Reader offer
Get £10 off WWII Lanc Sqn book
See page 17



Surviving horrors of infamous PoW camp
See page 19

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ROYAL AIR FORCE

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RAF News



Vet Ronnie's US Remembrance



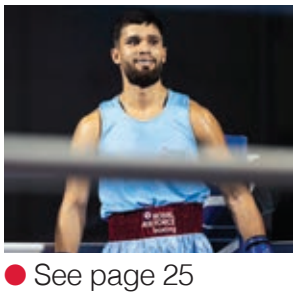
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Esports
AS1 Elia's on a high



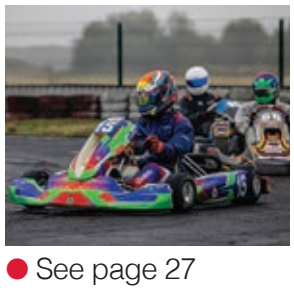
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Boxing
Top honours to AS1 Smith



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Karting
AS1 Goring Prem king



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Rising star

Titania lifts UK space power

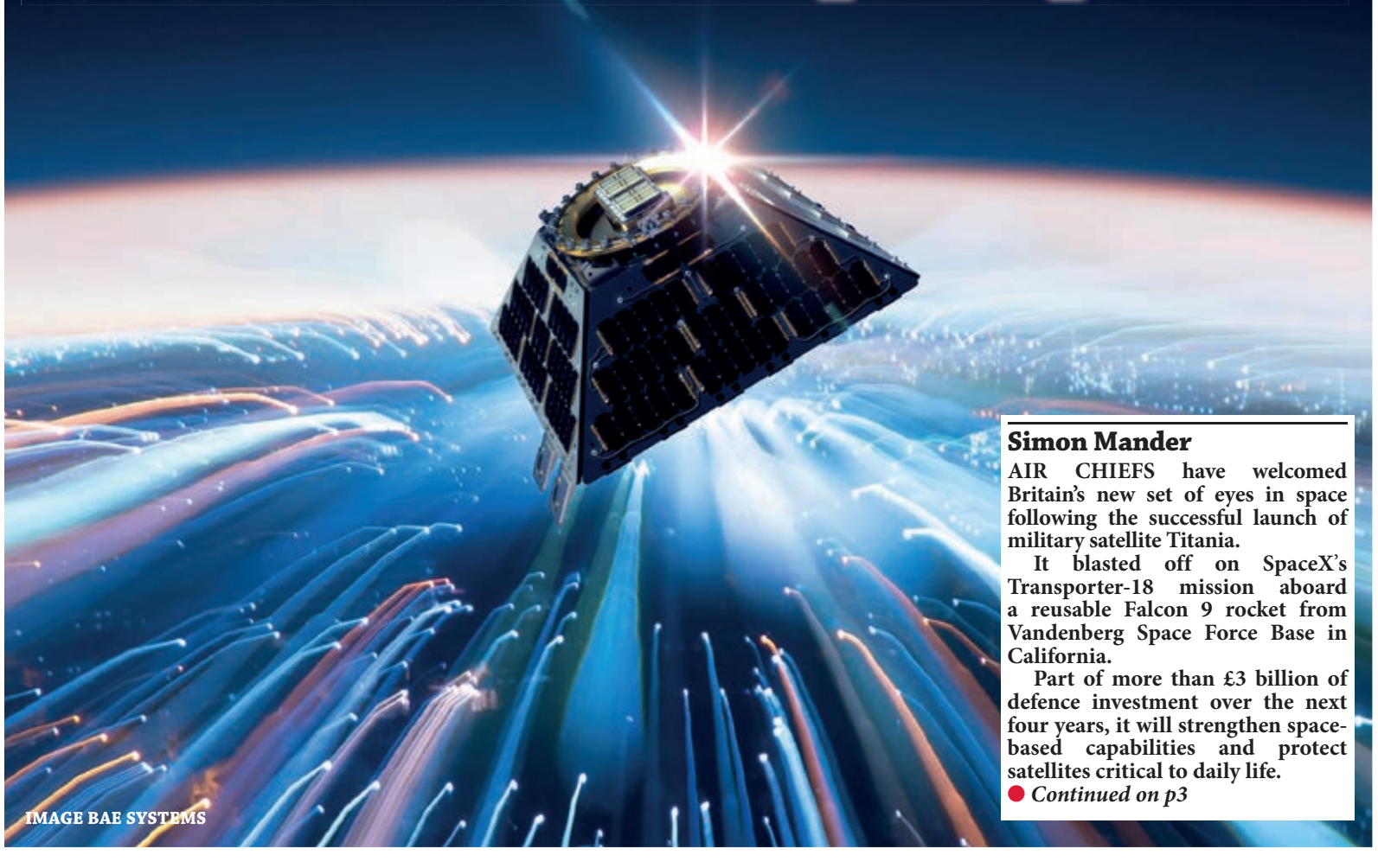


IMAGE BAE SYSTEMS

Simon Mander

AIR CHIEFS have welcomed Britain's new set of eyes in space following the successful launch of military satellite Titania.

It blasted off on SpaceX's Transporter-18 mission aboard a reusable Falcon 9 rocket from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California.

Part of more than £3 billion of defence investment over the next four years, it will strengthen space-based capabilities and protect satellites critical to daily life.

Continued on p3

BiteSize



"This marks a new chapter in our defence nuclear relationship with France"

Defence Secretary Wes Streeting on Exercise Rummy

See page 13



"The koala was number one on the call sheet that day"

Return to Paradise actor Anna Samson on the real star of the Australia-based crime drama

See R'n'R pages 4-5



"I want to go out on a high and finish on my own terms"

RAF and Exeter Chiefs star Flt Lt Lucy Nye to end playing career after this season's Inter-Services

See page 25



£13m vets aid pledge

Simon Mander

AN ESTIMATED one million veterans are expected to benefit from easier access to services after an extra £13.2m was distributed across the UK.

Prime Minister Andy Burnham said: "It is a privilege to be able to honour our veterans, as we remember the service and the sacrifice of those who fought for the lives we live today."

A further 21 organisations share more than £13.2m to become recognised centres under the Government's Valour programme by the beginning of 2027.

Among them will be military charity sw, which operates a drop-in centre in Glasgow, and the Defence Medical Welfare Services, who together serve around 176,000 veterans living in Scotland.

Veterans Minister Calvin Bailey said: "The Valour system will help charities support even more veterans and their families."



ROYAL AIR FORCE
RAF News

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This Week In History



1940
Radar debut

A 604 Sqn Beaufighter scores the first air-to-air radar success, shooting down a Junkers Ju88A near Chichester.

1972
Museum opens

HM THE Queen formally opens the Royal Air Force Museum at the site of former RAF Hendon in outer London, closed in 1968.





1981
Wessex in Northern Ireland

72 SQN Wessex helicopters deploy to Aldergrove in Northern Ireland to support UK security operations.

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

Titania lifts UK space capability

Drop zone test for Atlas crews



NEARLY 700 paratroopers and their kit were airlifted to Germany as the Atlas tested its long-range combat capability.

Brize Norton's Air Mobility Force joined 16 Air Assault Brigade to showcase their rapid combat deployment skills in realistic war fighting conditions.

Inserting troops and combat kit into a German drop-zone tests Atlas' ability to deploy an airborne force with precision at long range.

A key element of the drill was the A400M's ability to carry both troops and stores on the same aircraft.

Its Ramp Airdrop System allows mission-ready paratroppers to hit the target zone with communications systems, drone kit, ammunition, food and transport.



SPACE ASSET: The 100kg Titania joins the UK's growing satellite constellation, designed to enhance national security and military capability

● *Continued from front*

CAS ACM Sir Harv Smyth, the Chief of the Air Staff, said: "The ability to observe the Earth from space is critical to both national resilience and military advantage. This will be demonstrated by Tyche and Titania, alongside Juno and Oberon in the years ahead.

"We will monitor these vital satellites using state-of-the-art technology around the world, including our Inaros sensors – to ensure our armed forces can fight and win wherever they are."

Titania is the second ISTARI satellite in the UK's growing constellation and is expected to operate for at least five years before burning up harmlessly in the upper atmosphere.

Weighing around 100kg – about the size of a washing machine – it orbits the Earth every 90 minutes, travelling at 27,000 kilometres per hour.

British built and operated by UK Space Command, it will keep watch from 500km above Earth helping the Armed Forces see further and act faster 24 hours a day.

It comes as the MoD stands up Project Inaros, a new trial network of advanced sensors to monitor space from three sites around the world.

Defence Minister Wes Streeting said: "The new space age is here. Space underpins everything from weather forecasts and financial transactions to sat-navs and mobile phone connections, and it is critical for our national security and military operations.

"Having Titania now in orbit and Project Inaros stepping up how we watch over our satellites means we can see threats sooner, making the UK safer.

"Titania and Inaros are British-built and British-designed, backed by more than £3 billion of investment in space capabilities. That means highly skilled jobs across the UK, a stronger industrial base, and a more secure United Kingdom."



Titania was designed and built in Hampshire by the partnership of the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory and BAE Systems as part of a £9.5 million contract, and will be followed by satellites Juno, with SSTL, and Oberon, with Airbus Defence and Space.

Project Inaros will trial three ground-based sensors, developed by British Australian company Optera, to monitor movements in space from sites in the UK, Australia and Cyprus.

This technology mimics biological processes by detecting changes in light and could be developed to be an early warning system to spot unusual or threatening activity near UK satellites.

Information gathered by Inaros will help UK Space Command units safeguard British satellites which guide ships, connect mobile phones, and warn of missile attacks.

The work is part of the £3bn committed by the Defence Investment Plan for space-based capabilities to protect UK assets in space and strengthen deterrence on Earth.

Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund



"Our break gave us the chance to spend quality time together as a family"

RAF veteran Bill

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Sam's Christmas crawl for tragic Frankie

Grieving dad's mission to help ease pain of stillbirths



CHARITY CRUSADE: Fg Off Brown with a print of his stillborn son Frankie's hand and foot prints. The Coningsby-based officer will be raising funds for his local neonatal unit to thank staff who supported him and his partner Sgt Bryany Lowe

Simon Mander

A CONINGSBY Force Protection officer is putting his battlefield skills to use in a bid to raise cash for the hospital that helped him and his partner cope with the trauma of losing their newborn son.

Fg Off Samuel Brown will be hoping to complete a 1.3-mile leopard crawl through Boston town centre to the couple's local hospital to thank nursing staff who supported him and his partner Sgt Bryany Lowe following the tragic death of their stillborn son Frankie, in November last year.

The crawling technique is practised by soldiers in the combat zone who push themselves along the ground by their elbows and knees to present the smallest possible target to an enemy.

Called Every Inch for Frankie, the challenge hopes to raise more than £2,000 for the Boston Pilgrim Hospital's specialist neo-natal department.

Sam, who serves with 7FP Wing at the Lincs station, said: "Frankie was born sleeping and never got to make his entry into the world we had both so desperately hoped for.

"It was an incredibly frightening, heartbreaking and emotional experience for both myself and Bryany. She showed incredible strength and courage throughout such an unimaginable experience.

"Having to go through childbirth knowing that we had already lost our little boy is something no parent should ever have to endure. Her strength during those moments is something I will admire for the rest of my life.

"The staff at Pilgrim Hospital were nothing short of amazing. Their compassion, professionalism and genuine care made an unbearable situation that little bit easier.

"Without their support, I truly believe we would have found ourselves in a much darker place.

"This is a mammoth task, crawling that far in December over cemented paths and roads in a town that is renowned for being busy during the Christmas month," he added.

"One midwife, named Frances, was there day and night, sometimes outside her working hours, ensuring that Frankie was treated with the dignity, love and respect he deserved.

"If the money raised can help another family spend a little more precious time with their baby, provide comfort during an unimaginable loss, or support the staff who dedicate themselves to caring for bereaved parents, then every painful inch of that 1.3-mile crawl will have been worthwhile," said Fg Off Brown.

● ***Sam's charity challenge takes place on December 19. To make a donation go to: justgiving.com/page/samuel-brown-1.***



On the pull

CHINOOK CREWS with Akrotiri's 1310 Flt tested their pulling power by hauling the 10 tonne helicopter 1310ft down the runway to raise funds for Forces charity SquaddieBox.

KCS cadets make the grade

Staff Reporter
Cranwell College

KING'S COLOUR Sqn graduates hit the parade ground at Cranwell after graduating this month.

Parade Reviewing officer, healthcare chief AVM Darren Ellison, said: "It is a privilege to congratulate the graduating Officers of MIOT 44 on this significant achievement.

"They join the Royal Air Force at a time of considerable challenge and change, when strong leadership, agility and professionalism are more important than ever.

"Their talent, commitment and determination will help shape the future of the Royal Air Force and I wish them every success in their careers ahead."

The parade included a performance by the RAF Regt Band.





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Registered charity number in England and Wales 219279 and Scotland SC054446

Dambusters hit the deck for NATO



Simon Mander

THE RAF'S Dambusters deployed to the High North as Nato steps up security patrols and training across the region.

Seven F-35B aircraft from 617 Sqn embarked on the flight deck of HMS Prince of Wales to protect Britain's biggest warship on the second phase of its frontline duties in the Arctic and North Atlantic.

The mission is designed to counter Russian aggression and safeguard critical undersea infrastructure.

Flying under Nato command, UK crews will work with Norway, Denmark and Germany and take part in exercise Neptune Strike.

More than 1,200 British personnel deployed with the Carrier Strike Group.

RIAT Boscombe move secures show's future



LEAGUE OF HER OWN: Olwen is joined by Tranmere stars Luke McGee, David Kamara and Coniah Boyce-Clarke

Rovers on the ball for WAAF Olwen's 104th

A WORLD War II veteran who worked on Winston Churchill's War Room staff celebrated her 104th birthday in style at Tranmere Rovers' Remembrance match.



Olwen Cantlay was a special guest at Prenton Park, where Tranmere Rovers defeated Cheltenham Town 3–1, providing the perfect present.

