



**Typhoon
3D-print
first for
71 Sqn**

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**Funds
SOS at
site for
The Few**

● See page 10



**ROYAL
AIR FORCE**

Friday, November 14, 2025
Edition No.1620

**Only
99p**

RAF News



**CAS on how the
Harrier helped
to inspire F-35**



See
pages
14-15

**Boarding
Skate stars
roll with it**



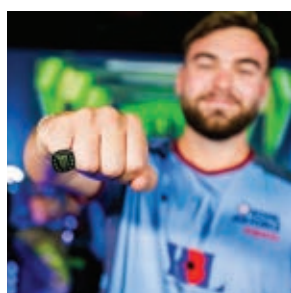
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**Motorsport
Duo third in
race league**



● See page 25

**Esport
Call of Duty
Vegas win**



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Italian job

**Lightning completes eight month CSG
deployment with Med combat drill**



THE UK'S Lightning Force launched its final training drill from the deck of HMS Prince of Wales on Operation Highmast as the Carrier Strike Group heads back to British waters after eight months at sea.

Exercise Falcon Strike gave F-35 crews the chance to train with Harriers and Tornados before arriving back in the UK.

● See p5 for full story.

BiteSize

“It’s great to show people how much they mean to the bigger picture,”



RAF Leeming Civil Servant of the Year winner Liv Hart

See page 5

“There’s so much love for Morse,”



Actor Tom Chambers takes to the stage as the fictional detective

See R’n’R pages 4-5

“They all want my MVP ring from Vegas,”



Winning Call of Duty team captain Cpl Ethan Grange

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ROYAL AIR FORCE RAF News

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NATO trunk call

Staff Reporter Wattisham

FRENCH AND British helicopter crews joined forces as they prepare to take part in a major Nato land exercise with US military personnel.

The formation of eight Apache, 10 Wildcat, two Chinook and four Gazelle helicopters showcased their flying skills performing the famous ‘Elephant Walk’ – flying nose to tail in tight formation.

Exercise Pinion Titan involves more than 50 aircraft, 2,000 personnel from the British Army, Armée de Terre and the US Army.

An Army spokesman said: “The participation of French Gazelle helicopters, which carry out reconnaissance and attack missions, reflects both nations’ central role in Nato and the closer Franco-British military co-operation initiated by the 2010 Lancaster House Treaties.”



EXERCISE: RAF Chinooks join Apache, Wildcat and French Gazelle helicopters in the ‘Elephant Walk’ formation. Inset above, French crew prepare for a sortie PHOTOS: MOD

This Week In History



1941

Mossie debut

THE MOSQUITO fighter bomber enters service with 105 Sqn at Swanton Morley. The aircraft launches its first low-level bombing raid six months later.

1944

Gunners strike

THE BOFORS Detachment of the RAF Regt shoot down a Messerschmitt Me 262 at Helmond airfield in Holland. It is the first time a jet aircraft is downed by ground fire.



1992

Fylingdales revamp

THE FAMOUS ‘golf balls’ at RAF Fylingdales are replaced with the three-sided pyramid phased array radar.

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



VETERAN: Evelyn with her medal and in uniform when she was in WAAF, inset

Evelyn, 104, honoured by the French

WAAF VETERAN Evelyn Armstrong has been awarded the Légion d'Honneur by the French government – France's highest and most prestigious national order of merit – at the age of 104.

As a teenager she started working at the telephone exchange in Blackburn alongside the contralto singer Kathleen Ferrier. When war broke out, Evelyn had to persuade the authorities to release her from her work at the exchange, as it was a reserved occupation, and she joined the WAAF in 1941.

During her time in the Service, she worked at Barton Hall, Bawtrey Hall, and Tangmere and at one point was interviewed to work at Bletchley Park, but turned the role down to continue working on flying operations with the RAF.

Evelyn's grandson Robin said: "She served as a plotter with the WAAF during the war, and the medal was sent to her by the current French Ambassador to the UK, Mme Hélène Tréheux-Duchêne, thanking her for her vital role.

"It only recently became apparent that Evelyn qualified for the medal, which recognises her role as a plotter at RAF Tangmere during D-Day, plotting 617 Sqn aircraft as they went back and forth over the Channel dropping 'window' as part of the pre-invasion deception to make the Germans believe that the invasion was at Calais instead of Normandy."

The success of this deception contributed enormously to the success of Operation Overlord, and the eventual liberation of France, Mr Armstrong added.

Evelyn said she was "absolutely delighted" to receive the medal and it was "a great honour and a great surprise after so many years."

Soon after the war, she met her husband, Malcolm, who became the editor of the *Sunday Sun* in Newcastle. Evelyn has lived in the Borders for the past 40 years after moving there from Lancashire.

WORAF homes in on improving conditions

CAS right-hand man says his role is to serve *all* personnel

Tracey Allen

THE RAF'S main challenges include infrastructure and retention, says WORAF WO Murugesvaran Subramaniam, known as 'Subby'.

As the most senior Warrant Officer in the Air Force he is right-hand man to Chief of the Air Staff, ACM Harv Smyth, and has his finger on the pulse when it comes to recruitment, retention and morale in the Service.

WO Subby said: "We know the challenges with some accommodation that we need to fix, the leadership is very aware and we are doing everything we can. We have some great accommodation at some places – such as Lossiemouth – and some sub-standard elsewhere. But we need patience, you cannot just build accommodation in two weeks, it takes at least three to five years. This is where the current leadership – and Sir Rich Knighton, the



previous CAS – are being very honest with people. It's not a quick fix, but it's coming."

Recruitment, the WORAF said, is better than it has been for a while. And morale, he added, is "good, without a doubt."

"Currently we have a lot of people wanting to join the Service, we now see a lot more people graduating and the numbers are getting better, but we cannot rest on our laurels.

"We tend to get people joining the Services as they get a longer contract professionally than on Civvy Street, and there is more security and stability in the Armed Forces.

"The RAF needs to be in a place where it offers opportunities so that personnel want to stay, including good accommodation, food, opportunities to work overseas and the chance to be able to do what you're passionate about.

"If the motivation is money, where some industries offer higher salaries than we can, we find it quite difficult because we



STATION VISIT: WORAF WO Subby (right) talks to personnel at RAF St Mawgan

cannot compete. But people need to realise that the RAF offers a lot more opportunities than industry does."

He added: "I love the RAF, I came here from Malaysia with practically nothing and I've had the opportunity to do a degree, courses, work overseas, meet some great people – I even met my wife through the Service. The RAF is an anchor, why would you not want to stay?"

WORAF joined in 1998 after leaving the Royal Engineers. His time in his present post has been extended to March 2027 and he will retire in 2028.

He said: "To be a good

WORAF you need to be a people person, understand that it's not about you, it's about the people you serve and you have to put the Service before yourself.

"People are our most important asset and we need to celebrate our successes. I was at Cosford recently for the Astra Awards and some of the great things personnel are doing at grass roots level, without prompting, to make the Royal Air Force better, are amazing"

"Our purpose in the RAF is to always be ready to fly and fight – and our people achieve this by being agile, integrated and always ready."



REMEMBRANCE FLIGHT: BBMF Dakota and Lancaster are captured from above by photographer AS1 Leah Jones, aboard a RAF A400M

PAST AND present came together when an Atlas flew in formation with the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight.

The visual representation of the RAF's journey from its historic roots to its modern-day role came when an A400M, which is operated by Brize's 30 and LXX Squadrons, flew under the callsign 'Memorial'.

"This event provided a remarkable opportunity to bridge the RAF's illustrious past with its present-day frontline roles," said Sqn Ldr Paul Wise.

"Many of the responsibilities and values upheld by the RAF today have their roots in the pioneering efforts of the courageous Second World War generation."

Piloting the Dakota alongside the Lancaster and Spitfire, the formation took shape over Covenham Reservoir with the A400M.

The Lancaster is set to undergo a period of depth maintenance, while the Dakota has only recently returned from the same process.



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Highmast finale

**F-35 joins Harrier & Tornado
in Italy as CSG heads home**



Staff Reporter

F-35 LIGHTNING stealth fighters launched combat training sorties from the deck of the HMS Prince of Wales alongside Italian Air Force Tornados and Harriers as the Carrier Strike Group returns to the UK.

The drill off the coast of Italy is the last ahead of the CSG's arrival back in Britain after an historic eight-month deployment spanning Europe, the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific.

Falcon Strike brings together participants from France, Greece, the United States and the United Kingdom, integrating fourth and fifth-generation aircraft, refining coalition tactics and strengthening logistics cooperation among F-35 users.

Air Marshal Allan Marshall, Air

and Space Commander, said: "Exercise Falcon Strike is another outstanding demonstration of how far our collaboration with the Italian Air Force has come. Training side-by-side with our Italian colleagues strengthens interoperability, deepens mutual understanding and ensures that both nations remain ready to deliver decisive air power whenever and wherever it's needed."

"This exercise showcased not only fifth-generation capability, but the trust and professionalism that underpin every mission we fly together."

"Over the past eight months, the Royal Air Force has delivered a truly global contribution through Operation Highmast from the UK to the Mediterranean, across the Middle East and deep into the Indo-Pacific."

He added: "This has been a sustained



GENERATION GAP: F-35 joins Italian Harrier during CSG exercise

demonstration of reach, resilience and relevance: projecting air and space power, strengthening partnerships and reaffirming the UK's commitment to regional security.

"As our crews now operate alongside Allies once again here in Italy, the success of Highmast speaks to the professionalism and determination of every person involved."

In Brief



Crisis call

CIVIC LEADERS in North Wales joined forces with Valley personnel to plan how their local RAF station can support emergency services in the event of terror attacks or natural disasters.

The training event is part of the North Wales Resiliency Forum's planning, and is organised by liaison officers from all three Services and the Army's Regional Brigades.

Leeming stars shine at awards

PERSONNEL WHO have gone the extra mile for the RAF Leeming community have been recognised at the base's Excalibur awards evening.

Winners of 13 categories out of more than 120 nominations were announced and given the prize crafted by the base's workshop.

Civil Servant of the Year Liv Hart said: "It's great to show people how much they mean to the bigger picture because everyone is doing such an amazing job. I think everyone has had an amazing night."

Team of the Year was the Physical Education Flight and Sgt Dan Law said: "When you get recognised for hard work it makes you

want to do it again – you have a hunger to do it more and more."

The Wifinity Champion Award for Leeming connectivity went to FO Taje-Wayne Sutherland.

Cpl Aiden Jones was named Innovator of the year, while Mentor of the Year went to Flt Lt Andrew Mawdsley.

The Resilience Award was presented to FS Scott Archer and Sgt Stuart Jardine was named Fundraiser of the Year.

The Health and Wellbeing Award went to Sgt Graeme Jackson, the award for Community Development was presented to FS Matthew Fox and the Local Champion Award was won by RAF Leeming



LIV HART



Community Primary School.

The Ellis Award for Sporting Achievement was presented to Cpl Tom Whitworth, Aviator

of the Year to AS1 Samantha Wain and the Award for Special Recognition went to Ken Holland.



