

The Forces' favourite paper

Inspiring British aviation pioneer

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Win!

Pilot in the Cold War and the Reds

See R'n'R page 5

Win!



ROYAL AIR FORCE

Friday, June 12, 2026
Edition No.1634

Only 99p

RAF NEWS



Win!

In plain sight

The military art of deception



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Athletics
Brize race to victory



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Motorsport
Sidecar duo lead pack



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Football
Leeming in Cup win



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F-35 on CSG High North mission

Cold front heats up



Simon Mander

UK F-35 LIGHTNINGS are set to spearhead air operations from the deck of the Prince of Wales carrier as Nato chiefs counter the growing threat from Russia in the High North.

Britain's Carrier Strike Group will join the multi-national operation to guard the Iceland and Greenland gap to boost security across the Arctic region.

Defence Secretary John Healey said: "This deployment will help make Britain warfighting-ready, boost our contribution to Nato and strengthen our operations with key allies, keeping the UK secure at home and strong abroad."

See page 3 for full report

BiteSize



“To see our family tradition continue is amazing,”

Mum and daughter Louise and Caitlyn proudly mark five generations of RAF service

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“I didn’t expect the film, or myself, to last this long,”



John Cleese marks 50 years of classic comedy movie *The Holy Grail*

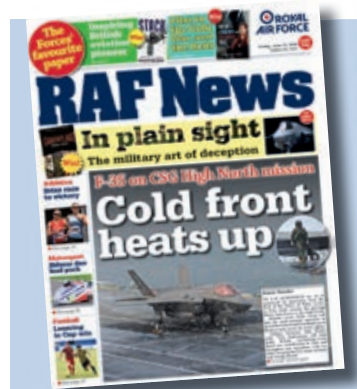
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“It promises to be a real spectacle,”

RAF to host huge Strongman & Strongwoman contest near High Wycombe

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ROYAL AIR FORCE RAF News

RAF News

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Pippa's D-Day tribute

Simon Mander

A NORMANDY veteran who fought through Occupied Europe has been remembered by his RAF granddaughter.

Boulmer-based 20 Sqn's Cpl Phillipa Walker was on a force development exercise to pay tribute to 21 Base Defence Sector personnel who landed on Omaha beach on D-Day with the American 29th infantry division and took a portrait of her granddad, who followed them with British troops.

She said: "My Grandad's experiences make me so proud, to know that he sacrificed his younger years to serve his country and fight in the war is incredible, and I am so grateful to be related to such a hero."

"I know it would make him so proud that both me and my brother have chosen careers in the RAF. Grandad was a proud Normandy Veteran, and his



REMEMBRANCE: Cpl Walker and her father on Omaha beach in Normandy

experiences made him the most loving family man."

By September 1944, less than

three months after the D-Day landings, at least 46 enemy aircraft had been shot down due

to the work conducted by 21 BDS personnel and Allied aircraft.

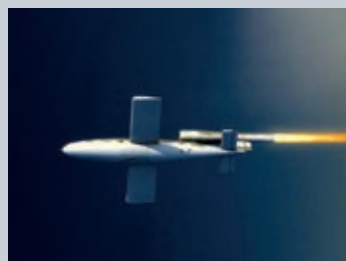
Despite sustaining 11 dead, 39 seriously injured and with only eight operational vehicles out of 27 delivered on shore, the unit supported the Allies' efforts to establish a stronghold in Normandy.

"These mobile radar components pioneered how the modern-day Air Command and Control Force operate in today's climate, especially when integrating with Nato," said Flt Lt Alistair Matthews of 20 Sqn.

"21 BDS was the first time mobile radar had been employed in combat and showed how effective use of airspace can have a direct outcome to operations on the ground."

"Today's RAF units have drawn inspiration from how 21 BDS operated, with radio and radar equipment installed in light off-road vehicles to provide mobile support to friendly aircraft in austere conditions."

This Week In History



1957 Grapple finale

THE THIRD and final thermonuclear bomb is dropped from a Valiant in the South Pacific during the UK's atomic test programme, code-named Operation Grapple.

1944 V-1 downed

605 SQN Mosquito crew Fg Off Musgrove and Flt Sgt Samwell shoot down the first V1 rocket to be destroyed by the RAF. The duo go on to destroy 12 V1s targeting London.



1968 Royals mark 50 years

HM QUEEN Elizabeth marks the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Service at RAF Abingdon in Oxfordshire.

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

Bulletin



Three dead in Merlin crash

THREE ROYAL Navy personnel have died after a helicopter crashed into a field in Devon during a training exercise, the First Sea Lord and the Navy have confirmed.

The aircraft came down close to Okehampton battle camp, a military facility on the edge of Dartmoor which has been used for training crews from the Commando Helicopter Force.

The First Sea Lord, Gen Sir Gwyn Jenkins, said: "I am deeply saddened to share the news that three crew members onboard a Royal Navy Merlin Mk4 helicopter have died after it crashed in the early hours of the morning near Sourton, Devon.

"I know this will come as a huge shock to all in our naval community, and my deepest condolences go out to the families, friends and loved ones impacted by this tragedy."

An investigation into the crash has been launched.

Fired-up

F-35 joins NATO Firecrest mission in the High North



Simon Mander

F-35 LIGHTNING squadrons are to counter Russian military activity in the High North with Britain's Carrier Strike Group.

The stealth jets will spearhead UK air operations from the deck of HMS Prince of Wales in the North Atlantic as part of the latest Nato mission.

Crews will deliver advanced strike, intelligence and integration capabilities as part of a joint and multinational force during Operation Firecrest.

Defence Secretary John Healey said: "I am proud that we are stepping up UK leadership on High North and Atlantic security.

"This deployment will help make Britain warfighting ready, boost our contribution to Nato and strengthen our operations with key allies, keeping the UK secure at home and strong abroad."

The F-35's stealth and survivability in high-threat airspace will be tested along with intelligence, data fusion and battlespace control capabilities alongside US Marine Corps and other Allied F-35 variants.

The deployment comes as Russian military activity increases near British waters in the Greenland/Iceland/UK gap and across the region.

The aircraft will protect critical undersea

cables and pipelines and maintain freedom of manoeuvre in emerging Arctic routes.

Working with the United States, Canada and Joint Expeditionary Force nations, parts of the operation will fall under Nato's Joint Force Command Norfolk.

It builds directly on last year's Indo-Pacific mission, where Royal Air Force F-35 Lightnings flew over 1,000 sorties and operated alongside more than 30 partner nations.

That deployment validated the aircraft as fully operational and Nato-assured and Firecrest will apply that capability closer to home and involve thousands of UK military personnel.

Rookie Brad's on a roll

Simon Mander

A GLIDER aerobatics expert will show why he is one of the youngest in the RAF to hold a display pilot's licence at Cosford Air Show.

Air Recruit Bradley Lefley Kemp (22), of the station's No. 1 School of Technical Training, will thrill the crowds at the event with skills that also make him a highly accomplished instructor.

Currently undertaking a Level 3 apprenticeship in aircraft maintenance, AR Lefley Kemp has combined his lessons with an outstanding progression at the RAF Gliding and Soaring Association.

His selection to perform at Cosford Air Show follows his rapid progress through solo flight, cross country qualifications and advanced badges at Shawbury's Gliding Club.

He said: "It was something I could not quite believe at first.

I was asking myself if I was good enough and how I would manage it alongside my training, but I was encouraged to focus on the opportunity and what it could become.

"Gliding is very much a team sport and open to everyone. I hope that by performing at Cosford I can demonstrate that flying opportunities exist within the RAF for a wide range of people, not just those in traditional pilot roles."

Display flying requires high levels of precision, discipline and safety awareness and AR Lefley Kemp has completed the rigorous assessment required to achieve a Civil Aviation Authority Recognised Display Authorisation.

Shawbury Gliding Club Chief



AIRSHOW DEBUT:
AR Brad Lefley Kemp will be performing at Cosford this weekend

Flying Instructor Ian Gallacher said: "It is fantastic that Brad has been selected to fly the glider aerobatics display at the 2026

Cosford Air Show. It is a testament to the hard work he has put into his flying alongside his intensive technical training."

Cosford Air Show 2026 will take place on June 14 and is expected to attract visitors from across the United Kingdom.



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20 years of Hope



WG CDR NEIL HOPE



CHARITY PREMIER LEAGUE: Kenyan orphans sporting Leicester City strips donated by the club to Neil Hope's Taking Football to Africa and Beyond appeal

466,536 items sent to 71 countries

Simon Mander

A FOOTBALL charity set up by an ex-RAF officer has completed 20 years of deliveries of kit across the world.

The appeal, founded by former Wg Cdr Neil Hope, was intended to run until the end of the 2006 World Cup but continues to this day.

He said: "When I started, I had no idea how long it would last and how successful it would be.

"We collect donations and re-distribute them to people that would otherwise never afford them.

"Football is huge across the world and does amazing good. We tap into that to deliver aid to those who need it."

Based at RAF Shawbury, the Taking Football to Africa and Beyond Appeal started in May 2006, making its first delivery a month later. It was inspired by a late night conversation in a bar with a Bolton season ticket holder who suggested 'let's pool all our old football shirts and send them to Africa.'

Starting with collections within the RAF, it quickly included donations from



TRAGIC LOSS: Wg Cdr Hope's daughter Charlotte volunteered for the charity before her death in a car crash in 2022

grassroots village teams to the Premier League and the FA.

It has delivered 466,536 items, including 131,931 football shirts, to 72 countries, the most recent being Togo in May following a

delivery of Arsenal shirts.

Kit has been given to underprivileged children and adults in Afghanistan, Iraq and Ukraine and slum areas in Soweto, South Africa and Kibera in Nairobi.

The crusading aviator's mission was struck by personal tragedy in 2022 when his teenage daughter Charlotte was killed in a car crash near his home station at Shawbury.

She was deeply committed to the charity and had hoped to work as a primary school teacher in Kenya when she finished her education.

Mr Hope said: "The Appeal is special to me, as it was to my daughter Charlotte, and we set up Lottie's Way as a sister charity to raise funds for education and feeding programmes."

Each year the Appeal organises a delivery trip to either Nepal or Kenya and more than 180 people have delivered aid to schools, rescue centres and football clubs, with all participants paying their own way.

The Appeal has been aided by Shawbury and Brize Norton's Supply Receipt and Dispatch sections.

Sqn Ldr Mark Smales will continue to take the appeal




NEXT GENERATION: Sqn Ldr Smales will take over running of the charity as founder Neil takes a backroom role

forward while Mr Hope takes a backroom role.

He said: "I am genuinely honoured to be involved in the Appeal and even more so that Neil has entrusted me with something that is so special to him.

"In a world which seems to have more and more negativity, I'd like to think that Neil, myself and all our helpers are doing what we can to show that there's some good in the world."

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H-bomb hero dies

Tracey Allen

A FORMER 76 Sqn pilot who took part in Britain's nuclear test programme in 1958 has died aged 93.

Flt Lt Terry Hilliard flew a Canberra through a mushroom cloud just minutes after the detonation of the UK's first H-bomb, collecting radioactive samples over the Christmas Island blast site in the South Pacific.

Terry witnessed three

tests from the cockpit during Operation Grapple as Britain entered the nuclear age.

In an interview with *RAF News* last year he said: "The flash of the explosion just cannot be described.

"With eyes screwed shut and covered tight, for a moment I could see every bone in my left forearm as if it were a super X-ray."

He is survived by three children, four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.



Sting-sim tests UK's Top Guns

Simon Mander

PILOTS WILL be able to train against highly-realistic simulated enemy air defences on a new training system.

Known as Sting, it replicates the surface-to-air missile systems they could encounter on operations in conflict.

RAF Air and Space Warfare Centre Commandant Air Cdre Steve Berry said: "This capability marks a significant step in the RAF's ability to respond to current and evolving threats, enabling our Combat Air Force crews to train against a credible adversary."

The technology generates the threat signals that challenge the advanced sensors on modern fighter aircraft, allowing pilots to practise identifying, reacting to, and defeating enemy air defences in a live environment.

A demonstration of the system was recently held at Saltburn by the Sea, near Teesside, attended by senior RAF commanders.

It integrates with the Phantom



GROUND THREAT: New Draken designed simulator generates threat signals to test pilots' reactions

Sky range control system, which allows the simulated air defences to respond and react in real time.

Draken chief Dr Nic Anderson said: "Draken has delivered this surface threat capability in a very short timescale to meet the RAF's

training requirement.

"Phantom Sky creates a representative threat environment that can be targeted, reacted to and assessed in real time, and it is designed for the rapid integration of new

technology to combine realism with affordability."

The capability forms part of an RAF contract to provide integrated, multi-domain adversary training to the Air Force and allied nations.

Fjording ahead

SURVEILLANCE CREWS practised operating from a foreign base during a recent deployment to Scandinavia.

Rivet Joint aircraft from 51 Sqn flew to Norway's Ørland Air Base to learn how to operate in various locations alongside Nato partners.

132 Flight Wg Cdr Col Ole Torrisplass said: "The Norwegian Air Force shares a long history of cooperation with the Royal Air Force.

"51 Sqn operates an impressive

capability that has the potential to significantly enhance the warfighting potential of Allied air power in the most demanding missions.