The Women's Auxiliary Air Force veteran received a visit from first-team players Luke McGee, David Kamara and Coniah Boyce-Clarke, who presented her with a personalised football shirt bearing the words 'Olly 104'.

Simon Mander

THE ROYAL International Air Tattoo is to move to MOD Boscombe Down next year, organisers have confirmed.

Billed as the world's largest military airshow, it also funds the RAF Charitable Trust inspiring young people through education and engagements in air, space and technology.

RIAT chefs say the move from Fairford to the National Armaments Director Group site creates opportunities to enhance the visitor experience, strengthen international participation and introduce new attractions.

Chief of the Air Staff, ACM Sir Harv Smyth, said: "For more than 50 years, RIAT has brought together air forces, industry and aviation enthusiasts from around the world.

"My first role as a newly commissioned RAF Officer in the summer of 1991 was to work on RIAT's air display operations desk at Fairford – the support from the base and its team was superb then and has been every single year since. The RAF will continue its long-standing partnership with RAF Charitable Trust Enterprises to support RIAT for many years to come."

The move will secure the future for the airshow, with the availability of Fairford not guaranteed as the US Air Force continues to support operations in the Middle East.



The airshow will retain the same dates as already announced, July 16-18, and participating aircraft are due to be revealed in February.

Boscombe Down in Wiltshire held the TVS Battle of Britain Airshow in 1990 and Air Tournament International in 1992.

Charitable Trust Chairman AM Phil Osborn said: "This move to Boscombe Down provides the foundations needed to secure the airshow's long-term future for decades to come."



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HANDOVER: Gp Capt Buckle (*right*) takes over from Gp Capt Flynn at CFS

Buckle up at Cranwell

TRAINING ACE Gp Capt Jamie Buckle has taken over command of the RAF's Central Flying School.

He replaces outgoing chief Gp Capt Dave Flynn at the Cranwell-based unit which trains all UK Tri-Service air crew instructors.

A Cranwell spokesperson said: "Gp Capt Buckle takes command of an organisation with a proud heritage and a critical role in shaping the future of military aviation, building on the foundations laid by those who have served before."

Invictus call-up

INVICTUS GAMES organisers are hoping to recruit more than 200 volunteers to help run the 2027 event in Birmingham.

Go to: invictusgames2027.org/volunteer

Protector hits Ops milestone





BENCHMARK: Unmanned Protector has completed 1,000 flying hours since its introduction in November last year

Simon Mander

PROTECTOR REMOTELY piloted aircraft have completed 1,000 operational flying hours.

The Waddington-based platform, based on the MQ-9 Sky Guardian, flew its first mission in November 2025. Since then, it has used its suite of technology to safeguard frontline personnel during recent combat operations in the Middle East.

Air and Space Commander AM Mark Flewin said: "Protector has already proven to be a vital Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance asset since its first operational flight.

"It played a key role in supporting the protection of RAF personnel, UK allies and partners during the recent escalation in the Middle East by delivering critical overwatch and timely information to senior decision makers."

Protector is part of the UK's ISTAR fleet and represents the latest generation of remotely-piloted, medium-altitude, long-endurance aircraft.

Operated by XIII Sqn and 31 Sqn (The Goldstars) it can stay airborne for between 30 and 40 hours flying at altitudes of up to 50,000 feet. It is also certified to fly in all classes of UK and international airspace.

Further developments have seen it begin to carry precision-guided weapons, including the MBDA Brimstone 3A and Raytheon UK Paveway IV.

Armed Forces Minister Louise Sandher-Jones said: "Protector is a powerful example of the future of the RAF, harnessing cutting-edge technology to give our Armed Forces a vital operational advantage."

Protector took over from Reaper, flying sorties over Syria and Jordan on Operation Shader. Last October it also began routine flights over the Channel and North Sea to deter malign activities.

Allies plan post-war future for Ukraine

Simon Mander

TYPHOONS AND a Voyager will practise how Allies would support Ukraine to ensure the skies are safe to allow civilian airspace to reopen once the war in Ukraine ends as part of a series of manoeuvres this month.

UK CREWS are among thousands of military personnel from 11 nations taking part in Exercise Koalicja in Poland.

Under British command the exercise will help underpin the country's future security by enabling safer skies and seas and regenerating its Armed Forces.

Air Force personnel will join forces from Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden and Türkiye during the two-week drill to test command and control capability and the movement of personnel, equipment and supplies.

Turkish forces will stand up the MNF-U's maritime element in Istanbul, testing arrangements for mine clearance to allow commercial shipping to return safely to Ukraine's ports.

Britain continues to provide military aid and training to Ukrainian forces, while maintaining economic and diplomatic pressure on Russia.

The UK Government has pledged to step up defence spending to 2.7 per cent of GDP by 2029 and £300 billion over four years.



DEFENCE SECRETARY Wes Streeting and CAS ACM Sir Harv Smyth joined serving personnel, veterans and volunteers at Charing Cross Station for London Poppy Day.

The British Legion's flagship fundraising event involved more than 1,000 uniformed military personnel and 1,000 veterans, volunteers and supporters.

The event is supported by many civilian agencies, emergency services, businesses and influential figureheads and VIPs.

The Poppy Appeal is the Legion's largest fundraising campaign, dating back to 1921.

News



CHINOOKS FROM Odiham trained on board HMS Queen Elizabeth integrating the heavy-lift helicopter crews into the Royal Navy's strike groups.

Dubbed Exercise Hathi Pol, or Elephant Gate, the drills ensured 27 Sqn air and ground crews passed their maritime embarkation qualifications to operate self-sufficiently at sea.

Crews practice day and night landings, moving troops and carrying freight on underslung loads.

One test includes moving a 99ft-long Chinook weighing 12 tonnes down to the hangar deck using the ship's aircraft lift.

The helicopter fits with its nose overhanging the edge of the deck with its rotors spread.

The Chinook Force operates in multi-domain environments, including humanitarian relief operations and non-combatant evacuation tasks.

The full Monte



FUNDRAISING CYCLISTS netted more than £36,000 for Forces charity SSAFA after conquering a 200-mile ride across Italy to the hilltop monastery at Monte Cassino.

The original Benedictine abbey was destroyed during one of the fiercest battles during the World War II campaign to break through the German Gustav line and liberate Rome.

After climbing 3,000 metres to the site, the 14-strong team of riders visited the military cemetery below where more than 4,000 Allied fighters who died in the battle are buried.

SSAFA organiser Hannah Siddle said: "That spirit of shared endeavour carried the riders across every mile.

"The physical challenge was considerable, but it was the encouragement, friendship and shared purpose within the group that made the experience so powerful."

RAF SPORTS LOTTERY

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"I think the wider camaraderie and value of sport should not be underestimated. Sport not only improves your fitness, but can give you structure, goals and friendships, to name just a few of the benefits. Whilst sport might feel like a luxury when we are working at capacity and with the operational tempo increasing, the resilience sport helps foster will ultimately benefit our service in the longer term."

Squadron Leader Sam May

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2ND PRIZE £3,000

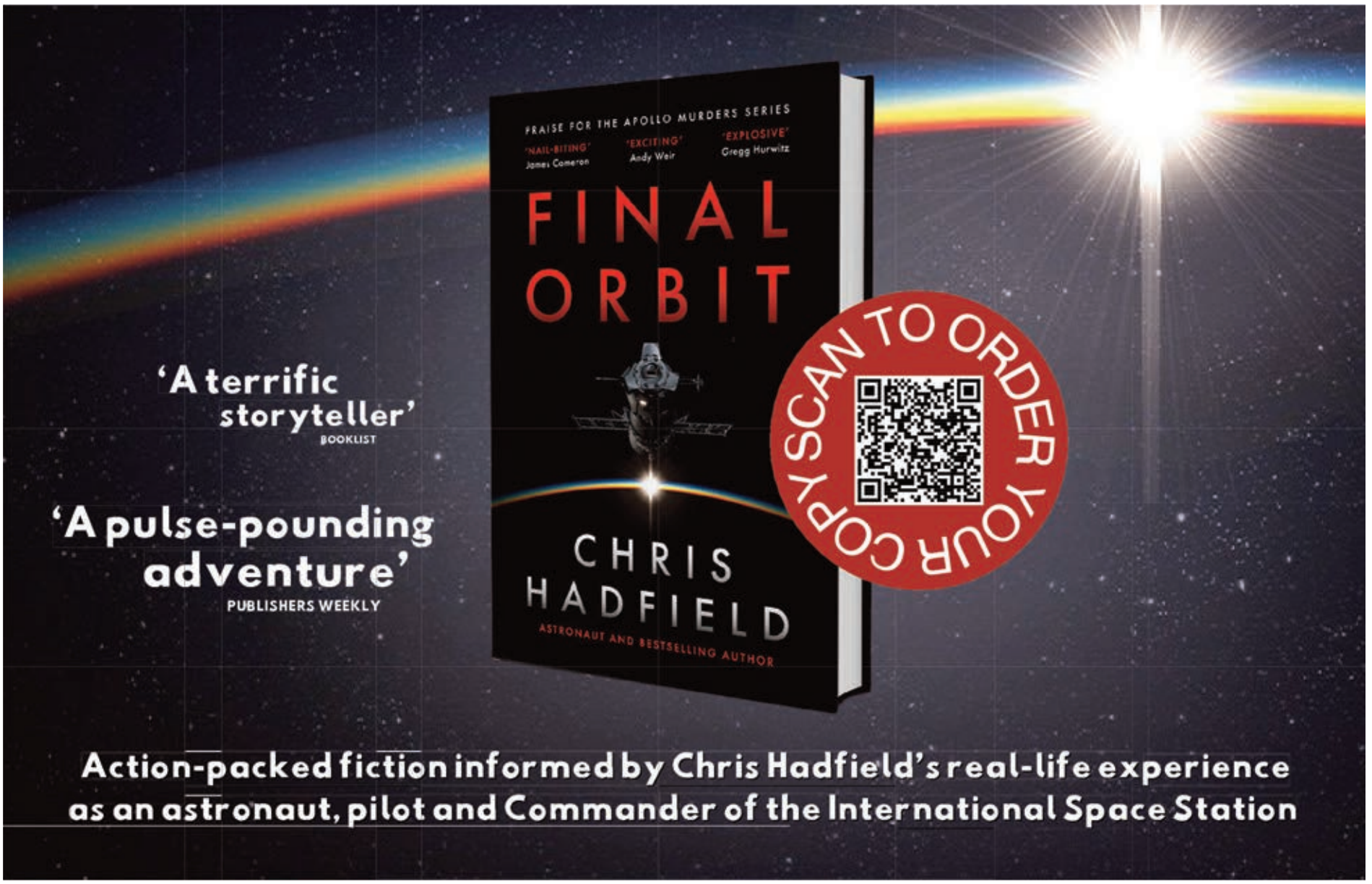
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CAS awards

A PAIR of Luftwaffe Typhoons brought the Chief of the Air Staff's Commendation Award Ceremony to a dramatic close with a flypast over Cranwell.

The event brought together 19 Commendation winners and WO Bali Flora, who received the third clasp to his Long Service Good Conduct Medal.

CAS ACM Sir Harv Smyth said: "Being back at Cranwell, the esteemed training ground where RAF officers are shaped to the highest standards, was especially meaningful. This unit plays a vital role ensuring our Armed Forces remain ready and resilient."

Sharron takes the plunge at Cranwell



TV STAR: Baroness Davies

OLYMPIC SWIMMING star Baroness Sharron Davies got a taste of military life as she joined a group of UK politicos at Cranwell.

The visit was part of the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme which gives MPs and members of the Lords first-hand experience of training and deployment to the frontline.

Baroness Davies narrowly lost out on gold at the 1980 Moscow Olympics in the games hit by allegations of widespread drug use amongst the Soviet bloc competitors.

After retiring from the sport she became a familiar TV figure as a commentator, and *Gladiators* star Amazon, and a campaigner for women's sport.

She was given a life peerage earlier this year and is the current patron of Disabled Sport England and SportsAid.

Typhoon French nuclear alert drill



NUCLEAR SCRAMBLE: UK Typhoon (*right*) and FAF Rafale prepare to take part in training exercise PHOTO: ARMEE DE L'AIR

Simon Mander

TYPHOONS CONDUCTED nuclear drills alongside French Rafale jets in an historic first.

The show of allied strength on Exercise Rummy marks a major step forward in the two countries' defence cooperation under the Northwood Declaration.

Defence Secretary Wes Streeting said: "This exercise marks a new chapter in the defence nuclear relationship between the UK and France.

"As Europe's nuclear powers, we have a shared responsibility to contribute to the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic region.

"This exercise demonstrates the depth of our partnership, the credibility of our deterrents and our determination to stand together in the face of emerging threats.

"In an increasingly dangerous world, our adversaries should be in no doubt: the UK and France remain united in our commitment to European security and to maintaining the deterrence that has helped preserve peace for generations."



WES STREETING

British and French forces operated side by side over the Mediterranean, after launching from Saint-Dizier Air Base in France, in a simulated nuclear strike mission.

The exercise did not involve nuclear weapons but focused on improving how our forces work together.

French Armed Forces Minister Catherine Vautrin said: "Having independent nuclear forces does not exclude coordination. Our nuclear cooperation with the United Kingdom keeps deepening."

Britain and France are close defence allies, each with a sovereign independent nuclear deterrent.

This is underpinned by the refreshed Lancaster House Agreement expanding the joint deployable force, boosting nuclear cooperation, and developing the next generation of high-tech weapons.

It complements the UK's £63 billion investment over the next four years to strengthen the UK's nuclear deterrent.

Britain will also buy 12 F-35A aircraft and join Nato's nuclear mission.



Jet set

JET ENGINES for military aeroplanes could be built in Britain for decades to come under a new £2.5 billion programme between the Government and Rolls-Royce.

The aerospace giant estimates that it could add £120 billion to the economy over its lifetime.

