation.

The Last Viking has a preposterous concept that it can laugh at one minute and take deadly seriously the next. That deliberate wonkiness keeps you off-guard throughout. Silly, funny and sometimes brutal.

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



Film Review

My Father's Island (15)

Out now

Island strife for father and son

A YOUNG teenage boy sets out on a trip with his estranged father to a remote Norwegian island in Vladimir de Fontenay's mournful adaptation.

The film opens with Roy as an adult (Ruaridh Mollica) travelling across icy terrain in search of a pilot who can take him back to the island, 10 years after his father's death. Thrown back in time, we meet young Roy (Woody Norman), who is told that his dad, Tom (Swann Arlaud), wants to take him out of school for a year and live on an island where they will quite literally be the only inhabitants.

For the most part, the film consists of Tom trying to teach survival skills and become a father figure to young Roy. Setting up camp in the island's only cabin, which has seen better days, father and son must hunt, fish and build in order to sustain themselves. Although home-schooling was part of the arrangement, Tom seems more interested in making a man out of his son, sharing booze and asking about his love life – when they're not hiding from bears.

They have a radio, allowing them to stay in touch with Roy's mother (Tuppence Middleton), with whom Tom appears desperate to reconcile. In fact, Tom seems to be battling demons of his



own, marked by wild mood swings and chastising himself late at night. There is a definite echo of *Aftersun* here: a childhood trip with a struggling father, recalled years later, where the memory is coloured by melancholy.

The source material for *My Father's Island* is a novella from David Vann's semi-autobiographical *Legend of a Suicide*, though this very personal story is explored in a markedly different way, which may significantly affect how audiences respond to it.

For all its ponderous pacing and unusual narrative structure, the film's strongest asset is its performances, particularly that of rising star Woody Norman. There is much to appreciate, though the storytelling choices might undermine your emotional investment.

Two roundels out of five ●●
Review by Sam Cooney



Dance

Johannes Redebe: Finally Home
UK tour



JOHANNES: His incredible life may be made into a film PHOTO: MATT CROCKETT

It's coming Home ...for Jojo at least

STRICTLY COME DANCING Host and star of the West End hit musical *Kinky Boots*, Johannes Redebe will tour the UK in his new show *Finally Home* next year.

The tour runs from April 1 – June 13, 2027, kicking off at the Swan Theatre, High Wycombe and finishing at the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff.

A spokesperson said: "Packed with dazzling choreography, sensational live vocals, spectacular costumes and the warmth and energy that have made him a national favourite, this unforgettable show brings together the music and moments that have shaped his journey. From ballroom classics to South African rhythms and beloved pop anthems, *Finally Home* is a heartfelt celebration – and everyone is invited."

This year has been a remarkable one for Jojo. He became a British citizen, made his West End debut and stepped into his dream role as host of *Strictly Come Dancing*. Yet one thing remains unchanged: Johannes was born to dance.

He said: "People have been asking if I won't be dancing anymore... darling, I'm just getting started! Bringing this tour *Finally Home* across the UK and Ireland is my way of saying thank you to everyone who has supported my journey. So come

ready for joy, fun and celebration, because we're bringing the biggest party to your town and I cannot wait to dance with you all!"

Johannes started dancing aged seven, fascinated by the discipline and the glamour of Ballroom and Latin. Aged 21, he left South Africa to work on the Italian cruise liner *Costa* and, in 2018, was invited to join the debut season of the international hit show *Dancing with the Stars*, in South Africa.

He toured the world in international dance show *Burn The Floor* before being headhunted by *Strictly* in the UK and moved to London to dance on the flagship BBC show, from which he has become the breakout star.

Freedom

His debut solo UK Tour *Freedom* and follow-up show *Freedom Unleashed* sold out across the UK, including a week in London's West End at the Peacock Theatre, while his 2024 UK tour, *House of Jojo*, played to packed houses including two shows at the London Palladium.