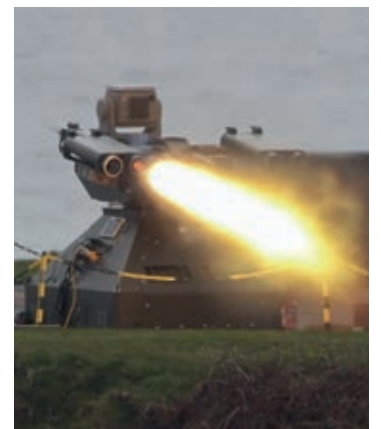
"When our people meet, we can resolve practical matters more quickly, update our plans with higher precision, and build closer relations.

"Operating with Nato Airborne Early Warning aircraft and Norwegian F-35s with minimal support demonstrated that the squadron can operate from a dispersed location."



ALLIED AIRPOWER: Norwegian and British crews inspect the 51 Sqn Rivet Joint aircraft during training at Ørland Air Base

Bulletin



DRONE KILLER: £36m Thales deal is a boost for missile systems like Rapid Sentry

Lock & load

BRITAIN'S AMMUNITION stockpiles will be boosted by a £36 million contract to supply hundreds more UK-made missiles.

Thales is to supply the weapons, which will protect military personnel in the Middle East and beyond in the coming months and throughout the year.

Defence Secretary John Healey said: "These interceptor missiles are battle-proven – successfully used in action by our RAF sharpshooters over recent months.

"We're getting UK-built kit into the hands of our forces faster."

The latest contract, placed by the National Armaments Director Group, follows an additional order for the Lightweight Multirole Missile.

These have already defeated drone attacks in the Middle East, with more than 100 drones shot down using the missiles, including by RAF Regiment gunners using the Rapid Sentry.

The missiles are also deployed on Royal Navy Wildcat helicopters helping defend Cyprus.

This year, the UK has stepped up its defensive presence across the Middle East, with more than 1,000 personnel deployed across the region, including fast jet squadrons and specialist counter-drone teams.



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Enter the Dragon

WELSH TYPHOON display ace Flt Lt Tom Nation will be storming the air show season this year under the callsign Dragon 01 – to pay tribute to the land of his birth.

The 29 Sqn pilot will be showcasing the supersonic jet's combat capability this weekend at the Cosford Air Show as the UK display season takes off.



Marham delivery

THE LAST two UK F-35Bs have landed at Marham.

The delivery of aircraft BK43 and BK45 brings the total number of operational F-35Bs in the UK fleet to 47.

Combat Air Force Commander Air Cdre Chris Layden said: "This marks an important milestone in our fifth-generation combat air power journey, reinforcing our declaration of full operational capability last year.

"The Lightning Wing has had operations ranging from a truly global carrier strike deployment in 2025, to combat missions in defence of UK personnel in Cyprus and the Middle East this year."

Marham is home to the unit's three squadrons with 207 Sqn responsible for training the next generation of F-35B pilots and groundcrew.

Ukraine lands Gripen pledge



AIRPOWER: Gripen (foreground) alongside Typhoon and F-16 during recent NATO training exercise

Simon Mander

FIGHTERS PART built in Britain are to boost Ukraine's defences against Russian aggression.

The deal will see 16 Gripen aircraft given to the war-torn country, which will also buy 20 more using an EU loan.

Defence Minister Luke Pollard said: "This deal is both a big boost for Ukraine's air power and a show of confidence in the UK defence industry, supporting thousands of good British jobs.

"As the fierce resistance of the Ukrainians continues

and Russian aggression grows, we will stand with Ukraine and Nato allies like Sweden, bringing the combined power of our industries to bear to support the fight against Putin's illegal war."

The Swedish-brokered deal supports more than 5,000 UK jobs making parts of the aircraft and will give Ukrainian forces modern combat fighters, bolstering Nato.

The Gripen is a collaboration between the UK, Sweden and the US.

British companies supply critical components including the radar and landing gear, with more than 30 per cent of each aircraft

manufactured in the UK.

At least 50 native firms, from Saab UK in Fareham to Leonardo UK in Edinburgh, are set to be involved in the deal.

The UK has so far contributed 120,000 drones to Ukraine this year. Combined military support from the UK and Sweden since Russia's illegal full-scale invasion in February 2022 now stands at £11.4 billion.

Last summer a squadron of Swedish Gripens deployed to Poland alongside the RAF to conduct Nato air policing.

Saab is investing £100 million in its Fareham site, while BAE Systems has a long-standing presence in Sweden through BAE Bofors and BAE Hägglunds.



LUKE POLLARD

Sub hunters Arctic alert

Simon Mander

BRITISH SUB KILLERS have been practising hunting naval vessels on a Nato exercise.

Lossiemouth-based Poseidon aircraft played both friend and foe during Exercise Dynamic Mongoose.

Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal, Germany and Denmark joined UK aircraft in simulated battle drills

The exercise off the coast of Norway and Iceland is a key test for

Nato's strategy in the 'High North'.

Alongside sonobuoys Poseidon crews may deploy the Electronic Signal Underwater Sound devices to simulate an attack on submarines.

Each sortie offers real-time training for the Poseidon force and includes tactical flying and tracking techniques.

As part of the Exercise, a detachment from the German Navy has been hosted at the Moray airbase with one of its Poseidon aircraft.



Care cash

AIR FORCE charity chiefs have netted funding to deliver dementia care courses for serving personnel and veterans.

RAFA launched its support package in 2021 and will now expand the scheme after winning a grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

Charity director Rory O'Connor said: "Serving personnel face a unique set of challenges which can make caring for someone with dementia especially difficult."

News



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Off the grid at Leeming

Eco-power keeps station motoring



GREEN MACHINE: Sustainability chief Gp Capt Dixon tops up at the new hub

Staff Reporter
Leeming

LEEMING HAS gone off-grid, to ensure Service vehicles can still operate if it's hit by power cuts.

Station chiefs are testing new green charging hubs that combine solar generation, hydrogen power and battery storage to keep the fleet motoring if the power grid goes down.

MT specialists at the North Yorkshire station started using the GeoPura system this month ahead of the installation of six charging points later this year.

Station Commander Gp Capt Maurice Dixon said: "We hope to further Defence's commitment to harnessing clean energy technologies to enhance operations."

"Six modular, transportable electric vehicle charging units will support our electric

vehicle fleet providing flexible surge power capacity for operational needs, including grid reinforcement and deployment scenarios."

Each hub is self-sufficient and capable of maintaining reliable power supply day and night.

GeoPura chief Andrew Cunningham said: "Modern defence operations rely on consistent access to energy wherever it is needed."

"This contract marks a step forward in strengthening the RAF's resilience while reducing reliance on fixed infrastructure and fossil fuels."

"By combining hydrogen, solar and battery technologies, we are able to deliver clean, self-sufficient power that performs in demanding environments."

"We are also removing harmful emissions that affect both the environment and the people working on site."

UK marks Telic anniversary

DEFENCE CHIEFS attended the National Memorial Arboretum to commemorate 15 years since the end of Operation Telic in Iraq.

The Royal British Legion-hosted event brought together more than 1,000 veterans and their families to remember the 179 people who lost their lives.

And it featured a flypast to mark the RAF's role in enforcing a no-fly zone, maintaining an airbridge bringing troops and equipment into Basra, carrying out battlefield medical

evacuations and repatriating casualties

Defence Secretary John Healey said: "Today we honour the courage, dedication and sacrifice of our Armed Forces personnel who served in Iraq."

"We remember the 179 personnel who gave their lives."

From the initial operations in March 2003 until the departure of the British military in 2011, all three Services faced daily threats from roadside bombs and rockets as they sought to rebuild Iraqi civil society, police and Army.

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Star turn

VETERAN FRIENDLY
Framework project support officer Jules Walker has netted a national award for her work supporting Forces veterans living in sheltered accommodation across the UK.

She was presented with the Service Champion Award from the Armed Forces Network for her role working with residents and staff at Wimborne Care Home – part of the VFF group.

She said: “This award reflects the impact the VFF is having on the Armed Forces community living in care homes, and the great work of my colleagues.”



Clare Wildblood

CHIEF OF the Air Staff ACM Sir Harv Smyth returned to the Cranwell parade ground – to welcome the latest Officer Cadets as they graduated after completing their initial training.

Speaking after reviewing the parade he said: “I was honoured

to serve as Reviewing Officer at today’s RAF Officer Graduation at Cranwell, 35 years after my own start here in 1991.

“To the new officers: you join a proud legacy. Embrace the challenges ahead with agility and leadership. Welcome to the RAF family, your journey is just beginning.”



GOING THE DISTANCE: Trevor (left) and Tony saddle up for their epic fundraising trek.

E-bike Bros on a charge

Tracey Allen

VETERAN AIR Force brothers Tony and Trevor Jackson launched an epic charity challenge with a difference – riding an electric motorbike from Land’s End to John o’Groats to raise £10,000 for the RAF Benevolent Fund.

Biker Tony covered the 910-mile distance in six days on his Maeving RM1S electric motorcycle, while Trev provided back up in an E-van – donated for the event by local dealer Rygor Auto.

The fundraising duo passed through Taunton, then RAF Shawbury – where Tony completed his Air Traffic Control training – before continuing to Penrith, Stirling and Inverness and ending at John o’Groats.

Retired Sqn Ldr Tony, who served for 36 years, said: “I wanted to take on a meaningful personal challenge after turning 65, and this seemed like the perfect opportunity to combine that with fundraising for the RAFBF.

“Due to my long service in the RAF, the Fund felt like the ideal charity to support, as it provides vital help to serving personnel, veterans and their families.”

“Although we haven’t received support from the charity personally, Trevor worked closely with the Fund during his RAF career to help support long-term sick and terminally ill personnel.”

Electric vehicle charging app Zapmap also sponsored the challenge to cover vehicle charging costs.

● Go to: [justgiving.com/page/tony-jackson-lejog](https://www.justgiving.com/page/tony-jackson-lejog) to donate.

High five

Simon Mander

A MUM and daughter have marked five generations of RAF family service by graduating within months of each other.

AS2 Louise Honeyman is now a RAF Reservist with 4624 Sqn, while her 17-year-old daughter Caitlyn is currently training at Worthy Down as a chef.

Speaking after attending Caitlyn’s graduation parade, proud Mum Louise said: “We have both been fortunate to be going through training at the same time – a rare and deeply meaningful experience for us both.

“Being able to attend her graduation was a moment of immense pride, not only as a parent, but as a fellow member of the RAF who understands the commitment, discipline and resilience required to reach that milestone.”

The roles were reversed when Caitlyn was able to attend her mum’s Basic Training at Brize Norton.

Louise added: “I am the fourth generation of my family serving, and Caitlyn now proudly represents the fifth.

“To see that tradition continue and to share this chapter of service together is amazing. We are both proud to serve and honoured to be contributing to the RAF together.”



FORCES DYNASTY: Louise Honeyman and her 17-year-old daughter Caitlyn graduated to continue a Forces family tradition now spanning five generations

HIDING IN P



NOW YOU SEE IT: Boeing plant with tell-tale saw tooth roof later disguised as a fake town called Wonderland – USAAF, National Archives

How military planners take inspiration from nature and Hollywood to fool their enemies

INVISIBILITY to the enemy has long been the goal of military planners. From the legendary Trojan Horse to modern light-bending synthetic metamaterials used on stealth bombers like the F-35 Lightning and US B-2, making things disappear is the name of the game.

For the RAF, the next best thing, making things appear to be what they are not, often had to suffice, as advances in aviation and photography since World War I made confusing the Luftwaffe a national priority.

And so dummy airfields were created using decoy aircraft, and night bombers were lured by lights placed to mimic runways. Bomb craters were even painted on the real thing to convince enemy reconnaissance aircraft they were hitting their targets.

Indeed, as new book *Camouflage Designed to Deceive* points out: “The night decoys proved so confusing that during the Battle of Britain they received twice as many attacks as the real sites, and some RAF pilots even tried to land on them.”

But it was in North Africa where British camoufleurs, as they came to be known, changed the course of the conflict, at El Alamein in 1942. A desert camouflage unit was set up near Cairo headed by filmmaker Geoffrey Barkas and naturalist Hugh Cott to hide from Rommel Field Marshal Montgomery’s attack plans, dubbed Operation Bertram.

Canvas covers

“It was a staggering undertaking,” the book notes. “Montgomery’s armoured units were moved forward under cover of night. As the tanks and guns arrived in their positions, they were fitted with canvas covers that made them look like trucks. Fake tanks had replaced them at the position they had left.”

Ammunition, gas and food needed by the attackers was hidden in the north while in the

south a fake army built of wood, calico, hessian, and palm fronds was constructed. The deception worked and when the real guns threw off their covers the Afrika Korps was wrong-footed.

The link between nature and warfare had long been known, explaining why so many Service personnel are keen birdwatchers, animals had long been adept at hiding themselves but the arrival of experts from the showbiz world was new.

Wonderland

While Britain had the ‘Great Illusionist’ Jasper Maskelyne on its side at its Camouflage and Training Centre, America, when it came to the fight, had Hollywood. And the results were stupendous.

Following Pearl Harbor President Roosevelt ordered a massive increase in combat aircraft production, making factories in southern California and Seattle vulnerable to Japanese bombers. Enter set designer John Stewart Detlie, who created a 26-acre fake neighbourhood called ‘Wonderland’ on top of the birthplace of Boeing’s B-17 Flying Fortress.

As the company’s retired corporate historian, Mike Lombardi, said: “To this day, the size, scope, and imagination of that project still captures and amaze the public and employees.”

Wooden buildings and even trees were constructed on scaffolding on top of the plant, which cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to dismantle but gave many of those involved in building it the expertise to construct Disneyland.