No new grants have been awarded at this stage, and any future government support will be subject to value-for-money approval processes.

It is also subject to agreement on terms and conditions with Rolls-Royce.

Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds said: "It represents a big step forward in the Prime Minister's plan to reindustrialise Britain.

"The Industrial Strategy is creating the right conditions for companies to invest, create jobs and secure future military air capability."

Rolls-Royce chief Tufan Erginbilgic added: "The technology, engineering skills and industrial capabilities developed through this agreement could be used in both passenger and military plane engines, boosting the UK's national security at a time of global uncertainty.

"It will develop technologies, electronic systems, advanced manufacturing and the use of robotics and AI."

Feature WWII survivor

Ronnie's U.S. Re

Family and air chief fly to California to honour Halifax tail-end Charlie, 105

A 105-YEAR-OLD wartime rear gunner on a Halifax Bomber will mark Remembrance in America at a special ceremony with his family.

As a 'tail-end Charlie', Ronnie Holdsworth wasn't expected to survive more than three air raids but flew 32 missions with 158 Sqn.

This month members of his family will travel to his California retirement home, with video messages from the Lord Mayor of Bradford and the International Bomber Command Centre near Lincoln.

"We're taking Remembrance Sunday to Ronnie," says great-niece Marlow FM presenter Angie Burns. "He's returned to the UK over the years for reunions with 158 Sqn, but he can no longer travel."

Ronnie's retirement home in Bakersfield is organising a special event for him and other veterans.

"Ronnie's war service is incredible. He is one of the world's last surviving World War II airmen," said Angie.

And like many aircrew, he took a talisman on every raid. "Our pilot wouldn't let us fly without them," says Ronnie. "Some guys had a flag or mascot, I had a little bag of lucky charms."

One of eight children, Ronnie signed up for the RAF in 1940. "I didn't tell my parents I had volunteered. My brother Stanley volunteered for the Army, but I didn't want to go in the Army because I knew I might have to stay in for seven years," he said.

"When I got to RAF Catterick, I met my crew. We were all in a big room, gunners, navigators, pilots. We got to know each other and then a Scotsman called Jock, a pilot, came up to me and said, 'I need a gunner, how about it?'"

Ronnie trained as an aircraft mechanic in Nakuru, Kenya, before being posted to Madagascar, to work on Blenheims, and qualified for aircrew in 1943 when the RAF's bomber offensive was escalating.

He was stationed at the former RAF Lissett in the East Riding of Yorkshire and converted from twin-engined Vickers Wellingtons to the four-engined Handley Page Halifax.

He recalls the 1,000-bomber raid on the German city of Duisburg: "I've never seen so much fire in all my life. I remember thinking it must be terrible down there, but we did what we had to do.

"As a rear gunner, I was the only one who flew backwards. My job was to safeguard the aircraft from rear attacks. I was in that cramped, freezing turret for six or seven hours.

"I couldn't talk to anyone, if you started chirping on the intercom the pilot would tell you to shut up."

The crew came close to crashing



RIDING IN STYLE: Ronnie at US parade

near Duisburg on Christmas Eve, 1944. "We were coming up to the target. There was a big noise. We hit the target and on the way back the skipper said one of our oxygen tanks had been hit. He didn't know if the undercarriage would hold up. It shook me up, I thought 'I'm going to be a guest of Hitler's for Christmas.'"

The plane did an emergency landing at the former RAF Carnaby near Bridlington – one of just three emergency landing grounds in the UK for bombers returning from missions over Occupied Europe.

"We all piled out and saw the damage – a hole in the side of the plane," says Ronnie.

His last mission was near Berlin on January 16, 1945. "It felt like a load had been taken off, but one crew we knew well didn't make it that night," he says.

"We didn't really make friends with many others in other squadrons because we never knew if they'd come back. We knew if they hadn't made it back when we returned to base and saw their bicycle was still there.

"If we had free time we'd go to the local pub for a pint and we'd usually take our bicycles."

Ronnie is hoping to acquire an original RAF flight jacket to wear at his retirement home.

UK Air Attaché Air Cdre Andy Chisolm will fly to Bakersfield for the service to present a signed framed photo of a Halifax Bomber from CAS, ACM Sir Harv Smyth.

President Trump has already sent a letter of gratitude and birthday wishes to Ronnie, as he recently turned 105.

Until 2008, Ronnie attended 158 Sqn reunions and wrote to his crew navigator, until he died in the 1990s. In America, Ronnie has taken part in many veterans' events and on his centenary he took to the skies again, in a 1940s biplane. On his 105th birthday he rode in a tank.

Angie said: "He's very humble and still has a sense of humour. His crew nicknamed him Chico because he was from a musical family and liked to dance. He still does a dance class every day.

"People say 'there aren't any war veterans left now,' – well, we want the world to know that Ronnie is still here. A Bradford man who flew backwards, in a cramped, isolating, freezing turret, for hours, on dangerous raids, day and night.

"Growing up, I didn't know or appreciate Ronnie's war service because he and family didn't talk about it. When Servicemen came home, they just got on with their lives."

IBCC Chairman AM Sir Baz North said: "Through the stories told to me by my uncle Sid who was a rear gunner on Wellingtons, I am intimately familiar with the psychological and physical challenges that you had to endure as a tail-end Charlie.

"As we pay respect to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice, I trust that you will rest easy knowing how committed the IBCC is in maintaining a comprehensive record of those who served in Bomber Command; we will remember them."

IBCC Trustee Dave Gilbert, who has documented Ronnie's RAF career, said: "This book offers a glimpse, not just into extraordinary events, but into the character of the man who lived them. Your warmth, your quiet determination, and your generosity of spirit shine through every page.

"It has been my great honour to help preserve these memories here for you – and for those who come after us – and to celebrate not just a life of service, but also a remarkable example of how to keep living it."



HONOURED GUEST: Ronnie at a veterans event in Kern County, California



CLOSE-KNIT: Ronnie Ho

by Simon Mander

emembrance



“We didn’t make friends with other crews...

... we didn’t know if they would be back”



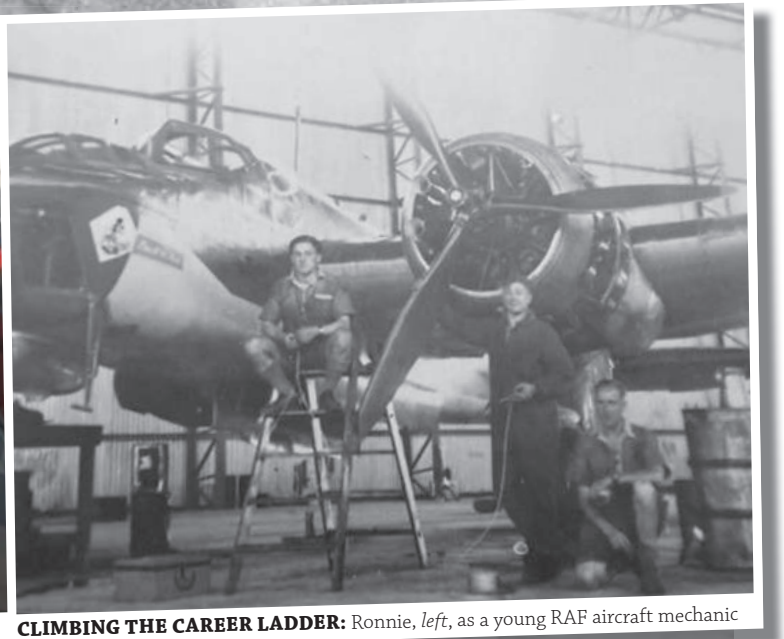
LONELY JOB: Ronnie, *below*, when he was a tail-end Charlie facing backwards in the cramped, lonely and freezing gun turret of a Halifax bomber like the one pictured



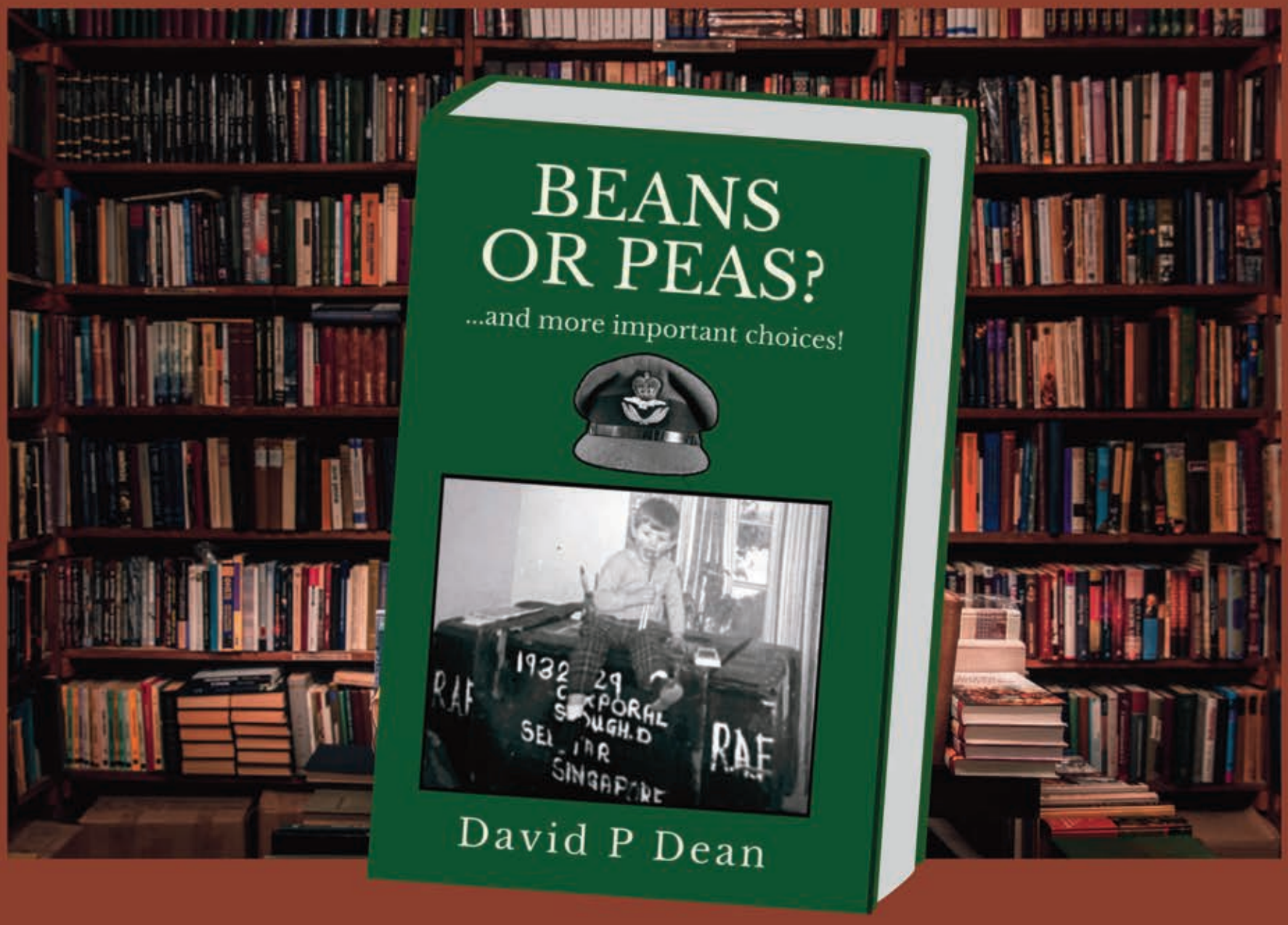
ldsworth (*rear, second left*) with fellow aircrew members



FLYING AGAIN: Ronnie took to the skies in the U.S. to celebrate a recent birthday



CLIMBING THE CAREER LADDER: Ronnie, *left*, as a young RAF aircraft mechanic



This non-fiction memoir tells the story of a disillusioned young man who, unable to fulfill his potential as a dancer, decides to join the RAF Boy Entrant Scheme in the mid '50s as a trainee cook.

It's the tale of an ordinary, often rebellious, but caring young man who blunders from disaster to disaster in the days of National Service as a cook on an RAF station in Middle England, told in the first person; a rollicking irreverent depiction of life from seventy years ago.

There is plenty of bawdy humour, with sexual encounters never far away, and authority, of course, is snubbed at every possible opportunity. An interesting insight into life on an RAF station in the '50s that goes beyond station life and ventures into the private turmoil encountered by those who stepped up to support their country.

Join Dixie as he ventures from continent to continent, country to country and ultimately from fecklessness to faithfulness.

A testimonial to enduring love

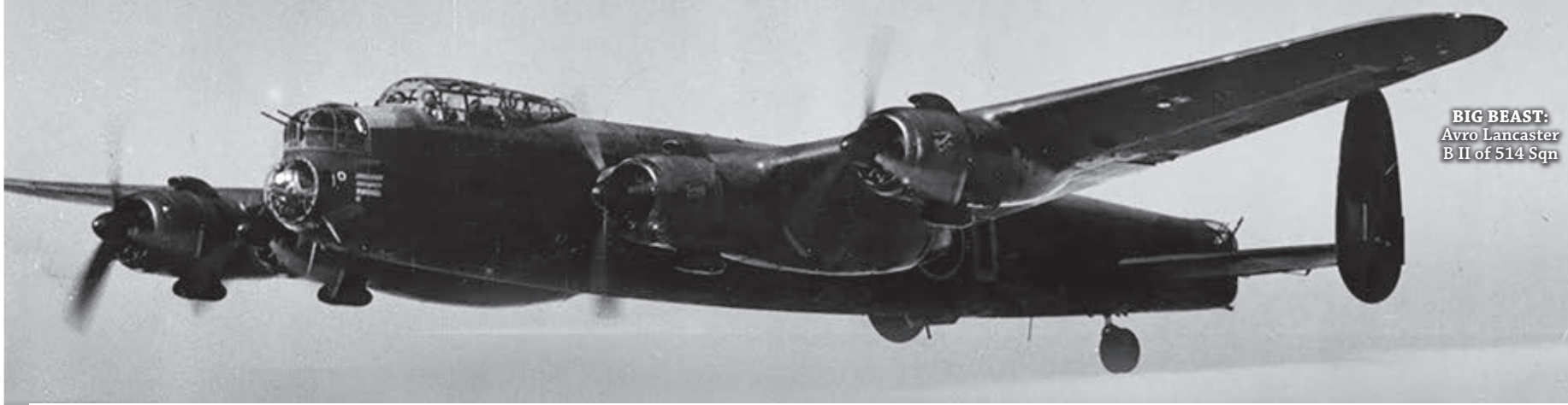
A whopping 600 pages!