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1,300 crew
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45 days



GUNNING FOR GLORY: The Military vs Cancer team celebrate as they arrive at Land's End after 45 days PHOTOS: CPL TOM CANN

...& got the T-shirt

Staff Reporter

Land's End

FORCES GUN runners hit Land's End in Cornwall on the final leg of their epic 1,000-mile charity challenge after hauling a 1.3 tonne field gun across the length of the UK.

More than 1,300 serving and veteran personnel volunteered for duty – starting in John o'Groats and working in crews of 20 to cover 20 miles a day, raising an estimated £150,000 to help support cancer victims and their families.

As they neared the Cornish finish line they were joined by hundreds of veterans and serving military personnel from nearby St Mawgan, a pipe band and local well-wishers.

Speaking after finally crossing the finish line after 45 days, organiser Dave Bathgate who set up the Military vs Cancer charity said: "I am exhausted, but so proud of everyone from around the UK who has not only got involved with the pull, but also come out to show support for us.

"The whole challenge has been really strenuous, but completely worth it for the money we have raised to help those affected by



cancer within the Armed Forces community, whether serving, veterans, or their families.

"Military vs Cancer is dedicated to providing direct support to those who need it most, and this event is about

showing what can be achieved when people come together with determination and purpose."

David added: "Completing this challenge wouldn't have been possible without the support of thousands of volunteers, companies

and members of the public who are donating to the charity."

The challenge has not yet been verified as a World Record, but organisers believe this to be the first time a 1-tonne field gun has been pulled the entire length of the country.

The field gun challenge was a personal mission for many who took part. Former weapons engineer Mark Barnes said: "This is a cause very close to my heart. My daughter was diagnosed with cancer at 16, so I know first-hand how important it is to receive support from charities.

"It has meant so much to represent the military on this challenge and to personally be a small part of this epic achievement, which I'm sure will not only be remembered for the enormity of the challenge, but also for the money it raises to help military families around the UK deal with their battle with cancer."



This advertorial contains references to suicide attempts which some people may find upsetting.

FROM SOLDIER TO CIVVY STREET. FINDING PEACE AFTER MEDICAL DISCHARGE.

For nearly two decades, Caroline served in the British Army. Her military life was filled with purpose and pride. But when her service abruptly ended, she faced invisible wounds, physical injury, and a deep sense of loss.

"The Army was all I wanted to do. Through it, I met my husband and served in amazing places, meeting people across the world."

But behind those adventures were accumulating scars – the kind you can't always see.

Long before her medical discharge, Caroline's mental health was deteriorating.

"There were too many bad memories of previous tours. I didn't tell anyone and kept it hidden."

While deployed in Iraq, the weight became unbearable. She attempted to take her own life.

Back in the UK, Caroline faced bullying from colleagues who didn't understand why she'd come home early. Six months later, she ruptured her Achilles tendon. The injury wasn't taken seriously, and a delayed operation led to permanent nerve damage and drop foot – a life-changing disability.

But that wasn't the only trigger. She was sent to Afghanistan, then posted to Cyprus – away from her husband, isolated, and barely coping. Over one weekend, she made other attempts to end her life.

"It didn't work. On Monday, my alarm went off for PT. I was more scared of being charged for missing parade than what I'd done to my body. I made it to the parade ground and collapsed."

She was airlifted to a UK mental health facility.

Caroline was later medically discharged. She found the process chaotic and negligent. Her care didn't transfer. Her discharge paperwork was delayed. No guidance. No plan.

"I fell through every gap and felt like a failure.

"You lose everything. Your role. Your identity. Your future. You keep shaving bits off yourself to fit – but you just don't."

For years, Caroline struggled, but then she found hope in an unexpected way: an invitation to a Help for Heroes Christmas party.

That night, she met others who understood her and learnt how the Charity could support both her and her husband. From sporting and social activities to physical and mental healthcare, Caroline discovered that Help for Heroes offer services for anyone who served.

"I've now been with the Charity for ten years. Every year, there's a bit of growth, a bit more healing. It's not fast. It takes time."

Today, Caroline has retrained through night school to become a gym instructor and personal trainer. She also tried new sports, adapted for her new reality.

"I kept clinging to the athlete I was before injury. At some point, I had to



accept that version had gone. So I tried something new."

She earned qualifications in indoor rowing and powerlifting, joining the Help for Heroes Coaching Academy. In 2023, she became a powerlifting coach. Now, she coaches other veterans.

"One guy told me, 'I never thought I'd get to do anything like this because I'm blind.' So we adapted it. When he reached the right squat depth. The smile on his face was everything."

Helping others heal through sport has become part of her own journey.

"I still struggle sometimes. But now, I can be the person I needed back then."

Her message to other veterans still fighting for peace?

"You've already got determination built into you. You just need to channel it into something that lights you up. Whatever makes you feel strong again.

"When you do – you'll feel it. That moment of pride. That freedom. That growth. And that's everything."

**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.



Winging it

GRADUATE PILOTS won their wings after completing the latest fast jet training course at RAF Valley.

The six future top guns took to the air in front of Nato deputy commander AM Sir Johnny Stringer and family members at the Welsh airbase.

“Today marks a massive achievement for these pilots, which is historic, personal and profoundly meaningful. The young officers graduating today are no longer simply students of the air, they are pilots,” said Officer Commanding 72 (Fighter) Sqn, Wg Cdr Matt Axcell.

“They receive their RAF flying wings – a symbol of excellence recognised across the world, and one that will remain on their chest for the rest of their lives.

“My instructors and I take huge pride in celebrating this momentous occasion, the first of many such achievements in what will undoubtedly be long and successful careers in the RAF.”

JET SET: Trophies awarded to Valley high-flyers and, inset, AM Sir Johnny Stringer addresses gathering

PHOTOS: CPL GARETH MCGARVIE

High North nuke drill

Staff Reporter

NATO TEAMS launched a nuke and chemical attack drill during training as allies tested security in the High North.

Counter chemical, biological and nuclear specialists from the UK joined medics, gunners and fire services gathered at the Royal Norwegian Air Force’s Ørland Air Base to test evacuation and

detection capabilities.

“Exercise Toxic Trip has allowed us to show our adaptability in challenging environments; from overcoming the weather to modifying decontamination drills to protect Nato colleagues and enhance our own techniques,” said Cpl Hemming from the Defence Rehabilitation Centre, Loughborough.



Fund pledge

MILITARY CHARITY chiefs are targeting sexual harassment with a £100,000 grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund.

Welfare group SSAFA’s Safe to Serve initiative is one of eight projects to receive funding under the Seen and Heard Campaign, and will provide support and advocacy to victims of bullying, harassment and sexual abuse in the UK Armed Forces.

3D print pioneers

Simon Mander

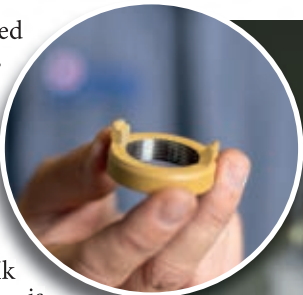
ENGINEERS HAVE fitted the first ever in-house 3D printed component to an operational Typhoon, pioneering a process that could cut aircraft downtime and return jets to the frontline more quickly.

The advanced manufacturing process allows 71 Sqn technicians to design and print parts to keep combat aircraft operational and is set to transform frontline repairs across the Air Force fleet, cutting costs and boosting capability.

“Without the use of this technology, local innovation and RAF engineers’ operational mindset, this aircraft would have been unusable for many months. In the coming months, Air Support will share detailed plans for the expansion of such capabilities,” said AVN Shaun Harris.

Originally launched as Project Warhol, the 71(IR) Sqn team now produces polymer and metallic components for the F-35 Lightning, A400M, Chinook helicopter and Mk 15 helmets and is developing a 3D-printed metallic chaff and flare dispenser for the Apache, Wildcat and Shadow aircraft.

“While the process will not be suitable for every application, it will generate significant operational advantage, increase supply chain resilience, mitigate obsolescence and ultimately increase fleet availability – all vital tools enhancing the RAF’s ability,” said Programme Director Gp Capt Justin Blackie.



QUICK FIX: Technicians can now print spares for frontline aircraft, cutting costs and maintenance times

News

Funding SOS for 'The Few'

Memorial battles rising costs

Malcolm Triggs

THE BATTLE of Britain Memorial Trust which safeguards the legacy of The Few has launched a funding appeal to preserve its cliff-top site.

Bosses at the Trust, which receives no state or RAF funding, says the rising cost of living and escalating operating costs are threatening the future of the national memorial and museum at Capel-le-Ferne in Kent.

Now they are appealing for supporters and the public to pledge money in their wills to guarantee the future of the venue which is free to visit and relies on donations, fundraising and profits from its cafe and shop.

The call comes as the UK marks the 85th anniversary of the epic battle for British skies in 1940.



Trust chief Richard Hunting said: "The bravery and sacrifice of the aircrew who flew in 1940 to defeat the Luftwaffe and preserved the freedoms we enjoy today should not be forgotten."

"With the cost of living having an impact on people's spending power and our own costs continuing to escalate, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find the cash we need."

"Leaving a legacy to the Trust will help ensure that the charity can continue remembering The Few, not just for next year's 86th anniversary of the Battle but to the centenary and beyond."

● For a free guide to leaving a legacy, email enquiries@battleofbritainmemorial.org or visit battleofbritainmemorial.org/support-us



Game for a 'raffe

GIRAFFES GOT airborne on a C-17 Globemaster to raise money for Great Ormond Street Hospital. The cuddly crew members and charity organisers were guests of Brize Norton's 99 Sqn and flew out of the base under the callsign

Giraffe 1 to start their fundraising tour. The flight was an existing training sortie for students on XXIV Sqn and the final flight for Sqn Ldr Graeme Court, who will soon be leaving RAF service.



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Sqn Ldr Clare Thomas

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The RAF Sports Lottery operates as a society lottery within the Royal Air Force Central Fund and is licensed and regulated by the Gambling Commission (www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk). The Royal Air Force Central Fund is a company registered in England and Wales 8555984, Charity registered in England and Wales 1152560, Charity registered in Scotland SC044299.



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BOOKLIST

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PUBLISHERS WEEKLY



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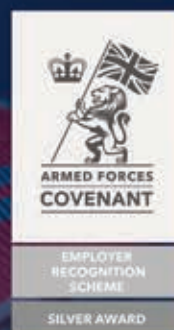
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Royal tribute for victims of UK military’s gay ban

Simon Mander

HM KING Charles has unveiled a sculpture dedicated to thousands of gay and lesbian personnel prosecuted under the MOD’s ban on homosexuality

The statue at the National Memorial Arboretum marks the historical harms faced by LGBT veterans and features a free-standing, opened letter forged in bronze (inset left),

resting on a base of York stone.

The letter incorporates words drawn from the testimonies of former Service personnel affected by the ban, alongside contributions from current serving members and veterans.

It was backed by Britain’s first openly gay judge, the late Lord Etherton, whose review included 1,128 testimonials of those affected, with many personnel dismissed, losing their pensions and medals, or facing imprisonment and ‘forced treatment’ at military hospitals.