Spy Museum

Packed with colourful illustrations, *Camouflage Designed to Deceive*, produced to support an exhibition at the independent



LOW PROFILE: Chinook in Kosovo, 1999 and high-tech F-35 Lightning, inset right

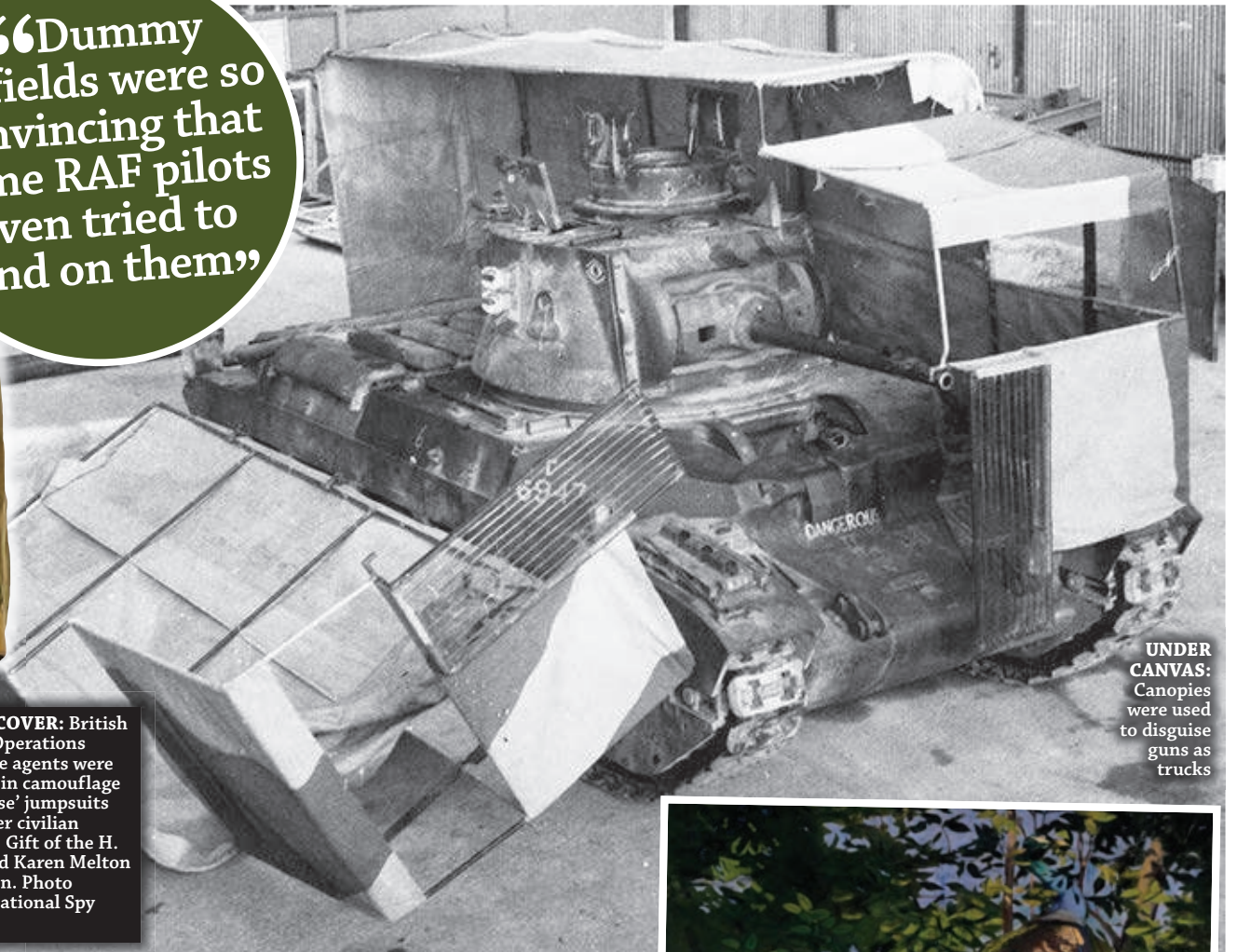
by Simon Mander

PLAIN SIGHT



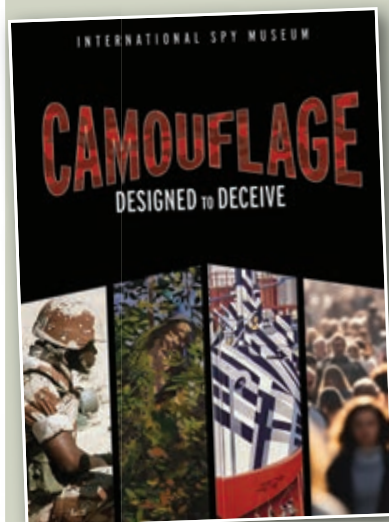
“Dummy airfields were so convincing that some RAF pilots even tried to land on them”

UNDERCOVER: British Special Operations Executive agents were dropped in camouflage 'striptease' jumpsuits (left) over civilian clothing. Gift of the H. Keith and Karen Melton Collection. Photo by International Spy Museum



UNDER CANVAS: Canopies were used to disguise guns as trucks

Win a copy of the book



WE HAVE copies of the International Spy Museum's *Camouflage Designed to Deceive* to be won.

To enter, answer the following question.

What name was given to camouflage experts in Britain?

Email your answer, marked Camouflage book in the subject heading, 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 June 26.



NATURE'S WAY: Thayer's painting 'Peacock in the Woods,' Smithsonian American Art Museum, gift of the heirs of Abbott Handerson Thayer

Washington-based International Spy Museum, tells the story of how the art of deception developed from nature to modern day attempts to avoid surveillance.

Along the way it tells how

techniques designed for hunting translated onto the battlefield, and even the fashion catwalk, and became a multi-billion-pound world industry.

It even reveals the subtle tricks

spies have of avoiding detection with real case studies and brings the story up to date by detailing how protestors and others today seek to defeat facial recognition systems and other weapons of

the modern surveillance state.

At a mere 112 pages and packed with illustrations, this is an accessible look at a fascinating subject of interest to the general reader and military enthusiast alike

and shows how much is hidden in plain sight, not just in war zones but in the everyday world.

● *Camouflage Designed to Deceive* is published by Casemate, rrp £19.95.

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.

by Tracey Allen

Tall ship adventure **Feature**

Voyage of discovery for retired Sqn Ldr

Jayne remembers pal who died in yachting tragedy 25 years ago

TAKING PART in a tall ships sailing expedition around the coast of Britain has been 'life-affirming,' says an RAF veteran.

Retired Sqn Ldr Jayne Lindley spent three weeks on board the Spirit of Falmouth for the Full Circle event coordinated by sailing charity Turn to Starboard (T2S) and delivered in partnership with Invictus Games Birmingham 2027.

The nautical adventure supported wounded, injured and sick personnel and is aiming to raise £300,000 so that T2S can buy a second tall ship, Pellew, to help more veterans.

Former logistics officer Jayne sailed with the charity on the first leg of the 12-week, 2000-nautical-mile journey as part of an 11-strong crew. A total rotating crew of 70 took part in the whole event.

She said: "The reason I volunteered for the trip was for the sense of adventure, the challenge and to experience the calming effect of the sea. The expedition's first leg marked 25 years since my good friend Linda Yarr drowned in a yachting accident off Australia when she was 35. I took up sailing to honour her memory and keep her memory alive."

Jayne added: "On the evening of the 25th anniversary the sea was calm, there was a deep sunset and then a starlit night with the reflection of the moon on the water. It was almost a spiritual experience, I found it really healing. It was quite life-affirming and something I will never forget."

She worked alongside volunteers from all three Services with various levels of sailing experience. "It was really great to mix with Tri-Service veterans – you just all pull together to get the job done. Having spoken to vets who had volunteered with Turn to Starboard, including

amputees, I understood how transformational it has been for them," she explained.

A keen wildlife photographer and birdwatcher, having volunteered for seabird survey work while in the RAF, Jayne was delighted to observe pods of dolphins and various birds including gannets, cormorants and auks during her adventure.

She said: "Seeing a baby dolphin riding the bow wave was a really special moment."

Every time the crew were in port they raised the flag for the Invictus games and met local dignitaries and Forces veterans.

Jayne added: "Another highlight was spending time with older RAF veterans and hearing their stories – you see them come to life through contact with other vets."

Along with overcoming a bout of seasickness on her very first day on board, Jayne also coped with the challenge of being at sea during Storm Dave and her crewmates' nighttime snoring.

"Since having a serious car accident in 1993 I have been a light sleeper and the big challenge was trying to sleep in bunk beds at close quarters with the other crew members who snored. I hadn't banked on how many snorers there would be and I ended up sleeping in the kitchen," she laughed.

Having retired from the Royal Air Force in 2024 after a 28-year career that included serving on Operation Telic in Baghdad in 2003, the Balkans and the South Atlantic, Derbyshire-based Jayne has concentrated on volunteering for conservation charities, including in Bolivia and for the charity Conservation Without Borders.

She said: "After being part of the Full Circle expedition I'd like to do more sailing – it's a great way of switching off, slowing your mind down and being engrossed learning the ropes of something new after a busy career."

T2S was founded in 2012



JAYNE: Expedition



MEET: With fellow veteran



LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVE: Jayne (2nd from right) with crewmates and Defence Minister Luke Pollard (right), who visited the tall ship in Plymouth

by retired RAF Sqn Ldr Shaun Pascoe, who drew on his own struggle transitioning to civilian life after 16 years of service in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Sally Terry, the charity's CEO, said: "Full Circle brings together two organisations committed to empowering veterans through challenge, camaraderie and community, each united in the

belief that adventure can be truly transformative.

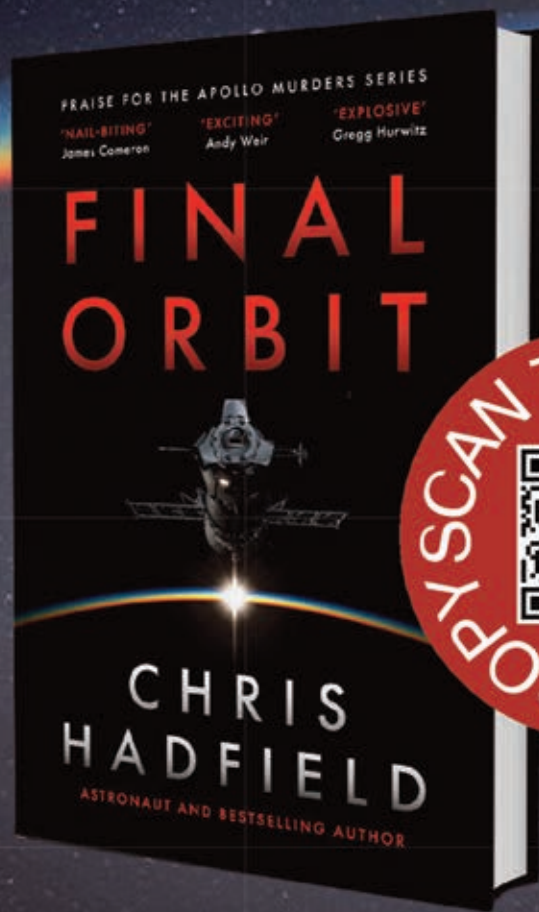
"While Invictus Games Birmingham 2027 harnesses the spirit of sport to inspire recovery and rehabilitation, Turn to Starboard draws on the unique challenges of life at sea to rebuild confidence, restore purpose and help veterans navigate life with intention and fulfilment.

"More than a voyage, this

expedition is a powerful story of courage, service and renewal, showing how adventure and the sea can heal, inspire and bring people together."

The Full Circle expedition was about to finish in Falmouth as *RAF News* went to press.

● Go to: fullcircle.turntostarboard.co.uk to donate.



'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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ESPORTS FOR THE ARMED FORCES



Images: BFBS/British Esports/Jonas Konta.utas

AIR CDRE Tim Thorn, who has died aged 83, was an exceptional Cold War fighter pilot and outstanding sportsman who went to the Winter Olympics as a member of the British bobsleigh team.

His life of adventure rivalled that of any Boy's Own hero; as Head of Security for De Beers in 2000 he played a crucial role in foiling what would have been the biggest diamond heist in history.

He was educated at Ipswich School before gaining a cadetship in September 1961 to the RAF College Cranwell, where he was a senior under officer and excelled as a pilot and a sportsman.

Known as "Tiger Tim" by all his RAF colleagues, he was a fierce fast bowler and excellent rugby player having represented Suffolk in the Minor Counties cricket league and for Blackheath rugby club. He went on to represent the RAF at rugby.

After graduating from Cranwell he was posted to the Central Flying School to train as a flying instructor. During this period, the first of his many incidents occurred when the single engine of his Jet Provost failed and he managed to land with a dead engine.

He was posted to RAF Syerston to train pilots. In May 1966 he and his student were climbing in their Jet Provost training aircraft when it collided with another as it emerged from cloud. They were forced to eject and landed safely near Nottingham.

This was just one of a series of close shaves that became a feature of Thorn's flying career, all of which he survived thanks to his rare gifts as a pilot, and which made him renowned for his "nine lives".

After his time as a flying instructor, he achieved his ambition to be a fighter pilot and began a long association with the Hawker Hunter single-seat fighter.