Out on Amazon

Feature

Life with a Lanc

Keeping the Second World War bomber icon airborne



BIG BEAST: Avro Lancaster B II of 514 Sqn

ACCLAIMED AVIATION historian and author Michael Napier, a former Tornado pilot, gives a fascinating insight into life on an operational Avro Lancaster squadron during World War II in his latest book, *Lancaster: Twenty-Four Hours on a Squadron*.

It brings to life not only the aircrew but also the many men and women on the ground whose combined efforts kept the bombers flying. Using over 200 first-hand accounts it describes the activities and life of aircrew, ground maintenance personnel, mission planners and support personnel.

The following is an extract from the book.

THE MOST successful – and well-known – heavy bomber flown by the RAF during World War II, the Avro Type 683 Lancaster remains one of the most enduring symbols of RAF, and indeed British, history. Some 7,377 Lancasters were built, eventually equipping 60 squadrons in Bomber Command. Many of the most daring and spectacular bombing raids of the war were carried out in Lancasters, such as the daylight attack on the MAN diesel factory at Augsburg in April 1942, the 'Dambusters' raid in May 1943 and the sinking of the Tirpitz in November 1944. By the end of the war, ten Victoria Crosses (VC) had been awarded to Lancaster aircrew.

Manchester

Although it entered service in late 1941, the four-engined Lancaster had its origins in a pre-war air staff requirement for a twin-engined medium bomber. In response to the specification which had been issued in 1936, A.V. Roe & Company Limited (Avro) produced the Type 679 Manchester, which was powered by a revolutionary new type of engine, the Rolls-Royce Vulture. In this ingenious engine design, the 24 cylinders were in an unconventional 'X' configuration to produce a remarkable 1,800hp at full power – or almost



MISSION-READY: Loaded Lancaster bomb bay

double that of the contemporary Merlin II engine. Consequently, on paper at least, the Manchester should be able to match the performance of any four-engined bomber. The Manchester first flew on 25 July 1939 and entered front-line service with 207 Sqn in November 1940. Eventually the type was to equip eight Bomber Command squadrons, but unfortunately, the Manchester was not a success. The Vulture engine proved to be extremely unreliable, suffering numerous failures which at the time were diagnosed as being due to poor design and manufacturing quality, but subsequent analysis suggests that the main cause was propeller technology: the propellers of the day could not absorb and transmit the enormous power output, causing the engines to become overloaded and consequently fail.

Meanwhile, in addressing the failings of the Vulture, Avro chief designer Roy Chadwick proposed the Type 683 Manchester B III, which would be powered instead by four Merlin XX engines. The prototype Manchester B III made its maiden flight in January 1941 and by the time the second prototype had flown on 13 May 1941, the type had been rechristened the Lancaster.

The two main operational variants of the Lancaster were the B I, of which 3,425 were constructed, and which was powered by Rolls-Royce Merlin engines, and the B III, of which 3,039 were built and which was an identical airframe to the B I but was powered by American Packard-built Merlin engines. In fact, the airframes were interchangeable and sometimes in-service engine changes meant that a B I became a B III or vice-versa.

The B II differed from the previous three variants by being fitted with air-cooled Bristol Hercules engines. As a result, its propellers rotated in an anti-clockwise direction, as opposed to the clockwise rotation of the Merlin-powered propellers, but more importantly it was less fuel efficient than the Merlin-engine variants. Brian Haslam, a pilot with 514 Sqn, 'was not keen on the Lancaster B II … for a start they didn't look right and more practically you would not get the petrol economy from a Hercules that you could get from a Merlin.'

44 Squadron

The first front-line unit to receive the Lancaster B I was 44 Sqn, based at RAF Waddington in December 1941; the Lancaster made its operational debut with the squadron on a mine-laying operation on the evening of 3 March 1942. A second squadron, 97 Sqn based at RAF Coningsby, began to re-equip with the Lancaster B I in January, before moving to RAF Woodhall Spa in March. After that, the remaining squadrons in 5 Group, 207 Sqn at RAF Bottesford, 61 Sqn at RAF Woolfox Lodge, 83 Sqn at RAF Scampton and 106 Sqn at RAF Coningsby, all followed in turn over the next five months. The squadrons of 1 Group followed suit the next year. All of these units were equipped with the Lancaster B I or B III variants. The Lancaster B II was initially issued to a single flight on 61 Sqn, but these were passed on to 115 Sqn at RAF East Wretham. Both 115 Sqn and 514 Sqn operated the Lancaster B II briefly, before the variant was exchanged for B I or B III aircraft. Similarly, the squadrons of 6 (Canadian) Group, namely 408 Sqn, 426 Sqn and 432 Sqn (at RAF Linton-on-Ouse and RAF East Moor) only operated the Lancaster for a brief period before they re-equipped with later marks of the Halifax; they had been issued with the Lancaster B II because of the commonality of its engines with the Handley Page Halifax-flying units in the same group.

The Handling Notes for pilots of the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) who flew many types, delivering aircraft from factories and maintenance units noted that, 'the Lancaster is perhaps the easiest (four-engine) aircraft to fly.' Indeed Arnold Watson, who test flew all aircraft for the ATA, wrote of the Lancaster, 'what a delightful machine to fly. She seemed to have no vices on take-off, in flight or landing. It's almost true to say she is as simple and safe as the Anson. No higher praise is possible.'

Reader offer



READERS OF *RAF News* can enjoy an exclusive £10 discount on *Lancaster: Twenty-Four Hours on a Squadron* by Michael Napier (Evro Publishing). Special price: £25 (normally £35). Simply visit evropublishing.com and enter the promotional code EVRO2026RAF at checkout to claim your discount.

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.

HELP for HEROES

Help for Heroes is there for anyone who’s worn the uniform, for as long as it takes. Find out more at **helpforheroes.org.uk/get-help**.

Story of remarkable airman **Competition**

Buchenwald survivor

Navigator endured horrors of brutal PoW camp and fought for recognition of airmen and Special Ops agents



OFFICER: Stanley Booker after the war



'GARDENER': Stanley as Pierre Lecomte



CAMPAIGNER: Stanley Booker laying a Remembrance wreath at Buchenwald

IF EVER a book lived up to its title, this is it. In *Airman, Prisoner, Saviour, Spy: The Remarkable Story of Squadron Leader Stanley Booker MBE, Buchenwald Survivor and Cold War Spy* (grubstreet.co.uk) the experienced aviation author Sean Feast chronicles the life of this amazing RAF officer who died last year, aged 102. It is an inspirational account from start to finish.

Fg Off Stanley Booker was a 22-year-old navigator with No. 10 Sqn in Bomber Command in 1944 when his life changed for ever.

Resistance

On his eighth sortie, an attack on the Trappes marshalling yards west of Paris on June 2, 1944, his Halifax was hit by two bursts of fire from a German night fighter. The pilot and wireless operator were killed trying to keep the aircraft flying, to allow the others to parachute into the French countryside.

Assisted by brave members of the Resistance, Stanley was dressed in civilian clothes, assumed the identity of a gardener, Pierre Lecomte, and carried documents to be passed to the Free French authorities in London. However, he was betrayed in Paris a month later and arrested. He was brutally treated in Fresnes prison and suffered a vicious and degrading Gestapo interrogation at their Avenue Foch headquarters in Paris, which left him with lasting injuries.

When the Germans evacuated Paris, Stanley was one of 168 captured Allied airmen, members of the French Resistance and SOE agents on the last German train to leave the city. The cattle trucks trundled east towards Weimar.

Their destination was Buchenwald concentration camp. The book conveys the sheer hell of Buchenwald. It was a place of death. The horrors that Stanley witnessed at Buchenwald over eight weeks remained with him throughout his life.

Scheduled for execution, Stanley and his colleagues were spared when a passing Luftwaffe officer investigating a recent air raid heard about their existence and sought their transfer to Luftwaffe custody. They were a pitiful sight on arrival at Stalag Luft III at Sagan in October 1944.



FAKE ID: French Resistance operatives gave Stanley fake papers declaring that he was a gardener named Pierre Lecomte

Red Army

Stanley recounted that conditions in Sagan resembled a less comfortable RAF overseas mess. The Red Army's rapid advance led to the camp's evacuation on the night of January 27-28, 1945. Prisoners headed west along snowbound roads. The risk of frostbite and the lack of food were major concerns.

Eventually, Stanley and many others made it to Luckenwalde, an overcrowded camp south of Berlin, where conditions were deplorable. Stanley recalled the camp's liberation by the Soviets. Despite the delays in repatriation, he remembered how friendly they were.

Returning home to resume his RAF career, Stanley assumed a specialist administrative role with the sad task of disposing of surplus aircraft. The author observes that this was a tame reintroduction to Service life and a chance to fly to all corners of the country but notes that already Stanley was exhibiting behaviour that would now be diagnosed as the early stages of post-traumatic stress disorder.

However, Stanley kept going and played his part in the airlift to supply Berlin which was blockaded by the Soviets in 1948-49. He flew on 227 trips, amounting to 480 airlift hours.

For over six years, from the early 1950s, Stanley was engaged in intelligence work, notably in Berlin where the building of new Soviet airfields in East Germany was his main concern. He then enjoyed flying again as a navigator on Shackleton long-range maritime patrol aircraft. A brief return to Berlin followed in 1961-62. Here Stanley saw the damage done by the traitor George Blake, who had previously worked in a neighbouring office.

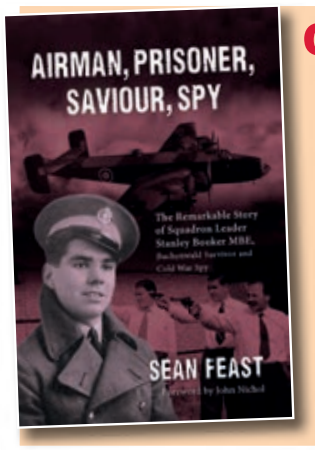
After further postings, including two years in RAF intelligence operations in Gibraltar and the award of an MBE, he retired from the Service in 1973.

Stanley now redoubled his efforts to broaden understanding and gain official recognition of the suffering endured by airmen and SOE agents at Buchenwald. He lived by the words inscribed on the Buchenwald memorial: 'It is the duty of the living to honour the dead.' His unstinting and successful efforts to achieve these goals are central to the final part of the book.

The author spoke with Stanley and made excellent use of the Booker family archives and numerous other sources. The book is well illustrated, with helpful endnotes.

It is indeed a remarkable story.

Review by Alastair Noble



Copies up for grabs

YOU COULD win a copy of this excellent book – for your chance to own one, answer the following question:

How old was Stanley Booker when he died last year?

Win!

Email your answer, marked Stanley Booker 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 November 27. Please include your full postal address.

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Dunkirk and D-Day veteran dies at 107

ALBERT 'COLIN' COLE, who has died aged 107, served as a wireless operator on RAF air-sea rescue launches during the evacuation from Dunkirk and four years later he patrolled off the Normandy coast during the D-Day landings.

The son of a former World War I Royal Flying Corps veteran, he became a special constable with the Metropolitan Police in 1938 but, with war looming in 1939, he joined the RAF and trained as a wireless operator/air gunner.

After completing his training, he joined No II Squadron in Essex. Equipped with the Westland Lysander, the squadron flew in the Army co-operation role.

Injured whilst refuelling an aircraft, the non-swimmer Cole transferred to the RAF marine branch, completed his training as a wireless operator and joined the crew of High-Speed Launch 126 (HSL 126).

Operating primarily out of Newhaven, the 64-foot-long launch patrolled the English Channel and southern North Sea ready to rescue airmen who had ditched their aircraft or had been forced to bail out.

During the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk in June 1940, Cole and his nine crewmates patrolled the beaches during Operation Dynamo, rescuing stranded soldiers. Operating close to the shore, their launch came under heavy fire in the crowded waters. With limited capacity to house survivors, HSL 126 made two or three trips across the English Channel each day pulling "anyone who was in trouble" out of the sea.

The Air-Sea Rescue organisation maintained rescue launches and aircraft at immediate readiness for call-outs and, with the scale of operations in the area patrolled by HSL 126, the launch crews rescued many airmen who owed their lives to Cole and his colleagues. These included Allied and German airmen, and, on occasions, the 10-man crews of USAAF heavy bombers picked up from their life rafts or lifeboats dropped from the air.

During the ill-fated Dieppe operation in August 1942, five HSLs from Newhaven patrolled the English Channel to pick up downed airmen. Losses of aircraft was high, and the HSL crews were in constant action with some coming under heavy fire from enemy aircraft.

On the night of June 5, 1944, HSL 126, together with other launches, headed for the Normandy coast to patrol off shore ready to collect aircrew and glider-borne troops brought down over the sea. Throughout the following days of the build-up of the invading forces, constant patrols close to the shore were maintained, ready to rescue downed airmen in the sea.

At the end of the war, Cole was demobbed as a sergeant and then trained as a teacher at Cheltenham College before taking up a post in London. He later moved to Shropshire, where he settled.

> "No salt, walk the dog every day and have a glass of Merlot in the evening"

Cole was a pillar of the local community. He was a devoted supporter of the British Legion and sold poppies for Remembrance Day until very late in his life. Aged 96, he volunteered for the Mercia police and was based at Oswestry Police Station as a CCTV operator. His colleagues described him as "remarkable for his age and a valuable member of the team – a real gentleman".

