

The Forces' favourite paper



A Halloween spooktacular with Daisy May Cooper

See R'n'R page 3

Win!



Missing aircraft Iceland tragedy

See page 17

ROYAL AIR FORCE

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RAF News



Cpl Court's got brass in pocket

Air chiefs help campaigner Hayley raise £250k



See pages 14-15

Global donor search to save DFC hero

“In Afghanistan I saw courage and leadership at its best. Now I find myself needing help from others...”

Flt Lt Chris Gordon



A CHINOOK pilot awarded the RAF's highest flying honour for saving countless lives in one of the most daring rescues in the conflict in Afghanistan has revealed he has just two months to find a stem cell match after being struck down by fatal blood cancer.

Veteran Flt Lt Chris Gordon, who is expecting the birth of his second child with wife Morgan in the next few weeks, faces a race against time to find a suitable donor for the life-saving treatment.

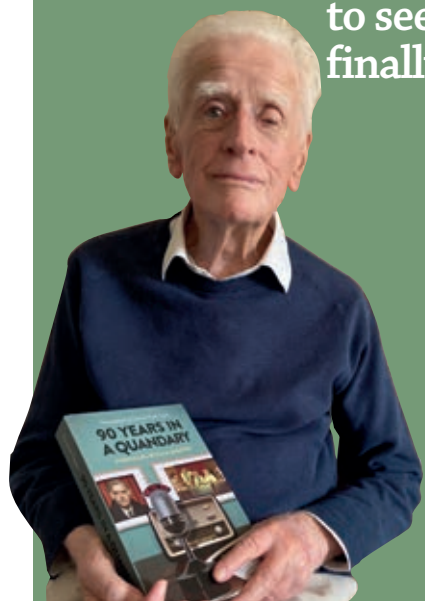
● See p3 for full story

All the best RAF sport action

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“At 95 it’s very satisfying to see my book finally published,”



TV comedy writer and RAF veteran Ted Taylor releases his memoir

See page 9

“Dance and family are the two most important things to me,”



Strictly judge Anton du Beke puts on his Ballet Shoes

See R’n’R pages 4-5

“I’ve had some unbelievable experiences – rugby league bucket list stuff,”



Head coach Sgt James Hutchinson as he steps down

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ROYAL AIR FORCE
RAF News

RAF News

Room 68
Lancaster Building
HQ Air Command
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire
HP14 4UE

Editor: Simon Williams

Email: editor@rafnews.co.uk

Executive Features Editor:

Tracey Allen

Email: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk

News Editor: Simon Mander

Email: Simon.Mander116@mod.gov.uk

Sport: sports@rafnews.co.uk

All advertising:

Edwin Rodrigues

Tel: 07482 571535

Email: edwin.rodrigues@rafnews.co.uk

Subscriptions and distribution:

RAF News Subscriptions

c/o Intermedia,

Unit 6 The Enterprise Centre,

Kelvin Lane, Crawley

RH10 9PE

Tel: 01293 312191

Email: rafnewssubs@

subscriptionhelpline.co.uk

E-7 Lossie arrival

TWO RAF E-7 Wedgetail aircraft are now stationed at Lossiemouth, as testing and evaluation of the UK’s future airborne early warning and control capability continues.

The first aircraft, designated WT001, has been at the Moray airbase since May and has been joined by WT002 following the completion of testing at MOD Boscombe Down.

Both aircraft will continue development work as the programme progresses.

The Wedgetail offers advanced radar, communication and multi-domain battle management to support UK and Nato operations.

It provides Airborne Early Warning and Control capabilities and transmits high-resolution radar data through advanced communication links.

It replaces the E-3D Sentry fleet, delivering long-range surveillance, battle management and command and control for air and joint operations.



This Week In History



1939

Junkers downed

602 SQN Spitfires shoot down the first enemy aircraft over British territory, downing a Junkers JU88 over the Firth of Forth.

1953

Memorial unveiled

HM QUEEN Elizabeth unveils the RAF Memorial at Runnymede, commemorating the 20,000 crew lost with no known grave.



2005

Chinook mercy mission

27 SQN Chinooks based at Chaklala launch aid drops to remote mountain villages following earthquakes in Pakistan.

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

DFC Chinook vet's cancer battle SOS

Tracey Allen

A 43-YEAR-OLD former Chinook pilot awarded the DFC for his bravery in Afghanistan is in a race against time to find a life-saving stem cell donor.

Flt Lt Chris Gordon has the rare and life-threatening blood disorder severe aplastic anaemia and needs to find a donor in the next two months.

Now a director of a global helicopter company, and based in Los Angeles, he is working with blood cancer charity DKMS UK to get more people onto the stem cell donor register.

Chris's wife Morgan is expecting their son in the next few weeks. The couple have a two-year-old daughter, Mila.

Chris said: "In Afghanistan, I saw courage and leadership at their best; people stepping forward when others needed help. It was something I tried to do wherever I could."

"Now, I find myself needing help from other people. A potential donor could be anyone, anywhere in the world. But I need them to join the donor register so they can be identified as a match."

He added: "Everyone knows about giving blood whereas the stem cell register is not well known. There is a lot of fear and misconception, but if you're okay giving blood, you can donate your stem cells. The sign-up process

is so easy, and most people will never even be called up.

"But if you are a match, you could save the life of someone like me. Signing up just takes a few minutes."

Chris received the DFC in 2020 for landing his Chinook in the middle of a fierce firefight in a Taliban stronghold to rescue ISAF Forces pinned down by heavily armed insurgents at the height of the conflict.

Military chiefs praised his skills and selfless bravery for placing the damaged Chinook between Coalition troops under fire and the enemy to protect them as they boarded the aircraft.

Previously fit and healthy, Chris experienced no symptoms of the disorder and found out during an annual check-up.

He said: "My blood test showed a critical drop in my red and white blood cells, and platelets. It was a huge shock to hear that my bone marrow had failed, that I wasn't producing any of these cells."

He is now reliant on regular blood transfusions and visits hospital for blood and platelets twice a week.

DKMS spokesperson Bronagh Hughes said: "Currently, just seven per cent of the eligible UK population are signed up. Finding a matching donor is also linked to ethnic heritage, and only a small proportion of the stem cell register is from an

ethnic minority background.

"This means that many non-white patients, like Chris, who is half Jamaican, have less chance of finding their life-saving match."

"He has one brother, Jonathan, but he is only a half-match. Chris's doctors have searched the global stem cell register, but so far have identified only two partial matches."

Signing up involves answering a few health questions and some painless cheek swabs – you can order a free swab kit from the DKMS website.

Once potential donors are on the register, doctors worldwide can search to see if candidates are a match for a patient. There are currently around 2,000 people in the UK waiting for compatible donors.

Bronagh added: "Most people who join the register will never be called to donate, but if you are matched to a patient, nine out of 10 times the donation can be completed through a simple, non-surgical procedure."

"For Chris, and patients like him around the world, the right person joining the stem cell donor register could give them their lives back."

● To help Chris find a donor and to register, go to: dkms.org.uk. To make a donation go to: gofundme.com/f/chris-needs-a-stem-cell-transplant-and-care



RACE AGAINST TIME: Flt Lt Gordon in his RAF days; inset left, with wife Morgan and daughter Mila; and, far left, receiving the DFC from HM Queen Elizabeth II in 2020



LAID TO REST: Families gather at the Venray War Cemetery in The Netherlands for the rededication service

Lost WWII crew honoured

Simon Mander

FOUR AIRMEN who died when their Lancaster bomber crashed in Germany in December 1944 were finally honoured by name after an 82-year search into one of Bomber Command's biggest mysteries.

At the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Venray War Cemetery – in The Netherlands, a service was held for Australian Fg Off Leslie Markland Hough, RAFVR Plt Off John Henry Tales, Sgt Henry Charles Burnside and Sgt John Lawson, whose remains lay in graves marked 'unknown' for decades following a series of post-war administrative errors.

The 218 Sqn Lancaster departed

RAF Methwold as part of a force of 130 tasked with attacking the Neerbeck oil plant at Homberg in Germany's Ruhr region.

The aircraft was hit by flak and was later seen losing height, gradually heading towards Horstgen before nose-diving and crashing in a field.

Four parachutes were seen to open before the aircraft hit the ground and three crew were taken prisoners of war. The fourth was killed on the ground by members of the SS. Three went down with the aircraft.

JCCC caseworker Tracey Bowers said: "Seeing relatives meet members of the local community who adopted these graves was incredibly moving."

Plt Off Tales, born in Attercliffe in 1917, enlisted in 1939. He moved to 149 Sqn in Suffolk as an instructor, where he volunteered to join the crew as a flight engineer. Hough's nephew John Tales said: "It has been wonderful to learn more about Uncle John and we would like to thank all those who have made this possible."

Captain Fg Off Hough remained at the controls of the burning aircraft to give others the opportunity to escape.

The two other crew honoured were air gunners Sgts Burnside and 'Geordie' Lawson.

The service was conducted by Reverend Gp Capt Ruth Hake.



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ON PARADE: Gp Capt Jordan leads the parade through Shawbury to mark 1 Flying School's 50th anniversary

Shawbury marks 50th

Simon Mander

HALF A CENTURY of helicopter training has been marked by Shawbury.

Personnel from 1 Flying Training School celebrated the milestone by exercising their freedom of Market Drayton by staging the first parade since 1818.