His first book *Jojo: Finally Home*, published in 2023 became a Sunday Times bestseller. The book has been optioned for a film.

● Go to: musicalsontour.co.uk for full tour details.



Theatre

The Car Man
UK tour

The Car Man, I still get engine

LOOSELY BASED on Bizet's ever-popular opera *Carmen*, Matthew Bourne's award-winning dance thriller *The Car Man* is now on a nationwide tour until November 21.

The familiar 19th century Spanish cigarette factory becomes a greasy 1950s garage-diner in the American Midwest, where the dreams and passions of a small town are shattered by the arrival of a handsome and enigmatic stranger. Fuelled by heat and desire, the inhabitants are driven into an unstoppable spiral of greed, lust, betrayal and revenge.

Choreographer Bourne founded the dance-theatre company New Adventures in 2001. He said: "I never dreamed when we created this show at the beginning of the new millennium that it would still be around, thrilling audiences, 25 years later. Inspired by vintage movie film noir classics, it holds a unique and special place in the New Adventures repertory as the only piece based on an opera and possibly the first ballet to feature a bisexual anti-hero."

Why was Bourne first attracted to Bizet's *Carmen*?

He said: "I resisted it for quite a while because there were so many versions of it, both ballet and opera, but I kept listening to the score and I felt that it was the right kind of music for New Adventures. I also felt in 2000, when I made the original piece, that it suggested a different kind of movement than

Choreographer Bourne revisits his racy dance show based on Bizet's *Carmen*

we had done before.

"But to stop myself, and probably everyone else, thinking, "Oh no, not another *Carmen*", I thought, well, we'll use the music but we'll tell a different story and that's what really inspired me and made the whole thing feel like a totally original project. I was also keen to create a 'dance thriller', full of plot twists and suspense. You can't do that with a story people already know."

The Car Man differs from the original *Carmen* 'quite a lot' added Bourne.

He explained: "There are parallels with the opera story; there are elements of lust, fate, revenge and murder and all those things that are associated with *Carmen*. I think the essence of *Carmen* is there, but we've set it in a different place and time.

"*The Car Man* is set in an Italian-American community in a small mid-western American town called Harmony in the 1960s. Although it's set in the USA there is quite a European feel to the production and



TORQUE OF THE TOWN: Mechanics at the garage-cum-diner in small-town Harmony

although there are some obvious American elements, we've tried to add a gritty kind of realism, associated with Italian, French and Spanish cinema, and to avoid Hollywood glamour."

He added: "The characters are very gutsy and real, requiring a whole different acting style from much of the New Adventures repertory. It was certainly a change of direction in 2000 following the royal court and lakeside fantasy of *Swan Lake* and the more genteel period feel of our wartime *Cinderella*.

"*The Car Man* has always been a piece that has challenged my company as actors too. The movement that came from this was also much more earthy and gritty and contemporary in feel. You could call it a classic film noir but one that tells a story that no film of that era would have been able

STEAMY: Show shower scene



Compiled by Executive Features Editor Tracey Allen

Luca, can es revving



to tell! In dance terms, 26 years on, it remains a comparative rarity, as the first ballet to depict bisexuality as a major part of the plot."

He explained: "In terms of character, the title is quite literal really and it relates to the idea of mechanics working in a garage where most of the production is set. More specifically, it refers to the character of Luca, a stranger who arrives in Harmony at the beginning of the show and takes a part-time job as a mechanic at the local garage/diner. He is really the Car Man, the title character. Luca is a kind of fate figure who affects everyone's lives and becomes the catalyst for change."

Why did Bourne want to revive *The Car Man* in 2026?

"Apart from the special Albert Hall London revival in 2022 to celebrate the iconic venue's 150th birthday, the show has not been seen



BOURNE: Founded his New Adventures dance/theatre group in 2001, the year after he created *The Car Man*

around the UK, on tour, for over 10 years," he said. "*The Car Man* has become one of New Adventures' most popular productions since its creation in 2000. It's also probably the most popular show amongst my dancers, who all want the chance to play these challenging roles."