Travelling alone, he visited his family in Scotland every year. When he was 99, they arranged for him to visit RAF Lossiemouth, the home of his old No. II Squadron.

He received VIP treatment and was able to climb the ladder unaided to sit in the cockpit of one of the squadron's Typhoon fighters.

When asked what his secret was for such a long life, he replied, "no salt, walk the dog every day and have a glass of Merlot in the evening." He lived independently until a month before his death.



OLD KING COLE: 'Colin' climbed the ladder unaided into the cockpit of a Typhoon aged 99 during a visit to RAF Lossiemouth

Motoring Ford Mustang 2026 (from £57,670 otr)

Tim Morris









CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK: Our man Tim's daughter, Tilly, drove the Mustang on Route 66

Teenage dream

THIS WEEK I am, once again, driving a motoring icon. THE action machine of the silver screen is back. Ladies and gentleman, I give you the Ford Mustang, in its natural environment… Hollywood.

Yes, we're at Warner Brothers studios and my daughter, Tilly, wants to do some of the driving. What could possibly go wrong?

You can read more about our destination in the next edition's Travel section, but right here, we're interested in the car we've lived with for almost 1,000 miles, on a road trip that's taken in Route 66, Pacific Coast Highway and Mulholland Drive. At one point, I even got lost in Beverley Hills and ended up driving it down what turned out to be a very private driveway, much to the interest of the two heavily-armed security guards at the end. Well, it was Leo DiCaprio's gaff, I later discovered. Oops.

Exterior

Nothing significant has changed on the outside since I reviewed the Mustang in the UK last year. Whichever side of the pond you drive it, it looks stunning, with narrow headlights, menacing bonnet vents and a refreshingly uncluttered tail. It remains faithful to the 1960s legend that started it all, with simple rear lights and an iconic profile. Even in a rare Southern Cali downpour, it looks amazing.

Interior

The cabin quality is much more upmarket than Mustangs of old and you now get a dual-screen combo that pairs a 12.4-inch digital instrument binnacle with a 13.2-inch infotainment panel. It incorporates the latest tech, but looks traditionally simple. The clocks, for example, can be set to mirror the chrome dials from the 60s classic and the handbrake looks like a conventional lever. Instead, it's a modern electronic set-up that, when the car is set to drift mode, locks the back wheels to allow for those movie style stunts. Brilliant!

The driving position remains bang on and there's plenty of space up-front. Rear seats are cramped, with tight leg and head room, due to the classic coupe design. You know what to expect though. It is an American sportscar, right?

On the road

Now, here is where we spot a few differences on this side of the pond because, for starters, there are far more options available, the most important of which is the choice of engines.

In the UK, the turbocharged 2.3 litre EcoBoost engine has now been phased out, so you can only buy the 5.0 V8. Not that I'm complaining about that, at all, because I do love a V8, but the cost difference is where this matters. We're talking about a Mustang starting price in the US being $32,995 (circa £24,670), verses £57,670 in the UK. I know, right?!

Anyhooo, roaring along Pacific Coast Highway, with the warm sea air caressing your face and the Beach Boys playing, you can understand why California loved the original version of this car so much. It is still the tourer of choice in this part of the world and prowls the highway with effortless style. On the winding narrow lanes of Cornwall, weighing the best part of two tons, it's no svelte gazelle, but this is its natural hunting ground. Here, this car is king.

Motoring doesn't get much better than this, driving old-school American muscle on an open highway, flanked by the glistening Pacific Ocean. It's a rocket ship on take-off and has so much power through the bends that it's an absolute hoot. Give the throttle a poke and the back-end nudges out effortlessly. Brilliant on the tight bends leading up to Griffith Observatory, or in the winding Hollywood Hills. As I said, the last time I tried to kill myself with this car, it's a package that allows you to sense the car's limitations and you soon adapt to drive like an American... Slow in, fast out... You'll live longer, that way.

On that note, it was onto Route 66 and out into the desert for a bit of right foot stretching. This is where Tilly took the wheel and what a drive for a 19-year-old! Starting at Warner Brothers Studios, we headed out until the desert stretched out in front of us like a scene from a science fiction film. This is where they shot the opening credits for *Knight Rider* back in the 80s. The sun setting into the desert, the roar of petrol power and a trail of dust streaming behind a Mustang that's tearing through the landscape at 155mph. That's a good day in the office!

0-62 mph in 4.9 seconds, drift mode for shredding tyres and a V8 engine that can turn worlds, that's in the car you can buy today in the UK. European regulations mean that Ford has to restrict power by around 50bhp, in comparison to the US car, but I'm sure you might be able to find a clumsy mechanic who might accidentally turn that off.

Ford Mustang 2026

Pros
- Fun-factor 9
- V8 straight-line power
- Slick manual gearbox
- What a soundtrack!

Cons
- Expensive to run in UK
- Hefty through the bends
- You will REALLY want to visit the USA



Verdict

The Ford Mustang offers a huge amount of drama for the money. It sounds like a Hollywood car chase and you can drive like a stunt performer with that trick handbrake/drift electronics. It brings the kind of smile to your face that needs to be surgically removed and refuses to yield to the green lobby in a world where modern regulations have all but outlawed such beasts. Like a character in a classic Hollywood Western, it is a lovable outlaw and, without a doubt, the star of the show.

ESPORTS

Cyberspace specialist Elia first esports high performance athlete

Daniel Abrahams

RAF ESPORT'S first high-performance athlete is proof not all gamers are couch potatoes.

With a degree in sports psychology and a background in semi-professional football, cyberspace communications specialist AS1 Stelios Elia is at the forefront of the Service's rapidly-expanding esports association.

He said: "I never dreamed it would reach these heights and it is still growing. If you'd told me I would help build a Tri-Service community and visit events across the globe, I would have laughed at you. To be the first esports high-performance sportsperson is incredible."

He added: "Esports brings so much to personnel. I sit with them before, after and in the moment during competitions, helping them regulate emotions to avoid over arousal to focus their APM [Actions Per Minute]."

Elia says gaming also helps with his cybersecurity role: "You learn how to communicate very well under extreme pressure. My job in cybersecurity demands this and esports enable this. I communicate with high-ranking officers, that requires accuracy, anything else can impact higher-level decision making. Esports enables this accuracy, and all personnel are learning this through gaming."

While gaining his degree at the University of Roehampton in south west London, Elia played semi-professional football for Greenwich Borough, and now plays for YouTube team Rebel FC, which is viewed by around 100,000 subscribers a week. He was also called up by the Cyprus Football Association to represent them at the FIFAe World Cup for Rocket League and has also coached Cyprus for the FIFAe Nations League.



SHOW TIME: The season 2 finals of BFBS' esports league, which saw three RAF teams – Stormshadows, Nighthawks and Typhoons – compete



TALENTED: Elia was also a semi-pro footballer

When he joined up four years ago, the aviator found esports in its very junior stages, with a small Rocket League community.

He said: "I set about facilitating a giant reboot, hosting trials to create the official RAF Representative Rocket League roster, that would play at the Inter-Services and internationally.

"Now, the RAF Stormshadows name is known in the professional Rocket League scene. We are now in a position where we host professionals on our channels."

Now able to use his coaching skills on a professional level, he saw the team finish in the top 16, top 9 and top 8 (out of 3500+ teams) in the Rocket League Championship Series (RLCS).

Along with AS1(T) Edward Nussey-White, the aviator helped stage the first Inter-Services championship in 2024, and now sees the RAF team travel abroad annually to compete at international tournaments, including the Allied Forces Esports Invitational in America.

Elia will be coaching the Combined Services (UKAF team) against seven other nations at the British Arena in Sunderland for the first-ever International Defence Esports Games (IDEG) in the coming weeks.

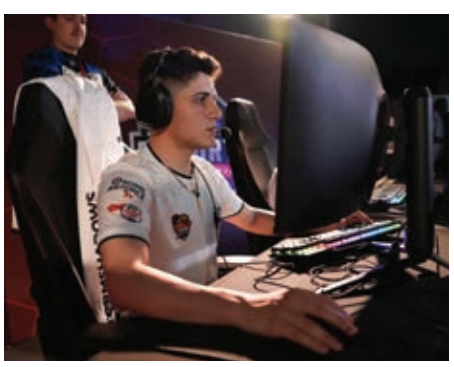
"We now have eight teams and are seeing professional gamers who are interested in joining the RAF – so that is the best example of what we are achieving," he said.

"We have arenas [gaming facilities] popping up all over, from Digby to Akrotiri and Waddington – it is growing – and personnel taking up esports is increasing every day.

"We currently have 150 personnel who do not have a team, but who compete nightly in our gaming community, so every aspect is possible. You can achieve whatever you want within your sport, not to mention displaying at numerous public events and air shows annually.

"We never stop advancing, pushing all the time."

● **Find out more about RAF esports at: discord.gg/GCmCFv7x8**



FOCUS: Gaming demands full concentration



YOUR SERVICE NEEDS YOU: Stelios wants esports to continue to grow

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

ANGLING

A late brace seals it for Mike



WHAT A BEAUTY: Sgt Michael Keightley with 31lb 13oz catch

Sgt saves best 'til last to take championship title

Sports Reporter

AN AMAZING last-gasp brace of catches saw Sgt Michael Keightley seal the Service's carp championship over Cpl Jamie Page at Horseshoe Lake, Sandhurst.

A field of 40 personnel gathered for the annual 72-hour event at the 62-acre site with 75 swims and a stock estimated at between 800 and 1,000 fish.

Spokesman Chf Tech Lloyd Moore said: "What a venue. What a match. Over 72 hours Horseshoe Lake delivered everything it is famous for: incredible carp, changing fortunes and a championship battle that went right down to the wire."

Scales tales

1) Sgt Michael Keightley, 163lb 02oz
2) Cpl Jamie Page,150lb 10oz
3) Sgt Jamie McFee, 137lb 08oz
Biggest Fish: WO Reg Verney, 36lb 10oz zip linear

WO Richard Cooke landed the first fish, a stunning scale-perfect common carp weighing 26lb 5oz.

Sgt Jamie McFee, Cpl Jamie Page, Sgt Dave Jones and Keightley then all steadily added to the scoreboard.

By the close of the second day, Keightley and McFee led, hot on their heels AS1 Chris Payne and Jones, as the second night unfolded, ensuring a battle at the top tightened further.

The weather on the final day would play its part as overnight rain saw increased carp activity.

McFee was rewarded in style with a stunning 34lb 8oz chestnut common, strengthening his grip at the top of the leaderboard.

Payne was mounting a challenge of his own, banking another brace to move into second place and keep the competition wide open.

With the final night upon them, anglers knew that a quick run of fish could completely change things. One of the standout moments of the championship belonged to WO Reg Verney, who landed a magnificent 36lb 10oz zip linear, the largest fish of the match.

At the sharp end of the competition, Page produced a late surge, banking a further three fish to move into first place. McFee slipped into second, with Keightley holding onto third, while Chf Tech Lloyd Moore had quietly pieced together an impressive run of fish.

McFee then saw his chances dented as a late catch slipped its hook.

Keightley's moment came as he bagged a 31lb 10oz mirror, then hooked an even bigger speciman, 31lb 13oz, to take top spot and win the championship.



RUNNER-UP: Cpl Jamie Page totalled over 150lb

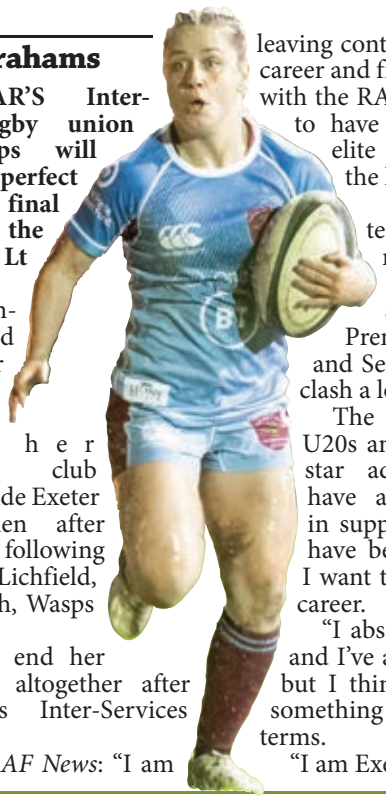


ZIP IT: WO Reg Verney takes bragging rights with huge linear

RUGBY UNION

The end is Nye for Lucy

Flt Lt aiming to finish playing days on a high at the Inter-Services



Daniel Abrahams

THIS YEAR'S Inter-Services rugby union championships will provide the perfect stage for the final bow for the RAF's Flt Lt Lucy Nye.

The scrum-half, 30, ended her 12-year topflight playing career with her hometown club Premier 15s side Exeter Chiefs women after two years, following stints at Lichfield, Loughborough, Wasps and Leicester.

And she'll end her playing days altogether after this season's Inter-Services competition.

Nye told *RAF News*: "I am leaving content with my rugby career and finishing the season with the RAF. I am so grateful to have been part of the elite athlete scheme for the last few years.

"In everyday terms, it will be nice to have a year where I am not spinning both Premiership rugby and Service rugby, which clash a lot fixture-wise."

The former England U20s and England Sevens star added: "The RAF have always been great in supporting me while I have been here, but now I want to kick on with my career.

"I absolutely love Chiefs and I've always done rugby, but I think it's nice to end something on your own terms.

"I am Exeter born and bred. I grew up there, worked at Sandy Park [Chief's home ground]. I can't be more grateful to have finished my career down here.

"Every life decision I have ever made has always been around rugby. That change will be a bit foreign to me, but I also feel at peace with my decision, so I think that's a sign that it's right for me. I'm going to miss the girls, but I'm leaving with a big smile on my face.

"I am lucky though that the RAF is a pretty similar environment, so I am really excited to kick on into the next chapter of my life.

"I am happy, and I am excited about it. I just want to finish on a high and go out on my terms."