Training moved to Shawbury from nearby former RAF Tern Hill in 1976.

The parade was reviewed by Shropshire Deputy Lieutenant AVM Warren James, a previous Station Commander, and AOC 22 Group, and attended by civic dignitaries.

Parade Commander Gp Capt Mike Jordan led the procession past the war memorial before halting for the Review in front of the library.

A flypast of three Juno helicopters flew over before the Deputy Lieutenant spoke to the assembled crowds.

Back at base an evening reception was held for past and



present Qualified Helicopter Instructors.

A vintage Whirlwind HAR 10 helicopter positioned in front of the Officers' Mess provided a fitting spectacle for the event.

The concept of the Defence Helicopter Flying School was born out of the Defence Costs Study of 1994, and a single school was formed at Shawbury in 1997, responsible for basic helicopter training for all three Services.

It was rebadged as 1 Flying Training School on February 28, 2020 and is the oldest flying training school in the world, having originally formed in 1919.

UK ends Iraq Ops



COMBATTING TERROR: Typhoons launch strike against Daesh terror group at the height of operations. Below, Tornado GR4

Simon Mander

AFTER THOUSANDS of air strikes Britain has announced the imminent departure of its personnel from Iraq.

Typhoons and Tornados have so far struck more than 2,300 Daesh targets and provided critical surveillance and reconnaissance in support of Iraqi ground operations.

Now the Global Coalition's military mission against Daesh, codenamed Operation Inherent Resolve, has ended after more than a decade of operations, training and capacity building.

The Iraqi Security Forces and the Kurdish Peshmerga have now secured the enduring territorial defeat of Daesh and can take primary responsibility for the country's security.

The UK will continue to support the country's security and stability, working to develop a bilateral defence partnership.

Operation Inherent Resolve was established in 2014 to advise, assist and enable the lasting defeat of Daesh and establish enduring security cooperation operating under a coalition of 90 partners.

At the invitation of the Iraqi government, UK forces have trained and assisted more than 111,000 members of the ISF, including more than 21,000 of the Peshmerga, in infantry, weapons maintenance, counter-IED, medical and engineering skills.

The UK remains committed to ensuring the global defeat of Daesh through the continuation of Operation Shader and will continue to lead the coordination of Coalition communications to counter Daesh propaganda.



Stateside chute out

UK AEROBATICS acers from the Falcons joined an international line-up of military demonstration teams and innovative aircraft at America's largest airshow.

The annual Huntington Beach event attracts thousands of spectators to the Southern California coastline near Los Angeles.

The team were joined by an RAF C-17, the USAF Thunderbirds and F-22 Raptor Demonstration Team.



Remembrance ride

Staff Reporter

THOUSANDS OF bikers from around the UK will gather for the annual Ride to the Wall Remembrance event at the Royal British Legion National Remembrance Gardens in Staffordshire.

During the Service of Remembrance at the Armed Forces Memorial, riders will pay tribute to the names of the fallen engraved on the memorial, remembering those 'who can no longer ride by our side'.

Launched in 2008, the Ride to the Wall community has now



raised more than £2 million to support the work of the National Remembrance Gardens.



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AWARD: Former CAS, ACM Sir Andrew Pulford, presents FS McDermott with the ceremonial pace stick at Cranwell College

Training ace on the Pace

CRANWELL COLLEGE training ace FS McDermott has been presented with the Jack Holt Memorial Trophy for his role preparing the next generation of Air Force officers for frontline duty.

He was awarded the ceremonial pace stick by former Chief of the Air Staff, ACM Sir Andrew Pulford. The trophy is named in honour of FS Jack Holt, who held the SNCO post in the 1950s.



Art attack

MUSEUM CHIEFS called in artist Luke Crump and a group of school pupils to create eye-catching RAF-themed murals as part of the Cosford site's redevelopment programme.

Students drew inspiration from the Museum's displays that span more than a century of RAF history, to create their own artwork under Luke's expert guidance.

Engine debris blamed for fatal Spitfire crash



EXCEPTIONAL TALENT: Sqn Ldr Mark Long had amassed 2,700 flying hours and was a highly respected pilot, the report says

Simon Mander

DIRT IN the engine has been blamed for the crash of a Spitfire killing the pilot, a report has found.

Sqn Ldr Mark Long died when his Battle of Britain Memorial Flight aircraft ploughed into the ground on take-off at Coningsby on June 14, 2024.

Now the findings of a Service investigation into the accident have been published.

It blames: "Debris within the carburettor which caused fuel starvation, leading to a loss of thrust required to maintain powered flight."

The investigatory panel made a total of 26 recommendations to prevent a similar event occurring.

Director General Defence Safety Authority AM Alan

Gillespie said: "The Service Inquiry has determined that the debris found within the carburettor was likely to have been present for a significant period of time."

"It is not clear when the debris formed nor whether it had contributed to serviceability issues in the past."

"The inquiry has concluded that the procurement of historical items to operate within military equipment requires careful scrutiny and robust processes need to be in place to ensure the serviceability of components on receipt."

The exhaustive 158-page document notes that the BBMF project team was 25 per cent undermanned at the time due to the gapping of posts.

It was also working on several

corrective action requirements relating to resourcing imposed by the Military Aviation Authority in 2022 which "was likely to have imposed significant stress on such an under resourced team."

"I am content that this accident has been thoroughly investigated and robust recommendations have been made which should minimise the likelihood of a recurrence of a similar tragedy," AM Gillespie said.

The report describes Sqn Ldr Long as an experienced RAF fast jet pilot and instructor who had been seconded to the BBMF as a volunteer for three years alongside his daily duties as a Typhoon pilot.

He was qualified to fly the unit's Spitfires, Hurricane and Chipmunk and at the time of

the accident was due to join the flight as full-time aircrew and assume the duties of officer commanding.

It says: "Sqn Ldr Long had consistently been assessed as an extremely talented pilot and instructor and held in the highest regard by his peers and seniors."

"He had amassed close to 2,700 flying hours in his career and demonstrated on at least two occasions exceptional airmanship and skill in the air whilst dealing with aircraft emergencies."

"Although he had accrued only 131 hours total in warbirds, this was in line with the average of a BBMF pilot after three years of volunteering."

"The panel concluded that his flying experience was extremely likely not a factor in the accident."

Atlas nets £190m lift

Simon Mander

A MULTI-MILLION-POUND contract has been signed with Airbus to maintain the RAF's A400M fleet.

The £190 million deal extension is set to increase the number of mission-capable A400M aircraft available each day from 10 to 13 by the end of 2027.

The 30 per cent improvement in availability for the RAF's tactical and strategic airlift fleet will see Airbus continue its maintenance, repair and support

services at Brize Norton.

Defence Minister Luke Pollard said: "This contract extension is a vote of confidence in the workforce at Brize Norton and Carterton who keep our A400M fleet flying. By boosting availability of these aircraft, we're strengthening the RAF's ability to conduct global operations and deliver on Nato commitments."

The A400M supports operations ranging from humanitarian relief to rapid troop deployment.

National Armaments Materiel

Head Air Mobility, Air Cdre Si Young, said: "This contract will deliver continued improvements in A400M fleet availability, giving our Armed Forces the capability and supporting a platform that is at the heart of the RAF's operations now and into the future."

The 31-month extension to the Medium-Term Contract means support services will continue until April 2029.

The contract builds on the work of the Defence Investment Plan, which commits £298 billion to UK defence over the next four years.



BUDGET BOOST: Airbus deal will increase Atlas availability by 30 per cent, Defence chiefs say



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CHALLENGE: RAF Museum Arrows fundraising drive

Reds alert

MUSEUM BOSSES are giving Red Arrows fans the chance to support the team by hitting the fundraising trail.

They're looking for aerobatic enthusiasts to take part in the Red Arrows Challenge and walk, run or cycle a 5km course. Those who complete the challenge and raise £50 or more will receive a unique Red Arrows pack, while the event's top fundraisers will receive family tickets to the RAF Air Show at Cosford.

Entry costs £22 per adult, £11 per child, or £16.50 for members of the Armed Forces community.

● Go to: rafmuseum.org for details.



Mace pace

GLOBAL operations continue despite major runway resurfacing at Brize.

Aircraft and personnel have been dispersed across the country as work continues under a four-month infrastructure programme codenamed Project Mace.

Operating from sites including Prestwick, Boscombe Down, East Midlands, Stansted and Bournemouth, the Air Mobility Force has maintained its operational output.

Brize Norton Commander Air Wing, Gp Capt Andy McIntyre, said: "Project Mace is all driven by the refurbishment and resurfacing of the Brize runway."

"The scheme is providing a real-world demonstration of Agile Combat Employment, testing the RAF's fight from dispersed locations."

"At the very start, we wanted to make an opportunity out of this effective denial of Brize."

Comedy legend brought to book

Simon Mander

A BLIND RAF veteran who wrote for *Morecambe and Wise* and *The Two Ronnies* has published his memoir.

Edward "Ted" Taylor also helped launch Paul Merton's broadcasting career and created the hit BBC comedy *The Men From The Ministry*.

Now his autobiography, *90 Years In A Quandary*, recounts a life that took him from RAF National Service, through Cambridge University and into the BBC.