"There is now a whole new generation of talented New Adventures artists ready to take up that challenge and that has to be one of the other main reasons for bringing it back into the repertory in 2026."

"It's a particular favourite of mine because it combines my great love of cinema with a highly theatrical approach. It also gives me a great excuse to revisit many of my much-loved old movies for research."

● **Go to:** new-adventures.net for tour information.



Music
Becky Hill
Rebecca

Hill's
new
album

Becky Hill on being Rebecca

TWO-TIME BRIT Award-winner Becky Hill will release her eagerly anticipated third album *Rebecca* on September 25.

Rebecca was written during a period of intense personal and artistic reflection and sees Becky (pictured) exploring ambition, identity, visibility and the contradictions of her life from a place of greater openness and creative freedom.

"Across the record, she examines the tension between desire and self-preservation with clarity, humour and brutal honesty, resulting in her boldest, emotionally charged body of work to date," a spokesperson said.

"Described by Becky as 'curated chaos', *Rebecca* also marks a significant evolution in her sound. It sees her reconnecting with the wider influences that shaped her early musical identity, pulling inspiration from guitar



music alongside the dance and drum & bass foundations that have defined her career.

"*Rebecca* blends that collision of worlds with heavy electro production, alternative influences and euphoric electronics into an album that feels both expansive and unpredictable," the spokesperson added.

"I've always wanted to be the people's artist," Becky said. "But that doesn't mean having to please everybody all the time. With this album, I needed to be headstrong and make something that fully reflected who I am creatively."

Becky is headlining a range of major outdoor events and festivals in July and August, including Creamfields in Cheshire and Poland's BitterSweet Festival.

● **Go to:** beckyhill.com for more details.



Books
The Posting
bookguild.co.uk

Win!

PoW nurse's war brought to life by daughter-in-law

BASED ON the incredible true story of a World War II nurse who cared for prisoner of war camp survivors, Gillian Edward's debut novel, *The Posting* (bookguild.co.uk), has just been published.



At 15, headstrong Jane is growing up in a quiet village in East Sussex, dreaming of travel and a life beyond the familiar. When war erupts in 1939, those dreams are swept into motion. Leaving school behind, Jane steps into adulthood far sooner than she ever expected and a chance encounter with injured RAF pilots changes everything.

Told in Jane's own voice, this biographical novel charts an extraordinary journey from V1 and V2 attacks in Kent to the heat and danger of Ceylon and Singapore.

Jane confronts death, grief and moral conflict as she tends wounded airmen, liberated prisoners of war and even former enemies. Along the way she experiences friendship and love as well as devastating loss, emerging fiercely independent and forever changed.

Gillian explained: "The idea of the story began when my mother-in-law Jane was in her mid-80s, and started talking about her life in WWII, something she had never talked about before."

"She described her posting to Ceylon and treating survivors rescued from the prisoner of war camps in Singapore, her compassion for these men and women and her anger at the Japanese for their cruelty."

"I knew there was more to the story and, after a little encouragement, she told me all of it, beginning in 1939 at the start of the war and the aftermath in 1946. This formed the basis of *The Posting*."

You could win a copy of *The Posting*. For your chance to own one tell us:

In which county does the novel's teenage protagonist, Jane, live?

Email your answer, marked The Posting book competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by July 24.



AUTHOR: Gillian Edwards tells the story of her mother-in-law, Jane, in new book *The Posting*, inset top



Your Announcements

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

Seeking

SEARCHING for the whereabouts of former armourer Cpl Alan Ronald Gray, who started his career as an RAF apprentice and member of the 81st Entry at RAF Halton. He and I served together at RAF Leuchars, Fife. Upon leaving the RAF he forged a career as a civilian weapons engineer in a number of Royal Naval Armament Depots around the United Kingdom. Any information to Alan Mudge, tel: 01760 337514 or: bombhead055@gmail.com

I would be very keen to hear from any former members of Number 44G State Enrolled Nurse Course who undertook their programme of Nurse Education at RAF Hospital Ely (as it was at that time) between 1971 and 1973. Please email: retiredraf8030192@gmail.com. Paul Elliott P8030192, served between 1971 and 1985.