King Charles was joined by Chief of the Defence Staff ACM

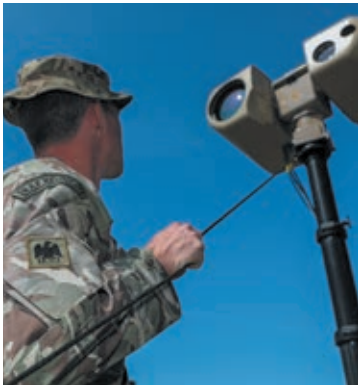
Sir Richard Knighton and senior military leaders for the ceremony.

The chosen design, titled An Opened Letter, incorporates the testimonies of former Service personnel.

Charity Fighting With Pride held an event for the memorial in July. Project officers Roly Woods and Kevin Bazeley said at the time: “This memorial represents a powerful step forward in recognising and honouring the service and sacrifices of the LGBT+ armed forces community.

“The team is proud to deliver a tribute that will resonate for generations to come.”

Bulletin



TECH THAT: Specialist military skills in demand in Civvy Street, survey says

Just the job

Staff Reporter

MILITARY SKILLS could hold the key to UK economic growth, according to a new report.

Recruitment experts Lightcast say Service leavers have top transferable, technical, and specialised abilities that meet the most pressing labour market needs, including clean energy, advanced manufacturing and the latest digital technologies.

Key military skills like leadership, problem solving and resilience match the top competencies sought by employers.

Service leavers are also equipped with the experience and technical talents in demand in the advanced manufacturing sectors and life sciences.

Report director Donna Murrell said: “Service leavers are more than ready for today’s jobs – they are equipped for the careers of tomorrow.

“By demonstrating how military-acquired skills match with employer demand across the UK economy, we are seeking to open up the widest possible choices for Service leaver careers.”

Türkiye lands Typhoon deal

£8bn contract to deliver

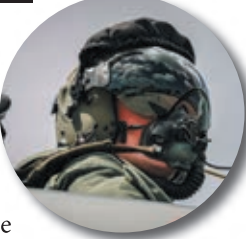
20 Eurofighters



Simon Mander

THE UK and Türkiye have signed a deal worth up to £8 billion for 20 UK Typhoons, hailed as the biggest fighter jet export agreement in a generation.

It was signed in Ankara as the Prime Minister was hosted by the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and saves BAE’s Warton production line from closure. PM Sir Keir Starmer said: “This landmark



agreement with Türkiye is a win for British workers, a win for our defence industry and a win for Nato security.”

During the visit he met Turkish military and Royal Air Force Typhoon pilots.

The contract to buy the swingrole fighter will see more than 37 per cent of each aircraft manufactured in the UK, the rest will be produced by partner nations.

Defence Secretary John Healey said: “Türkiye is an important Nato ally and the gatekeeper to the Black Sea. By equipping them with Typhoons, this deal will strengthen deterrence and help make us all safer.”

The first delivery is expected to take place in 2030.

BAE Systems Chief Executive Charles Woodburn said: “This announcement extends Typhoon production and preserves crucial sovereign skills which underpin the UK’s defence and security.”

Former jump jet pilot ACM Harv Smyth was a 5th-gen F-35's role lie in Harrier and Tornado



FORERUNNER: CAS ACM Harv Smyth disembarks from a RAF Harrier at Kandahar Airfield in Afghanistan in December 2008, whilst he was Officer Commanding IV(AC) Sqn PHOTO: AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH (RAF)

As the UK's Carrier Strike Group F-35 Lightnings head for home, Chief of the Air Staff and Harrier veteran ACM Harv Smyth tells *RAF News* how fifth-generation aircraft are transforming the way the Air Force fights



CURRENTLY DEPLOYED on Operation Highmast, RAF F-35s are exercising with veteran Italian Harrier and Tornado aircraft on Falcon Strike, the final combat drill to take place during the Carrier Strike Group's eight-month deployment.

It's a salute to the new Chief's own roles as a former Harrier pilot and a driving force of the UK's F-35 programme – and an acknowledgement of the debt the Lockheed stealth fighter now operating from the deck of HMS Prince of Wales owes to its combat-proven forebears.

Since joining the RAF in 1991, ACM Smyth has flown hundreds of

operational missions over Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan. "Flying the Harrier taught us to be exceptionally agile and unconventional in our approach," he says. "The Lightning takes that mindset and supercharges it."

He now oversees the UK military's shift to warfighting readiness following the Strategic Defence Review and RAF's resumption of a nuclear capability with the purchase of 12 F-35A jets.

With its game-changing STOVL (Short Take-Off and Vertical Landing) capability, the Harrier redefined basing options and survivability in austere environments.

That capability is now combined with stealth and sensor fusion with the

by Simon Mander

at the forefront of UK's Lightning programme

oots



THE OLD AND THE NEW: Spanish Harrier beneath RAF F-35
PHOTO: AS1 JAKE HOBBS



HARRIER: Proved invaluable to RAF in the 1982 Falklands War



TONKA: RAF Tornado on Op Ellamy



OFFICIAL DUTIES: CAS inspects a RAF Regiment Guard of Honour at Cranwell PHOTO: ANDREW WHEELER

F-35, allowing dispersed operations, agile basing and rapid force projection in contested zones.

CAS explains: "STOVL isn't just something the jet can do, it enables us to show up where others can't. That can make a difference fast, especially in terms of readiness and responsiveness."

Exercise Falcon Strike also provides the opportunity to operate in the same battlespace as the Tornado, the RAF's multi-role workhorse for decades, delivering deep strike, reconnaissance, air defence and more across global theatres.

Today's F-35B pilots inherit that legacy. With integrated ISR, strike, electronic warfare and defensive

counter-air capabilities, every Lightning functions as a sensor, shooter and networked node in the battlespace.

ACM Smyth said: "The Tornado instilled adaptability; the Lightning makes it instinctive. Integrating 5th-gen assets with legacy aircraft adds a powerful dimension to air power and operational flexibility."

Legacy aircraft operated in analogue environments. The 5th-gen battlespace is digital, integrated and data-driven. Yet the core principles; survivability, adaptability and mission effectiveness remain. "What 5th-Gen enables beyond legacy platforms is decision superiority," Smyth explains. "And that is battle-winning."

He added: "Tornado crews innovated

under pressure, adapted tactics to technology and thought beyond the cockpit. These attributes have never been more apposite in an unpredictable, volatile world, where agility, integration and readiness are essential."

As the RAF operates from the Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific and Nato's eastern flank, the echoes of legacy platforms are strong. The Harrier's agility and the Tornado's

tenacity live on in the Lightning's every mission.

Today's 5th-generation tactics are the evolution of decades of hard-earned lessons. As the RAF looks ahead to the F-35A, GCAP and beyond, it does so standing on the shoulders of the personnel whose innovation, courage and commitment continue to shape the battlespace.



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WWII trailblazer

Features

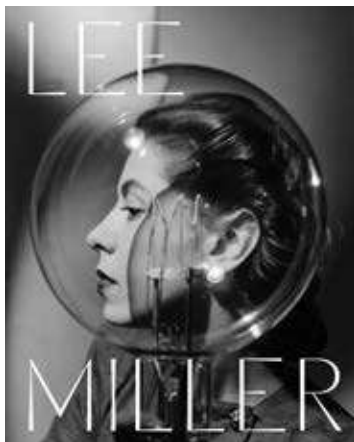
The Miller's tale

Exhibition reveals hidden side of war photojournalist's remarkable career

LEE MILLER was a trailblazer – a pioneering war correspondent and photographer and a former model who evolved from being a leading fashion photographer to documenting harrowing scenes from the frontline.

But Miller hid her enormous archive of negatives, prints and notebooks in her attic in the 1950s, didn't tell her son Antony about her former life, and reinvented herself as a gourmet cook, said her granddaughter Ami Bouhassane, who is director of Miller's archive at Farleys House and Gallery, the Sussex home of Miller and her husband, the surrealist artist Roland Penrose.

At Cheltenham Literature Festival last month, Bouhassane discussed her celebrated grandmother's life and work with Hilary Floe, curator of the landmark Tate Britain exhibition *Lee Miller* that runs until February 15, 2026.



EXHIBITION BOOK: *Lee Miller*, edited by Hilary Floe and Saskia Flower (Tate Publishing)

Bouhassane revealed: "Mum and dad found the stuff in the attic just after Lee died."

Born in New York in 1907, she died in 1977, aged 70.

Ami said: "Lee had an elder and a



FAMOUS PHOTOGRAPH: Lee Miller, *David E. Scherman Dressed for War*, London 1942. Lee Miller Archives

younger brother but her parents treated them equally, and because she had this basis as being equal to her brothers she had this core belief in herself."

As a model she appeared on the cover of *American Vogue*, but said, "I would rather take a picture than be one," and by 1930 was trying to launch herself as a fashion photographer.

She introduced herself to the surrealist artist and photographer Man Ray and was his assistant in Paris for nine months, but, stressed Ami, "was not just his sidekick, as the exhibition at Tate Britain shows."

Ami added: "Within less than a year of practising as a professional photographer her work was being published in *Vogue*."

"Miller and Man Ray fell in love and an apprenticeship very rapidly became a collaboration, a real exchange of creative ideas," Floe explained. "It was a very exciting time."

Ami said: "Paris was her base

and her really formative years. This is who she was and who she wanted to be."

“Lee was left traumatised by the things she witnessed during the war, and its aftermath. What she saw in the camps deeply affected her”

Floe added: "Wherever Lee went she seemed to attract a crowd of artists and intellectuals, she was so clever and charismatic, and an extrovert. She fell in with surrealists in Paris and formed friendships that stayed with her for the rest of her life."

Miller lived in Egypt from 1934 to 1939 and when war broke out moved to London and became a

leading fashion photographer for *British Vogue*.

She went on to work as one of the few accredited female war correspondents and, as well as recording women's contributions on the home front, photographed the devastation and deprivation in post-liberation communities across France, Germany, Luxembourg, Belgium, Denmark, Austria, Hungary and Romania.

She later became known as 'the girl in Hitler's bath tub', and the Tate Britain exhibition includes the famous portraits of Miller and of her colleague David E Scherman in Hitler's private bath in April 1945.

Ami said: "Lee was left traumatised by the things she witnessed during the war, and its aftermath. What she saw in the camps deeply affected her. Some of her friends later in life had no idea about all that work she had done as a photographer."

● **Goto:** farleyshouseandgallery.co.uk and tate.org.uk for more information.

ARCHIVE DIRECTOR: Lee Miller's proud granddaughter Ami Bouhassane at Farleys House and Gallery



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PARADE: New officers
PHOTOS: Paul Saxby

New officers put best foot forward

GRADUATES FROM the Modular Initial Officer Training Course No 37 took to Cranwell College's parade square for the formal review, carried out by Air Vice-Marshal Steve Kilvington, AOC 11 Gp.

AVM Kilvington said: "This is a memorable day for our graduating officers. They follow in

illustrious footsteps, and embody the quality, professionalism and dedication which underpins the effectiveness of the Royal Air Force.