Mr Taylor said: "I would spend the week making notes and when Blind Veterans UK volunteer Sian came to visit, I would dictate the text to her. It was a wonderful thing."

During more than four decades in broadcasting he worked on more than 2,000 BBC productions and wrote for some of Britain's best-loved entertainers, including Arthur Askey, Kenneth Horne, and Bob Monkhouse.

Among his credits are *Round the Horne*, *Just a Minute*, *I'm Sorry, I'll Read That Again*, *Whack-O!* and *Dr Finlay's Casebook*.

Comedian Paul Merton, to whom Mr Taylor gave his first broadcast appearance on Radio 4's *Just a Minute*, has written the book's foreword.

Born in 1931, Ted enlisted in the RAF as a National Serviceman in 1950. After initially training for aircrew duties, he

was posted to a radar station on the east coast, where he monitored for approaching Soviet aircraft during the early years of the Cold War.

Following military service, Mr Taylor studied English at Cambridge University and joined the Footlights theatrical club. It was there that he caught the attention of a BBC talent scout who offered him a trainee writing contract.

One of Ted's proudest achievements was creating, writing and producing *The Men From The Ministry*, often described as a forerunner to *Yes Minister*.

The series ran for 15 years, was broadcast internationally and was adapted in countries around the world.

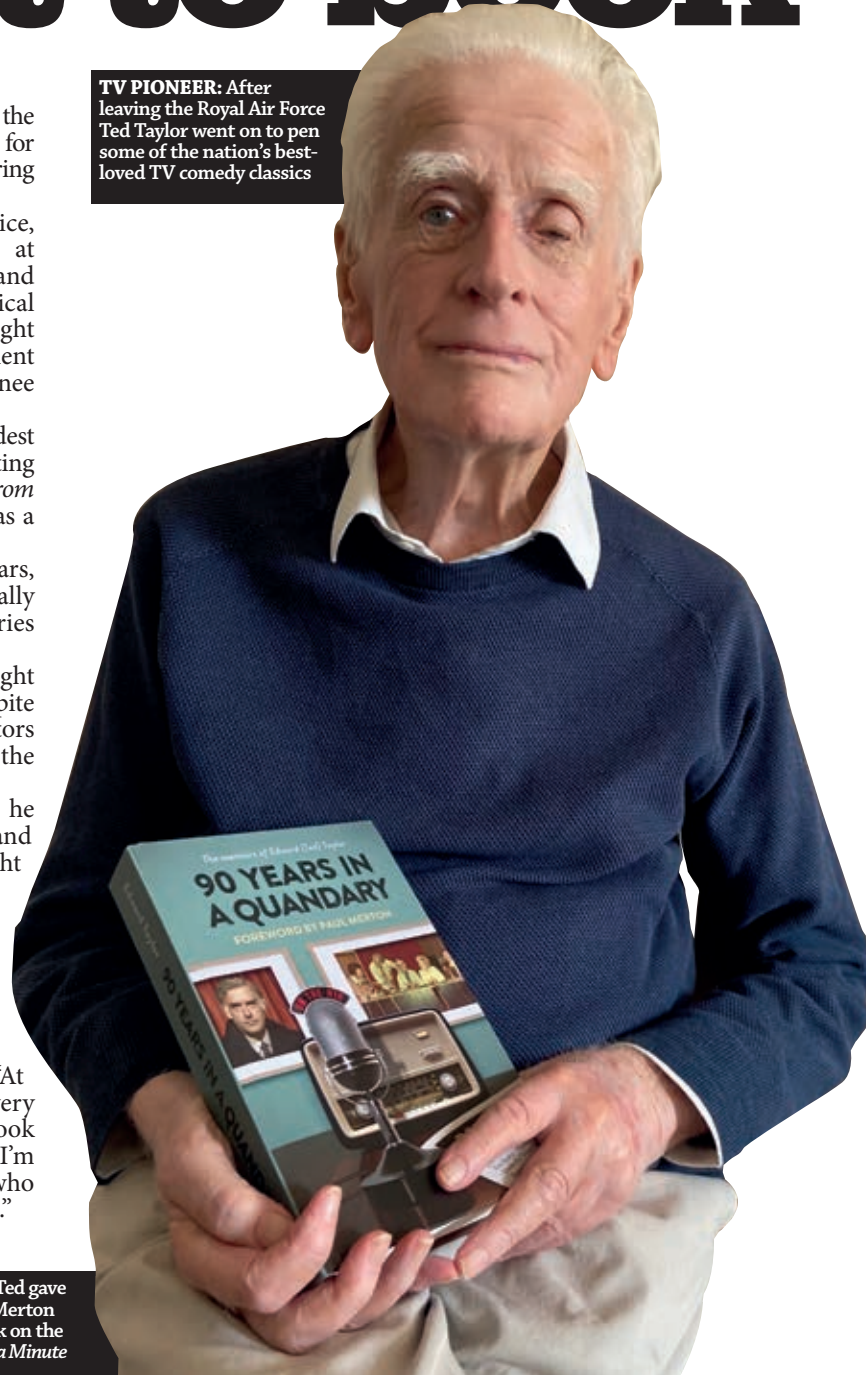
Ted began losing his sight in the mid-1980s and, despite extensive investigations, doctors were never able to determine the cause.

As his sight deteriorated, he was forced to give up driving and adapt to life with severe sight loss.

He later learned about Blind Veterans UK through a healthcare professional who recognised that he was an RAF veteran living with sight loss.

Mr Taylor said: "At 95 years old, it's very satisfying to see the book finally published. I'm grateful to everyone who helped make it happen."

TV PIONEER: After leaving the Royal Air Force Ted Taylor went on to pen some of the nation's best-loved TV comedy classics



PROTEGE: Ted gave comic Paul Merton his big break on the BBC's *Just a Minute*

Ukraine powers UK drone tech

DRONE SWARMS using AI to attack targets could be developed in Britain following access to a Ukrainian intelligence database.

The uncrewed aerial systems would be able to fly autonomously or controlled by aircrew on tasks such as the targeting of enemy submarines in the North Atlantic.

Britain is the first international partner to be allowed to share Ukraine's Avengers AI Labs, which holds imagery and video gathered on the battlefield using daylight and thermal sensors, and is used to develop, train and

evaluate AI models.

Defence Secretary Wes Streeting said: "On my recent visit to Kyiv, I saw first-hand the extraordinary innovation which is allowing them to repel Putin's illegal and unprovoked invasion."

"This world-first access to real battlefield data will allow British companies to continue pushing the frontier of defence innovation, making us

safer at home as well as further strengthening Ukraine."

The MOD is inviting companies to submit proposals for how they would use the data to create AI models for the next generation of battlefield drones. This is the first competition under the UK-Ukraine AI Partnership and could see the creation of models that let drone swarms keep working when communications are degraded or

satellite navigation is unavailable.

AI Minister Kanishka Narayan said: "We are bringing together Ukraine's hard-won battlefield experience with Britain's best AI companies to develop and deploy capabilities faster."

The database includes sensor information from over six million detections of tanks, artillery, air defence systems, infantry, and aerial targets, including Shahed drones and reconnaissance Uncrewed Aerial Vehicles.

Access will be available for up to 12 UK firms selected within weeks.



News



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P8 trawler scramble



GROUNDING:
Search and Rescue team prepare to winch trawler crew to safety as P-8 Poseidon monitors the scene from above

Staff Reporter

A P-8 POSEIDON crew used its state-of-the-art maritime surveillance equipment to help rescue a stricken fishing boat off the coast of Orkney.

Personnel from Lossiemouth-based 201 Sqn were on a training mission when the mayday call came from the Old Man of Hoy that the trawler Genesis had run aground.

Alongside HM Coastguard, the RNLI, Police Scotland, and the Scottish Ambulance Service, 201 Sqn joined the multi-agency response to save the 17-man crew and retrieve the vessel.

The Poseidon offered an eye in the

sky during the rescue operation and communication equipment to co-ordinate the rescue operation. It also has a life-raft – which can be deployed should there be the need.

All members of the trawler crew were winched from the deck of the stricken vessel and airlifted to hospital.

Although the primary role of the P-8 aircraft is focused on maritime surveillance and anti-submarine warfare, it holds the capability for search and rescue at sea.

The rescue is the squadron's third in recent months, following similar emergencies in the Irish Sea and off the coast of Stranraer this summer.

War dogs unleashed

AIR FORCE police dog handlers showcased their security skills as defence chiefs gathered at Brize for a high-level war-fighting conference.

Defence Minister Calvin Bailey joined industry chiefs and academics for briefings on military operations, emerging threats and the role of the Air Force during the 2021 Afghan evacuation, spearheaded from the Oxfordshire station.

Military working dogs from 3 (Global) Police and Security Wing put on a display of routine search, detection and security procedures.





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BOOKLIST

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PUBLISHERS WEEKLY



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Bulletin

Women recruits move up

RECORD NUMBERS of women are achieving command roles in the UK Armed Forces, a new report reveals.

But a limited numbers of female recruits with defence experience and under representation in senior posts may still deter many entering or remaining in defence.

The latest Women in Defence UK survey had the highest participation rate since the report began six years ago and shows female senior officers increasing to 10.4 per cent, narrowing the gap with men.

Founder Angela Owen said: "The 2026 Charter Report demonstrates that progress is possible – and happening. The Summit shows that the sector has the ambition, capability and community to go further."