I am trying to trace my brother, ex-FS R.E Lee (Bob) born in Sleights, N Yorks, March 1945-6, enlisted in RAF 1960 from West Sleekburn in Northumberland, was in the Telecommunication Branch. Last known posting was Brize Norton and he may have lived in the Oxford area, he would have served for 22 years. I have visited the UK a few times and tried to contact him without any luck. I would be grateful if anyone that knew him could contact me, Norman Lee, on: argemtis71@gmail.com.

DO you know anyone who trained at one of the six British Flying Training Schools in America in World War II? The Falcon Field Association: The Next Generation is holding its next annual event in Edinburgh on October 3-4. This year we are widening our invitation to include anyone connected with any of the BFTSs. If you learned to fly at a BFTS or are related to a pilot

who trained there, we'd love to hear from you. Please contact Kathryn Masters by email: falconfieldassociationtng@gmail.com or mobile: 07885 378090.

Reunions

IF you have been a QHI or QHCI at RAF Shawbury during the last 50 years and would be interested in attending an evening function in October, please contact: SHY-ComdtOuterOffice@mod.gov.uk

CALLING all former TG11 comms personnel, T/phonists, TPOs, Tels, Wop Specs, TCOs, TRCs, plus all comms trades associated with the 'Sparks' badge. All are welcome to attend the Trade Group 11 Association reunion to be held Friday, April 9 to Sunday April 11, 2027. This will be at the Eastwood Hall Hotel, Mansfield Road, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, NG16 3SS. Please find further details at: tg11association.com where, if not already a member of the association, there is a facility to become one (just click on the register motif at the top of the website page).

309 Entry RAF Hereford C Flt 4 Sqn Cooks, April 1967 to May 1968. If anyone knows anybody from that Entry and wants to get in touch, with a view to meeting for a 60th anniversary celebration in 2027, please call Ian Dell on: 01202 722058

ALL ex Clk Secs who were trained on the Apprentice Wing at RAF Credenhill in the 1960s and 1970s are cordially invited to email: David.tibbett@ntlworld.com with a view to arranging a reunion this year.

Associations

THE RAF Air Loadmaster Association (ALMA), which marked its 25th anniversary in May, is looking to recruit new members – serving personnel as

well as veterans. If you are interested in joining, please email Les Weston on: lesalma9001@gmail.com or call: 0753 1523456.

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

HARTLEPOOLRAF Association Branch was formed on October 29, 1946 and has continued to the present day. Current members and their guests will gather to celebrate at Hartlepool Yacht Club on October 30 from 7pm, with dinner and entertainment. Guide price £15. All current, past and distant Branch Members are hereby invited to apply for tickets by email to: treasurer@hartlepoolrafa.com or telephone: 07864857186.

591 SU Association. In its 72nd year of existence, 591 Signal Unit has established an Association (better late than never!). Ex-members and currently serving ex members of 591 SU are invited to visit the Association's website at: 591suassociation.co.uk for membership details and news of the next annual reunion plus other upcoming events for 2026.

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

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

Ace's mural looks down on restored residents' gardens



WAR HERO: Johnnie Johnson with his dog Sally in July 1944

A **COMMUNITY** group is helping to restore gardens underneath a mural of RAF fighter pilot ace Johnnie Johnson.

The Coronation Gardens in Loughborough, created to commemorate the Coronation of Elizabeth II, are being brought back to life through a restoration project transforming a once-neglected space at the busy junction of Great Central Road and King Street.

Overgrown and forgotten for decades, the gardens are now being restored by a dedicated group of volunteers determined to see them flourish again as a place of colour, pride and community spirit.