DISTINGUISHED CAREER: Scrum-half Flt Lt Lucy Nye (*right*) offloads to Cpl Tyler Lewis during 2024 IS Army clash PHOTO: SBS

BOXING

Top honours to AS1 Smith

Sports Reporter

THE HISTORIC Churchill Hangar at RAF Northolt was transformed into a packed boxing arena as Service personnel and civilian athletes came together for an evening of high-quality amateur competition.

Boxers representing the RAF, Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), 3rd Battalion, Parachute Regiment (3 PARA), Islington Amateur Boxing Club, and the Patrick Wilson School of Boxing, Northolt, took part in an action-packed programme.

The evening opened with an all-RAF contest between AS1 Hopwood-Mairs (RAF Wittering) and AS1 Corbett (RAF Wyton). Hopwood-Mairs set the tone for the evening by securing a well-deserved victory.

Momentum remained with the RAF in the second contest as AS1 Smith produced a commanding performance against Pte Readings (3 PARA). Smith's skill, composure and work rate earned him a convincing win and ultimately the coveted Boxer of the Night award.



AS1 SMITH: Aviator was named Boxer of the Night after an impressive win against 3 PARA's Pte Reading

Bout three saw AS1 Brimicombe (RAF) and Pte Manuel (3 PARA) engage in one of the closest contests of the evening. Both athletes demonstrated exceptional determination, but Manuel edged it, claiming victory by split decision after three hard-fought rounds.

The Inter-Service rivalry continued when AR Kendall (RAF) faced Mr Bangura (MPS). Despite a spirited RAF performance, Bangura proved too strong on the night, taking a unanimous points victory.

Following the interval, the action continued with a further five contests featuring RAF boxers AS1 Cutting, AS1 Jacques, and AS1 Surridge, alongside Dogan and Justin representing the MPS and Pte Snow representing the Army.

The standout finale of the night saw Surridge (RAF) take on Justin (MPS) in an elite female contest. The two athletes went toe-to-toe over three fiercely contested three-minute rounds, exchanging skill and determination throughout. While Justin was awarded the victory, both boxers received a standing ovation from an appreciative crowd.

RAF Boxing spokesman Sqn Ldr Joel Sweeney praised the standard of boxing on display and the strong support from spectators.



STANDING OVATION: AS1 Surridge (*right*) beat Police star Justin in a humdinger

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

SKATEBOARDING

Life on the edge



PUTTING ON A SHOW: Competitors pull out all the stops at Flo Derby

All aboard for UKAF Skateboarding Jam

SKATEBOARDERS FROM the RAF, Army, Royal Navy and their US counterparts travelled to Derby to compete in the fifth UKAF Skateboarding Jam.

Organised by the RAF, the event featured a special guest – renowned US pro skateboarder Brandon Turner.

US Marine Zachary Sales said: "The UKAF's 5th Annual Skateboard Jam, hosted by the Royal Air Force, was an incredible event and I feel very lucky to have been able to witness it in person.

"It was amazing to see the RAF, Army, Royal Navy, and Marines come together for such a well-organised, almost Olympic-like, competition.

"Military skateboarding has grown into a strong international community over the years, and the UK is setting an impressive standard for what these events could become back home in the United States as well."



Flt Lt Charlie Turnbull, OIC of the event said: "This has been our biggest and best event yet. The atmosphere was electric, tricks were increasingly impressive, skaters enjoyed the park [Flo Derby] and we showed our US counterparts from @officialmilitaryskate what we're all about."

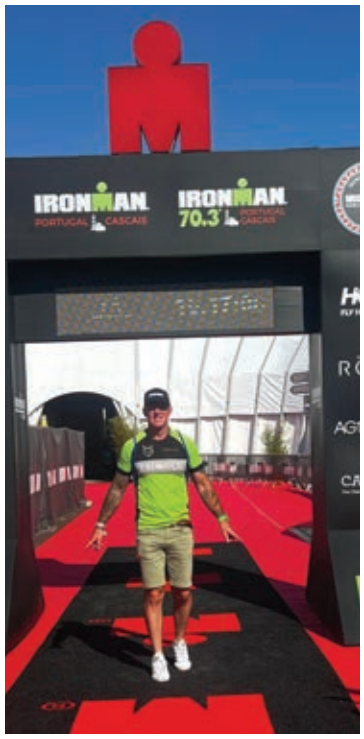
In the bowl competition, Army veteran Matt Hooper claimed first place with an impressive performance. Meanwhile, in the game of S.K.A.T.E – where participants must replicate each other's tricks – AS1 Matthew Brewster flipped his way to top spot.

RAF corporal Dom Brown said: "This was an incredible event. The level of skill shown by personnel clearly reflects the dedication and progress made this year. I also really enjoyed watching the demo by the experts."

Skateboarding across the three Services has ambitious plans for 2027, with numerous competitions and meet-ups scheduled.

Contact@RoyalAirForceSkateboarding on Instagram for more information.

TRIATHLON



FIRST BRIT: FS Scott Hill in Portugal

FS Hill is back to his best in Portugal

SERVICE TRIATHLON machine FS Scott Hill was the first British athlete past the post at the Ironman 70.3 in Cascais, Portugal.

The latest challenge in Hill's European tour saw the aviator take on the 1900m swim, 56-mile bike ride and 13.1-mile run, coming home seventh in his age group and 28th male overall.

Cosford-based Hill, said: "It was a race that's given me plenty to be proud of, a lot to reflect on and some valuable lessons to take forward.

"There were some real positives to take away from this one, and definitely some negatives too – for one the bike course was hilly and with the wind on the day it was a bit more tricky descending."

The result sees Hill back to his best after illness affected his performance at the Emilia Romagna Ironman event in Italy in September.

The aviator will be heading to Abu Dhabi for the World Long Distance Championships later this month.

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 pages of RAF Sport



Sgt Keightley's big fish of carp event

See p24

KARTING



SIXTH: AS1 Bailey Vernon-Higgs



EIGHTH: Cpl Tom Lucas

Jack's in Premier league as he takes the honours

WADDINGTON VULCANS missed IS karting endurance glory by just four points, while AS1 Jack Goring claimed the Premier-class championship to end a thrilling 2026 season.

RAF karting spokesman Sgt Rob Baptista said: "Waddington's Endurance crews showed that the RAF can challenge the strongest Navy and Army teams across a full season, while Goring's Premier title delivered a clear individual success. With strong finishes from other RAF drivers and teams, the Vulcans leave the championship having established themselves as a force to be reckoned with and with a firm foundation for the next campaign."

The Tri-Service competition culminated in a day of speed and skills at Whilton Mill, Daventry where AS1 Bailey Vernon-Higgs and AS1 Will Foulkes finished sixth overall on 416 points in Kart 150, while Cpl Tom Lucas and civilian associate Tye Edwards (51), secured eighth with 391 points, making RAF Waddington the leading airbase in the Endurance team standings.

In the Premier class, Goring provided one of the season's standout individual performances, securing the overall title with 215 points. He also finished 19 points clear of associate civilian runner-up Jack Twilley, who scored 196.

Army driver Major Ian Hodgkiss completed the overall podium on 177 points.



CLASS ACT: AS1 Jack Goring Photos: AS1(T) Edward Nussey-Waite

The Station/Unit Trophy also saw Waddington lead the RAF challenge.

The trophy combines points from the two highest-scoring teams representing each station or unit, rewarding collective performance rather than the results of a single entry.

Waddington's Vulcans finished second overall on 924 points, behind Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm on 971, with the Army third on 872.

The result confirmed Waddington's position as the top RAF station in the competition and kept the RAF in direct contention through to the final round.

MOTORSPORT

Championship second for RAF sidecar pairing

Daniel Abrahams

A FABULOUS runners-up spot in this year's British Sidecar Championship was the reward for Service speedsters at Brands Hatch in Kent.

After five hard-fought rounds, the aviator team of Cpl Rob Atkinson and Shane Colbrook, sitting second after a frustrating penultimate weekend at Donington Park, were aiming for a brace of wins, but ended up settling for second in the Champs after two third places.

"We headed into Brands for the final round of the British Championship with high expectations after taking double victories at this event last year," said Atkinson.

The weekend started well, with the RAF team qualifying first in class with a comfortable gap over the rest of the field.

Overnight their competitors made adjustments to step up their pace, with two major rivals now matching the aviators' qualifying time.

"We had tried to do the same thing but unfortunately we went in the wrong direction and lost time, resulting in two third place positions," said Atkinson.

"They were not the results we were hoping for but were enough to secure second place in the British Sidecar Cup championship."

Focus now turns to preparation for next season, with the team expecting to be back to an all-RAF set-up, with the injured Sgt Mark Middleton back as passenger alongside Atkinson.



SUCCESSFUL SEASON: The RAF sidecar team at Brands Hatch PHOTO: LC PHOTOGRAPHY

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HELP for HEROES

R'n'R



Mack's back – Return to Paradise

● See pages 4-5

Film reviews: page 3 & 8 + 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.

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Film

Think of You Often

Trailer: youtube.com/watch?v=XhQGwfCqtsA

Filmmaker's tribute to Lanc hero grandad

Pilot killed in action before birth of his son



GRANDSON'S REMEMBRANCE: A scene from Nick Southwell's film, *Think of You Often*

A FILMMAKER whose grandfather was killed in action during World War II has released a film for Remembrance that tells the story of the brave young Pilot Officer and his crewmates.

PO Anthony Jeaffreson Southwell, who flew Lancasters with 207 Sqn from RAF Bottesford, was 25 when he took off on a mine-laying operation over Danish waters on August 16, 1942. His aircraft, Lancaster R5616, never returned.

Now his grandson Nick Southwell has made a 10-minute film *Think of You Often* in tribute to the lost Lancaster crew.

Nick explained: "My father, Max, was not yet born when his own father was killed, and has spent his entire life knowing him only through photographs, letters and the stories passed down through our family.



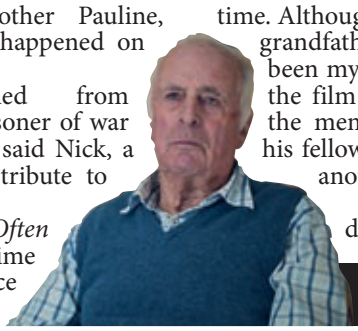
YOUNG PILOT: PO Anthony Southwell

"I've spent the last few months making the film, which brings my grandfather's story and that of his crew back to life through original wartime documents, interviews with my father and cinematic AI-assisted reconstructions.

"One of the most extraordinary elements is a letter written in October 1945 by Sgt Jack Read, a surviving member of the crew, to my grandmother Pauline, describing what happened on their final flight."

Jack returned from captivity as a prisoner of war and his letter is, said Nick, a deeply personal tribute to PO Southwell.

Think of You Often was released in time for Remembrance Sunday and can be viewed on Nick's YouTube channel Raccus Stories.



SON: Max Southwell never met his father

He added: "This is a story I've wanted to tell for a very long time. Although I never met my grandfather, he's always been my hero, and I hope the film might help keep the memory of him and his fellow airmen alive for another generation.

"The more I've discovered about my grandfather and what he and so many other Servicemen and women went through, the prouder I've become.

"I feel my generation is one of the last to have a real, personal connection to those who lived through the Second World War.

"I think of him [my grandfather] all the time. He's always been a presence in my life and I've always felt so much for my father, who never had the chance to meet his own dad."

● **Go to: raccus.com for more information.**

Film Review

Your Mother Your Mother Your Mother (15)

In cinemas November 20

The hitman single father



'DEVOUT': Muslim assassin Latif (*Mahershala Ali*)

A RECENTLY widowed hitman refuses to take a job but finds himself caught between rival factions, fighting for survival whilst trying to be a father of three in Bassam Tariq's stylish action thriller.

Latif (Mahershala Ali) is a devout Muslim and self-styled samurai who has, until now, killed for money, justifying it to himself as part of his 'code' and refusing to use a gun, even.

But now Mike (Laith Nakli) has tasked him with killing Korean veteran turned moral crusader Pastor Hwan (Jon Cho). Evidently, this is because the Pastor has launched a literal war against pornography, whilst Mike's son Hatty (Abubakr Ali) is running a 'Halal-certified' Muslim pornography business out of his mansion.

More focused on finding breast milk for his baby, as his recently deceased wife's supply of pouches is running low, Latif reluctantly finds himself at the centre of this battle, sword in hand and baby strapped to his chest.

Having failed to get a *Blade* remake off the ground after several years of setbacks, Ali, who was set to star, and Tariq, who was brought on as one of several directors attached to the project, have put their skills to use in this film about an avenger of sorts.

For a film packed with well-choreographed violence, it can be surprisingly meditative, with faith playing a large part in all the characters' lives, to say nothing of the kindly Mormon neighbours with the good Wi-Fi. *Your Mother* features some well-constructed, tense action, sleekly shot and accompanied by a cool score from Son Lux.

Perhaps testing the limits of our sympathy for this pretty irredeemable character, watching Latif taking down a roomful of goons is electric.

Four roundels out of five

Review by Sam Cooney

Theatre

dinnerladies

UK tour

Second helping for Sue

CORONATION STREET favourite Sue Cleaver (Eileen Grimshaw) is to star as Jean in the 2027 tour of Victoria Wood's beloved sitcom *dinnerladies*.



Cleaver, *pictured*, who takes on the role made famous by Anne Reid in the TV show, said: "I am beyond thrilled to be joining the cast of *dinnerladies* on tour: I was honoured to have a regular role on the show itself and to work alongside the legendary Victoria Wood many moons ago so it's an absolute joy to be returning to play such a fantastic character as feisty Jean.

"I cannot wait to get out on the road and whip up a storm in the kitchen alongside such a stellar cast."

Les Dennis leads the cast as dependable maintenance man Stan and Karen Henthorn (*EastEnders*) is sharp-tongued Dolly. Amy Drake (*Brassic, Alma's Not Normal*) will be filling Wood's role as kind-hearted deputy canteen manager Bren, Gemma Dobson (*A Taste of Honey; Rita, Sue and Bob Too*) plays cynical young Twinkle, and her endearingly naive co-worker Anita will be played by Faye Weerasinghe (*Spitting Image The Musical*).