Researchers say more organisations are adopting evidence-based practices such as inclusive recruitment, mentoring programmes and flexible working.

Survival team look sharp for Gurkha trial

Susie Woods

St Mawgan

AIR FORCE survival experts took on a brutal Gurkha endurance test to raise money for a Forces charity.

St Mawgan personnel joined members of the Defence Survive, Evade, Resist, Extract Training Organisation to take part in the traditional Doko Race.

Competitors carry a Nepalese bamboo doko basket filled with 25kg of sand over a 5.5km course.

The SERE team completed the challenge, raising £500 for the Gurkha Welfare Trust.

Cranwell Commandant Air Cdr Mark Lorrinan-Hughes presented the winners with a Gurkha kukri knife trophy.



BASKET CASES: SERE instructors hit the Mawgan course carrying traditional Gurkha 'dokos' PHOTOS: CPL TOM CANN

Gaza crews honoured

Simon Mander

BRIZE--BASED AIRDROP specialists who spearheaded life-saving missions to Gaza at the height of Israeli military operations against Hamas terrorists have scooped a top Air Force humanitarian award.

Members of 83 Expeditionary Air Group, 206 Sqn, the Joint Air Delivery Transport Evaluation Unit and 47 Air Despatch Sqn were presented with the Firmin Sword of Peace at the Oxfordshire airbase.

Atlas A400M aircraft joined a fleet of 14 transporters from the US, Germany, France, Indonesia, the United Arab Emirates, the Netherlands and Egypt during the mission coordinated by the Jordanian Armed Forces.

UK crews delivered hundreds of tonnes of ready-to-eat meals, water and rice and medical supplies into a UK-designated drop site on the northern coast of Gaza as part of the international famine operation.

Speaking after the ceremony, Officer Commanding 47 (AD) Sqn, Maj Sam Kennedy, said: "The Firmin Sword of Peace recognises the positive difference made to people facing humanitarian hardship."

"What makes this all the more



MERCY MISSION: Atlas aid drops into northern Gaza were part of a 14-nation operation to ease suffering during Israeli attacks against Hamas terror group



special is that this is the second time the sub-unit has been awarded the Sword of Peace, having first received the honour for its contribution during the Ethiopian famine in 1985."

The international air drop, dubbed Operation Underhill, was part of UK efforts to provide humanitarian relief to the people of Gaza which included the creation of a maritime aid corridor and the deployment of a Royal Navy vessel to the Eastern Mediterranean.

That's a lot of



PINK LADY: Charity force Cpl Hayley Court brass at the gala and joins the podium larks, both

HEALING Military Minds – the fundraising group set up by mental health campaigner Cpl Hayley Court – smashed through its £250,000 target with its sell-out big-ticket summer ball.

It's a milestone moment for Hayley, who set out four years ago with modest hopes to raise a few quid to support Forces charity Combat Stress after her close friend, Army Infantryman Jamie Sinclair, attempted to take his life after battling with the psychological legacy of tours in Bosnia and Kosovo.

The glitzy annual event has won the backing of top brass across the Armed Forces to become one of the social highlights of the year, attended by hundreds of guests.

This one was even more special for Hayley as she was crowned Reservist of the Year at

Fundraisers smash milestone target with glitzy annual ch

the English Veterans Awards for her tireless campaign to help fight mental health problems in the Forces as the HMM committee made their final preparations for the event.

Breast cancer

She was flying high until a visit to her GP brought her back down to earth as she was told she had breast cancer weeks before the grand fundraising event.

Hayley said: "Being told I had cancer was a huge shock, especially

when I was busy preparing for an event that meant so much to me.

"But I've learnt that strength isn't about never being scared, it's about carrying on, one day at a time."

After early diagnosis and surgery to remove a small lump she now faces months of radiotherapy but is confident she can beat the illness which claims the lives of more than 10,000 women a year in the UK.

She added: "I'm now recovering from major surgery and preparing for radiotherapy, and I hope my story encourages other women to

know their bodies and get anything unusual checked. Don't ignore the small things, they could be important."

Despite the shock diagnosis and surgery, Hayley showed the determination that has been the hallmark of her military career as a Regular serving in Iraq and Afghanistan and now as a Reservist with Brize Norton-based 622 Sqn on board the RAF's Voyager transporter.

She added: "Reaching £250,000 is a huge moment for everyone involved with Healing Military

by Simon Williams

f (top) brass...



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com left



HIGH NOTE:
Military pipers



MORE BRASS:
Cadets Band



NATTY HATS:
Fun at gala

ne £250K narity ball

Minds. When we began, we wanted to make a genuine difference to veterans, their families and the organisations that support them.

"To see the community behind that ambition grow to this level is incredibly meaningful. This milestone belongs to our board, committee, volunteers, sponsors, fundraisers, supporters and everyone who has donated or helped along the way.

"The total matters because of what it can help achieve for veterans, their families and the wider Armed Forces community.

"Behind that £250,000 are thousands

of individual acts of support: people who have donated, sponsored an event, volunteered, bought a ticket, completed a challenge, entered a raffle or helped raise awareness of what we do.

"On behalf of the Healing Military Minds board, committee and wider team, thank you to everyone who has been part of this journey."

Dressed in a bright pink ball gown – the campaigning colour used by breast cancer charities – Hayley took centre stage at the event to keep the donations flowing.

Mental health

Alongside the top class entertainment delivered by 40s-style singers the Bluebird Belles, RAF Cadets Band, military pipers and Royal Air Force

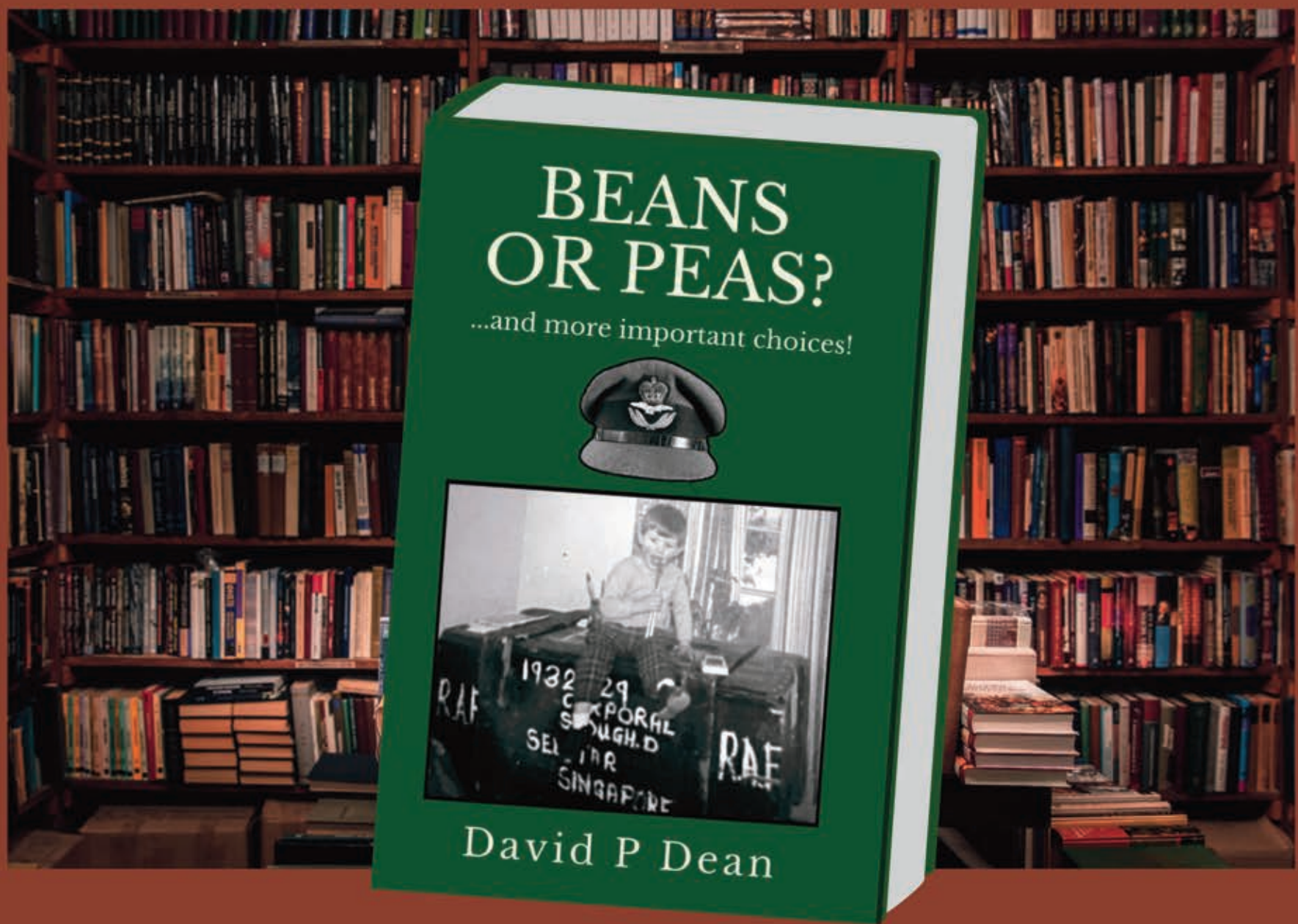
rockers Fallen Angels, there were speeches by Air Vice-Marshal Darren Ellison KHP, Director Defence Healthcare, and Andrew Geelan, an Afghanistan veteran who shared his experience of using mental health support services.