Ellen Troop, Secretary of the Friends of the 1953 Coronation Gardens, said: "I often walked past the mural, and was fascinated by it. I didn't realise there was a crown-shaped flower bed in the gardens because it was so overgrown."

Ellen then met Andy Moore of Print Monkey, whose building carries the striking mural overlooking the gardens, who told her all about Johnnie Johnson. A pupil at Loughborough Grammar School, Johnson went on to become one of the RAF's most celebrated fighter pilots – often described as the "original Top Gun" – flying Spitfires during World War II and achieving 34 individual victories.

He became an Air Vice Marshal and after the war founded the Johnnie Johnson Housing Trust.

"It really has become a garden for and by the people," Ellen added. "A real community effort."

Plans are underway for a bug hotel and biodiversity planting, encouraging wildlife back into the heart of the town.

The group also hopes to continue improving the site and ensuring it is never neglected again.

Experts offer free workshop

BREAK-UP AND divorce coaching experts will be holding a free online workshop on Wednesday, September 9 at 7pm.

Stronger Relationships, Stronger Service Lives will cover emotional

resilience, healthy choices, communication and getting the right support, said course leader Christine Paterson Deacon (*left*), an RAF veteran who works with who she describes as "individuals who struggle to deal with the emotional rollercoaster of separation and divorce."

The workshop will also feature experts Paul Naisbitt (paulnaisbittcoaching.com) and Louise Neilson (louiseneilson.co.uk).

● Goto: christinepatersondeacon.com for more information



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 or by post to: **Announcements, RAF News, Room 68, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE.**

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Soar into summer with Duxford air shows

IWM DUXFORD will host a remarkable aviation event with its Legends of the SR-71 Weekend (July 25-26), exploring one of history's most iconic aircraft, the SR-71 Blackbird.

The pinnacle of Cold War technological innovation, the Blackbird was the fastest manned, operational jet-powered aircraft ever built, with the only example outside the USA on permanent display in the American Air Museum at IWM Duxford.

"Across the two days, visitors can enjoy a packed programme of meet and greets, lectures and a special evening VIP reception with 30 SR-71 pilots, Reconnaissance Systems Officers, ground crew and civilians who flew and worked on the aircraft," said a spokesperson for the Museum.

"Attendees will include Colonel Pat Bledsoe, who flew the Blackbird until 1978 and set the world speed record of 2,092mph, and Colonel Buz Carpenter, who became an instructor pilot with more than 230 flights and over 65 operational missions,

later becoming a member of the Virginia Aviation Hall of Fame," the spokesperson added.

IWM Duxford will host a Spitfire Day on Saturday, August 1 with talks and a private flying display celebrating the Spitfire and its legacy.

The day will focus on three aircraft representing the changing Spitfire, from its early days fighting in the Battle of Britain through to the Rolls-Royce Griffon-powered variants which gave the Spitfire a new lease of life.

And on August 22 there's a Flying Evening – as the sun sets over the historic World War II airfield, visitors can expect to see a mix of historic aircraft such as the iconic British Spitfire, military jets including the Canadair Sabre and airborne pyrotechnic displays that light up the night sky.

Rounding off the summer, Duxford turns back the clock to the 1940s, with vintage aircraft taking to the skies at the Battle of Britain Air Show (September 12-13), this year marking the



ICON: Mk.1 N3200 Spitfire at the 2025 Flying Evening ©IWM

90th anniversary of the Spitfire's maiden flight.

Visitors will see iconic displays including the Duxford Big Wing, along with a spectacular array of vintage aircraft.

Period-themed stalls, music and activities will recreate the spirit of the era.

And there's plenty of family fun on offer at IWM Duxford with exciting hands-on activities daily and throughout the summer holidays.

Family activities can vary – please check details at the Visitor Planning Point in Hangar 1 when you arrive to see what's running

on the day, say the organisers.

On Saturday, October 3, the Duxford Flying Finale celebrates the highs of Duxford Flying Season 2026 with a special end of season flying display taking place across the historic site.