Henthorn said: "This is a proper dream come true for me. I used to love watching *dinnerladies* as it was such a hilarious and heartwarming sitcom so I cannot wait to bring the snooty snipes from Dolly to life on stage and hear audiences laughing up and down the country."

Originally created, written and starring comedy legend Wood, *dinnerladies* ran for two acclaimed series and 16 episodes between 1998 and 2000. Set in the canteen of fictional Manchester factory HWD Components, the sitcom followed the lives, friendships and workplace dramas of the staff and regulars who gathered there every day.

The tour starts at the Churchill Theatre, Bromley on January 23 and finishes at the Congress Theatre, Eastbourne on March 27.

● **Go to: dinnerladiestheplay.co.uk for full details.**

Theatre
Porridge
UK tour



WRITING GENIUSES: Ian La Frenais and Dick Clement created hit sitcom *Porridge*

Another bit of *Porridge* for Fletcher and Godber

A NEW adaptation of Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais' classic TV comedy series *Porridge* starts a UK tour from September 2027 and tickets are on sale now.

The iconic BBC sitcom is brought to life on stage with perfectly observed characters in some of their most memorable moments – all delivered by a cast of three. Casting is still to be announced.

Join career criminal Fletcher and wide-eyed cellmate Godber (famously played by Ronnie Barker and Richard Beckinsale respectively in the TV show), as they navigate life inside Her Majesty's Prison Slade.



Clement and La Frenais (*Whatever Happened to the Likely Lads?, Porridge, Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* and *Lovejoy*) have enjoyed a unique creative partnership in television, movies and theatre, spanning more than five decades.

Clement said: "Someone once pointed out that the best comedies thrive in captive situations. He or she quoted *Steptoe and Son*, where a father and son are shackled together trying to get along and nearly come to blows in the process.

"If you accept that premise, then *Porridge* is the ultimate example, where our characters are literally locked up behind bars. Even the Prison Officers suffer in a similar way where Mr Barrowclough, not looking forward to going home to a wife we never meet, says plaintively: 'Sometimes I wish I was in here with you lot'.

Clement added: "I look forward to seeing our creation in the theatre. If the audience feels confined, they can of course make a run for it. Instead, the hope is that they will enjoy sharing the familiar experiences of Fletcher, Godber, Mr Mackay and the entire team. And when they have finished laughing, they will find that the doors to the street are unlocked."

Samuel Freeman, the show's director (*inset left*), said: "I am thrilled at the opportunity to bring *Porridge* back to the stage, touring across the UK in 2027. Dick and Ian's script contains so many great moments of this national treasure of a British sitcom, bottled up into one fantastic evening of entertainment, full of unforgettable characters, razor sharp wit and the heartfelt truth of a friendship found in one of the toughest places."

The tour begins in Bath on September 11 and culminates at BEAM, Hertford on November 12, 2027.

● **Go to: porridge.onstage.co.uk for more information.**

TV
Return to Paradise
BBC iPlayer

Return of the Mack



YEARNING: Mack misses pathologist Glenn, *above*, but is reunited with mum Jillian, *main photo*

Mackenzie's back in Dolphin Cove... a

DOLPHIN COVE'S favourite outcast and wedding wrecker Det Sgt Mackenzie 'Mack' Clarke (Anna Samson) is back in series 3 of *Return to Paradise* on BBC One.

Following the shocking departure of pathologist Glenn Strong (Tai Hara), Mack throws herself into her workload alongside the ever-faithful detective Senior Constable Colin Cartwright (Lloyd Griffith).

Mack (*pictured right*) and Colin find themselves untangling some of Dolphin Cove's most impossible murders: an artist stabbed in full view of an audience; a wildlife worker killed in a locked cage and a famous film director shot at her own screening. But the biggest and most perplexing mystery of all will be Mack's own heart.

Samson said: "The big pain for her is that Glenn has left Dolphin Cove and she feels hugely responsible. For the first time, she's not trying to run away from Dolphin Cove, she's sitting in a kind of self-inflicted punishment as a form of penance. She's back in uniform; she's sitting it out hoping that Glenn will come back because she doesn't feel she can move forward without him. She's in a state of limbo."

This series introduces an important new relationship for



Mack when her mother Jillia unexpectedly arrives. How doe that change Mack's perspective an the choices she makes? Do her an her mother get on well?

"Any parent-child relationship i really fertile ground for drama an comedy," replied Samson. "No matte how good or bad your relationshi is with your parents, it's potent. wouldn't say they get along; Mac feels quite abandoned by her mum All throughout her life, there's bee a sense of abandonment, whether be lack of rules or lack of structure.

"Her mum would go missin when she was a kid and she hasn seen Jillian (Kerry Armstrong) for very long time. She doesn't entirel trust the emotional relationshi that she has with her mum, but sh does love her. There's no drama c comedy without that love as th basis for it."

The actor explained that Jillian return offers a lot of insight int who Mack is, why she is the wa she is, why she doesn't like Dolphi Cove, and particularly about th failed wedding to Glenn.

Now that she's played Mac across three series, what feel instinctive about her and what sti takes her by surprise when she playing her?

Samson said: "She takes m

Compiled by Executive Features Editor Tracey Allen



and so's Mum

by surprise all the time. I know her so well and yet it is rare that I've predetermined her response to something. Something will annoy her that I didn't expect or something will make her laugh that I didn't expect. That's a beautiful experience for an actor that the homework's done, but you're going with instinct on camera rather than predetermined choices."

The cases take the team into some great locations this series. Which setting was Anna's favourite to film in?

Koala

"Easily the wildlife park! I loved the koalas," she said. "I was meant to hold one, but unfortunately, you need a licence to hold a koala in Australia. But they are such phenomenal animals. We take them for granted but when you're that close to a koala, you cannot believe it's real. It looks like a teddy bear that's come alive; they're incredible.

"The wildlife park keeper was very protective of the koala as well, we all felt like the koala and her keeper were number one on the call sheet that day and we were the guest actors in their show!"

● **The series is available on BBC iPlayer: bbc.co.uk**

Music
Sleeper
UK tour

Louise preps for *End of the World*

SLEEPER HAVE announced their biggest UK tour since reforming in 2017, with the band set to take their forthcoming sixth studio album, *End of the World*, on the road across the UK in March and April 2027.

The announcement follows the release of their new single and album title track, *End of the World*, which introduces a new chapter for the band and for frontwoman Louise Wener as a songwriter. The album is released on February 12.

"I'm really looking forward to taking this album out on the road," said Wener. "These new songs mean a lot to me, and I think they're going to sound fantastic live. There's something wonderful about finally playing them in a room with people and making that emotional connection with a crowd. We're so excited that Turin Brakes are joining us – we've been fans for a long time, so it's going to be a special combination."

For the tour, Sleeper will be joined by Turin Brakes, the South London band founded by childhood friends Olly Knights and Gale Paridjanian. Their 10th studio album, *Spacehopper*, was released in 2025, adding to a catalogue that includes the Mercury Prize-nominated, Gold-certified *The Optimist LP* and 2003's Top 5 album *Ether Song*, which featured the Top 5 single *Pain Killer (Summer Rain)*.



L OF A GIRL: Sleeper's Louise Wener



SUPPORT: Turin Brake

The *End of the World Tour* will see Sleeper performing songs from their new album alongside the classic tracks that established them as one of the defining guitar bands of the 1990s.

They emerged in the mid-90s, scoring eight Top 40 singles across three Top 10 albums and selling more than one million records. They toured to sell-out crowds across the UK, US and Japan, played the main stages at Reading and Glastonbury, toured with Blur and supported R.E.M. at Milton Keynes Bowl.

The tour kicks off on March 12 at Rock City, Nottingham and finishes at the O2 Institute, Birmingham on April 3.

● **Go to: sleeper.band for full tour details.**

Music
James B Partridge
The Big Christmas Assembly

...and a Partridge in a pear tree

THE NATION'S favourite primary school teacher turned Glastonbury sensation James B Partridge is bringing back *The Big Christmas Assembly* for 2026.

Following a successful 2025 tour which saw venues across the UK filled with festive singalongs – and with his *Primary School Bangers* show continuing to sell out nationwide – James's feel-good phenomenon shows no sign of slowing.

The tour starts at the Corn Exchange, Ipswich on November 26 and visits venues including Sheffield City Hall, Theatre Royal Brighton and The Engine Shed Lincoln and ends on December 23 at Hull City Hall.

The show features festive favourites, primary school memories, full-voiced singalongs and nostalgic throwbacks.

James said: "2026 has already been such an incredible year, and what better way to round it off than with *The Big Christmas Assembly*? I've always loved how the songs we sang as children at Christmastime brought so much joy and excitement. This show is a celebration of those moments, from assembly halls to nativity plays, and I can't wait to see audiences relive them together in the most festive, feel-good way possible."



FAMILY FUN: Sing along with primary school teacher James

What began as a handful of social media videos for his pupils has grown into a national phenomenon. From viral fame to a standout Glastonbury performance, James has taken his unique brand of musical nostalgia from the classroom to some of the UK's biggest stages.

He has performed with Gareth Malone's Voices at the Royal Variety Show and provided vocals for global icons including Paul McCartney, The Rolling Stones and Electric Light Orchestra. His media appearances span *BBC Breakfast*, *The One Show*, CBBC *Newsround*, BBC Scotland, ITV's *This Morning*, BBC Radio 2 and Virgin Radio.

● **Go to: jamesbpartridge.com for more tour dates.**

R'n'R

Your Announcements

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

Death

RIPLEY Terry. Passed away suddenly on October 26. Beloved wife of Grahame (ex 201/206/51 Squadron and RAF Boulmer).



Terry Ripley

Seeking

I would like to catch up with a friend from our posting in North Front Gibraltar 1961-63 – his name is Bill Chapman and we worked together in the Instruments Workshop. We met briefly after re-pat but then lost touch. Bill is the taller chap on the right in the photo below. Please email Harry Burton: harryhburton00@gmail.com



SEEKING two mates from my days at St Athan in the early 70s, Wiggy McVey and Geordie Hepple, they were painters and finishers based at West Camp, St Athan. Please contact Charles Bell: chabell36@aol.com

SEEKING contact with former aircrew and ground crew of 80 Sqn who served prior to the September 1969 disbandment.
I am looking to collect, document and preserve first-hand accounts, photos and flight logs from this era. Please email: andrew.nash.722@mod.gov.uk

SEEKING Con Roscrow/Roscoe (not 100 per cent sure of his surname). Con was a Col. engine fitter when I was posted to 56 Sqn at RAF Waterbeach in April 1956 as a young airman.
Over the next four years he mentored me until I became Junior Tech (engines) and was posted to Australia. During this time we became good friends and I have looked for him for many years, problem being he would be in his early 90s now as I'm 88. Please contact: peterrandell286@btinternet.com

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 April 9-11, 2027. This will be at the Eastwood Hall Hotel, Mansfield Road, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, NG16 3SS.
Please find further details at: tg11association. com where, if not already a member of the association, there is a facility to become one (just click on the register motif at the top of the website page).

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

Associations

THE RAF Air Loadmaster Association (ALMA) marked its 25th anniversary in May and is looking to recruit new members – serving personnel as well as veterans. If interested in joining, please email Les Weston on: lesalma9001@gmail.com or call: 07531 523456.

Did you know that the Armourers have a virtual Branch that currently stands at 751 members both serving and retired? We are always on the lookout for more to join us. If you are already a RAFA member of your local branch you may add the Armourers as an additional branch at no extra cost. To join visit the RAFA website and select Armourers as your branch or phone: 0800 018 2361. For more information email: plumbersrest@outlook.com

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

591 SU Association. Ex-members and currently serving ex members of 591 SU are invited to visit the Association's website at: 591suassociation.co.uk for membership details and news of the next annual reunion plus other upcoming events for 2026.

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

How to use our service

There is no charge for conventionally-worded **birth, engagement, marriage, anniversary, death, in memoriam seeking** and **reunion** notices. For commercial small ads contact Edwin Rodrigues on: 07482 571535.
We cannot, under any circumstances, take announcements over the telephone. They can be sent by email to: **tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk** or by post to: **Announcements, RAF News, Room 68, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE.**

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AWARENESS: The RAF Memory Suitcase was created to help people living with dementia

Objects spark memories

THE RAF Museum in London has partnered with National Museums Liverpool to create a new RAF Memory Suitcase, using objects, photographs and archive material to spark memories and conversations with people living with dementia.

A spokesperson explained: "Co-created with veterans at sessions at the RAF Museum Midlands, the new suitcase brings together specially selected items from the Museum's handling collection and archive, chosen for their ability to prompt conversation, reminiscence and personal stories.

"The RAF Memory Suitcase will be used as part of National Museums Liverpool's award-winning House of Memories programme, which supports people living with dementia, their families, carers and communities through the power of museum collections," the spokesperson added.

Rhiannon Watkinson, the Museum's community engagement manager, said: "The RAF story is ultimately a story about people, and the objects and photographs in our collection can hold incredibly powerful personal associations.

"Something as simple as a photograph, an item of uniform or a familiar object can be a starting point for a conversation and unlock memories and stories that might otherwise remain untold.

"It has been particularly important to us that veterans have helped shape the suitcase and decide what should be included."

She added: "We hope it will give people living with dementia, their families and carers an enjoyable and meaningful way to connect with RAF stories, as well as with memories and experiences from their own lives."

Dawn Carroll, head of programme at House of Memories, National Museums Liverpool, said: "We hope the Memory Suitcase will help raise awareness of dementia across the Armed Forces community."

● Go to: rafmuseum.org.uk

Free concert at the RAF's church, St Clement Danes

THE CENTRAL Church of the RAF, St Clement Danes in the Strand, London, is holding its annual Friends Concert on Thursday, November 26, 2026, starting at 6.30pm.