"I envy all those graduating today as they join an agile, integrated and operationally-ready Royal Air Force. Congratulations to all, I wish

them every success in their future careers."

There was musical accompaniment by the Band of the Royal Air Force College and a flypast by a Typhoon from 11 Sqn, RAF Coningsby.

Prize winners

- Sword of Honour for best recruit – Off Cdt CN Dykes.
- Gp Capt Williams Memorial Trophy for greatest improvement – Off Cdt D Kenton.
- Sarah Moland Memorial Prize for outstanding courage and fortitude – Off Cdt JA Gibbard.
- Hennessy Trophy and Philip Sassoon Memorial Prize for the best all-round cadet, other than the Sword of Honour winner – Off Cdt MJ Passey.
- WO Bill Torrance Trophy for Physical Education – Off Cdt MJ Passey.
- The RAF Club Prize for grit and unwavering perseverance – Off Cdt TG Bone.
- The BAE Systems Trophy awarded for highest marks for professional studies – Off Cdt SA Manson.
- The MacRobert Prize, voted for by their peers for greatest contribution to the course – Off Cdt TG Bone.



HIGH-FLYER: Off Cdt SA Manson with the BAE Systems Trophy



TOP RECRUIT: Off Cdt CN Dykes receives Sword of Honour from AVM Kilvington



LOTS OF PROMISE: Off Cdt MJ Passey was awarded the Hennessy Trophy



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Features

The RAF's challenges in 'forgotten' Far East



BRISTOL F.2BS: North West Frontier, 1919

THE ROYAL Air Force experience in the Far East is certainly worthy of further study. In *RAF Boys in the Far East* (grubstreet.co.uk) Steve Bond embraces this ambitious remit. Having already written books on the 'boys' who flew iconic RAF aircraft, he tells the story with commentary and testimonies from beginning to end, some 82 eventful years.

He starts with the arrival of the first Royal Flying Corps units in India in 1915 and ends with the disbandment of No. 28 Squadron and its Wessex helicopters before Hong Kong's handover to China in July 1997.

Cold War

The author has drawn on first-hand recollections of those who served in the region, largely covering the wartime theatre and Cold War period, from all ranks across air and ground crew. The result is a fascinating and wide-ranging book. The reader is introduced to fast-changing weather, challenging terrain and epic flights. The book ranges from the pioneering air evacuation of Kabul in 1928 to daring Search and Rescue operations mounted

from Hong Kong, notably during Typhoon Koryn in 1993.

There are major landmarks, including the outbreak of war with Japan in December 1941 and the near four years of brutal conflict which followed. The Japanese foe was described as 'crafty' but also 'very brave'. One pilot recalled they put trip wires across rivers at the height they expected the RAF to be flying. Similarly, a lighthouse at the end of Ramree Island in Burma was fitted with remote controlled guns. When he approached bullets suddenly flew past his head.

Conflict continued after Japan's formal surrender on September 2, 1945. Various small wars and insurgencies flared up throughout the region necessitating RAF participation. Most significantly British rule in India ended in 1947, transforming the political landscape. The Malayan insurgency, Operation Firedog (1948-60), and the confrontation with Indonesia (1963-66) were key developments in the 22-year story of the Far East Air Force (FEAF) covering 1949-1971.

Post-1947 there was a concentration of remaining



VULCAN: Tengah, Singapore, 1966

RAF BOYS IN THE FAR EAST

True Tales of the RAF in India, South East Asia and Hong Kong 1918-1997



STEVE BOND

Win copy of book

You could win a copy of this excellent book. For your chance to own one, tell us:

What was Leading Aircraftman Shaw better known as?

Email your answer, marked *RAF Boys in the Far East* book competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: **RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by November 28.**

Win!

forces at Changi, Seletar and Tengah in Singapore and a single squadron in Hong Kong. From the late 1950s Gan in the Maldives was built up as a staging post for UK to Singapore transit. This is well covered in the accounts. The sheer scale and variety of combat and transport aircraft at airfields in Singapore and Malaya is underlined, packing a punch and with nuclear capabilities into the bargain.

FEAF

The death knell for the FEAF was the Government decision in the late 1960s to withdraw forces stationed east of Suez by the early 1970s. The UK doubled down on Nato commitments, financially constrained and able only to confront challenges closer to home.

The testimonies underline that RAF squadrons in the Far East were at the back of the queue for equipment. This was most exposed during the early months of war with Japan. Often aircraft were obsolete, if not ancient. The resultant losses were heavy. When Hurricanes finally arrived in India in crates in 1942, they were in poor condition. Spitfires were late on the scene too.

This pattern tended to continue during the immediate Cold War period and the early years of the jet age. Most of the famous fighters, bombers, transport aircraft and helicopters eventually found their way to Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong. It was also the scene of the last operational flight for many famous RAF aircraft types. The

book's numerous photographs testify to this.

Chapters extend to encompass nuclear testing in Australia and at Christmas Island (Kiribati) in the 1950s, as well as the final decades in Hong Kong. Prominent individuals are highlighted. There was Leading Aircraftman Shaw, better known as Lawrence of Arabia, who was observed in 1928 serving at faraway Miranshah on India's north-west frontier. With his 'very intelligent blue eyes' he had 'a very direct and measuring gaze that could be disconcerting' but nonetheless 'got on remarkably well with the other airmen, and with most of the NCOs'.

Eyewitnesses

The book is well presented. The eyewitnesses supplied many of the pictures. There is a helpful glossary and useful index. The bibliography is short, with no mention of ACM Sir David Lee's overarching study *Eastward*, which covered 1945-72.

Nevertheless, this is a most enjoyable book featuring fascinating stories interspersed with informed commentary. It goes some way to helping redress the lack of sources on the challenges the RAF faced in the 'forgotten' Far East for most of the 20th century.

Review by Alastair Noble



NO. 28 SQN: Wessex formation, Hong Kong, early 1990s



THE XC90 has been around since 2003 and each variant brings a fresh face to the dependable steed that is Volvo's thoroughbred SUV. It needs no introduction, no fanfare. I don't need to tell you how well it tackles life off-road, how comfortable it is, or how safe you are in the cabin, it's a given.

Neither do I have to bang on about how overbearing its intelligent safety systems are – nanny mode in full overdrive. It's a Volvo, it's going for the title of 'world's safest SUV', also a given. The biggest news here is its latest cosmetic makeover. How smart does this thing look?

Outside

Incredibly, this fine-looking beast is only the second generation of the car, since the original, albeit with two facelifts. As the sun rises on the 2025 edition's reign, it seems to have evolved beautifully, capturing the mood of the modern SUV buyer with sleek lines, clean styling and a beefy stance. It's a bit of kit that puts the 'sport' into Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV). Space Age LED headlamps, signature Volvo rear lamps, a sporty boot spoiler and those supercar-style alloys all add to the package, while the classic XC90 profile remains recognisable. Volvo's design team have pulled off a blinder here.

Inside

The cabin is as plush as you would expect in an XC90, with that stunning crystal gear knob remaining the centre-piece. The dash has been remodelled, bringing new vertical vents and a range of new finishes, including pale woods and light fabrics. Much of the interior is also made of recycled materials too, so you can enjoy luxury with a clear conscience.

There's loads of space, front, back and back-back (the foldaway extra seats in the boot).



Big XC90's a safe bet

On The Road

The driving position is great, there's plenty of sound deadening and it's a wonderfully soothing environment.

There's an abundance of tech on-board and everything works well. The 9in touchscreen infotainment system looks smart, with fast-responding menus and sharp graphics. As with many modern motors, the menu can be somewhat fiddly to operate. Pretty much, my only gripe here.

The XC90 is a well-balanced cruiser that allows you to make rapid, safe progress on long, winding roads. If you're after an SUV that delivers exhilarating cornering and sports car style performance, Lotus, Porsche will, almost certainly be your weapon of choice but, for everyday use, the XC90 is a brilliant driving package.

The seats are supportive, the

driving position is well-gauged, and you feel safely cocooned in a powerful machine. Our test car was the plug-in hybrid T8, which delivered a stonking 449bhp, enough to take this hefty SUV from 0-62mph in 5.4 seconds. That's enough to beat many hot hatches off the mark!

The 18.8kWh battery allows for an official electric-only range of 44.1 miles on a charge and fuel economy of 217mpg. No, you're

never going to get close to that in the real world, but it's about as economical as an SUV of this size will get for many years.

All versions are 4WD, have eight-speed automatic gearboxes and come with dampers that react individually to road conditions. Everything, but the entry car, gets air suspension that analyses the terrain ahead 500 times a second. The result is a calm, serene ride that will genuinely impress.

Road noise is well suppressed and wind noise minimal. The stunning big alloys will add a small amount of drone at high speeds, but they look cool as hell, so I'll let you decide whether you really want to spec the smaller wheels.

Up to 60mm of ride height adjustment allows you to wade water and tackle rough terrain with confidence.

and the plug-in hybrid tech is, as yet, reasonably untested, but there are, otherwise, no causes for concern here. It looks modern, it looks expensive, it is a relaxed cruiser and it oozes reassuring safety, all the things that made it the market leader in the first place. A new face, but some things never change.



Pros

- Refined interior
- Classy big-beast SUV
- A relaxed cruiser that handles well
- 7-seat versatility

Cons

- Reliability of hybrid tech untested
- Some sports rivals handle better

Volvo XC90

- Transition between EV and petrol power clunky

Verdict

The Volvo XC90 is a cracking SUV that combines a spacious cabin with plenty of kit and classy materials. Its reliability has been questioned in the motoring press recently

Sport

SKATEBOARDING

By George, it's the super Bowl

BALANCING ACT:
Chf Tech Ian Savage

Cpl Phipp slam dunks jam

Staff Reporter

RAF SKATEBOARDERS took on their 4th Tri-Service jam at Prevail, Poole, with Cpl George Phipp leading the way.

The pressure was on to battle it out against the other Services, competing for top spots in two disciplines – SKATE and Bowl.

In the head-to-head trick elimination discipline SKATE, Cpl Dom Brown from RAF Benson finished third.

He said: "Since I was young, skateboarding has been my favourite activity. With a busy work/life balance, skateboarding in the RAF has given me time, positivity and the ability to develop myself in many ways."

Next in the Army-hosted event was the Bowl competition,

where skaters have five attempts of 30 seconds each to put down their best performance.

The RAF's Cpl George Phipp won top spot and said: "It was a really enjoyable event. I'm very happy with my result. It took a few slams and I look forward to the next one."

Chf Tech Ian Savage, who won 5th place in the Bowl competition, has played a key role in helping pave the way for skateboarding in the RAF.

He said: "This was another brilliant event. It's great to see it grow, year on year. There was a really big mix of ages, levels and styles and top prizes and support from the industry too."

RAF Skateboarders are set to host the next Inter-Service event in 2026.

WATERSPORTS

RAF reign supreme on water at Windsor

THE RAF Waterski & Wakeboard team made a splash at this year's Inter-Services Championships at Liquid Leisure in Windsor.

In a closely-fought contest, the Air Force won both the Waterski and Boat Wakeboard team events, while the Army secured victory in the Cable Wakeboard.