● Go to: iwm.org.uk for further details.



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R'n'R



Prize Crossword No. 413

Solve the crossword, then rearrange the 8 letters in yellow squares to find an RAF aircraft.

Across

- 6. Changed the curt Dutch city (7)
- 7. Lichtenstein and Capone join sovereign (5)
- 9. See 3 Down
- 10. Man will mostly eat one pancake (7)
- 12. Hires menace to upset bitter rivals (4-7)
- 14. See 20 Down
- 18. See 2 Down
- 19. Cord pulled by Bobby Robson initially! Help! (5)
- 21. Silly little stain an embarrassment (5)
- 22. Storm Shadow, for example, will not hit the Italian embassy first (7)

Down

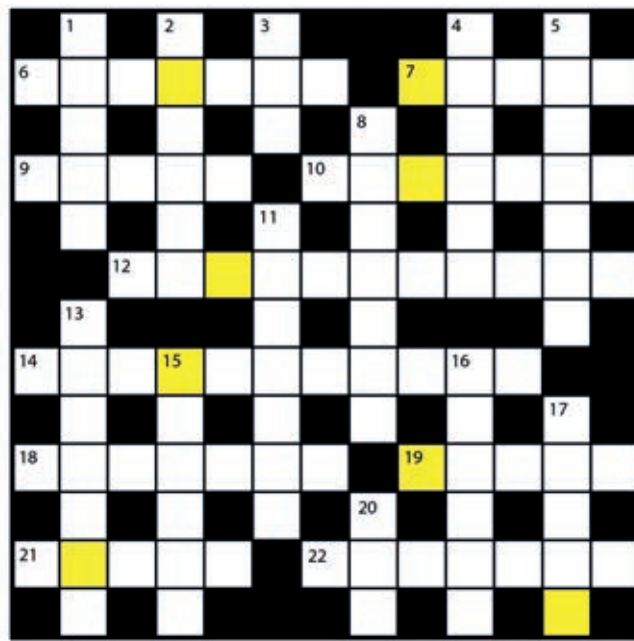
- 1. Pig-pen with the French fashion (5)
- 2. **And 18 Across.** Disorderly fairground attraction? (6-7)
- 3. **And 9 Across.** Queen abandons zither belt affecting WWII campaign (3,5)
- 4. Decoration for two Brits in Australia (3-3)
- 5. Speedy black Lightning, say (4,3)
- 8. Australian chicken has fashionable chopper (7)
- 11. Applauded guerrilla, eastern communist (7)
- 13. Poseidon's RAF aircraft? (3,4)
- 15. Change your mind about pre-Easter period (6)
- 16. Bird loses tail to first push (6)
- 17. Musical plant? (5)
- 20. **And 14 Across.** We disgorge Troy disturbing pioneering engineer (3,6,5)

Name:

Address:

RAF aircraft: Crossword No. 413

The winners of our Prize Crossword and Prize Su Doku puzzles will receive a recent aviation title – please send your entries to the address printed in the adjacent Su Doku panel, to arrive by July 24, 2026.



Solution to Crossword No. 412:
Across – 7. Relief 8. Helmet 10. Obelisk 11. Match 12. Harv 13. China 17. Plume 18. Gnat 22. Ivory 23. Everest 24. El Nino 25. Mexico
Down – 1. Brioche 2. Algebra 3. Fetid 4. Leeming 5. Smyth 6. Itchy 9. Skyhammer 14. Cloying 15. Interim 16. Station 19. Rivet 20. Joint 21. Fewer
Air force – Luftwaffe

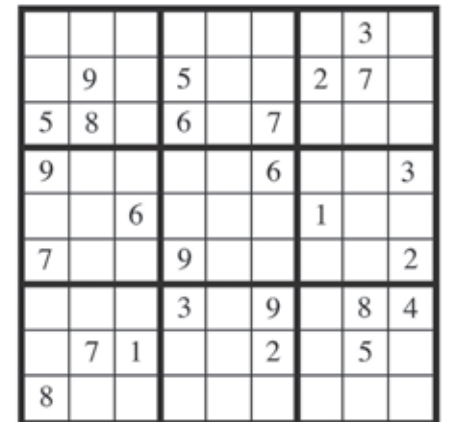
Prize Crossword No. 411 winner is: Mr D Allison, Lincoln.