HMM director Wg Cdr Graham Prager added: "It was a privilege to see the strength of support behind Healing Military Minds. Passing £250,000 reflects the generosity, commitment and shared purpose of everyone who has contributed to the organisation's work.

"The Gala Ball was an opportunity both to recognise what has been achieved and to reaffirm our commitment to supporting charities and initiatives serving veterans, their families and the wider military community."



ON POINT:
Guests arrive



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

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

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

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

A testimonial to enduring love

A whopping 600 pages!

Out on Amazon

Missing over Iceland



DE-ICING AIRCRAFT 1942 BY RAVILIOUS: Ground crew clear off snow and ice from a DH Dragon Rapide on a runway at RAF Clifton, York
PHOTO: TOWNER, EASTBOURNE

Tragedy of war artist and pilot who disappeared on flight and how it affected their young children back home



ARTISTS: Eric Ravilious and his wife Tirzah Garwood were both very accomplished

THE MYSTERY of war artist Eric Ravilious's disappearance on an RAF reconnaissance flight over Iceland has never been solved.

Now award-winning writer Melody Foreman has written *Love as Strong as Death* (scriptbooks.co.uk) unravelling the fate of Flt Lt 'Ginge' Culver and Ravilious, blending historical investigation with the enduring enigma of their final flight.

The deeply personal story of loss and legacy explores the impact of wartime tragedy on the children left behind – Carol Lockwood was only eight weeks old when her father, 'Ginge', disappeared. Anne Ullmann was 17 months old when she waved her father Ravilious goodbye for the last time.

At dawn on September 2, 1942, a Hudson aircraft lifted into the pale Icelandic sky, and was never seen again. On board was Flt Lt Alfred 'Ginge' Culver DFM, just 25, together with three fellow airmen of Coastal Command's 269 Sqn. With them flew Ravilious, 39, the brilliant war artist whose luminous watercolours had captured the uneasy stillness of

Britain at war. Within hours, all were gone.

What happened in those final moments? Were they victims of a German U-boat or battleship? Did ice and mechanical failure bring them down? Or were they struck by a Luftwaffe reconnaissance aircraft over the Atlantic?

For decades, questions haunted the families left behind.

The following extract from the book is Ginge's last letter. In his mind he feels sure he will soon be home on leave. There was so much to say. Soon enough he would be in the arms of his beloved 'Face' and holding his new baby daughter. These days he was flying on the emotional fumes of great hope:

Kalda [undated]
"I haven't time to write a letter with this, but I do send all my love to you and our lovely daughter. I hope the satin meets with your approval, I'll send the other things when I can get them. Share the tobacco between your pop and mine, the rest is all yours darling, I love you,



Copies up for grabs

YOU COULD win a copy of Foreman's excellent book. For your chance to own it, tell us:

What was 'Ginge' Culver's first name?

Email your answer, marked **Win!** Ravilious 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 October 30.

All my love to you darling, and God bless you both Your own, Ginge."

The book also includes a handwritten, compassionate letter from Wg Cdr John G. Davis for Olive [Ginge Culver's wife]. It was dated September 6, 1942, and sent from 'No. 269 Squadron, RAF Station, Kaldadarnes, Iceland (c)'.

DEVOTED: Flt Lt Culver with wife Olive in 1936



"Dear Mrs Culver,
It is with very great sorrow that I have to write to you about the death of your husband, official intimation of which you will already have received. First of all let me express my own deep regret, not only as his commanding officer but as a friend, and that of the squadron as a whole.

We all regarded Ginge as the very best, as an officer, a pilot and a man. He was easily the most popular man in the squadron, and was loved by all who came into contact with him. He was thoroughly reliable in

all that he did in his work, and the best of companions in the Mess. I regarded him as my most valuable officer, and he would certainly have gone far.

You will want to know how it happened, but unfortunately I cannot tell you much, as we don't know ourselves with any certainty. Early in the morning of September 2nd Ginge and his crew, together with two other crews, were detailed to carry out a search over the sea south-west of here for another aircraft of the squadron which was missing. The weather was fine, and the other two aircraft duly returned after an uneventful trip.

Ginge did not come back, and nothing was heard from the aircraft. We have been carrying out the most intensive searches ever since, and have found no trace, so I am afraid that hope must be abandoned...

I cannot tell you how sorry we all are. Please accept our very deepest sympathy for yourself and your little daughter who, though she will not know her father, will learn that he was one of the finest of men.

Yours sincerely, J G Davis, W/C."

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

Elaine Paxton has always believed in teams.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

by Lynn Dunne

National Cadet Week **Feature**



OFFICIAL DUTY: Tiffany attended the Allied Air Forces Memorial Day event at the Yorkshire Air Museum, Elvington, with RAF Leeming Station Commander, Gp Capt John 'Geordie' Lawson



PUBLIC FACE: Tiffany at the Annual Formal Reception at the Officers' Mess at RAF Leeming in June, hosted by Station Commander Gp Capt John Lawson. The event is an opportunity for the Station to meet, thank and influence those who have supported it over the year

The sky's the limit when you're a Cadet

...and it's not just for those who aspire to join Armed Forces

DEVELOPING THE confidence, leadership skills and resilience of more than 130,000 young people around the UK, National Cadet Week this month celebrates everything the movement has to offer, as experienced by Cadet FS Tiffany, RAF Leeming's Station Commander's Cadet.

Selected by Gp Capt Geordie Lawson to accompany him at various high-profile events throughout the year, FS Tiffany's tenure as SCC is the pinnacle of a cadet career in which she now mentors more junior members of 873 (Driffield) Sqn Air Cadets, which she joined in 2021.

Tiffany, 17, found out about Cadets during a school assembly, and has never looked back. She said: "I was interested in the opportunities available. There is just so much going on, and you get to experience everything from flying and gliding to shooting, first aid and leadership courses. I've also had the honour of laying a wreath for a Remembrance Parade.



"Being the Station Commander's Cadet for RAF Leeming has been amazing, I've been to two formal events and just loved it."

873 (Driffield) Sqn is one of around 1,000 Air Training Corps staffed by volunteers to provide unique opportunities and experiences to more than 40,000 young people around the UK. Tiffany explained: "We meet every Tuesday and Thursday. There is always first parade, and we sometimes do drill but it's different all the time. There might be leadership, first aid or some other type of training. Once a month there's a sports night where you can put leadership skills into place but also have lots of fun."

A huge benefit of being a Cadet has been the friends she has made, and the opportunity to pass her knowledge on to more junior members of the squadron. "There is a big age range, and you meet people at camps – I talk to friends from different places all the time.



FAST JET DREAM: But for now Station Commander's Cadet FS Tiffany is enjoying glider flights

"I love seeing the younger cadets progress in different areas and I encourage them to do things that are out of their comfort zone. People worry about going on camps [inset left] because they miss their families, but that is where a lot of the experiences are," she said.

Currently studying for A-levels in biology, criminology and psychology, Tiffany hopes

to become a fast jet pilot in the RAF, but stresses that Cadets is not only for those who want a military role, and she has the qualifications to prove it: "There is a big misconception that Cadets is very strict and military. There are rules but if you don't want to join the military, you absolutely don't have to.

"Cadets helps in lots of other areas – you can put it on your CV

and in university applications. I have achieved my Bronze Wings, Master Cadet Classification, Silver Leadership, Silver First Aid, Silver Radio, Silver Shot and Bronze Space.

"I have also completed Silver DofE, silver fieldcraft and MOI. It's absolutely given me more confidence. I promote myself much more than I would have done five years ago."



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The official voice of the Royal Air Force

by Jo Lamb

Girls in Aviation Day **Feature**

First female fast jet pilot's new mission

Dr Salter calls on women to consider career in aviation

BRITAIN'S FIRST female fast jet pilot has taken to the air for the first time in four years to promote women in aviation.

Former Tornado flier and 617 (Dambusters) Sqn officer Dr Jo Salter took control of a Diamond DA 42 Twin Star aircraft at Cranfield Airport to mark Girls in Aviation Day.

"It was really exciting, I'd forgotten how much I love flying," she said as she stepped out of the trainer operated by the charity Mission Aviation Fellowship to prepare bush pilots to fly in some of the most isolated locations on earth.

The mission came after research showed the global aviation industry will need 1.4 million new professionals by 2034, but women account for just 6.5 per cent of UK airline pilots.

Dr Salter said: "The hardest thing we've got to do is get over ourselves – don't ever let anyone



INSPIRATION: Jo Salter (left) and Sophie Jones (right) with MAF's Vivienne Pattison. Jo and Vivienne are holding photographs of MAF founder and pilot Betty Greene

tell you what you can and can't do. Seize the opportunities... just step out and give it a go, however scary it may feel!"

She was carrying a picture of Betty Greene, the first woman pilot to fly into a Mexican Jungle camp and launch MAF in 1946. RAF colleagues engineer Stuart

King and pilot Jack Hemmings AFC were pioneers of MAF. Jack died in 2025 aged 103.

The Fellowship is now the world's largest humanitarian air service, flying to more destinations than any other commercial airline.