The RAF also topped the podium individually, with Flt Lt Lucy Carter in the Women's Waterski Slalom, Sqn Ldr David Jenkins in the Men's Waterski Slalom, Sqn Ldr Emma Phillips in the Women's Boat Wakeboard, and Sgt Rich Philips in the Men's Boat Wakeboard.

The event also saw Sgt Pete Glassman compete in his final Inter-Services after more than 20 years in the RAF.

"Watching Pete compete one last time was special," said Sqn Ldr David Jenkins. "He's been such a big part of our association for so long."

It was very much a family affair for the Sqn Ldr, with his wife and brother also shining.

He said: "Having so many of the 'Jenkins clan' on the team sheet was incredible. My wife Lucy and I both took the top spots in our categories, and my brother Mike came third behind me. To share that experience as a family was a really proud moment."

His advice for those interested in joining the sport is simple: "Get involved through the RAF Waterski Championships– it's the perfect grassroots event for all abilities. That's exactly how I got into Slalom Waterskiing."

"The future of RAF Waterskiing lies in growing participation from the ground up. It's a niche sport that many people haven't tried, so our focus is on grassroots engagement and development. From there, we can build competitive talent for future Inter-Services success."

LIQUID GOLD:
Team members

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

SAILING

Crouch-ing tigers

Pair Endeavour to fight storm in quest for glory



BATTLERS: Hawkes and McVey
PHOTO: ALISON CHENARD



RAF DINGHY sailing duo Ben Hawkes and Jonny McVey battled a storm and the best amateurs in the country taking part in the prestigious Endeavour Trophy.

The race invites national champions from across a range of classes within UK sailing to fight for the prestigious crown of Champion of Champions. Ben earned his invitation thanks to his triumph as National Champion in the K1 class.

He reunited with long time crew McVey for the country's ultimate test of amateur sailing, hosted by the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club in Burnham-on-Crouch, Essex.

Friday's practice day gave competitors a chance to familiarise themselves with the

new boats selected for the event, Melges 15s, sharpen tactics, and absorb world-class coaching from a British Sailing Team mentor.

Saturday's sailing was called off as storm winds reached 50 knots and Sunday dawned with gales still roaring past 30 knots on the River Crouch, but the event was given the go-ahead.

Four gruelling races followed; boats capsized, crews hung on for dear life and downwind speeds topped 20 knots.

Hawkes and McVey fought hard to secure 26th place overall, an impressive result considering they hadn't sailed together all season due to deployments with their squadrons.

Hawkes told *RAF News Sport*: "The

Endeavour Trophy is not an easy event to compete in. Because everyone is on the ball all the time it makes it hard to find those winning margins. The event was run very professionally with the addition of the new Melges making for a more level playing field. If given the opportunity, I would recommend this event to anyone."

McVey added: "It was very exciting to be up against some of the best sailors in the country, especially when we were all in the same class of boat – it makes for very close and competitive racing."

"You need to keep the concentration levels up all the way around the course, as any mistakes are punished by the sheer class of the other sailors chasing you down."

RUGBY

The Saints march in at Leeming

RAF LEEMING welcomed Gallagher Premiership side Northampton Saints for a two-day visit combining rugby, leadership development and community engagement.

The visit formed part of RAF Rugby Union's ongoing programme to build relationships with professional clubs.

The Saints took part in a range of activities including visiting 34 Sqn RAF Regiment, where they gained insight into the unit's mission and learned about the Counter-Uncrewed Air Systems (CUAS) capabilities operated by Regiment personnel.

The players were also given a presentation by the Training Development Flight focused on decision-making under pressure, a session designed to mirror the split-second choices faced in both the cockpit and on the rugby pitch.

Several players also visited the station primary school, delivering two fun-filled touch rugby sessions and taking part in a lively Q&A with pupils before signing autographs and posing for photos.

There was also a strength and conditioning session in the station gym and training on the rugby pitch, which included returning British Lions Tommy Freeman, Fin Smith, Alex Mitchell and Henry Pollock.

RAF Rugby Development Officer Flt Lt Dave Manning said: "It was great to be able to host the Saints at Leeming. The players enjoyed getting an insight into some of the roles the RAF conducts whilst making use of Leeming's excellent facilities."

"Building relationships like this enables us to generate continuing professional development opportunities for our players and coaches, while expanding our reach in terms of recruitment and engagement across the wider rugby community."



CLASS ACT: Saints players visited Leeming Primary School
PHOTO: SGT PETER GEORGE (RAF)

MOTORSPORT



AVIATORS:
Brands Hatch
finale success



DRIVER: Cpl Rob Atkinson

Championship third for aviator sidecar pairing

Staff Reporter

WITH THIRD place in the British Sidecar Championship already secured, RAF duo Cpl Rob Atkinson and Sgt Mark Middleton went into the finale at Brands Hatch hoping for an unlikely leap into second.

Free Practice brought a pleasant surprise, with the lads finishing 8th overall and 1st in class, clocking a personal best of 1:37.1 – a strong start to the weekend.

Friday afternoon’s qualifying session saw yet more improvement. The team posted a 1:36.2, securing 7th overall and again 1st in class – the bike performing better than expected.

In Race 1 on Saturday there was a fantastic battle between the RAF outfit and the ever-competitive Bell/Hyde pairing. Both bikes had their strengths in different areas, but on lap 6 the RAF

machine made a decisive move, clearing Bell to take the class win and 9th overall, just losing out to multiple champion Tim Reeves, who charged through from the back of the grid on the final lap.

Race 2, on Sunday, the last of the season, got underway just before a downpour hit. A solid getaway saw the aviators shadow Bell/Hyde early on, before a near repeat of the previous day’s battle unfolded.

This time the pass came a lap earlier, and the team stretched out a five-second lead, finishing 8th overall, 1st in class, and setting a new personal best of 1:36.0.

A brilliant end to a season of learning, development, and consistent progress end in 9th overall and cemented third in class, with an impressive record of three wins, two second places and seven thirds.

The pair are now working hard over winter to prepare to challenge for the 2026 Cup Championship.



PASSENGER: Sgt Mark Middleton

Sport

BOXING



BOXER OF THE YEAR:
Cpl Jennifer Sabine



BIG HITTER:
Cpl Jennifer Sabine (left) at
RAF Odiham
boxing evening
last February

Jen's knocked out by honour



SQN LDR SWEENEY: Special
recognition as he leaves RAF

CPL JENNIFER Sabine pulled no punches as she was named the RAF Boxer of the Year at the association's AGM at RAF Northolt.

Also recognised for their contributions were bright new hope AS1 Kieran Brimicombe and sport stalwart Sgt George Westpfel.

A special recognition award went to Executive Secretary Sqn Ldr Joel Sweeney, acknowledging his years of exceptional dedication and service to the association ahead of his departure from the regular RAF later this year.

The AGM and awards announcement celebrating another year of growth, achievement and service

Sabine is named Boxer of the Year

concluded with a curry social in the Officers' Mess.

The following morning, attendees faced a gruelling Hyrox-style PT circuit led by RAFBA PTI Westpfel, testing endurance, teamwork and determination.

Once recovered and suited, the group travelled into central London for a day steeped in history and heritage which

included a guided tour of the Houses of Parliament and paying their respects at the RAF Memorial on the Embankment, before an awards ceremony at the MOD Main Building.

To conclude the celebration, the group made their way to the Tower of London, where former RAFBA Head Coach and now Chief Yeoman Warder Paul Langley led a tour.

The awards

Chairman's Commendations for contributions and/or commitment to the RAFBA during the 2024/25 season:

- Sqn Ldr Ben Convery
- Flt Lt Marc Consterdine
- Sgt Ben Bailly
- Sgt Gareth Roughton
- Cpl Simon Green
- Cpl Connor Nixon

RAF Development Team Coaches:

- Sqn Ldr Martin Hughes
- Cpl Danny McLoughlin
- Cpl Anthony Mackellar

President's Commendation:

- Wg Cdr Nathan Foster
- FS John Kearns

President's Cup:

- Sgt Michael Griffin

Team Manager's Award:

- Sgt George Westpfel

New Member of the Year:

- AS1 Kieran Brimicombe

Boxer of the Year:

- Cpl Jennifer Sabine



SGT GEORGE WESTPFEL: Team Manager's Award



SGT MICHAEL GRIFFIN: President's Cup recipient



SGT BEN BAILLY: Awarded a Chairman's Commendation

5 RAF Sport

pages of

ESPORT

Bowled over..again

Call of Duty team are flying high in Vegas

Staff Reporter

HIGH ROLLERS from RAF Esports have won the sixth Call of Duty Endowment Bowl (CODE Bowl VI) tournament in Las Vegas.

The Royal Air Force are the first Service to take home the prestigious trophy twice, after also triumphing in the international competition in 2022.

CODE Bowl brings together military teams from Canada, the USA and all three UK Services in a test of concentration, communication, collaboration and strategy.

Each Service enters four players split across two mini squads who are then paired with professional gamers and influencers to form two squads of three. Representing the Air Force were Cpl Ethan Grange (Captain), Cpl Harry Hemeter, Cpl Matty Ingham and ASI(T) Blaine Langford.

They were joined by 'Fifakill' and 'Sophiesnazz', who are both professional players, and after a close contest with the US Air Force, the RAF came out on top and were awarded the CODE Bowl trophy.

Throughout the team event, judges also assessed the performances of all 60 players for the Monster Energy-sponsored Most Valuable Player award, won by the RAF's Cpl Ethan Grange (gamertag Whoopy), in a first for a British Service person.

Following the main event, players competed individually in the



Speed king duo secure third place in championship

See page 25



HISTORY-MAKERS: RAF team celebrate in Vegas with professional gamers Sophiesnazz and Fifakill (right)



CAPTAIN MARVEL:

Cpl Grange with his MVP prize ring

Corsair-sponsored 'Solo YOLO' battle royale, pitting all players against each other. At the end, two RAF teammates were the last competitors standing, with Fifakill eventually defeating Grange and completing a remarkable triple crown for the RAF, another first for the event.

"Winning the CODE BOWL VI was an incredible team achievement – I couldn't be prouder of the team's efforts the last year and it clearly shows," Grange told RAF News Sport.

"Now we're more

focused than ever on building on this success, with numerous sponsors getting in touch and more Service personnel interest. They all want this MVP ring."

Veterans

The goal for the annual event is to not only capture some great competitive action, but to also raise awareness and money for the Call of Duty Endowment, a charitable organisation that places thousands of veterans a year in high-quality, full-time jobs. The charity also supports the RBL and Walking with the Wounded in the UK.

CODE Bowl 25 was broadcast live across the official Call of Duty YouTube and Twitch channels, with total viewers reaching nearly 1.9 million.

RAF VGEA is the fastest

growing hobby association in RAF history, supporting more than 1,200 members – making it second in size only to RAF Football.

Beyond the charitable and mental health benefits proven with esports, RAF VGEA has grown to provide tangible evidence of digital skills that translate to Service jobs and duties day-to-day.

The RAF and wider military esports platforms can capture the transition of skills from a safe, synthetic environment on high-spec gaming PCs and simulators, through to the real-world physical domain and war-fighting scenarios.