Prize Su Doku No. 423

Fill in all the squares in the grid so that each row, each column and each 3x3 square contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

Solutions should be sent in a sealed envelope marked 'Su Doku' with the number in the top left-hand corner to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP14 4UE, to arrive by July 24, 2026. The winner of Su Doku No: 420 is: Mr CJ Hill, Gloucester.



Solution to Su Doku No. 422

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



Music Dance Sounds of the 90s UK tour

Rave on with Radio 2's Vernon

GET READY to rewind the clock and relive the golden age of dance music at BBC Radio 2 *Dance Sounds of the 90s: The Live Tour with Vernon Kay*.

From house phones and Sega Megadrives to Sony Discmans and legendary all-night raves in fields, Vernon will take fans on a euphoric trip back to the decade when dance music ruled the airwaves and every weekend felt unforgettable.

Expect wall-to-wall anthems from some of the greatest artists of the era including The Shamen, The Prodigy, Snap!, Underworld, JX and Ultra Naté. Joining Vernon on the tour will be special guest DJ Darren Noguero.

Best known for presenting Radio 2's popular weekday mid-morning show and the fan-favourite *Dance Sounds of the 90s*, Kay is swapping the studio for the stage to bring the spirit of that decade to life in venues around the country, including G Live, Guildford on September 4, Hangar34, Liverpool on September 18 and Edinburgh's Corn Exchange on November 27.

Vernon said: "The 90s was one of the best-loved decades when it came to music. Britpop and dance music came together to create an energy that the youth of its time attached itself to and created



VERNON: Hitting the road PHOTO: BBC/JAMES WATKINS

mayhem on the dance floors.

"Now more than 30 years on, Britpop is still as energetic as it was and dance music has come full circle, with kids today hearing samples from the tunes that originally rocked dance floors back in the 1990s.

"That's why we are taking *Dance Sounds of the 90s* on the road, to play the greatest hits from the best decade of dance. Come and join me for *Dance Sounds of the 90s Live*, I can guarantee you'll be hard pressed to keep your hands by your side. Rave on, see you there!"

● **Go to: seetickets.com for ticket and tour details.**



Competition Half Man (18)

Out now on digital, Blu-ray and DVD
 Trailer: youtu.be/egkRy1U94tA



Win latest Gadd TV hit

HALF MAN is the latest, critically acclaimed drama from the creator of *Baby Reindeer*, starring Emmy award-winner Richard Gadd and BAFTA award-winner Jamie Bell.

Niall (Bell) and Ruben (Gadd) are brothers, not related in blood but the closest you can get. One, fierce and loyal, the other, meek and mild-mannered. Inseparable youth. Brought into each other's lives through death and circumstance, all they have is each other...

But when Ruben turns up at wedding three decades later, everything seems different. He is on edge. Shifty. Not acting like himself. And soon, an explosion of violence takes place which catapults us back through their lives, from the eighties to the present day.

Capturing 30 years in the lives of these broken men, *Half Man* explores brotherhood, violence, and the intense fragility of male relationships. After all, when things fall apart, it is sometimes the closest relationships which break the hardest...



OH BROTHER: Ruben (Gadd, right) is trouble for Niall (Bell, left)



As well as starring in the BBC One series which was filmed in and around Glasgow, Gadd created, wrote and was the executive producer for the show.

We have copies of *Half Man* on Blu-ray up for grabs. For your chance to win one, tell us:

Who stars as Niall in Half Man?

Email your answer, marked Half Man Blu-ray competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe HP14 4UE, to arrive by July 24. Please note, entrants must be over 18.