Jo's passenger on Girls in



TRAILBLAZER: Jo took to the sky again for the first time in a few years

Aviation Day, 19-year-old aeronautical engineering trainee Sophie Jones, said: "Being Jo's passenger reminded me of how far women have come since Betty launched MAF 80 years ago – but there are still so many isolated communities who desperately need help."

Seven decades later Dr Salter is partnering with MAF to celebrate Betty's legacy and calling on women to choose a flying career.

She said: "It's easy to assume that today's technology has existed forever because we use it every day. But Betty's story reminds us just how far aviation has come and how much has been accomplished by people with vision, determination and courage."

Jo opened MAF's Aviation Academy at Cranfield Airport after her flight. It will train British pilots and engineers willing to fly humanitarian operations across 25 countries.

She said: "Aviation needs young people with skill, courage and purpose. The recruitment shortage won't be solved by just talking about the problem. It needs training, early career development and

a stronger vision of what an aviation career can mean.

"I'm delighted to support the launch of MAF's Aviation Academy, and I hope it encourages more young people to consider aviation as a career."

Bishop of Bedford the Rt Rev Richard Atkinson said: "It's alarming to learn how many professionals are needed to sustain the civil aviation industry – let alone carry out life-saving humanitarian air operations."

MAF International CEO Donovan Palmer said: "The Fellowship's aviation services are needed now more than ever to reach vulnerable, cut-off communities facing climate change, poverty and war. The reality is that too few people are willing or able to respond to those urgent needs."

"The Aviation Academy will help address the significant recruitment challenges across the sector and provide a clear pathway for younger generations to choose a career with MAF"



AMBASSADOR: Jo is keen for more girls and women to join her in the aviation industry



HUMANITARIAN WORK: Mission Aviation Fellowship helps remote communities including the Red Tribe in Kenya



YOU HAVE to hand it to Toyota, the latest C-HR is a bold statement. It stands out from the crowd, has one of the most effective hybrid systems on the market and is, generally, a banging small family wagon.

At the top of the range sits the GR, Toyota's sports model, augmented with battery power (in plug-in hybrid electric vehicle – PHEV form) to deliver 223bhp. This is our set of wheels for this week's review.

Exterior

The C-HR goes full chat to be different, with two-tone paint, slimline LED headlights, stealth-fighter aerodynamics and a funky full-width rear light bar. At the risk of losing our younger readers here, it's all a bit 'Lord Flashheart' in terms of subtlety (Search *Blackadder* on YouTube, kids). "Hello everyone, it's ME... Hurrah!"

The wheels have expanded to 20 inches and, in true Flashheart style, its frontal area has swollen to stonking proportions. "Woof."

It's not all Flash though. Better aerodynamics help fuel economy at motorway speeds and it has enough space to make it a practical wagon for day-to-day family life.

Interior

It feels suitably posh in the cabin, with high-quality materials and ambient lighting to rival most VW Group competitors.

Although there's a fair amount of space for four grown adults, it does feel snug inside the C-HR, mainly due to the pyramid-shaped roofline. It's not oppressive but feels 'cosy' overhead.

It's otherwise, a spacious, comfortable environment for longer runs and the seats are supportive. There's useful legroom in the back too, depending on how lanky the two up front are. The driving position is particularly well judged for this car.

The digital instrument panel works well, with crisp graphics and enough customisation available to make sure you have all the information you want.

The infotainment system has a decent 12.3 inch set-up on all but the most basic model. It's adaptive, responsive and has notably smart typefaces/graphics.



TOYOTA C-HR: Striking good looks, like Rik Mayall's Lord Flashheart, below



C-HR's Flash at heart

You even get buttons below the touchscreen for the climate control. Sometimes less is more.

On The Road

Our test car was the 2.0-litre petrol (PHEV) GR, with a 0-62mph sprint of 7.4 seconds and an official 41-mile EV-only range. Driving as I drove, the real world range was just under 30 miles, but I do have a hefty right foot. You could probably do better.

There is also a 138bhp 1.8-litre petrol available, if you want to save yourself a few bob on the asking price.

On the open road, the C-HR feels agile. It corners flat and feels well balanced, in traditional Toyota fashion. The steering is a bit vague on centre but soon sharpens up once you're in a turn. The front tyres don't have masses of grip, even on the GR, which

means the front end can start to run wide if you don't keep it in check.

Even with the sporty GR set-up, body control is quite relaxed, so there's some lean, but it's light on its feet and smooths out most bumps and imperfections. It's comfortable over long distances, but it's most at home around town where you can make best use of the hybrid tech.

In tight spaces, the C-HR does feel a bit wide, for such a compact vehicle, and you do find yourself relying on the sensors/cameras for parking because rear visibility is markedly compromised by the funky design.

The digital rear view mirror is a cool gimmick on the GR, but not without its faults. The image ends up being a close-up shot of the car behind you and you miss what's happening on the periphery. Moving your head

Toyota C-HR GR

Pros

- A bold statement
- Toyota reliability
- Efficient hybrid system

Cons

- CVT gearbox
- Rivals are cheaper
- Could be more fun to drive

Verdict

THE TOYOTA C-HR is not the most competitively

priced model in its segment, but its low running costs go a good way towards balancing this out. It comes with plenty of kit as standard and feels well put together. Precise steering makes it a nimble companion around town. It's not the best handling car in its class and it's not the most practical, but it holds its own, with flair. It certainly stands out from the crowd.

around won't help you either, so it can feel irritating at times.

The GR is rapid enough to put a smile on your face and it feels like a sharp little crossover. The biggest drawback for me, however, and I've said this before, is that the CVT gearbox lets the whole package down.

The word 'sporty' and term 'Continuously Variable Transmission' are complete contradictions in my book. CVT? Never mind, eh?

DRONE RACING

Aviators on manoeuvres at Sandhurst



IN THE FIELD: RAF drone racers

THIRD PLACE overall and a smattering of well-placed individual finishes was the reward for some superb flying at the Military International Drone Racing Tournament at Sandhurst.

The RAF team of manager and pilot Sgt Luke Smith, AS1 Kieran Oldham, LCpl David Gibson, LCpl James Ashworth and AS1 Daniel Medeiros came third behind Australia and Ukraine.

The event brought together 68 pilots drawn from regular personnel, reservists, veterans and cadets from Australia, Croatia, France, Germany, New Zealand, Sweden, Ukraine, the UK and the United States.

Sgt Smith was marking his first experience of flying in a real-world competition. He said: "I'd spent months flying in a simulator and building my own drone, so it was amazing to see those skills transfer into real life."

The competition included racing and tactical events featuring an obstacle course, simulated bomb drop and aerial interception using five-inch first person-view (FPV) drones.

Each aircraft was operated using a radio controller, while an onboard camera transmitted a low-latency video feed to the pilot's goggles.

In the overall event which saw the fastest 32 fliers do battle, AS1 Kieran Oldham was ninth and LCpl David Gibson 17th.

In the tactical event UK finished fourth in the country tactical standings, behind Croatia, Germany and the United States.

The RAF finished third overall. Smith added: "It was encouraging for the team to see new faces and promising talent coming through, with developing pilots gaining experience alongside established competitors."

"With a British racing podium secured and a new club on the horizon at RAF Brize Norton, the team has plenty to build on as it encourages more personnel to take up the sport."

CYCLING

Ben the MK don

Southgate takes finale

Staff Reporter

AN IMPRESSIVE final race of the season saw Service riders grace Milton Keynes Bowl for a final time for the road circuit championships.

AS1 Ben Southgate took first place in the race, which had added complexity due to a modified layout to the traditional kidney shape requiring riders to negotiate an extended route around the grounds.

With the course prepped with the assistance of a volunteer team from RAF Cosford, the 11 riders warmed up and prepared for 75 minutes plus three laps of racing for the season's finale.

The fireworks started by the end of the first lap, when a group of four started to pull away. Flt Lt Ed Calow and Sgt Rich Summerbell, who finished second and third respectively, Southgate and AS1 Ben Tappenden worked together, easing away from the pursuing field led by FS Nick Munro, AS1 Morgan Price and AS1 George Westall.

After the second lap the field of riders had broken into three groups with AS1 Darren Clark, Cpl Adey Hoyle, WO Bob Grantham and AS1 Ben Stewart

comprising the final group. By the third lap Grantham had lost a couple of laps due to a puncture.

With the groups stretching out, the lead four maintained their steady rhythm, with Munro and Price seemingly glued together as Westall was slowly dropped.

Around the 25-minute point, the relentless pace at the front proved too much for Tappenden, while Munro and Price succumbed later having worked hard in the early stages.

Just after the hour point Grantham picked up another puncture, forcing him to withdraw, which meant Hoyle had only to finish to pick up a British Cycling point.

Once the 75 minute target passed, the three-lap countdown began and the showdown at the front became an uphill three-way sprint to the line, with all the riders refusing to give in to the pace.

A final surge from Southgate saw him open a gap of a couple of bike lengths on Summerbell and Calow, crossing the line as victor with Summerbell second and Calow third, barely 2 seconds apart.

As the duo of Munro and Price came back into view their own battle had continued round the



CHAMP: Southgate, centre, Summerbell, left, and Calow



LEAD MAN: Sgt Rich Summerbell hits the front in the early stages

last lap, with Munro digging deep on a final effort to stretch a gap over Price who showed his hand too soon.