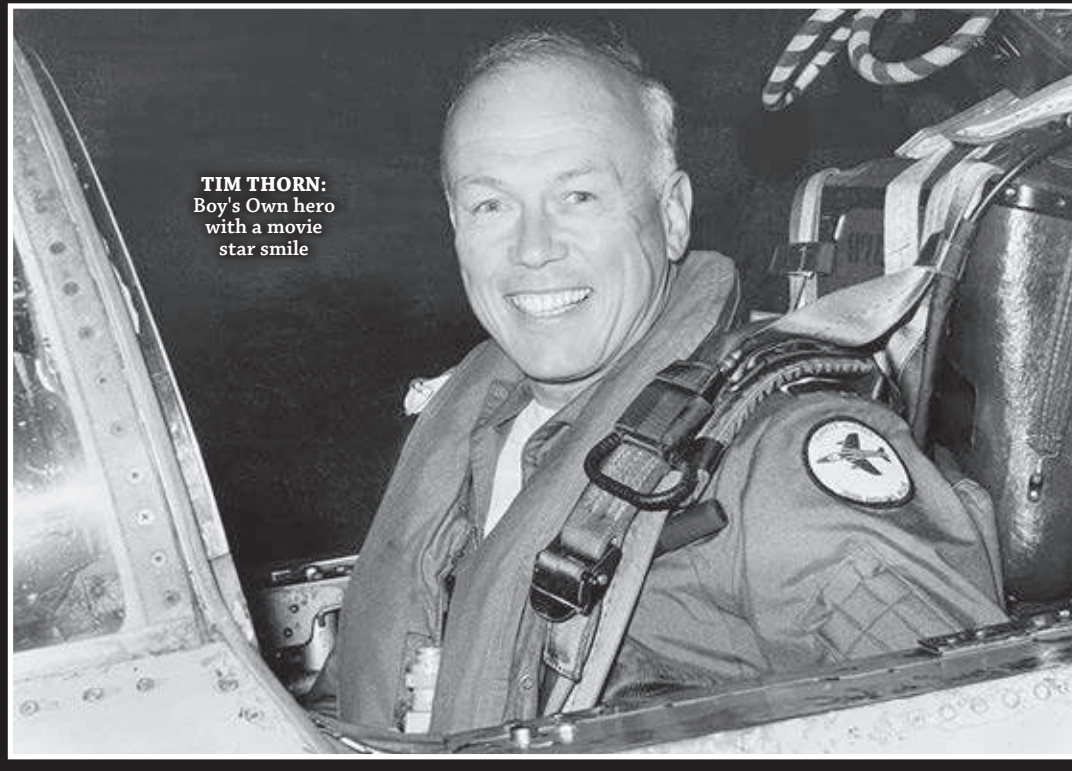
Safe landing

In January 1968 he was posted to 8 Sqn, based in Bahrain, where he honed his skills as a fighter reconnaissance pilot. He was also assessed as an exceptional air-to-ground attack pilot. On one occasion, the nose wheel of his Hunter failed to lower, but he made a safe landing.

This was followed by a posting to Germany where he first flew with 4 Sqn before transferring to II (AC) Sqn, both based at RAF Gutersloh, close to the Inner German border. On May 27, 1969, soon after arriving on the squadron, the engine of his Hunter caught fire shortly after taking off and he made a perfect emergency landing.

After two years as a pilot attack instructor on the Hunter training unit at RAF Chivenor, he was seconded to 16 Parachute Brigade as the Air Liaison Officer in 1972. Over the next two years he jumped on exercises over

TIGER TIM: fighter pilot with 9 lives



TIM THORN:
Boy's Own hero
with a movie
star smile

the UK, Germany, Norway and Turkey. On his 96th jump on an exercise near the Kiel Canal in Germany, his main and reserve parachutes failed but he was able to grab another paratrooper, and they descended together to land in a muddy field. After completing his 100th drop, he was made an honorary member of the Parachute Regiment and authorised to wear the red beret.

During his period with the Army, he flew air cadets in Chipmunk training aircraft at weekends. In May 1974, the engine of his aircraft seized, and he made an emergency landing on a golf course.

He converted to the new single-seat Jaguar in the fighter reconnaissance role before being posted as a flight commander to 41 Sqn at RAF Coltishall in Norfolk. His skill as a pilot was recognised when he was awarded a Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service in the Air.

100% hits

In 1980 he returned to Germany as the commanding officer of II (AC) Sqn equipped with the Jaguar, flying from RAF Laarbruch near the Dutch border. In addition to its primary fighter reconnaissance role,

the squadron's secondary role was ground attack. Thorn was the first and only Jaguar pilot to achieve 100 per cent hits on the target with his cannons on no less than seven occasions, a remarkable achievement. At the end of his tour, he was awarded the Air Force Cross (AFC).

Red Arrows

After three years in MOD, he was appointed in 1986 to command RAF Cranwell and its Flying Training School. He was later responsible for all RAF flying training and, despite being a ground appointment, he accumulated almost 500 flying hours in the Hawk jet trainer, which included sorties with the Red Arrows.

After attending the Royal College of Defence Studies in 1990 he was the senior air staff officer at the headquarters of RAF Germany at Rheindahlen. He quickly acquainted himself with the fast jet aircraft in the Command and flew with the Phantom and Tornado squadrons to remain fully conversant with their tactics and performance. He was responsible for supporting the Germany-based squadrons deployed for the First Gulf War.

In 1993 he became the 22nd

Commandant General of the RAF Regiment at a time of great upheaval and uncertainty. Due to the government's 'Options for Change' cost-cutting exercise, there was a reduction of both light-armoured and ground-based air defence capabilities, which presented many challenges. He also had to manage the relocation of his headquarters from London to High Wycombe and the move of the Regiment's long-standing depot at Catterick to RAF Honington in Suffolk.

He was a decisive, firm but kind commander who inspired confidence and was generous with praise and support. This attracted the utmost loyalty and following from his staff, with more than one commenting that they would follow him anywhere; rare praise for a non-home-grown RAF Regiment officer.

RAF Regiment

His sense of adventure never left him, and he took time to jump with the Regiment's parachute squadron, making his 105th descent before retiring in December 1995.

Thorn's passion for flying was undimmed after he left the RAF, and he joined the RAF Volunteer Reserve (Training) as a flying

officer and for the next 13 years flew cadets of the Air Training Corps on air familiarisation flights from RAF Benson, Oxfordshire. On December 13, 1997, he was flying a cadet when his Bulldog aircraft had a catastrophic engine failure shortly after take-off. He managed to turn the aircraft and make a force landing on the airfield. He was awarded a Green Endorsement for his "exceptional flying skill". By the time he finally retired from flying, he had accumulated over 8,000 flying hours, all in single-seat aircraft, an unprecedented achievement.

De Beers

After retiring from the RAF, he joined De Beers Diamond Company as Global Head of Security. In the autumn of 2000, he had been working closely with the elite Flying Squad of the Metropolitan Police when they carried out Operation Magician, to foil a planned robbery at the De Beers Millennium Jewels exhibit inside the recently-opened Millennium Dome.

The display included the Millennium Star, thought to be the most perfect large diamond in the world, with a value of hundreds of millions. It was encased in a 3ft-thick vault equipped with modern sensors so sensitive that they could be set off by a fly landing.

On November 7 a gang smashed into the Greenwich Dome using a JCB as a battering ram. Thanks to Flying Squad intelligence-gathering, however, the authorities were lying in wait and on Thorn's advice the real Millennium Star, along with 11 accompanying blue diamonds, had been replaced by crystal replicas.

Police pounced as the four robbers tried to smash the display case using a nail gun and sledgehammers.

Olympics

Sport played a major role in Thorn's life. In addition to his cricket and rugby achievements, he competed at the 1968 Winter Olympics at Grenoble in the British bobsleigh team and, just prior to that, won a bronze medal at the European Games. He was an excellent squash player and a fearless skier. His greatest passion was golf. He played to a single-figure handicap, won many tournaments and was President of the Aircrew Association Golfing Society. During the five events held each year, it was a very rare occasion when he did not win the longest-drive competition.

Thorn was a man of enormous energy, enthusiasm and zest for life. His presence invigorated the company he joined, and his sense of fun and ready laugh enlivened any company. He faced his final illness, cancer, with the stoicism and courage for which he was renowned.

Royal Air Force In Concert



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7.30pm Friday 2 October

Epsom Playhouse

7.30pm Friday 16 October

Terry O'Toole Theatre, Lincoln

2026

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Please note letters must be a maximum of 300 words and any accompanying pictures sent as attached, hi-res JPEG files.

Email: editor@rafnews.co.uk Post: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP14 4UE

Letters

A real failure to deliver

I AM writing about the article in the April 17 edition covering the JATF Proof of Concept operation (p10).

The article states that “the operation was mounted from Brize Norton by members of 47 Air Despatch System.” This attribution is incorrect and, respectfully, does a disservice to a significant number of personnel involved in the activity.

Firstly, the correct unit title is 47 Air Despatch Squadron, which is part of 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team. The Squadron’s specific role within the operation was the mounting and delivery of 24 tonnes of Container Delivery System, not the delivery of parachutists.

The wider planning, mounting, and despatch of the 276 parachutists was delivered through a joint 16 Air Assault Brigade and Air Mobility Force planning effort, with the RAF’s Airborne Delivery Wing (ADW) playing a critical role throughout

all stages of the activity, from planning and coordination, through ground training, to mounting and execution on the day, including leading the safe operation of the drop zone.

As someone who was directly involved in both the planning and execution of the operation, and as the officer whose Squadron within ADW was responsible for the parachuting element, I found the omission of ADW’s contribution particularly frustrating. This is especially so given the approximately 18 months of work invested by RAF personnel to deliver this capability.

It is unfortunate that such a significant RAF contribution appears to have gone unrecognised and has been inaccurately attributed within RAF News itself.

Sqn Ldr Nick Tucker
OC Parachute Training Squadron
Airborne Delivery Wing
RAF Brize Norton



HITTING THE MARK: RAF A400M successfully drops Container Delivery System into Salisbury Plain

EDITOR’S NOTE: Thank you out the error in the report. We are grateful for the clarification.

RN veteran takes a punt on the RAF

IN THE spring of 1984 my friends, who had a folk band called Brian Boru, and myself hired a punt on the river at Oxford and travelled up and down the river giving an impromptu performance, ending up outside a pub called The Head of the River.

Opposite was a barge with a crew of RAF lads who cheered us on and offered cans of beer. They took lots of photos and promised to send them on but probably lost my address.

It is a long shot I know, but maybe some of your readers, now retired, have those photos and, if so, I would love to have any copies.

Mike Scales
Ex Petty Officer RN
2 High Street
Kentsbeare
Devon, EX15 2AA
Email: mike.asw@btinternet.com

Win!

Competition

A Stack of adventures

NEVILLE STACK was once one of Britain’s favourite aviators. He came to fame as the first man to fly a light aeroplane to India. Having been honoured by the King for that achievement, he followed it with more than a decade of derring-do.

Author David Hewitt said: “I have been fascinated with the history of flying ever since I went to my first air show as a child. And when I came across the story of Captain Stack, I couldn’t believe it hadn’t been told before.

“Stack was known on airfields around the country and across the world, and I found traces of him everywhere, from Kent to Karachi. I wrote the book within sight of Blackpool Tower, in a house he will have flown over many times.

“There’s something I find very appealing in his personality: given the chance, he did what he did for the sheer joy of doing it.”

Stack was one of the great characters of interwar aviation. In a first biography *Stack: From Moth to Viceroy* (Troubador Publishing Ltd, troubador.co.uk), Hewitt chronicles his fascinating life. Stack’s Irish background and



Copies of the book to be won

YOU COULD win a copy of the book – for your chance to own one, tell us:

When did Neville Stack make his white Moth flight to India?

Email your answer, marked Stack biography 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 June 26.

When Stack and Bernard Leete (in his maroon Moth) landed in Rome, they were greeted as record-breakers, having made the longest light aeroplane journey. Later, over Mount Vesuvius, they were, in Stack’s words: “Moths fluttering around a flame”.

It was an epic trip, followed with relish back in wintry Britain. On January 8, 1927, Stack and Leete reached India, landing at Karachi. The 5,500-mile journey took 53 days. They became the first men to fly from Britain to India in a light aeroplane.

Displays and pageants characterised their time in India. They carried mail by Moth on flights to Lahore and Delhi. The RAF Display at Delhi was particularly impressive, involving 60 aircraft, including a performance by Stack and Leete.

The author introduces us to a rich cast of characters in late-

1920s British aviation. Some were women, including the tenacious Lady Bailey, who wore a turban after walking into her propeller. Meanwhile, the Master of Semphill was a Scottish aristocrat and accomplished aviator but also a Japanese spy.

The style of Hewitt (inset right) is conversational. He takes readers on Stack’s pioneering journeys. Passages resemble an exotic travelogue of a bygone world. It became less glamorous as war approached.

There are glimpses into Stack’s character. While he was a good mixer across society, playing the banjo and leading the singing, he could be temperamental, quick-tempered and plain-spoken in a work environment.

Stack moved jobs frequently. Nevertheless, he mixed

effortlessly with the wealthy and the well-connected who financed his flights, provided the aircraft and sometimes chronicled his trips.

After a serious Battle light bomber crash in July 1939, Stack remained with the Austin aircraft company in Birmingham for much of the war.

He joined the Fleet Air Arm in 1943. However, a car crash in January 1944 involved fresh injuries to one of the legs he had broken in 1939. Lt Cdr Stack reached No. 742 Naval Air Squadron in India in September 1944.