The concert will be given by the Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment* and the choir of St Clement Danes (all professional opera singers). The audience can look forward to excellent musicians performing exciting new and well-loved musical favourites, followed by wine, soft drinks and snacks after the concert, with the chance to meet the performers.

More than 130 people have already requested tickets for this free concert, but tickets are still available.

Simon Denny, concert co-ordinator, said: "The concert combines outstanding musicianship with the chance to contribute to the upkeep of the wonderful Central Church of the RAF and meet up with old and new friends in the RAF family, it is a wonderful opening to the build up to Christmas."

You can email: concert@fscd.org.uk to request tickets.

*The Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment plays by permission of the Air Force Board of the Defence Council.

More access to adaptive sport

THE VETERANS' Foundation has announced a new partnership with Invictus Games Birmingham 2027, becoming an Official Games Partner and launching Access Unconquered – a UK-wide programme to widen access to adaptive sport and build a better understanding of the difference it can make to wounded, injured and sick serving personnel and veterans.



INSPIRATION: Forces veteran and triple amputee Mark Ormrod has competed at four Invictus Games

"Through Access Unconquered, the Veterans' Foundation and Invictus Games Birmingham 2027 will work together to remove barriers to participation and create more opportunities for people from the Armed Forces community across the UK to experience the physical and mental health benefits of adaptive sport," said a spokesperson.

"As part of the partnership, the Veterans' Foundation will provide Adaptive Sport Grants of between £1,000 and £15,000 to organisations across the UK," the spokesperson added.

Now open for applications, the grants will support organisations using adaptive sport to improve physical and mental health and wellbeing, build confidence and strengthen connections – including for people who may never compete at an Invictus Games.

Mark Ormrod, Veterans' Foundation Ambassador and Invictus Games Team UK competitor, said: "The Invictus Games changed my life. Sport gave me a focus, pushed me physically and mentally and showed me that losing three limbs didn't mean losing the things I was capable of achieving.

"There are thousands of wounded, injured and sick serving personnel and veterans who will never compete at an Invictus Games. They should still have the opportunity to find out what adaptive sport can do for them."

A former Royal Marines Commando, Mark became the UK's first triple amputee to survive the Afghanistan conflict and later competed as part of Team UK at four Invictus Games.

Leeming's Lewis triumphs

SUPERFIT RAF Leeming-based medic AS1 Lewis Casey-Brown has successfully completed the PARAS'10 endurance challenge, raising money for the RAF Benevolent Fund.

The event involved a 10-mile TAB carrying 35lbs in a Bergen, completed at Catterick Garrison, North Yorkshire. Lewis, 19, prepared for the challenge by gradually increasing the weight he carried during training runs in the weeks leading up to the event.

He said: "I decided to raise money for the Fund because it's a great cause that supports serving personnel, veterans and their families in times of need. Although my family and I haven't received personal support, I am proud to raise money for a great cause."

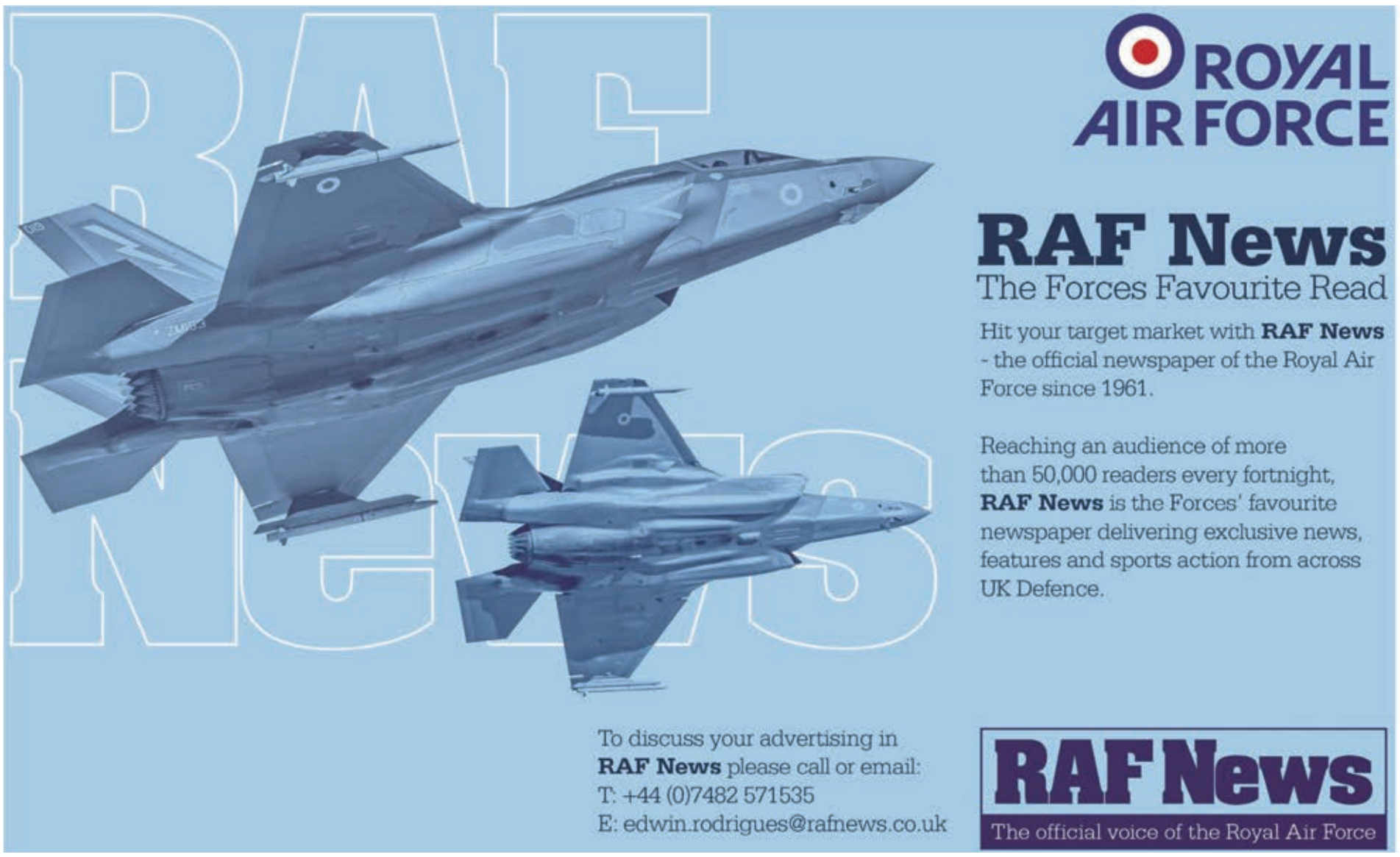
He added: "I signed up for this challenge as a physical test. I also completed an ultra-marathon in the Peak District for this reason. I thought the uphill sections of the TAB would be the most miserable part, but it was all part of the experience."

Lewis has so far raised £220 of his £500 fundraising target.



UP TO THE CHALLENGE: AS1 Lewis Casey-Brown

● Go to: justgiving.com/page/lewis-casey-brown to make a donation.



R'n'R

Prize Crossword
No. 421

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

The winners of our Prize Crossword and Prize Su Doku puzzles will receive a recent top aviation title – please send your entries to the address printed in the adjacent Su Doku panel, to arrive by November 27, 2026.

Across
7. Blockbuster pilot **(3,3)**
8. The run disrupted RAF plane **(6)**
10. Rent a party plane **(7)**
11. Korean joins Irish singer in Africa **(5)**
12. Honour has nothing on instrument **(4)**
13. Quick and intelligent **(5)**
17. Quiet instrument **(5)**
18. Northern river Don **(4)**
22. Typical American polite to Alistair **(5)**
23. Transport for former journalist? **(7)**
24. Resist Italian river going both ways south-to-east **(6)**
25. Minnelli takes road to southernmost point of British mainland **(6)**

Down
1. And 9 Down. Star commendation affects RAF post **(7,9)**
2. Piaf's bird **(7)**
3. A sump attacked by cats **(5)**
4. Rubbish Queen's German plane **(7)**
5. What a smell from street fluid **(5)**
6. Old Penny has 500 sheets of paper: imagine! **(5)**
9. See 1 Down
14. Family tragedy at old station **(7)**
15. Tree van knocked over, driven by ex-member of RAF **(7)**
16. Penny to stay and take command **(7)**
19. RAF trainer fillets trout **(5)**
20. First person under protest prods your dog **(5)**
21. Bearing French bread in foreign country **(5)**

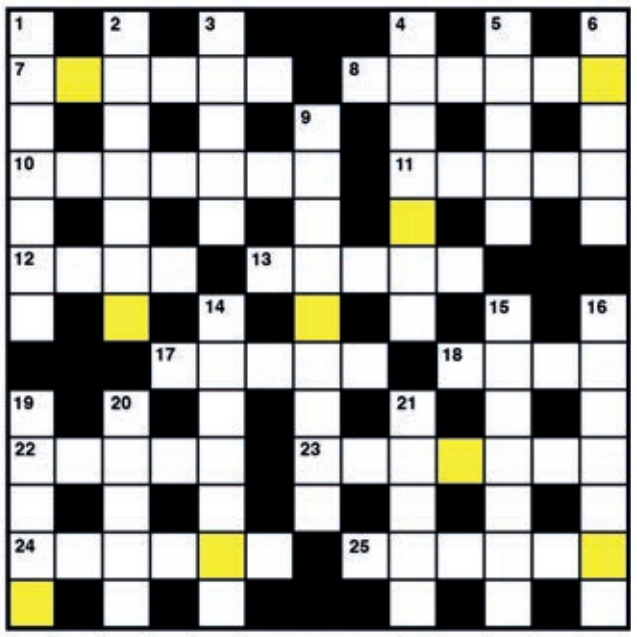
Name: .....

Address: .....

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.....

RAF term: .....Crossword No. 421



Prize Crossword No. 420 solution
Across – 6. Halifax **7.** Japan **9.** Pilot **10.** Disrupt **12.** Lossiemouth **14.** Controllers **18.** Traffic **19.** Sport **21.** Helen **22.** Nimrods
Down – 1. Magic **2.** Kimono **3.** RAF **4.** Hairdo **5.** Warpath **8.** Firefly **11.** Estonia **13.** Boarded **15.** Toffee **16.** Report **17.** Grade **20.** Air
RAF station: ***Wittering***

The winner of Crossword No. 419 is: Andrew Bunting, Fareham.

Prize Su Doku
No. 431

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 November 27, 2026. The winner of Su Doku No. 429 is: Edward Dillon, Wirral.

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

Solution to Su Doku No. 430

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

CINEMA

Film Review
Bad Day at the Office (15)
Out now

Blood and guts gamer action

A MAN wakes up in a hotel room with no memory of how he got there. There's a fresh gash on his chest, a note telling him to take pills regularly or die, and a Russian mobster dead in the bathtub. All this, with police at the door, makes for the opening of this rough and riotous film, shot entirely in first person.

Karl Davis (Jon Hannah) is a bloody mess when we meet him, scrambling to piece together his memories in an impossibly incriminating situation. He will have to fight his way out, and keep fighting to find answers, racking up an impressive body count along the way. At the same time, we meet Molly (Radha Mitchell), a maid at the hotel who seems to know Karl and is now along for the ride, trying to stay alive.

Bad Day at the Office never drifts from its fast-paced freneticism as head-mounted GoPros constantly swing around the gaff, while pink text adorns the screen, making jokes when it's not acting as a health bar or kill counter. Shot in the style of a videogame, it is propulsive, with an unapologetic brashness that recalls Jason Statham's *Crank* films. A product of their time, perhaps, *Bad Day* has a similar sense of humour, which could make or break the film for you because it is constant.

There are fun action set-pieces, including a foot chase with climbing and jumping across buildings, in which Karl offers a hilariously pathetic echo of Neo in *The Matrix* when he says to himself, in surprise: "I know parkour?!" Sadly, though, the repetitive scenes of killing everyone in the room and the relentless pacing make you long for something, anything, else.



BLOODY MESS: Karl (*Jon Hannah*) is in quite a fix

The story is simple enough, until it isn't: adding characters and twists until it becomes near-impossible to follow. And this despite the non-stop explanations. If this is to your taste, it is best experienced as a rollercoaster in 4DX, where you can be thrown about for a couple of hours and covered in all sorts of bodily fluids.

Two roundels out of five
Review by Sam Cooney

CINEMA

Film Review
Prima Facie (15)
In cinemas now

Tables turn for Tessa

A HOTSHOT defence lawyer specialising in rape cases has the tables turned on her when she is sexually assaulted by a colleague in this adaptation of hit one-woman play Prima Facie.

Tessa (Cynthia Erivo) may be highly sought after and a shoo-in for the Junior Barrister Outstanding Achievement Award, but she still feels like an outsider. "Thoroughbreds," she calls the others, having attended Cambridge herself but on a scholarship.

When the defence lawyers get together, however, they are more like wolves, discussing how easy it is to overturn a rape case, to use the victim on the stand and introduce an element of doubt around consent. The system Tessa so readily manipulates will be tested however when she herself is raped by colleague Julian (Daniel Ings). Complicating matters further, the two are dating when the life-altering incident occurs.

A crucial distinction between the film and its source material is that the original tells the story entirely from Tessa's perspective, allowing her to come across as glib and egotistical. The film, by contrast, goes out of its way to establish her as a noble and sympathetic character: someone who thanks the cleaners and shields her drunken friends from lecherous men.

The play's framing is also important.



RAPED: Defence lawyer Tessa (*Cynthia Erivo*)

As a story recounted to the audience, it mirrors the experience of a jury hearing court testimony, with our perceptions coloured by the way in which events are described. The film shows us the events directly, removing ambiguity. Combined with the insistence on Tessa's virtue, it leaves little room for interpretation, and makes everything a lot less interesting.

The dreadful circumstances awaiting Tessa are signposted from the beginning, creating a story devoid of nuance. There is an important message here, but sadly, it was delivered more powerfully in its original form.

Two roundels out of five
Review by Sam Cooney