● Search for RAFVGEA on Instagram, Facebook or Discord or go to rafcf.org.uk/sports/raf-esports for more details about the association.

READY FOR CIVVY STREET?

**You've grafted.
You've pushed yourself.
You've got the job done.**

**But stepping
into civvy life?
Not everyone's
got a plan for it.**

**HLP for
HEROES**

**Help for Heroes is here for
anyone who's worn the uniform**
and your family, whatever challenges you might face.

helpforheroes.org.uk/get-help



SCAN ME

R'n'R

A man with grey hair, wearing a blue suit, white shirt, and a red patterned tie, is looking into a large mirror. He has a serious expression. The mirror is surrounded by a ring of warm-toned lights. In the foreground, the back of a person's head with curly hair is visible, looking towards the man in the mirror. On a vanity table in front of the mirror, there are various items: a glass of red wine, several bottles of perfume or skincare products, a small red toy car, and a crossword puzzle. A postcard of Oxford is pinned to the mirror. The scene is set in a dressing room with a dark background.

Oxford blues –

● See
pages
4-5

Morse on stage

Film reviews pages 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.

**COMBAT
STRESS**
FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH



Music
Stereo MCs
UK and Ireland tour

Get Connected with Stereo MCs

PIONEERS OF UK hip-hop and electronic dance Stereo MCs are gearing up for a return to the road with their UK and Ireland *True To Life* tour, starting in Glasgow on November 27 and finishing on January 31, 2026 in Dublin.

The band features founder members Rob Birch, Nick Hallam and Cath Coffey, joined by drummer and percussionist Tansay Omar.

Best known for their early 90s international hit *Connected*, the BRIT Award winners are fresh from a triumphant US run and performance on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*.

With fans spanning generations, how do they build a setlist that strikes a balance between nostalgia and current relevance?

Rob said: "We try to give a cross-section of our music from over the years, but we also road test new tracks – if they work live, we keep them. Not every tune translates perfectly to the stage, and Nick usually decides what makes the cut. He's the filter. I'd probably sneak in a few of the more laid-back ones that I personally love, but he knows what lifts a crowd."

"We've also done a lot of collaborations over the last



decade with deep house and Afro house artists, so we weave a couple of those into the set, too. It keeps things fresh. And with some of the older tracks, we'll polish them up a bit – give them a new edge so they sound bigger and more alive onstage."

Rob added that he still loves performing *Connected* and the band's other huge hits, including *Step It Up*.

"They still make me lose myself every time. I've never had that problem some artists talk about, where they can't stand playing their big hits anymore," he explained.

"I feel lucky. Those songs connected with people, and if they still want to hear them live, that's a blessing. There's no way I'd ever get negative about that – not a chance."

"We've been playing live for so long that once you move past the fatigue, you reach a deeper space. There's a new kind of connection with the crowd – one that only comes with time."

"I've got to stay true to what feels right," he said. "That's what keeps it exciting, and that's what keeps it alive."

● Go to: stereomcs.com for all tour details.



Cinema
Bugonia (15)
In cinemas now

Stone is out of this world as pharma CEO

THE CEO of a pharmaceutical company is kidnapped by two hapless idealists in Yorgos Lanthimos' conspiracy caper.

For those familiar with the Greek director's work, you'll know not to trust him. From one film to the next, he hops between worlds: from people turned into animals for failing to find love, to stories grounded in reality but seen through a warped perspective. So when we're introduced to Teddy (Jesse Plemons) and Don (Aidan Delbis), preparing to abduct an alien disguised as CEO Michelle (Emma Stone), it's unclear which reality we've entered.

This may be down to the sheer conviction of Plemons' performance, whose palpable desperation brings sympathy to what is essentially a crazed kidnapper. Add to that the alien aesthetic of Stone, whose huge oval eyes become hard to ignore when you shave her head and cover her in antiseptic cream (to prevent her from contacting her mothership, of course).

What is abundantly clear from the get-go is the fervent belief of its opposing characters: a dark reflection of modern America's political divisionism, where only violence seems to make any form of progress.

Most of the film unfolds in Teddy's basement, where the truth ultimately doesn't matter. In this way, the film has its cake and



ABDUCTED: High-flying Michelle (Emma Stone) is held captive by oddballs Teddy (Jesse Plemons) and Don (Aidan Delbis)

eats it too: if these men believe Michelle to be an Andromedon, and they have her captive, she must play by their rules, in their reality.

Bugonia is a localised film, and perhaps Lanthimos' most straightforward (though that isn't saying much). Packed with dark comedy and some brilliantly convincing performances, it is in equal parts intriguing and hilarious, depending on your constitution.

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



Theatre
The Talented Mr Ripley
On tour until May 2, 2026 (thetalentedmrripleyplay.com)

Unrequited love is simply murder for talented Tom

TOM RIPLEY. One of modern fiction's greatest anti-heroes. Almost 70 years after author Patricia Highsmith unleashed her dangerously talented and lethal creation on the public, he's now stalking the boards in his first touring theatrical outing in the UK.

Starring *The Crown*'s Ed McVey as Tom, *EastEnders* veteran Maisie Smith as luckless and shallow Marge Sherwood and the excellent Bruce Herbelin-Earle as the odious, over-privileged and astonishingly talentless Dickie Greenleaf, director Mark Leipacher's take on the shape-shifting serial killer is as sharp as a dagger.

Tom himself prefers a blunt instrument – but the enduring genius of Highsmith's creature is that you cheer him on from the stands. You want him to get away with it as he brutally evolves from down-at-heel New York chancer to accomplished international fraudster and murderer.



STRAINED ROMANCE: Maisie Smith as Marge Sherwood and Bruce Herbelin-Earle as Dickie Greenleaf

He's Highsmith's own personal angel of vengeance, whose victims are loathsome cyphers for the vain and feckless everywhere. Tom Ripley is fast on his feet, adaptable, smart and very talented at what he does.

The production I saw at Oxford Playhouse makes creative use of a stripped-down set, producing some ingenious sleight-of-hand moments to take the audience into Ripley's mind. Watching Tom morph into Dickie Greenleaf is a genuine highlight.

In the first half Ripley is a bundle of neurosis and crippling insecurities. McVey seems to be channelling US comic Rick Moranis. Honey! I've shrunk Tom Ripley.

The chameleon killer's second half appearance reveals the more charismatic and self-assured psycho fans of the book have come to love.

Brushing over the complex and dark

pathology Highsmith gave her literary creation, Leipacher, like Anthony Mingella's celebrated film and the recent Netflix TV adaptation, delivers a Tom driven to dispatch Dickie because of his repressed and unrequited love for his victim.

It's a move that robs Ripley of devious agency and insults Highsmith's craft. It's like suggesting that the 20th century's other favourite mass murderer and celebrated gourmet Hannibal Lecter was driven to it because his soufflé didn't rise.

Top honours on the night go to Christopher Bianchi who takes on the dual roles of overbearing patriarch Herbert Greenleaf and the dogged Italian detective Roverini, who comes dangerously close to catching his man. Run, Tom, Run...

Four roundels out of five ●●●●●
Review by Noah Williams

R'n'R



Theatre
Inspector Morse: House of Ghosts
UK tour

ON THE CASE:
Chambers as
Morse with
Ellen (Teresa
Banham)



DIRECTOR:
Anthony Banks



OTHER JOB:
With cast of
Father Brown



DCI MORSE:
Tom Chambers
takes the lead
role in *House of
Ghosts*

Morse takes to t

HE WON *Strictly Come Dancing*, has starred in three top BBC One drama series and several hit stage shows. Now he's playing the lead in a national touring production of *Inspector Morse: House of Ghosts* and Tom Chambers says: "It's definitely one of my favourite jobs so far."

Known for his roles as Sam Stracher in *Holby City*, Max Tyler in *Waterloo Road* and as another popular TV copper, Inspector Edgar Sullivan in *Father Brown*, Chambers has reunited for the new show with director Anthony Banks, who directed him in *Dial M For Murder*.

Banks said: "I'm very excited to work with this fantastic cast who bring these much-loved characters to life and make them their own. Alma Cullen's original Morse story contains a play within a play – an inspired concept for a murder mystery which reveals the similarities between playing a part when

acting and covering-up a crime!"

House of Ghosts marks the first-ever major stage adaptation of the iconic detective, ITV's long-running Inspector Morse, famously played by the much-loved John Thaw. The series, based on the novels by Colin Dexter, inspired equally popular spin-offs, *Lewis* and *Endeavour*.

Cullen was one of the writers for the TV series which ran for 13 years and became a British TV classic.

Chambers said: "*House of Ghosts* is just so well-written with all that lovely dialogue between Morse and Lewis (Tachia Newall). It's such an honour, a pleasure to be a part of this, it's great fun."

A chilling mystery unfolds when a young actress suddenly dies on stage during a performance, and Detective Chief Inspector Morse embarks on a gripping investigation. What begins as a suspicious death inquiry takes a darker turn when the legendary inspector, together with DS Lewis, uncovers a connection to sinister events in his own past, 25 years earlier.

Newall, *inset above*, who worked with Chambers on *Waterloo Road*, said of Lewis: "He's pretty down to earth and hard-working. He loves his family and he's usually thinking about getting home

to his wife and kids, but he also wants to get to the bottom of the mystery.

"I'm probably quite different because I wouldn't say that I'm relatively chill. I'm down-to-earth, but I'm a little bit nutty. People will tell you that I'm very excitable."

He added: "Lewis is really loyal to Morse and Morse in turn respects his views, even if he gets exasperated by him at times. Morse is from quite an educated background, while Lewis's accent leads people to believe he's not that well-educated by comparison."

"This is a complex show, with complex timelines. It's challenging. And I just love being on the stage. With theatre, it changes every night. Just having a live audience in front of you, it brings you to life because anything can go wrong and you've got to be on your toes."

Chambers added: "There's so much love for Morse, the Morse brand and the relationship between Morse and Lewis. John Thaw was a national treasure, he had such a presence."

"The play is just like watching Morse on TV, it's so well-choreographed, it's a bit like watching a game of Tetris."

"I think of John Thaw when I'm in the



Exhibitions
Don McCullin:
Broken Beauty
Jan 30 to May 4, 2026
The Holburne, Bath

Two sides of legendary war photo

LEGENDARY WAR photographer Don McCullin recently turned 90 and a leading museum has announced plans to exhibit for the first time in the UK his most recent body of work: close intimate



Don McCullin – A Turkish woman mourning the death of her husband, Cyprus 1964 © Don McCullin, courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth

studies of Roman sculptures.

The Holburne in Bath will stage *Don McCullin: Broken Beauty*, an exhibition of work by one of the most celebrated photographers and photojournalists of our time.

Running from January 30 – May 4, 2026, it brings together some of the most iconic images from his seven-decade career.

Roman

A spokesperson for the exhibition said: "At the core of the exhibition is a group of McCullin's most recent works: images of Roman sculptures that he has captured in museums around the world that have not previously been shown in the UK. Made using ink-jet printing which gives the pictures an extraordinary physical presence,

the sculptures, broken survivors from the ancient world, offer, perhaps, a quiet solidity that is a counter-balance to the violence and chaos that McCullin has so famously documented since the 1950s."