Stack’s final job was with Orient Airways Limited in Karachi in 1948. His management style at the fledgling airline was abrasive. A messy dispute over the sale of a Douglas C-47 Dakota led to him being detained in Karachi, causing him severe nervous distress. Stack died at Mauripur

Airport in February 1949, aged 52, struck by a military truck. Some said it was suicide. A formal inquiry concluded that Stack had died of natural causes. This marked a sad and premature end to an eventful life and the conclusion of an exceptionally engaging book.

Review by Alastair Noble





IT'S ALL about legends in this week's motoring spot, as we take a Korean icon to meet the Sea Dog of Devon.

Yes, with the sun out, it seems apt to put a family wagon through its paces by hauling the clan on a 300-mile round-trip to the stunning Devon coastline. Who knows, we might even get to see the mythical giant hound that guards the shoreline! All we need is the right car.

There are a lot of contenders, until you decide to specify 7 seats, then your options narrow greatly. In this area, a few clear winners dominate and the fourth generation Sorento comes out on top, as the best all-round 7-seater.

It's an all-wheel drive SUV that's had a recent facelift and comes with a choice of powertrains. You can go diesel, hybrid or plug-in hybrid (hybrids are both petrol). The EV9 is now Kia's flagship car, the biggest bad-boy of the range, but it's electric only. That leaves the Sorento as Kia's king of long-distance petrol refinement. Emissions can be as low as 37g/km, for the PHEV, too so your green conscience is still clear (along with a lower tax bill).

Exterior

The Sorento name might have been around for a while, but the latest generation looks fresh and new. Sharp design, a sleek profile and some nice details all make it stand out from the crowd. The nose is purposeful, but aggressive, emphasising the size of the car, and the rear end is anything but bland. Looking for the rear windscreen wiper? Yes, it has one, Kia has hidden it. It's neatly tucked away, up in the rear spoiler.

It takes up the entirety of a narrow country lane, but it, somehow, avoids looking too hefty, with carefully thought-out side contours. It's just a good-looking SUV, with Korean flair.



CALL ME ROCKY: 'Sea Dog' circled above and the real-life Scooby Doo, right, both featured in our man's Kia Sorento road trip

Dog gone, Kia's Sorento's seventh heaven in Devon

Interior

The interior of the latest Sorento feels as fresh as the new exterior. It's a spacious environment, a seven-seater that seven adult-sized people can actually fit into. The boot is huge and the rear two seats fold neatly into the floor, with little effort.

They pop up again with a couple of pulls and pushes. Simple!

Leg and knee room are ample, everywhere, and the middle bench slides easily, to give you maximum versatility. Cupholders and cubbyholes are everywhere and the third row hasn't been left out in the comfort department. Even back there, you get aircon and USB sockets. Useful for my Great Dane who, like Scooby Doo, is as big as an extra adult. Granted, Scooby wouldn't be too bothered about the USB sockets, but the aircon is a must on a hot day!

Overall, the cabin feels classy – finished with a range of nice materials, that are soft to the touch. It doesn't feel opulent, like some SUV rivals, but you don't want that in a family wagon that you're going to use for its intended purpose. The Sorento strikes a nice balance. The 12.3 inch infotainment display works well, with clear graphics and a

responsive operating system.

The surround-sound audio, the stereo in old money, is beautifully clear, with real depth and Kia has fitted a clever 'intercom' system that plays the driver's voice in the back seats, using the hands-free mic. The kids can hear you, all the way back there, while you are nicely insulated from them. Small details that make life better.

On the road

The Sorento is a full-size SUV, so it's never going to handle like a sports car, but it is well-sorted and composed.

Kia have done a good job of creating a balanced ride that allows you to navigate winding roads at pace in an agreeable manner. Bounce and drift are well-controlled, reducing the feeling of motion sickness for the children and the hounds.

Push it beyond its limits and you'll find gentle understeer, that tells you the Sorento is now out of

its comfort-zone. It's progressive and everything feels very safe.

There's hardly a point mentioning performance figures, but if you really want a run-down of the stats, the 190bhp 2.2 diesel and 1.6 226bhp hybrid get to 62mph from zero in 9.7 seconds, and the 261bhp 1.6-litre plug-in will do it in 8.8 seconds. No version is what you would consider fast, but all have enough grunt to cope with safe overtakes on winding B roads. Just remember to slipstream on the run-up, before you slingshot out for the pass.

In terms of fuel economy, the PHEV (our test car) is supposed to manage 176mpg with 38g/km CO2. You're never going to hit that in the real world but, on my run to Devon, we did hit nearly 70mpg. With the battery recharged at our holiday cottage, the real-world EV range (in hot weather) was about 28 miles of coastal lanes. So a useful amount of silent running and protection of the Devon environment.

But here's the question that I know you want answered. Having spent a few days with the Sorento on the idyllic coastline, had we managed to find the mythical Sea Dog of Devon, a giant hound of stone, that emerges from the sea on a misty morn... A spectral beast that I just made up to make this article more exciting... Yes we found it and photographed it!

It's an optical illusion, but tell me you don't see the Sea Dog of Devon?

- Pros**
- Spacious seven-seater
 - Comfortable cruiser
 - Well-equipped

- Cons**
- More expensive than some rivals
 - Hybrid engine isn't the most fuel efficient in class
 - A big beast in tight spots

Verdict
The Kia Sorento is immensely well thought-out. Kia has gone all out to

Kia Sorento

ensure it remains relevant in the modern age and it is still good. It has some clever features, wrapped in a stylish package. It's not cheap, but it is a brilliant seven-seat SUV that delivers real-world practicality. Plus, it runs on petrol so, you know, faster to fill and more predictable on range. Just saying.



COURT IN THE ACT: RAF tennis players feel the heat at La Manga

TENNIS

It's hotting up for the Inter-Services

WALKING IN the steps of tennis stars Carlos Alcaraz and Rafael Nadal, the RAFTA visited the La Manga racquets club in Spain to complete pre-**IS** warm weather training.

Consisting of 24 association members – 12 ladies and 12 men – the aim of the tour was to continue to train Inter-Service squad members, whilst also introducing new players to a high level of training and physical demands.

RAFTA spokesperson Flt Lt Tom Elwick said: “The training sessions proved to be a shock to the system for a few, with others already mentally prepared for the rigours.”

Morning training sessions were followed by a switch of disciplines to padel.

Elwick said: “Having just come under the RAFTA umbrella, this was a great opportunity to develop an understanding of padel whilst enjoying some of the

more social aspects of the sport.”

In increasing morning temperatures, the afternoon sessions were altered on day three after Cpl Matt Dancer organised a mixed padel tournament to add a competitive spirit to the game.

After two hours of close matches, Sgt Christine Matthews and AS1 Alex Moore convincingly won their final match to claim the trophies.

Elwick said: “Not only was this a fantastic way to enjoy padel, it also enabled some of the more junior members to organise and run an event, a skill that is transferable to their daily roles.”

“The week proved another great opportunity to enhance their skills on both the padel court and tennis court but also to develop skills transferable to their workplaces.”

● **Follow RAF Tennis on Facebook search: RAF Tennis, Padel and Pickleball.**

SWIMMING

In the swim of things



COOL CUSTOMERS:
Open water swimmers vie for Cross Channel place
PHOTOS:
SALLY RAIMONDO (RAF)

Daniel Abrahams

THE RAF SWIMMING Association centenary celebrations are heating up, with the first four open water hopefuls completing round one of the Cross Channel trials.

The action did not stop there, with the men’s water polo team kicking off their Inter-Service preparations with three tough clashes, while personnel are looking to shine at the Best Fest Swimming Festival in Majorca later this month.

Preparation for the RAFSA100 Cross Channel Relay saw Flt Lt Dodwell, Flt Lt Armitage, Flt Lt Adams and Cpl Wright conducting their open water qualification swim at North Hykeham Lakes in Lincolnshire.

To participate in the RAFSA100 Cross Channel Relay Race, prospective participants must complete a qualification test comprising a 1.5-hour swim in water less than 16°C, rest for one hour, then complete another one-hour swim.

Sqn Ldr Stephen Brassington, chairman of the RAF Swimming Association, said: “Failure by any individual to complete this swim means disqualification from the

Centenary celebrations are in full swing



relay race. As such, the intrepid swimmers leapt into the 14.3°C water in their basic swim costumes [no wet suits allowed], with four successfully completing the trial.

“Next step is a second qualification event for those unable to conduct the initial swim and then it is a case of getting the miles in, ahead of arriving in Dover later this month.”

Association members will also head to Majorca to participate in the Best Fest swimming event – involving a range of pool and sea swims up to 10km.

And the men’s water polo team have stepped up their preparation for the Inter-Services with matches against the Fire Service (pictured left), as part of the Festival of Fire Sport, and then matches against City of Exeter and Plymouth University – losing to the Fire Service 16-11, before beating Plymouth Uni 21-15 and losing to Exeter 25-12.

Both the men’s and women’s water polo teams head off to Budapest for a week of training and fixtures this month, ahead of the Inter-Services in July.

● **Follow the swimming association on Instagram @rafswimassociation.**

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

Stone me, that's impressive



ATLAS STONES: UKAF Strongest Man AS1 Connor Poole lifts 150kg globe onto podium as he wins military strength crown

Military show of strength

STRONGMAN

Daniel Abrahams

THERE WILL be a historic first for Service sport when the RAF hosts a Forces Strongman and Strongwoman competition at Napfest 2026 – the High Wycombe music, arts and community festival.

It will also be the first time a strongman event has been run off a military camp in front of such a large crowd.

Sgt Stephen Winter, deputy OIC of the strength competition, said: "It will be an outdoor event and a real spectacle. I am excited and nervous at the same time. I was supposed to be competing, but I will be compere and head ref on the day, so I am not sure I will be able to take part."

Current UKAF strongman AS1 Connor Poole will compete at the festival open event, having won the military crown last month at Colchester Barracks.

The day will also feature RAF recruitment stands plus RAF police and firefighting demonstrations.

Winter added: "Our sponsors, Giants Live, will be present along with guests from the GB Disabled Strongman Association and veterans associations, and Together We Lift – a mental health charity."



Follow RAF Strongman on Instagram @forces_strongman and Napfest at: napfest.co.uk.

CROSS TO BEAR: RAF strongman Cpl Dan Brown

ATHLETICS

Brize are out in front in the President's Cup



BRIZE: Leaders of the pack PHOTO: AS1 KATIE MCKEE

BRIZE NORTON took first place at this year's RAF Athletics Association President's Cup Championship at RAF Cosford.

The station scored 108 points to secure victory, with Halton second on 96 and the host station third on 92.

Taking the form of an inter-unit combined men and women's team competition, athletes competed in a series of separate events, with points

scored counting towards the combined team overall score.

An event spokesperson said: "The event was open to all RAF stations and all abilities to provide a track and field athletic event through which Service personnel could participate in sport."

"The President's Cup also provides a platform to identify potential new athletes who may be selected to represent the RAF at the 2026 Inter-Services and beyond."

CYCLING

Going's tough for cyclists in North Wales

THE HORSESHOE Pass in North Wales provided a tough challenge for the Service's road racers, with top-10 finishes for the women and top-30 for the men.

The aviators were not only facing a tough course but a hugely impressive field in the inaugural race organised by the Ryan Morley Cycle Centre.

It saw RAF trio Sqn Ldr Vicky Webb, Cpl Sarah Toms and Cpl Laura Sheppard dig deep, fighting through split groups, heavy rain and relentless surges to claw their way back into contention after a tough start.

The 57-mile course, which included more than 1,250m of climbing, with descents hitting 40mph, was a test of grit which saw Webb storm to ninth, with Toms and Sheppard securing top-15 finishes after an attritional day in the saddle.

There was a field of 80 riders in the men's Open, with AS1s James Bunting, Thomas Stegeman and Ben Southgate all crossing the line two minutes down on the winner, securing top-30 finishes.

Supported by Fg Off Luke Brookes, Sgt Dan Watts and Jack Ramsbottom, the aviators had their work cut out in a race that included riders from across the UK and former professionals.

It showed as the race went off like a firecracker with a blistering pace which separated the field, only slowed as riders reached the first big climbs. It was here the RAF team held strong, at the front of the field.

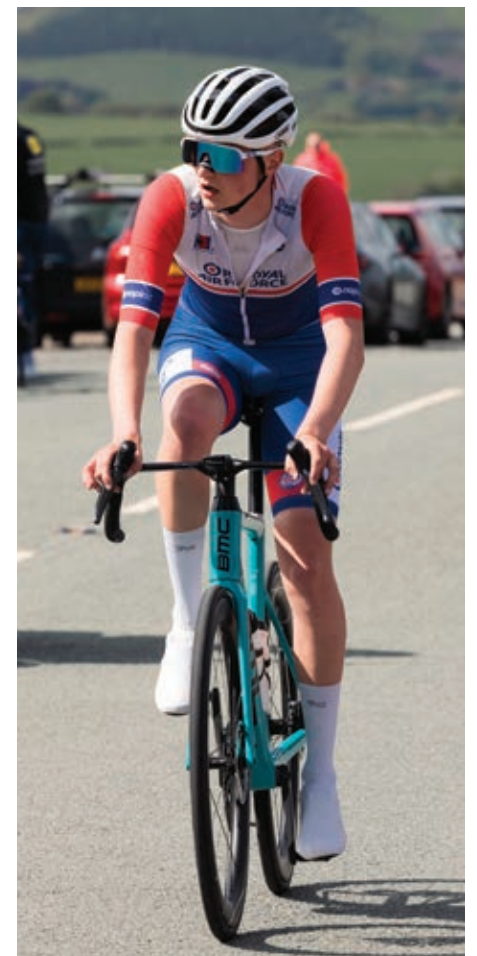


PHOTO: AS1KATIE MCKEE

With conditions better than in the opening race, speeds remained high throughout, further splintering any groups – with the final ascent a killer blow, making the aviators' finishes even more impressive.