Tappenden crossed the line in sixth, with Westall seventh, Stewart eighth, Clark ninth and Hoyle 10th.

RUGBY LEAGUE

Head coach Hutchinson steps down

Daniel Abrahams

WALKING AWAY unbeaten from the recent IS championships (see page 27), RAF rugby league has bid adieu to one of its favourite sons as Sgt James Hutchinson hangs up his boots.

Described by Wg Cdr Michael Burch, Chair RAF Rugby League, as "the embodiment of everything RAF Rugby League stands for", Hutchinson watched his charges miss out on a single try scored by the Army in York in the final minutes of the tournament's closing game against the Navy.

Hutchinson (pictured) said: "We were watching it. Fair play to the Army, they turned around 31 unanswered points to win it. You cannot knock them.



"To be in a position where it took something like that proves where we have come, we didn't lose, beat the Navy and drew with the Army."

Hutchinson has been at the forefront of RAF rugby league for 18 years, as player and coach, winning one IS title and a Tri-Service tournament as manager. He leaves the Service next year, but has stood down now to give the new incumbent time to put their own stamp on the set-up.

He said: "In my time in charge I've only lost one game in the IS yet only won it once. As a player I won it three times, playing in 10.

"Overall, it's been

brilliant. I've had some unbelievable experiences, rugby league bucket list stuff. I've played in some of the best teams and set-ups, including beating Australian at Cranwell – what an atmosphere that was."

The former centre and full back, who represented UKAF overseas in 2015 and 2017, added: "I'll be keeping an eye on it. We have our 30th anniversary dinner coming up this year, so I will be there without doubt."

Wg Cdr Michael Burch, Chair RAF Rugby League, said: "What makes him truly special is the person behind the success. He has always put the team before himself, led by example and earned the respect of those who have the pleasure to work alongside him. As head coach he has overseen a remarkable resurgence.

"I am confident his legacy will not only be measured in the trophies won and accolades he has rightly received but the standards he has set, the players he has inspired and the culture he has helped to build."

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

BOXING

RAF boxers are developing well



TALENT: AS1(T) Alex Masterman

Daniel Abrahams

FOUR WINS from eight was the return for the Service's boxers from the UKAFBA Development Championships at Brize Norton.

The gala night was held to showcase the future of Service boxing talent and featured a series of closely-contested bouts.

AS1 Jack Bushell, AS1(T) Alex Masterman, AS1 Nicolas Smith and AS1 Alex Cross were noted as ones to watch for the future of the Service association.

Chairman of the RAF Boxing Association, Air Cdre Paul Hamilton, said: "The Development Championships Finals Night was an opportunity to showcase some of the most promising boxing talent from



WINNER: Marham's AS1 Nicolas Smith gets the better of Pte Mairs

across the Armed Forces.

"The dedication shown by all competitors throughout their training and preparation reflects the values of courage, discipline and teamwork that are common to both military service and boxing."

The second bout of the

evening saw Bushell overcome Army boxer KGn Phoenix to kick things off for the aviators, with Masterman from Coningsby beating the next Army fighter, Pte Snow, to secure back-to-back wins.

Marham-based gloves man Smith secured bout six with a

win over Pte Mairs, with Cross, from Odiham, finishing off PLET Kimera to secure the four wins in the penultimate bout of the evening.

An association spokesman said: "The UKAFBA Development Championships play a vital role in identifying and nurturing emerging talent, providing opportunities for Service personnel to gain competitive experience, build confidence and progress through the military boxing pathway.

"Military sport continues to contribute to operational effectiveness by developing leadership, resilience, physical fitness and teamwork, while strengthening relationships across Defence.

"The successful staging of the finals night at RAF Brize Norton further demonstrated the station's commitment to supporting military sport and providing opportunities for Service personnel to excel both professionally and athletically.

"Congratulations to all those who stepped into the ring and represented their units with pride, and especially to this year's champions whose hard work, dedication and skill earned them Development Championship titles."

● Follow RAF Boxing on Instagram @RAFBBoxing.

TRIATHLON

When the going gets tough, Hill gets going



RESILIENT: Under-par Sgt in Italy

BATTLING ILLNESS and the tough country terrain, Sgt Scott Hill managed an impressive 12th in the Emilia Romagna Ironman Italy event.

The aviator had been struggling with a heavy cold in the run-up to the triathlon, which featured a 3.8km swim, 180km bike ride and 42.2km run.

He completed the course in nine hours and 37 minutes, making him 12th in the 40-44 years category.

He said: "The last few weeks haven't exactly gone to plan. I'd been ill and, even flying out here, I still wasn't 100 per cent.

"The swim got pretty choppy with the wind and rain, and the bike was windy too, with a couple of torrential downpours. I struggled to hold the power I wanted on the bike and as the kilometres ticked by, it just got harder.

"For the run, I decided not to think about 42.2km and decided to just get to the first aid station. I made it. Then the next one. And the next. Get to a feed station. Walk it. Keep moving. Repeat. And somehow, I got around.

"Nine hours and 37 minutes isn't the time I wanted, but it's a finish that taught me a lot. Ironman racing is hard. Really hard. And sometimes the race doesn't go the way you planned. But you learn that you can keep moving, even when things get tough.

"Just keep going. One step at a time. Always learning. Always moving forward."

WINTER SPORTS

Ella Leeds the way in novice street luge

HONINGTON'S AS1 Ella Farndon stormed to glory at the annual RAF Alpine Luge Selection and Street event, dominating the Harewood Speed Hillclimb in Leeds to kickstart the season.

The novice competition saw Cpl Robbie Reid (RAF Lossiemouth) secure second place and Cpl Beth Crosse (Lossiemouth) third as the racers exchanged blades for wheels to experience the high-adrenaline sport.

Deputy team manager Sgt Chelsea Medlock said: "It was great to see personnel of all ranks, professions and from different stations come together to experience Alpine luge.

"The event provided a fantastic opportunity for current athletes to develop their skills whilst also introducing



SPEED QUEEN: RAF Honington's AS1 Ella Farndon won novice street luge event

new personnel to the sport.

"A huge amount of effort was put in by everyone, with some brilliant sliding throughout the event.

"Everyone managed to complete their runs, and it was fantastic to see their resilience and dedication reflected in the progression they made."

The day saw novice personnel get a taste of the sport and race within the novice category.

Beginning at RAF Wittering, first-time participants received instruction on the correct drills, techniques and safety procedures, before having the opportunity to get on a sled and experience the sport for themselves.

Participants then travelled to Harewood Speed Hillclimb. The challenging track, spanning more than 1km, provides one of the closest opportunities in the UK to experience the demands of Alpine luge.

Medlock added: "The event once again demonstrated the inclusive nature of RAF Alpine luge, bringing together personnel from across the Service to challenge themselves, develop new skills and experience a unique and exciting sport."

BASKETBALL

In SHAPE



GOOD TOUR: Cpl Cousins (left)

UKAF BASKETBALL is gunning for a SHAPE victory after closing out its first international tour in Australia, where the men's and women's teams recorded impressive wins.

The 13-game UKAFvADF/ADF/NSW fire team Australia Tour Series saw stellar performances from RAF stars.

The men's team beat the Australian Defence Force Academy and the NSW (New South Wales) Fire team, before succumbing to the ADF senior team.

The women's team secured a brace of wins from their six games, one against the ADF and the second over the NSW fire team.

Team spokesperson Capt Tambi Spicely said: "It proved a hugely worthwhile and challenging tour and the perfect preparation for the 2026 SHAPE International Basketball Tournament."

Kicking off their wins at the ADEFA Sports Centre, Canberra, the men's team sealed a 51-50 win over the ADF Academy side – with AS1 Oliver Tate and Cpl Billy Cousins producing standout performances.

The women's team, having lost in the opening match 58-37, had to bide their time to taste victory, losing their second clash the next night at the AIS Arena, Canberra 27-48, having trailed 14-23 at half-time, while the men made it back-to-back wins with a 59-69 win, leading 34-39 at half-time.

Both teams fell to defeats (62-75 men's and 48-65 women's) at Belconnen Stadium, Canberra.

Two further defeats were ended as the women's team won 31-26 at the Sydney Comets Stadium, while the men followed suit with a 44-22 win, having trailed 13-16 at the break.

It was back-to-back wins for the women, as they closed out the tour in style with a 45-38 win at the Marrickville PCVC court in Sydney. Leading 25-14 at the break, the result was the perfect end to their tour, but for the men a narrow 45-58 defeat was the final bow down under.

The teams will be chasing their first win at SHAPE, Belgium since 2019 when the tournament begins in November.

TENNIS

Jolene's number one as women take the honours

AIRCOM victory for RAF ladies

Staff Reporter

THE SERVICE'S female tennis stars took first place in the latest AIRCOM event, with the men coming third, in Amsterdam.

AS1 (T) Jolene Richardson continued the aviator women's dominance by scooping the Most Valuable Player award and gaining UKAF selection in the process after a hugely impressive tournament at the Tulip Tennis Centre.

Team captain Flt Lt Tom Elwick said: "It was great to see so many new faces out representing the Royal Air Force at such a special event. AS1(T) Richardson winning MVP, something that comes with great respect from all nations, is worthy of a special mention. It was a fantastic event and we look forward to the next one in two years at Ramstein."