Displayed alongside this core of recent work is a rich selection of images drawn from across McCullin's career: from London to Vietnam, Northern Ireland to Cyprus, scenes of violence and suffering offset by still-lives and landscapes from the Middle East, Southeast Asia and his home in Somerset.

Sir Don McCullin is one of the most influential and renowned photographers of the last 60 years. Known for producing dark and intense images, throughout his career he has documented

the horrors of war, famine, homelessness and desperate poverty, as well as quiet still-lives and expansive landscapes.

The spokesperson added: "The images on display – while including graphic depictions of violence and suffering – have been selected to emphasise the humanity that informs every one of McCullin's images, revealing an attitude of respect and empathy towards his subjects, however abject their situation, that characterises his oeuvre."

McCullin, who grew up in poverty in North London, volunteered for photo reconnaissance for the RAF when he was called up for National Service in 1954.

A photograph of his gangland friends on the site of a bombed

Edited by Tracey Allen



TV WIFE:
Tom with
Father
Brown's
Claudie
Blakley.
PHOTO:
and left:
©BBC
Pictures



the stage

role as I don't think the audience want to see something so different from the original, but I'm not trying to be a mimic. I adopt some of his mannerisms and way of speaking. Hopefully it's the perfect combination.

"In this story Morse is revisiting a situation where he's been with people he was at university with 25 years ago and people he's worked with before. He's almost too close to the case."

Chambers explained that he didn't immerse himself in any of the original Morse TV episodes while rehearsing for the play but is watching them now.

He said: "I'm genuinely really enjoying them, they are great fun to watch."

The actor added that he's 'so lucky' to be working on *Father Brown*, the Cotswolds-based detective drama set in the 1950s, loosely based on the short stories by GK Chesterton. Series 13 is due to be broadcast early next year and, he revealed, there will be a Series 14.

"I'm very lucky as I'll be going back to *Father Brown* after the tour, with a lovely cast. It's great being married now [his character tied the knot with Mrs Devine

(Claudie Blakley) in Series 12]. I love the style, the suits and the hats, and the cars are absolutely beautiful."

Based in Marlow, Buckinghamshire, Chambers is a keen wild swimmer and loves swimming in the Thames.

He said: "I don't get as many weird looks now as everyone's doing it. I used to get a lot of strange looks when I first started."

Chambers won *Strictly* in 2008 with professional dancer Camilla Dallerup as his partner. He's an accomplished tap dancer, having starred in *Top Hat the Musical* in the West End and has an unfulfilled ambition to put tap dancing on the big screen.

He explained: "I would love to be in a tap dancing-related film – it's a story I've written, I've been working on it for about 20 years. I've been so fortunate that I've been working that the opportunity to do the film hasn't presented itself yet."

"Fred Astaire was still tap dancing in his late 50s so I've still got a good 10 years left. I love dancing."

The tour continues until April.
● Go to: inspectormorseonstage.com for more information.

ographer McCullin

house – The Guvnors – proved to be a turning point in his life, when it was published by *The Observer* in 1958.

He went on to work for the newspaper and assignments as a special photographer for it and *The Sunday Times* took him into conflict zones across, most famously, Vietnam, Cyprus, Biafra, Northern Ireland and Beirut.

Vietnam

It is for his work as a war photographer for which McCullin is best known, and during this time he produced his most celebrated images: of a shell-shocked GI in Vietnam, starving children in Biafra, and of British troops on the streets of Londonderry.

● Go to: holburne.org for further details.



Don McCullin – Venus, Palazzo Massimo, Rome, 2022 © Don McCullin, courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth



Music

Carthy and Boden
Wassail tour

Folk stars are ale and hearty

AFTER THE success of their last winter Wassail tour, two of the UK's most celebrated folk artists, Eliza Carthy and Jon Boden, are reuniting on stage and taking their festive wassail around the country until December 16.

The duo perform at the Oxford Playhouse on November 14, presenting seasonal, traditional material on a stage decorated for the occasion, then go to venues including Huntingdon Hall, Worcester (Nov 18), Halifax Minster (Nov 28), The Stables, Milton Keynes (Dec 11) and Union Chapel, London (Dec 12).

Throughout this special evening, Carthy and Boden will sing some of the oldest songs in the English canon and tell heartfelt Christmas tales.

Before there was carolling, there was wassailing, where seasonal songs were exchanged for money, food and ale. In the countryside, trees were blessed, while in towns, wassailers went house to house with their songs and calls for Christmas treats. Coming from the Anglo-Saxon waes hael, 'wassail' is a toast wishing good health with a 'be well'.

Carthy comes from a formidable musical dynasty, her mother Norma was one of The Watsons, the legendary family folk group, and her father Martin is a hugely influential singer and guitarist whose latest album, *Transform Me Then Into A Fish*, was nominated last month for the 2025 Mercury Prize making him, at 84, the oldest nominee for the



WASSAILING THIS WINTER: Folk giants Eliza Carthy and Jon Boden

prestigious award.

Boden is a singer, composer and musician, best known as the lead singer and main arranger

of the contemporary folk band Bellowhead.

● Go to: eliza-carthy.com for more information.



Theatre

Who Dares Wins
UK tour

Who Dares tours

AWARD-WINNING war reporter and bestselling author Damien Lewis has announced his first theatre tour.

He will bring his live show *Who Dares Wins – The Secret History of the SAS* to theatres around the UK in spring 2026.

From daring World War II raids to present-day covert operations, the show will see Lewis reveal the stories behind the world's most elite special forces unit. He will shine a light on the acts of courage, brotherhood, audacity and innovation that have defined the SAS since its inception.

Lewis will share untold tales of sabotage, undercover ops, and

extraordinary acts of courage, all drawn from years of frontline reporting and exclusive access to classified sources.

He worked for decades for major broadcasters reporting on conflicts across Africa, South America, the Middle and Far East, winning numerous awards along the way.

His books, which have sold millions, include *The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare*, turned into a major film by Guy Ritchie, *Hunting the Nazi Bomb*, *SAS Nazi Hunters*, *SAS Ghost Patrol*, *SAS Italian Job*, *Operation Certain Death*, *Bloody Heroes* and *SAS Great Escapes 1 – 4*. His latest book



WAR REPORTER: Damien Lewis

SAS The Great Train Raid, was published by Quercus last month.

The tour starts at the Wyvern Theatre, Swindon on April 16 and culminates at Cheltenham Town Hall on May 25.

● Go to: damienlewislive.com for a full list of tour venues.



Your Announcements

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

Seeking

SEEKING Flt Lt Bev Webb who was the station MO (Medical Officer) at RAF Wyton in the 70s, 1972-74. Any information will be gladly received. I was on Tactical Supply and we spent many weekends flying at Panshangar in the two Auster aircraft they had. Please call Maurine Boakes on: 0116 2849332 or contact me on Facebook.

SEEKING memorabilia relating to the Victor bomber, in particular hanging china/porcelain wall plates. If you can help please contact Dick Squire on: dick.squire4@gmail.com.

Reunions

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

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

CALLING all former TG11 comms personnel, T/phonists, TPOs, Tels, Wop Spec, TCOs, TCCs, TRCs and any comms titles that may have superseded the aforementioned. All are welcome to attend the Trade Group 11 Association reunion to be held on Friday, March 20 to Sunday, March 22, 2026. The venue will be The Marriott Delta Hotels, Mellors Way, off Woodhouse Way, Nottingham Belfry, Nottingham NG8 6PY. Further details if required can be found on the TG11 Association website at tg11association.com.

If not a member, details can be found on how to join.

Associations

591 SU Association. In its 72nd year of existence, 591 Signal Unit has established an Association (better late than never!). Its aim is to foster esprit de corps and comradeship, to promote and maintain the ethos and heritage of this incredible Signals Unit. Ex-members and currently serving ex members of 591 SU are invited to visit the Association's website at: 591suassociation.co.uk for membership details and news of the next annual reunion along with other upcoming events for 2025.

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.

RAF Catering Warrant Officers' and Seniors' Association: all serving or retired TG19 WO or FS and all former Catering Branch Officers are invited to join the RAF CWO&SA. We meet twice yearly with a vibrant gathering of retired and serving members. For more information please email: janedjones6@btinternet.com. The first year of membership is free.

RAF Armourers past and present: RAF Association's Branch aims to provide welfare support and comradeship for all who have served or currently serve as an RAF Armourer. See: rafaarmourers.co.uk or please email the committee: 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.

RAF tribute to Sergeant

WORLD WAR II veteran Sgt Arthur Walker has died aged 100. He passed away on September 21.

In January RAF Leeming's Station Commander Gp Capt John Lawson attended the former gunner's 100th birthday celebrations at Charles Dickens Lodge, Barnard Castle, to present some gifts from the Yorkshire station.

Under the direction of Station Warrant Officer WO Jason Smith, Sgt Walker's coffin was dressed with a Union Flag, a SD Hat, beret (which was presented to him by Gp Capt Lawson at his 100th birthday party) and RAF Ensign. Sgt Walker's veteran's fleece was placed on the coffin.

Members of RAF Leeming formed a lining party to pay their respects to Sgt Walker and his family at his funeral at Wear Valley Crematorium on October 16.

Sgt Walker served from



RESPECT: Personnel salute Sgt Walker's coffin; inset, Arthur as a young airman

October 10, 1943 to April 17, 1947. He trained on Avro Ansons while stationed at RAF Kinloss in 1944. He logged nearly 39 hours flying time as a gunner and RTO.

He was sent to Liverpool and seconded as a ship's anti-aircraft gunner on the Queen Mary, which was commissioned

to take wounded US personnel back to New York. He was then stationed at 111 Squadron, OTU, Nassau, Bahamas and in 1945 was flying B25 Mitchells.

He had 15 hours logged flying time on this aircraft, then his squadron was re-equipped with B24 Liberators. Arthur logged a total of 60 hours flying time.

More benefit with Blue Light Card

BLUE LIGHT CARD – the rewards and discounts service for military and MoD staff, emergency services, NHS, social care, and the teaching community – can now be used by bereaved family members of Armed Forces personnel.

A spokesperson said: "By offering exclusive rewards and discounts, Blue Light Card helps ease the cost of living and allows your budget to stretch a little further.

"These savings are a simple but meaningful way to show our appreciation for those who have dedicated their lives to protecting our country and supporting others.

"With more than 18,000

retailers including big name brands such as Nike, Starbucks, Jet2holidays, Cineworld, Samsung, Sky, Pure Gym, Ninja, and EE, Blue Light Card helps over five million members to take full advantage of savings, discounts and benefits often unavailable to the general public."

Blue Light Card's Chief Operating Officer, Andy Collins, said: "We're really pleased to be broadening our eligibility into this new category which will allow even more people to benefit from the incredible discounts available from our many retail partners.

"We've got some brilliant

discounts coming up for days out and holidays, plus many savings available on everyday essentials, so we recommend signing up for a membership as soon as possible so you don't miss out."