Follow RAF cycling on Facebook @RAFCycling.

MOTORSPORT

Classic racers *old* their own at Pembrey Circuit

HAVING DODGED a forecast of bad weather, the RAF Classic Racing Team produced the goods at Pembrey Circuit in Wales.

Team spokesman Sgt Gavin Heggs said: "Pembrey ultimately delivered exactly what classic racing so often promises: unpredictable weather, late-night repairs and hard-fought racing."

"With valuable points collected and plenty learned, the RAF Classic Racing Team now look ahead to the next round with growing confidence."

Opening up round 2 of the Classic Racing season in the Forgotten Era Racing Championship, Heggs continued developing the RAF TZ350 but suffered power issues throughout.

Sgt Ben Murfin arrived with a freshly-painted Honda CBR600 for his debut



POWER ISSUES: Sgt Gavin Heggs

outing on the machine in the Supersport 600 class, and what a debut it proved to be.

An engine cut-out during race two was quickly traced to a fuelling issue, then he was knocked off at Honda Curve in race three. After repairs he produced improved lap times in the final race of the day.

AS1 Joe Woodward suffered a mixed weekend on the Molnar Manx in the Classic 500 class, Kawasaki ZXR750 in Period 3 Superbike, and the KTM 690 in Supermono.

Having struggled, he found some form late in the weekend. One Supermono victory came after rival Ant Hart crashed out, while the final ZXR750 race unfortunately ended before it began, with a suspected puncture.

A smattering of silverware and valuable championship points was AS1 Dorian Eardley's return for a consistently productive meeting aboard both the Triumph Rocket 750 in the F750 and the Summerfield Manx in the Lansdowne Championship.

Veteran racer Sqn Ldr (Ret'd) Symon Woodward endured significant handling



DEBUT: Eventful time on Honda for Sgt Ben Murfin

issues throughout the weekend aboard his Yamaha RD250 in the PC250 Air Cooled class.

Despite the challenging set-up, he persevered and still managed competitive results. In the final race of the weekend he comfortably secured third place despite the bike's poor handling.



FLYING START: RAF Sidecar team head championship after Round 1, despite pre-season troubles (LCPhotography)

Time is on our side... yes it is

Daniel Abrahams

THE SERVICE SIDECAR team stormed to the top of the pile after Round 1 of the Marin British Sidecar Championship at Donington Park.

Having all but written off their bike in testing before the season opener, the mechanics worked tirelessly before the chequered flag to ensure the rebuilt ride was fit to go, and so it proved with the team taking a trio of second places and two fastest laps to sit atop the leader board.

Driver Cpl Rob Atkinson was joined by stand-in passenger Shane Colbrook after regular partner Sgt Mark Middleton

injured his wrist in the pre-season crash at Brands Hatch.

Middleton said: "We had a few late nights finishing the bike and making sure it was ready as we only picked it up, post repair, on the Tuesday before the weekend. All worthwhile though."

"It was a great start to the team's BSC campaign after the disasters of pre-season testing."

"There was a lot of hard work on Friday afternoon and into Saturday night trying to find a good setup for the bike. We are making progress and are confident of more to come."

After adversity, what followed was nothing short of incredible as the pair

laid waste to all-comers on the track.

Atkinson said: "Our hard work paid off in style with three 2nd places in class across the weekend. A strong start to the season now sees the team heading back to base leading the Cup Championship going into the next round."

"Massive thanks to our sponsors, the whole team, marshals, organisers and everyone involved for making it a fantastic weekend of racing."

The pair head to Dunfermline, Scotland for round two of the BSC at Knockhill.

● Follow RAF Side Car on Facebook @RAFF2SIDECAR.

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

FOOTBALL

Rare defeat for women as Holland notch up 5

UKAF Women	1
Dutch Air Force Women	5

Daniel Abrahams

IT WASN'T to be a hat-trick of President's Cup wins for UKAF's women footballers as they fell to a 5-1 defeat at the hands of the Dutch Air Force.

Having gone unbeaten throughout 2025, UKAF women – featuring mainly RAF players – came up against a Netherlands side who were preparing for their CISM European qualification tournament, to be held in Germany next month.

The Dutch netted inside the first minute and the hosts didn't even have the chance to get in their rhythm before a second followed after 17 minutes at Bracknell Town FC's SB Stadium.

Unsettled, the normally confident UKAF group found themselves 3-0 down after 20 minutes.

UKAF women's head coach FS Karl Milgate said: "The Netherlands took home the Cup as deserved winners on the day. They were the strongest Dutch side we have faced, but if AS1 Shaunna Jenkins' lob had found the net at the start of the second half, it would have unsettled them and been game on.

"We now regroup and begin preparations for our annual fixture against the Bundeswehr, this time over in Augustdorf, Germany, next month."

UKAF managed to see out the half, ensuring they still had a chance if they



RAF-HEAVY: UKAF Women
PHOTOS: AS1 KATIE McKEE

could hit the ground running after the break, and hit it they did.

With just 25 seconds on the clock in the second half, Flt Lt Jeorgia Carr netted for 3-1 and three minutes later Jenkins nearly made it two, with an audacious lob.

The half-time interventions were visible for all to see as UKAF stepped up their game.

Just after the hour mark (65) the Dutch lead should have been reduced again, but Army Cpl Imogen Fisher missed.

The Dutch stood firm and, having seen off UKAF's wave of attacks, they pounced. With the hosts exposed at the back as they chased the game, the Dutch launched a counterattack mid-way through the second half to make it 4-1.

Late in the game, Netherlands number 10 and player of the match Anna Ruiter made it 5-1 to the visitors.

● Follow the team on Instagram @ukaffootball.



FOOTBALL



WELL-TURNED-OUT: Spadeadam's footballers don 50th anniversary kit

Experience? We have it in Spades

SPADEADAM'S 50TH anniversary celebrations kicked off in style with a 4-3 goal fest match for the station's footballers over CRAG refugee action group.

The exhibition match saw the aviators don a special black and red anniversary kit as they returned to action for the first time in 15 years.

In a thrilling match played on a 3g pitch in Carlisle, Cpl Gav White netted a brace of goals, with Fg Off Louis Rainford scoring the other, but Carlisle Refugee Action Group proved too strong, netting four times to seal the win.

Sgt Pete Young said: "More than just a football match, the event symbolised unity

and remembrance, honouring five decades of history while fostering friendship and inclusivity through the beautiful game. This memorable occasion highlighted the power of sport to bring communities together to celebrate shared values."

RAF Spadeadam officially opened on May 12, 1976 and now serves as an Electronic Warfare Tactics Range.

CRAG is a volunteer-led organisation established in 2015 to support refugees and asylum seekers.

Young added: "The game was a vibrant celebration of community spirit and resilience, age versus youth."

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



President's Cup victory as Brize are out in front

FOOTBALL

Leeming leave it late to silence Wittering

Three second-half strikes end 20-year RAF Cup drought

RAF Leeming	3
RAF Wittering	2

Daniel Abrahams

THE RAF Cup final produced a classic clash as Leeming delivered a blockbuster second-half display to cancel out Wittering's two first-half goals to win 3-2.

The victory at Oxford City's MGroup Stadium ended the North Yorkshire station's 20-year wait to lift the Keith Christie Trophy again, but their hopes looked all but dashed after a superb first 45 from the team in yellow, Wittering - who weathered Leeming's opening salvo to clinically go in two up at the break.

The men in red (Leeming) saw an early effort clatter off the crossbar as Cpl Chris Lunn in the Wittering goal could only watch after AS1 George McCowie collected a long ball out on the left, cut inside and unleashed a shot. Lunn was not a bystander minutes later as he produced a brace of saves to keep the scores level.

McCowie again provided the shot across the keeper who, diving to his right, did well to parry, before superbly saving from AS1 Bailey Vernon-Higgs, who hit the rebound back across the keeper, with Lunn adjusting well to save.

Midway through the half a Wittering corner was seemingly cleared only for Cpl Nick Slade to cross back in for Cpl Harry Nichols to bundle in after Cpl Matt Cape fumbled the ball in the Leeming goal.

Wittering's 18-year wait to lift the trophy looked to be over, after Nichols' 25-yard free kick found the head of Cpl Jack Smith, with the Leeming defence all at sea.

A bundled effort from AS1(T) Mike White, after an AS1(T)



Greg Dakin thunderbolt was parried, saw Leeming hit the ground running after the break.

When Vernon-Higgs netted the second for his team after a stunning reverse ball into the box from AS1(T) Luke Cranswick found the blond forward, who calmly turned the ball inside an onrushing defender and rolled it under Lunn, it was game on.

As the match entered its final phase a long ball into the Wittering area found AS1(T) Joseph England, who cut back across the goal only to be clattered by Lunn.

From the spot kick White slotted home beautifully. Leeming played out the closing stages well and ended their long wait for RAF Cup glory.





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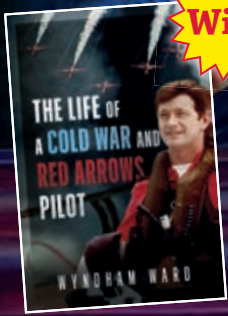
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R'n'R



Win!

Win Cold War pilot's story ● p5

● See page 8

On song – Maureen Lipman is Allegra



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

BREW+
BAKE!



IT'S TIME TO BREW AND BAKE FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH.

We all know it's good to talk. Host a Brew and Bake coffee morning or bake sale on station, at home, or in your community and make a life-changing difference to a veteran whilst having a brew, some banter and a slice of cake.



Simply sign up online for your free fundraising pack. Raise funds by asking for donations in return for a delicious brew and some baked goodies.

**COMBAT
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FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH



Theatre

Grayson The Musical

Soho Theatre Walthamstow, July 16-19

Grayson Perry musical to preview in Walthamstow

Tate marks Hockney's 90th year

TO COINCIDE with David Hockney's 90th birthday next July, Tate Modern will stage a multimedia installation in the Turbine Hall in the summer and Tate Britain will open a career-spanning exhibition in the autumn (October 7, 2027 to February 20, 2028).

A passionate fan of the opera, Hockney has created many celebrated designs for sets and costumes since the 1970s. These will be brought to life and projected onto vast screens in Tate Modern's most iconic space.

The large-scale Hockney exhibition at Tate Britain will focus on the role that family, friends and lovers have



David Hockney, *My Parents*, 1977
Tate. Purchased 1981

played in Hockney's visual storytelling, and how intimacy and human connection inform his art.

Featuring more than 200 works, it will span the full breadth of his seven-decade career, from trailblazing 1960s explorations of queer love and desire to tender depictions of his parents and recent works exploring private moments in his home and studio, said a spokesperson.

● Go to: tate.org.uk for more information.

A WORKSHOP production of a new musical comedy inspired by the extraordinary life of Turner Prize and BAFTA award-winning artist Sir Grayson Perry is at Soho Theatre Walthamstow from July 16-19 for five preview performances.

Grayson The Musical offers audiences an exclusive early glimpse of the show, with the lyrics and life story by Grayson Perry himself. Described as funny, irreverent and unexpectedly moving, it tells the incredible true story of one of Britain's most celebrated contemporary artists.

The production follows Grayson as he struggles to make his mark on the world while never quite feeling like he fits in. From the wrong class, wearing the wrong dress and making all the wrong choices, his journey takes him from an Essex working-class council estate to the dizzying heights of the Tate Gallery. This irreverent odyssey sees him navigate identity, creativity and self-acceptance via marital breakdowns, career disasters and some life coaching from a six-foot teddy bear named Alan.

This riotous new musical is about growing up and embracing who you truly are, touching on themes of family, therapy, art and, of course, cross-dressing, a spokesperson said.

Grayson Perry said: "When I first started thinking about turning my life into a musical, I realised it already contained most of the essential ingredients – questionable fashion choices and class anxiety amongst them. Beneath all the comedy however, is a story about trying to work out who you are and if you can ever truly belong. A concept which many



GRAYSON PERRY: The artist has led a colourful life

may relate to. I'm delighted that the show will be starting its life at Soho Theatre Walthamstow and excited to see what audiences make of it."

Presented as a special first-look engagement ahead of further development, these five performances offer audiences an early opportunity to experience this bold new British musical.

● Go to: graysonthemusical.co.uk for tickets.



Film Review

Madfabulous (12A)

In cinemas now

The Dancing Marquess who blew his millions

IT'S AN almost unbelievable true story – about a flamboyant young aristocrat in the 1890s who fritters away his considerable fortune, shocks the upper classes with his antics and eccentricities and dies tragically young.

Madfabulous, directed by Celyn Jones, stars BAFTA nominee Callum Scott Howells (It's a Sin, The Beautiful Game) as Henry Paget, the Fifth Marquess of Anglesey, with Rupert Everett (The Happy Prince, An Ideal Husband) as his (fictional) loyal butler Gelert, and Ruby Stokes (Jay Kelly, Bridgerton) as his cousin Lily.

The strong supporting cast



THE BUTLER: Rupert Everett

features Siobhán McSweeney, Paul Rhys, Louise Brealey and Kevin Eldon.

Following the death of his father in 1898, Paget, known as 'Topsy', arrives from France to claim his aristocratic inheritance and move into Plas Newydd, the grand family home he rename 'Anglesey Castle',

on Ynys Môn (Anglesey).

Not surprisingly, the wildly extravagant, cross-dressing young Marquess faces hostility and resistance from some family members to his crazy spending on elaborate, expensive, jewel-bedecked costumes and the staging of spectacular shows at his 150-seat 'Gaiety Theatre'.

But his lively cousin, Ruby, who marries him, is devoted to him, as is his stoic butler – a wonderful performance from Rupert Everett.

Scott Howells is marvellous as the man known as 'the Dancing Marquess' who was known for his Butterfly Dance, where he



FLAMBOYANT: Henry Paget (Howells)

would dance wildly for guests while multicoloured lights were projected onto the white silk costume he wore.

The young Welsh actor brings a touching sensitivity to the portrayal of Topsy, who, for all his flamboyance, is fundamentally a lost boy and the agent of his own demise.

This is a beautifully-shot film, with a superb script by Lisa Baker, who, like Jones, is also

an Anglesey native. It's a fitting tribute to Henry, who was so obviously ahead of his time and is now cited as an influencer.

Sadly, Henry spent his whole inheritance, the equivalent of around £200 million today, it was revealed at the end of the film and he died of tuberculosis, penniless, in the south of France, aged just 29.

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



Exhibitions

Beyond Impressionism
Holburne Museum, Bath, until Sept 13



The Pattern of Life
Compton Verney, until Jan 3, 2027

Artists who made their Marx through printing and design

BEYOND IMPRESSIONISM: Printmaking from Manet to Picasso is now on at the Holburne Museum, Bath until September 13, celebrating the resurgence of printmaking from the mid-19th century onwards.

A spokesperson said: "Taking a broad view of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, the exhibition spans the reappraisal of the artform in the 1850s through to the 1930s.

"Bringing together prints by key artists of the movement including Édouard Manet, Pierre Bonnard, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Pablo Picasso, among others, the exhibition explores how these artists, primarily known for their paintings, made remarkable contributions to the medium of printmaking."

Chris Stephens, the Holburne's Director, said: "We're beyond excited to be bringing such a range of major artists to the Holburne. The paintings of the Impressionists are so familiar, we seem to forget that the same generation of artists, and their successors, radically changed printmaking as well.

"It is wonderful to be able to demonstrate the revival of etching from Whistler's Venetian nocturnes to Picasso's Minotaures alongside Gauguin's rare woodblock prints and lithographs by Toulouse-Lautrec, Bonnard and Vuillard."

● **OPENING ON July 18** at Compton Verney Art Gallery in Warwickshire, *The Pattern of Life: Enid Marx and Modern British Design* runs until January 3, 2027. It's the first major exhibition dedicated to the artist-designer Enid Marx (1902-1998) and her impact on British design. Best known for her London Underground seat fabrics, this exhibition places Marx and her community of peers including Paul Nash within the cultural and geopolitical context of 20th-century Britain, a spokesperson said.

"Charting Marx's life through fabric, the exhibition explores her family influences, and formal education with leading British modernists, while also highlighting a broader community of craftswomen and designers who have often been sidelined in the story of 20th-century British design," the spokesperson added.

Born in London to an entrepreneurial Jewish family,



■ *Portrait of Enid Marx: Design Council Archive, University of Brighton Design Archives*



■ *Enid Marx, Watermelon, pumpkin and cucumber, 1950s, three colour linocut on paper © Compton Verney, photo by Jamie Woodley*

Enid Marx studied at the Central School of Arts and Crafts and the Royal College of Art from 1922 to 1925. Her contemporaries as a student included Eric Ravilious, Paul Nash, Bernard Leach and Roger Fry.

Marx's career reached its peak in the late 1930s and 1940s as the outbreak of World War II afforded many women even greater professional freedoms. She secured major commissions for London Transport, the Wartime Utility Scheme and Edinburgh Weavers.

The spokesperson explained: "Marx's work transformed the domestic sphere of textiles into an important form of public and social design, shaping the visual fabric of everyday life, from the seats of tubes and buses to the



■ *Édouard Manet (1832 - 1883), Berthe Morisot, 1872, lithograph, The Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford*

interiors of British homes."

Dr Az Crawford, the exhibition's lead curator, said: "Marx has long been overlooked for her role as a major British modernist. This exhibition offers a timely redress of the significance of her textiles beyond the surface, showing how pattern design configured and reflects personal, social and cultural politics of the first quarter of the twentieth century."

● **Go to: holbourne.org and comptonverney.org.uk for further details.**



Theatre

2:22 – A Ghost Story
UK tour

Bye Stacey, and hello Shvorne...

New roles for *EastEnder* James and play's Marks

STARRING AS Jenny in the 2026 UK tour of 2:22 – A Ghost Story, Shvorne Marks promised: "Audiences are in for a really fun night out at the theatre, with a bit of something for everyone."

She previously played Lauren opposite Stacey Dooley on the 2025 tour. "It has such a massive following," she marvelled. "Many people have seen it loads of times already and they keep coming back for more."

2:22 is a chilling and gripping thriller revolving around young mother Jenny and her husband Sam (James Bye), who have recently moved into a house they are in the process of renovating.

Every night at precisely 2:22am they hear strange, scary sounds, and Jenny is convinced the house is haunted but Sam is having none of it. When their old friend Lauren (Natalie Casey) and her new partner Ben (Grant Kilburn) come round for dinner, belief and scepticism clash and they agree to stay up until 2:22 to try to find out what's really going on.

Shvorne describes Jenny as a kind, caring, smart, funny woman who has lost her way a little. "She is very intelligent and very opinionated, and Sam has sort of overshadowed

her. She is navigating who she is and trying to find her feet as a mother in a new home. There's a lot of changes for her to contend with."

Written by Danny Robins, creator of the hit BBC podcast and TV series *Uncanny*, *2:22 – A Ghost Story* won Best New Play at the Whatsonstage Awards and was nominated for three Oliviers. It's had seven seasons in the West End and 12 replica productions worldwide.

Shvorne was a series regular on *Endeavour* and has also appeared in *Breeders*, *Get Millie Back* and *Three Little Birds* on TV.

With 2:22 she's excited to have switched roles for the 2026 tour, saying: "I planted the seed of me playing Jenny when I saw Stacey in the rehearsal room and thought 'I could do that role and have a lot of fun with it'. Danny's writing leaves room for you to bring your own take to the material, so my Jenny is very different to Stacey's."

Team believe

Jenny is on team believe when it comes to ghosts and the supernatural, and so is Shvorne. "I'm not messing with the ghosts, man!" she declared, adding that she had "a weird experience" while performing at the Theatre Royal Stratford East.



2026 CAST: James Bye (Sam), Shvorne Marks (Jenny), Natalie Casey (Lauren) and Grant Kilburn

Compiled by Executive Features Editor Tracey Allen



Theatre
Cleese: Monty Python and the Holy Grail
 UK tour

John's still nuts about Python



JUST OVER 50 years after it first galloped onto cinema screens, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* remains one of the most beloved and quotable comedy films ever made.

Now, audiences have the chance to relive the magic and celebrate the milestone with the legendary John Cleese live on stage as he tours across the UK this September hosting a unique screening and Q&A about the film.

The tour will make its way to select venues around the country throughout September, starting at Basingstoke Anvil Arts on September 1, and culminating at Leeds Grand Theatre on September 22.

These special events will celebrate more than half a century of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, beginning with an introduction from Cleese himself, before audiences see a full screening of the iconic film.

Following the screening, there will be a 45-minute Q&A interview with Cleese (hosted by a local interviewer) including the opportunity to ask your own questions of the comedy legend.

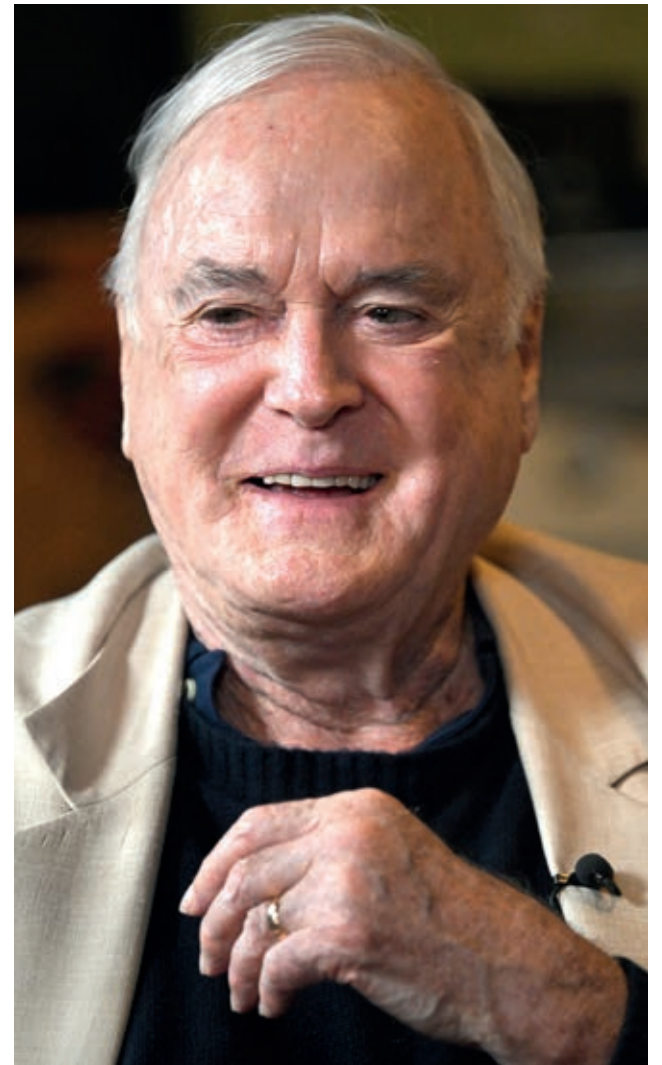
During the discussions, Cleese will reflect on the making of the film, the legacy of Monty Python...and whatever else he can still remember.

He said: "I'm delighted to be celebrating more than 50 years of *Holy Grail* with these incredible live events around the country... mainly because I genuinely never expected either the film or myself to last this long."

Audience members can expect behind-the-scenes stories, sharp observations and irreverent humour.

Please note: coconuts are not included in the ticket price!

● **Go to: JohnCleeseOfficial.com for ticket details.**



COMEDY LEGEND: Monty Python star Cleese is touring this autumn



Books
The Life of a Cold War Red Arrows Pilot
fonthill.media



Cold War pilot who flew with Reds

WYNDHAM WARD grew up with a determination to fly, whatever the odds. Beginning as a boy mechanic in the RAF, he progressed to being a 'Junior Joe' fighter pilot in the iconic Hawker Hunter, despite making almost every mistake possible during air combat training.

The Cold War threat loomed large, and Ward was transferred to operating high-speed, low-level Buccaneers – a dangerous job – flying with the RAF and Fleet Air Arm on board HMS Ark Royal, where he eventually mastered hair-raising catapult launches and the art of shaky recoveries.

Following active duty, Ward received an unexpected posting to the Red Arrows aerobatic team in 1979 – a significant year—when the Gnat was replaced by the Hawk.

The Life of A Cold War Red Arrows Pilot by Wyndham Ward (fonthill.media) is the story of the author's lifetime in aviation, from eager youngster

to strike formation leader, with an insider's view into squadron life, the camaraderie of the mess, the howlers committed during training and the tensions of frontline duty during the Cold War.

It reveals the inner workings of the Red Arrows in a year of exceptional pressure when, with new jets and a redesigned display, the nation expected something truly ground-breaking. Through it all, and onwards into an extraordinary career in civil aviation, Ward's boyish enthusiasm never faded; the book is, above all, a testament to the joys of flying.

We have copies of this excellent title up for grabs. To be in with a chance of winning one, answer this question correctly:

In which year was Wyndham Ward posted to the Red Arrows?

Email your answer, marked Cold War pilot book, 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 June 26.



NEW HOME TRAUMA: Sam (James Bye) and Jenny (Shvorne Marks). Inset, Stacey Dooley

"There was an area in the green room that I feel was someone's home," she elaborated. "I was talking with one of the other actors about whether or not we thought the theatre was haunted, and we both looked at each other and went 'water cooler. I hadn't told anyone but every time I went to the water cooler in that room I just felt that was another spirit around me, and so did she."

Shvorne is a 2:22 veteran, whereas James Bye is coming to it fresh. Signing on to play Sam, he confessed to never having seen it on stage before. "Maybe that's a blessing, because I didn't have any preconceptions," he said. "I know lots of people who have been in it and they all had an amazing time."

"Without giving too much away, Sam's the antagonist. He's the non-believer of the group. All the others have either had supernatural experiences or come from a place of faith or belief. But Sam is a university lecturer in astronomy and a physicist. He is from a scientific background and he has an explanation for everything. He's the guy who rubs everyone up the wrong way."

"That makes him a lot of fun to play. I'm not saying he's not a nice guy, it's just that he has strong beliefs and doesn't mind telling people what they

are. As well as being really scary, the play is also very witty and it has some comedic moments, several of which stem from Sam's sarcasm."

Is James on team believe or team sceptic? "I honestly don't know," he mused. "I can't say I've ever had any experiences with the supernatural and when people tell me that they have there is a slight scepticism in my head, but it doesn't mean I don't believe them. For me it's like 'There's got to be something else out there' even if I haven't encountered it myself."

Strictly

The actor first came to fame as Martin Fowler in *EastEnders*, joining the show in 2014. The character was killed off in February 2025, which James sees as a mixed blessing. "I loved being in *EastEnders*. I got to do some cracking storylines," he said.