This year, Blue Light Card members have saved over £500 million the spokesperson added.

A card costs £4.99 and is valid for two years.

It includes access to the Blue Light Card app where members can find information about all live offers. To prove eligibility for Blue Light Card, bereaved family members must provide a Death in Service certificate.

● Go to: bluelightcard.co.uk for more information and to register.

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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Free Friends concert

THE CENTRAL Church of the RAF, St Clement Danes in The Strand, London, is holding its annual Friends Concert on Thursday, November 27, starting at 6.30pm.

The event features the Central Band of the RAF and the Choir of St Clement Danes (professional opera singers in their 'spare' time), and will include exciting new and well-loved musical favourites. Refreshments are available after the performance.

More than 150 people have

already requested tickets for this free concert (donations to support the work of the Friends are welcome), said concert coordinator Simon Denny.

He added: "The concert combines outstanding musicianship with the chance to connect with the RAF family, it is a wonderful opening to the build up to Christmas."

● *RAF News* readers can request tickets by emailing: concert@fscd.org.uk

Bill remembers the fallen

A RAF veteran who served for 32 years has spoken about the importance of observing Remembrance.

Sqn Ldr Bill Wheeler, whose career saw him serve in Canada, Pakistan, Kenya, Germany and the Middle East, said "it was more important than ever" to remember the sacrifices made by the Armed Forces.

The 98-year-old now lives at Royal Star & Garter's Home in Solihull.

Bill joined the RAF in 1943 aged 15 and went on to become a navigator, before leaving in 1975. He helped train fledgling Air Forces in Pakistan and Kenya, flew photographic reconnaissance missions in the Persian Gulf and along the North African coast, and worked on nuclear deterrence.

He said: "During Remembrance I like to think back

on my time in the RAF and the people I served with. Unless we have some sort of remembrance afterwards they will be forgotten completely. I think it's important to remember the sacrifices that generations have made for this country."

After leaving the RAF aged 48, he retrained as a teacher and taught maths and computer studies. He and his wife Betty had a smallholding which allowed

them to live self-sufficiently.

After Betty died in 2022, and Bill had an operation on his leg which affected his mobility, he became a resident at the Home in 2024. He said: "I wanted to come here because of its links to military service. And I enjoy being with other people who have also served and have similar experiences to me."

● Go to: starandgarter.org/remembrance.



PROUD MILITARY MAN: Sqn Ldr Wheeler, above, and inset, left, during his RAF service



MEMORIAL: David, left, and Anthony, far left, with the sculpture *Ebb and Flow*

Kids vote for vet's design

A SCULPTURE designed by an RAF veteran created as a poignant memorial for the city of Plymouth as part of its Remembrance 2025 commemorations has been unveiled.

Former Air Force engineer David Beasley, now a Crafts and Material Practices degree student at Arts University Plymouth, created 'Ebb and Flow' that depicts a parent and child and has a reflective surface of polished steel.

He said: "It was through an open call to the university that

I was invited to submit a design which was aimed at the military kids' clubs of Plymouth, and it was a vote from the kids that won me the commission.

"I worked to finetune the design with another student and Royal Marines veteran, Anthony Hill. I felt incredibly proud that my design was chosen by the military kids."

Defence engineering group Babcock brought the design to life at its Devonport facility.

The memorial is now outside the city's Council House.

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R'n'R

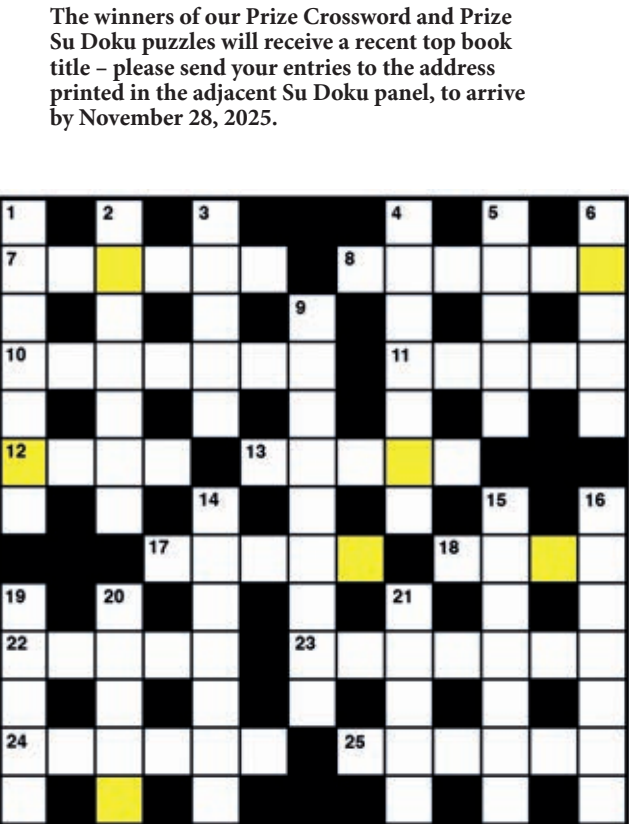


Prize Crossword
No. 397

Solve the crossword, then rearrange the 7 letters in yellow squares to find an RAF aircraft

- Across
- 7. High-flier uses Ordnance Survey to find target (6)
 - 8. Calvin and I use company cloth (6)
 - 10. Outstanding incompetent (7)
 - 11. Part of helicopter, either way (5)
 - 12. Story outside Tallahassee (4)
 - 13. Little Zelig looking for chilly dwelling (5)
 - 17. Before Hilton Head, stylish city appears (5)
 - 18. See 20 Down
 - 22. Raita mixed up by woman's band (5)
 - 23. Titanic conqueror (7)
 - 24. Without me, Ma buries damaged plane (6)
 - 25. Adult graduate joins Trade Union of Royal Engineers (6)
- Down
- 1. RAF planes destroy royal seats (7)
 - 2. It is used in cooking up disagreement with upper-class American city (7)
 - 3. Hat for the big race (5)
 - 4. See 6 Down
 - 5. Type of bean originally planted inside, near the oven (5)
 - 6. And 4 Down. Soldier follows snake while RAF exercise (5,7)
 - 9. Golf club to follow RAF plane (9)
 - 14. Turns pages on American aircraft (7)
 - 15. Daimler, say, spills fuel: take precautions! (7)
 - 16. Almost encourages, then does encourage horses (3-4)
 - 19. After first letter, salt returns in RAF plane (5)
 - 20. And 18 Across. Striker has William's brother with biblical striker, we hear (5,4)
 - 21. I object to lad returning RAF award (5)

Name:
Address:
.....
.....
RAF word:Crossword No. 397



Prize Crossword No. 396 winner is: J Evans, High Wycombe.

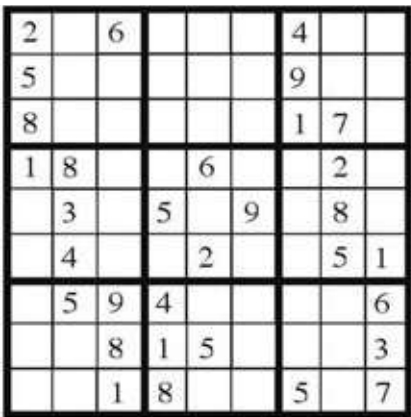
Solution to Crossword No. 396
Across – 1. Fail 8. Apolitical 9. Sir Keith 10. Park 12. Barred 14. Scruff
15. Beagle 17. Roster 18. Stun 19. Mitchell 21. Wellington 22. Toga
Down – 2. Ambivalent 3. Lark 4. Copied 5. Dishes 6. Airports 7. Flak
11. Refuelling 13. Reginald 16. Ermine 17. Rotate 18. Sown 20. Hint
RAF word: *Instructor*



Prize Su Doku
No. 407

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 28, 2025.
The winner of Su Doku No: 405 is: Edward Dillon, Wirral.



Solution to Su Doku No. 406

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



Film Review
Relay (15)
In cinemas now

Relay
runner

ONE MAN acts as a getaway service for whistleblowers: arranging payoffs for companies in exchange for the information they don't want publicised, in David Mackenzie's throwback thriller.

Riz Ahmed (*Sound of Metal*) plays Ash, the mostly voiceless go-between. The key to his operation is anonymity, and so we mostly follow him through the shadows or darting through crowds in disguise.

He communicates through a relay service – typically used by the hearing-impaired – where a third party voices his typed messages. It's an ingenious method of staying invisible, exploiting a system with a strict privacy policy.

Through this service, he connects with Sarah Grant (Lily Collins, *Emily In Paris*), who has discovered some secrets about the bioengineering company she used to work for. Now that Sarah is being followed and threatened, she just wants to return the documents.



FIXER: The elusive Ash (Riz Ahmed) helps whistleblowers PHOTO: HEIDI HARTWIG

Sarah's pursuers are led by Dawson (Sam Worthington, *The Exorcism*), professionals tasked with stopping the information from getting out. With a huge corporate merger looming, the clock is ticking, and they aren't afraid of getting their hands dirty. *Relay* is a nippy little thriller boiled down to "the handoff" – that point in a spy film where there's an exchange of goods in a public place, with all eyes trained and guns at the ready. It's a neat setup that creates intrigue almost

as quickly as it satisfies with solutions and escape plans. It evokes the Seventies paranoia of *The Conversation* and the cat-and-mouse precision of *Heat*, but stripped down and updated for an age of total surveillance: where every phone is a burner and avoiding detection is near impossible. Though it loses its footing a little as things ramp up, *Relay* stays fun, thrilling and tightly wound.
4 out of 5 roundels ●●●●
Review by Sam Cooney



Books
100 Things to Wear
Slocombe & Antrobus



The fabric of society

A NEW book from the National Trust, *100 Things to Wear*, explores historic clothing in National Trust collections, including uniform of the King's Bodyguard of the Yeoman of the Guard and the famous siren suit 'onesie' worn by wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

Written by Emma Slocombe, the trust's Senior National Curator for Dress and Textiles, and Helen Antrobus, Assistant Curator, the book's introduction is by Patrick Grant, one of the judges on the BBC TV show *The Great British Sewing Bee*.

Other notable items featured are Agatha Christie's evening coat (from Greenway, Devon), clogs belonging to Beatrix Potter (Hill Top, Cumbria) and Benjamin Disraeli's Chancellor's Robes (Hughenden, Buckinghamshire). Helen Antrobus said: "An extraordinary leather waistcoat [pictured inset] from Hatchlands

Park, Surrey stands as a poignant reminder of one of the darkest periods in our history – the First World War. Yet, despite the hardships, it shows the dedication and care of its makers. Clothing like this was used to show love, support and resilience, and says so much about the strength of the human spirit during such a challenging time."

Subtitled *Fashion from the Collections of the National Trust*, the book also highlights pieces from properties such as Powis Castle, Killerton House in Devon, Chartwell, Kent (where Churchill's 'onesie' and his Army greatcoat, trousers and hat are kept) and Snowhill Manor, Gloucestershire, where visitors can view the Yeoman of the Guard uniforms.

MAIN PHOTO: © National Trust Images/Pete Huggins
● Go to: nationaltrust.org.uk for more details.