After competing on *Strictly Come Dancing* he did his first-ever panto, as the Prince in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* at Aylesbury's Waterside Theatre in 2023.

The tour goes to Waterside Theatre, Aylesbury; Churchill Theatre, Bromley; Cambridge Corn Exchange and Congress Theatre, Eastbourne.

● **Go to: 222aghoststory.com for more information.**



Your Announcements

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

Death

COPPENHALL Patricia, née McMillan.

Patricia, a member of the Air Force family for over 40 years, passed away peacefully on May 12, aged 79. A much-loved wife of Vincent, she also leaves behind her children and their partners: Sara and Richard, Jonathan and Lenka, and Daniel and Sarah; and her grandchildren, Louie, Adam and Quinn.

A funeral service has taken place. Any condolences please send care of Seaton Leng Funeral Directors, 59A Bondgate, Darlington, DL3 7JR.

Seeking

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: argentis71@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.

Associations

HARTLEPOOL RAF 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 along with 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 discover the benefits of membership, plus see what activities and events we offer all over the world.

Reunions

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, 9 to Sunday April 11, 2027. This will be at the 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.

IBCC concert

A concert telling the story of the International Bomber Command Centre (IBCC) will be held at Louth St James' Church from 7.30pm to 9.30pm on Saturday, July 4, hosted by former BBC Radio Lincolnshire presenter Melvyn Prior.

Organisers are asking for a £10 minimum voluntary contribution as an admission fee to cover both the costs and raise essential funds to support the IBCC's Learning programmes available via IBCC at: Internationalbcc.co.uk/visit/events.



RESPECT: RAF personnel attend the service for Lt O'Neill

Pilot's grave rededicated

A WORLD War I pilot buried unnamed has had his grave rededicated more than 108 years after his death.

Lieutenant Thomas Michael O'Neill disappeared on May 8, 1918 on patrol when his 43 Sqn Sopwith Camel was attacked by German Triplanes. He was last seen out of control east of Bailleul, listed as missing and commemorated on the Arras Flying Services Memorial.

But research showed he was first buried at Steenwerck German military cemetery and later moved to Le Grand Beaumart cemetery, France.

Initially recorded as being a Lieutenant of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, attached to the RAF, the final Graves Registration Report listed him as an unknown Officer of the RAF.

Now his headstone has been changed accordingly at a ceremony organised by the

MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre.

JCCC Caseworker Nicola Nash said: "Although we were unable to find any of Lt O'Neill's family to attend the service, members of his RAF family were here to pay their respects and honour his sacrifice."

Thomas was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant on June 28, 1915 and joined the 9th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers but joined the Royal Flying Corps at Oxford and attacked at least one German night bomber in 1917, flying his Sopwith Camel.

In March 1918, Thomas travelled to France to join 43 Sqn, nicknamed the Fighting Cocks.

Commission Commemorations Case Officer Polly Brewster said: "His new headstone, crafted by our Headstone Production Unit team, will commemorate him by name at his final resting place in perpetuity."

Battle of Britain Service

THE MINISTRY of Defence has announced that the 86th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain Service of Thanksgiving and Rededication will be held in Westminster Abbey at 11am on Sunday, September 20.

Applications for tickets, stating all names, addresses, telephone number/email address, place and date of birth, passport or driving licence number of individuals wishing to attend, should be made in writing and are to be accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Applications should reach Mr Chris Rothwell, SO3 RAF Ceremonial Support, RAF Ceremonial Office, Bentley Priory Building, RAF Northolt, West End Road, Ruislip, Middlesex, HA4 6NG by July 10.

To assist with seating in the Abbey, applicants are requested to state which of the following categories is appropriate: relatives of aircrew or groundcrew who served in the Battle of Britain; past or present members of the Royal Air Force and its Reserve Forces; members of the Emergency Services or ground support staff during the Battle; or member of the general public.

Please state if you are a wheelchair user.

Tickets, and a note on dress and timings for the occasion, will be issued two weeks before the Service.

Applications are not to be made to Westminster Abbey.

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.**

Important Notice

The publishers of *RAF News* cannot accept responsibility for the quality, safe delivery or operation of any products advertised or mentioned in this publication.

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All advertisements must comply with the British Code of Advertising Practice. Mail order advertisers are required to state in advertisements their true surname or full company name, together with an address from which the business is managed.

Exclusive preview at Cosford Air Show

THE RAF Museum Midlands will showcase three new aircraft acquisitions at the RAF Cosford Air Show on June 14.

The British Aerospace Hawk T1A, General Atomics MQ-9 Reaper and Westland Puma HC1 go on static display in the Museum's enclosure on the airfield, alongside the iconic Chinook 'Bravo November'.

A Museum spokesperson said: "Visitors attending this year's Air Show will be the first to see the Museum's new Hawk, Reaper and Puma.

"Following their appearance at the Air Show all three aircraft will be stored before going on permanent display in the Museum's forthcoming exhibition *The RAF: 1980 to Today*."

The spokesperson added: "An advanced jet trainer, the Hawk entered RAF service in 1976. In 1979, it was selected as the replacement for the Folland Gnat as the aircraft flown by the Red Arrows.

"The Reaper entered service

with the RAF in 2007 and was its first combat-capable remotely piloted aircraft system or 'drone'.

"Its ability to loiter over targets undetected has given it an invaluable role in intelligence gathering and precision strike operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

"The Reaper retired from global RAF operations in 2025 following 18 years' service.

"The Puma is a French-designed, medium-lift helicopter, in service with the RAF from 1971 to 2025."

Tom Hopkins, Curator (Aircraft and Exhibits) said: "Each of these remarkable aircraft represents a significant chapter in RAF history, and while it will be some time before they go on permanent display at the Museum, we are excited to offer Cosford Air Show visitors this exclusive early preview."

Exclusively for the Cosford show, aviation fans can get on board the legendary Chinook 'Bravo November', for a small donation. Known as 'The



ICONS: The Hawk and the Westland Puma HC1 (inset)

Survivor', it earned its reputation during the 1982 liberation of the Falkland Islands. After the MS

Atlantic Conveyor was struck by a missile and later sank, Bravo November was the sole Chinook

to survive, going on to play a crucial role in the conflict.

● Go to cosfordairshow.co.uk.

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R'n'R



Prize Crossword No. 411

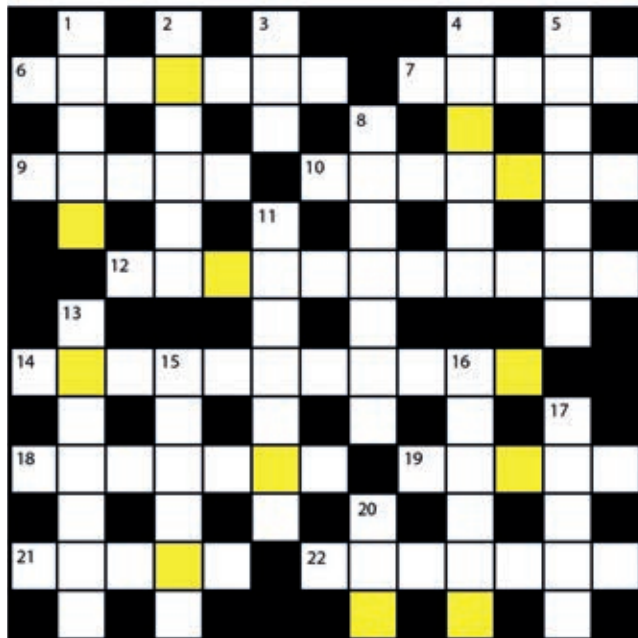
Solve the crossword, then rearrange the 12 letters in yellow squares to find an RAF legend.

Across

- 6. Some hope gas used on American plane will be revealed (7)
- 7. Either way, it's a surveillance device (5)
- 9. Up and back on mother's RAF aircraft (5)
- 10. Put a stop to the girl embracing first terrible spirit (7)
- 12. Part of the Royal Air Force destroyed in garment fire (3,8)
- 14. Smooth draws employed by this missile (5,6)
- 18. Station lettuce for ex-President (7)
- 19. First Vincent and Louise undercut eventual price (5)
- 21. Graduate's enclosed by vessel (5)
- 22. Be suspended next to a Royal Scot's RAF buildings (7)

Down

- 1. First Diana takes Underground back from premiere (5)
- 2. May a District Attorney enter this country? (6)
- 3. Castro's country cut off for probationer (3)
- 4. Its payment leads to captive release (6)
- 5. Pole has embraced desire for hot stuff (7)
- 8. It goes ship to shore for company en route (7)
- 11. Blanking out 1980s pop group (7)
- 13. German chap for furniture (7)
- 15. Royal Air Force command almost covers palm (6)
- 16. Duck variety in this colour (6)
- 17. Mongrel uses railway dish (5)
- 20. Kay returns beast of burden (3)



Across – 7. Ashram 8. Behave 10. Cholera 11. Party 12. Rage 13. Chasm 17. Whale 18. Puma 22. Alarm 23. Olympic 24. Meteor 25. Benign
 Down – 1. Mascara 2. Through 3. Games 4. Tempest 5. Sabre 6. Pepys 9. RAF Halton 14. Shampoo 15. Pumpkin 16. Falcons 19. Parma 20. Waste 21. Ryder **RAF aircraft – Poseidon**

Prize Crossword No. 409 winner is: Michael Bennett, Cardiff.

Name:

Address:

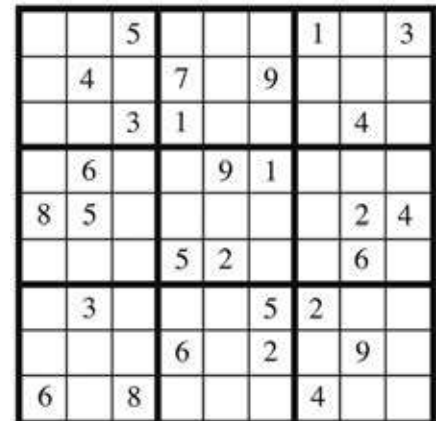
RAF legend: Crossword No. 411



Prize Su Doku No. 421

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 June 26, 2026. The winner of Su Doku No: 418 is: Brian Tanner, York.



Solution to Su Doku No. 420

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



Theatre Deadly Live! UK tour



BACKSHALL: TV star is wild at heart

Steve's live and deadly for autumn

FOLLOWING LAST year's hit tour, **Deadly Live!** with Steve Backshall is back for autumn 2026.

The supersized live entertainment adventure is returning this October half-term for 10 more live shows at some of the UK's biggest venues.

Deadly Live! is described as an action-packed, edge-of-your-seat thrilling experience hosted by BAFTA award-winning wildlife presenter and adventurer Backshall.

The tour is based on the hugely popular CBBC show *Deadly*, produced by the award-winning BBC Studios Natural History Unit for BBC iPlayer and CBBC. *Deadly Live!* with Steve Backshall 2026 kicks off at the Sheffield Utilita Arena on Friday, October 23.

During the show Steve goes on an unforgettable journey as he tracks some of the world's most formidable predators, from big cats and birds of prey to Dinomania dinosaurs, snakes,

and many more. "With daring stunts, mind-blowing experiments and cutting-edge science, this thrilling live show takes audiences across land, sky and sea in a truly unique wildlife spectacle", said a spokesperson.

Steve said: "I'm thrilled to be bringing *Deadly Live!* back for 2026. I was blown away by the response from audiences last year – both the adults and the kids! And I'm delighted that we will be taking the show to many parts of the country that we couldn't get to last time.

"We've got some amazing stunts and incredible experiments planned. Join me this autumn half-term as we explore once again animals from 600 million years ago right through to modern day."

Series seven of *Deadly 60* is available to watch on BBC iPlayer, along with all the other series.

● **Go to: DeadlyLiveTour.com for full tour details.**



Theatre Review Allegra UK tour, then West End (allegraplay.com)

Lipman's on song as the eccentric Allegra

PLAYWRIGHT PETER QUILTER is a specialist when it comes to portrayals of larger-than-life women. Having written *End of the Rainbow* about Judy Garland (adapted for the Oscar-winning film *Judy* starring Renée Zellweger) and *Glorious!* about the formidable Florence Foster Jenkins, his new comedy stars national treasure Dame Maureen Lipman (who played FFJ in the West End run) as the eponymous Allegra.

Touring the UK for the first time in 20 years, 80-year-old Lipman brings an impressive energy to her performance as the woman with the irresistible urge to burst into song, however inappropriate that may be.

She's a joyous being, full of life, but her impromptu singing can both delight and horrify those around her – the latter so much so that local policeman Officer Rogers (Bailey Patrick) has to visit to tell her people have made complaints about her.

Allegra's brother Ronen (John Middleton) is devoted to her and her carer Anna (Elizabeth Bower) adores her but it's a challenge trying to protect their exuberant charge without crushing her spirit.

When I saw the show at the Wycombe Swan, Lipman, as you might expect, was no less than brilliant in the lead role that shows off her still strong voice and her dancing talent – she even jumps on and off tables with the vim of someone more than half her age.



JOYOUS: Allegra (Lipman) with co-stars Bower and Middleton

There are plenty of laugh out loud moments – such as the line "some people do cocaine, some do cabaret, it's a crime that it is the singing that gets up people's noses" – but behind the laughter there's a serious message about ageing, memory and people's eccentricities.

It's a clever, ultimately uplifting, play that prompts food for thought with Lipman's faultless performance encompassing poignancy as well as playfulness.

Five out of five roundels ●●●●●
 Review by Tracey Allen