The ladies' team of Gp Cpt Delia Chadwick, Flt Lt Rachael Kidner, Sgt Esther Elwick, Sqn Ldr Andrea Jackson, AS1 Tara Squirrel, Flt Lt Sarah Wilkie and Richardson beat all the nations involved – with a final day win over the hosts needed to take the trophy.

Number two seed Wilkie kicked things off with a comfortable win, before the doubles pairing of Chadwick and



FIRST LADIES: Sqn Ldr Andrea Jackson and Gp Capt Delia Chadwick in action (above) and MVP AS1 Jolene Richardson (below)

Jackson took to the court – losing despite a gutsy display.

The deciding match fell to top seed Richardson, who needed to overcome her opponent having lost to her in the opening rounds.

Producing a tactical masterclass, the aviator produced a shock win to crown the women champions.

The men's team of Flt Lt Elwick, Sgt Adam Betts, AS1 Alex Moore, Cpl Henry Thomas, Cpl Tom Petrie and AS1 Javiel Ma were involved in a closely-fought competition.

The Polish Air Force unleashed



a professional tennis player – a serving reservist, ranked 822nd in the world, who cleaned up a few matches.

The aviators secured a win

against the Belgium team early in the competition, however, fell to a close defeat to both the Netherlands and eventual winners Poland.

WATER POLO

Welsh lead way at centenary Cranwell tournament

THE RAF Swimming Association closed out its centenary celebrations by hosting a home nations water polo tournament.

Masters teams representing Scotland and Wales, including a core of players from the 2006 Commonwealth Games, travelled to RAF Cranwell for a weekend of matches against Service sides.

The tournament produced a series of tightly-contested matches, especially the men's games between Scotland and Wales.



With each team playing each other twice over the weekend, the international men pulled out the stops in both games, with the Welsh

(pictured) coming out on top.

Similarly, in the ladies tournament Wales and City of Sheffield, short notice

replacements for a fully-fledged English team, competed vigorously for the title.

Association chair Wg Cdr Stephen Brassington said: "The tournament was a great workout for the RAF teams, having had the summer off after missing out on Inter-Service wins.

"All of the teams said how much they enjoyed the tournament and asked for it to be held again. In both the female and open competitions Wales ran out as the winners, taking home both trophies."

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

CYCLING

Aviators end 10 years of hurt



HISTORY-MAKERS: Aviators (l-r) Sgt Rich Summerbell, Chf Tech Dan Lewis, Cpl Laura Sheppard, Flt Lt Hattie Heywood, AS1 Thomas Stegeman, Sgt Dan Watts, Cpl Alex Metcalfe and WO Adey Hoyle



STALWART: WO Adey Hoyle has represented the association for more than 25 years

Army's stranglehold on the Inter-Service title is broken

Daniel Abrahams

A DECADE of hurt was ended as the RAF's Mountain Bike team triumphed in the Inter-Services Cross Country Championships at Cannock Chase in Staffordshire.

Ending 10 years of Army dominance, aviators dug deep and fought as one to win the auspicious event, with the fastest seven riders (including the fastest female) combining for a final team score. There is a penalty if riders do not finish the race in less than 90 minutes.

The performance was even more impressive as the Service could only field eight riders, instead of 10.

It was a fantastic team effort, from Cpl Alex Metcalfe to WO AD Hoyle, still representing the team after 25 years.

Racing on a demanding technical

course of five energy-sapping laps, the overall individual wins were taken by AS1(T) Thomas Stegeman and Flt Lt Hattie Haywood, with Sgt Rich Summerbell and Cpl Laura Sheppard taking third places on the podiums, cementing the team points.

The strength in depth was provided by a return to XC racing of former champion Chf Tech Dan Lewis, and strongly finishing the seven scorers was Sgt Dan Watts.

A team spokesperson said: "The 2026 XC team has had consistent representation at British Cycling national level and regional races and is always on the lookout for new riders to enjoy the challenge of XC racing, regardless of ability, who are keen to inspire and develop all ages and genders, Regular and Reserve."

● To find out more about RAF Cycling email: adrian.hoyle384@mod.gov.uk.

TABLE TENNIS

Hungary for progress

MEMBERS OF the RAF Table Tennis Association recently took part in an overseas training tour to Hungary which combined intensive coaching and a competitive match.

The five-day training programme provided players of all abilities with opportunities to develop technical skills, match play awareness and overall performance.

Along with daily training sessions, evening matches were played against opponents of varying standards.

The tour also included a weekend in Budapest and has now become an annual

event within the RAF Table Tennis calendar.

A spokesman for the association said: "Open to players of all abilities, the overseas training tour offered a unique opportunity to improve skills, gain international playing experience and build team camaraderie."

"All participants made significant improvements throughout the week, highlighting the value of the programme and the benefits of training and competing in a high-quality overseas environment."



WOMEN'S CHAMPION: Flt Lt Hattie Haywood on the course at Cannock Chase, Staffordshire

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

5 RAF Sport

pages of

ATHLETICS

Fastest RAF marathon in 30 years

"I WAS really happy with the result in Berlin," said Flt Lt Chris Davies after recording the fastest marathon finish time for an RAF athlete in almost 30 years.

Coming home as the fourth Brit and fifth overall in the German capital, Davies took nearly two minutes off his previous personal best.

His time of two hours, 17 minutes and 27 seconds eclipsed the previous best time of 2:15:44 set by Cpl Mark Flint in London in 1997.

It rounded off a phenomenal year which saw Davies become the reigning Inter-Services Marathon (2:19:46) and Half Marathon champion (1:06:44), while also securing the silver medal in both the Inter-Services 10k (30:50:4) and the IS Cross Country Championships.

He said: "I'd been hoping for around two hours and 18 minutes, and although I was a little behind where I wanted to be at the halfway mark, I managed to pick it up in the second and finish strongly. It was an amazing event and a great experience to compete in such a fast race."

He added: "I've been training for this since London, putting in some high-mileage weeks, so it was great to see that work come together. I'm grateful for the support from RAF Athletics and my chain of command, which has helped me balance the training and competition alongside my commitments."

"I'm really enjoying competing at the moment and I'm looking forward to the upcoming races and seeing what I can do next."

● Follow RAF Athletic on Facebook at RAFAthletics.

GREAT SEASON:
Flt Lt Chris Davies



RUGBY LEAGUE

First IS for women

RAF	18
Army	14

Daniel Abrahams

THE RAF Women's Rugby League team made history to close out the 2026 tournament in style as the first non-Army side to win the Women's Inter-Services Championship.

A blood and guts 18-14 victory over the Army at the Arthur Miller Stadium in Stanningley secured the IS crown following a hugely impressive 34-10 victory over the Royal Navy in Portsmouth.

Head Coach Max Green said: "My staff and this squad has been built on belief, commitment and resilience. These victories represent the culmination of three years of sustained growth and development. More than a championship win, it is a defining moment for RAF Women's Rugby League and one that will be remembered for generations to come."



HARD-FOUGHT: Aviators outgunned the usually dominant Army women

Entering the final fixture knowing a win would secure the championship outright, AS1 Josie Allen, AS1 Cerys McNevin, Cpl Kate Allan and FS Rachel Robertson ran in tries, with McNevin adding a conversion

to seal the deal before a partisan Stanningley crowd.

The Army were not in town to make up the numbers, taking an 8-4 lead into half-time, using their traditional power and physicality to test the dynamic hosts.

Refusing to take a step

backwards, the RAF saw standout performances among the entire team's full-blooded effort.

Kate Allan, a constant danger, repeatedly cut through the Army defensive line with powerful, incisive carries to shift momentum in the RAF's favour.

Vice-captain Cpl Grace Burnett's superb all-round performance culminated in her producing the offload that led to one of the game's defining moments. Mounting a remarkable comeback, Allan crossed to level the scores following Burnett's offload before veteran Robertson completed the turnaround with the winning try on her 26th and final Inter-Services appearance.

The score sparked scenes of jubilation as teammates, coaches and supporters realised history had been made.

Burnett's performance, which earned her the Player of the Match award, seemed apt having led the team that ended two decades of Army dominance.

Unbeaten men narrowly miss out

RAF	22
Army	22

IT WAS just not to be for the RAF as the Army took the 2026 IS championships with a score secured in the final seconds of the last game of the tournament against the Royal Navy.

Having won their opening clash against the Navy 30-18, the aviators drew 22-22 at home in Stanningley against the Army but it was not to be enough to prevent the soldiers from taking the crown.

Sgt James Hutchinson's aviators could only look on as the Army clawed back a 22-point deficit to the Navy in the tournament '00-s final game to win 36-32 with the last kick of the match, to take the Inter-Services crown in York.

Following their impressive 30-18 victory in Portsmouth, the RAF knew that a win against the Army would secure the championship.

Their opponents, however, arrived with their own



ALL WRAPPED UP: Aviators held the Army to a draw, but it wasn't quite enough

motivation, having defeated the RAF in 2025 and played a decisive role in preventing the Service from lifting the title last season.

Happy to spoil the party, the Army carried an 18-10 lead into the interval.

Tries from Cpl James Crabb

and AS1 Kieron Prescott ensured the RAF kept in touch, with the aviators, inspired by Prescott, responding strongly after the break.

Showing excellent awareness and footwork close to the Army try line, Prescott cut back before touching down beside the posts.

The successful conversion narrowed the deficit and reignited RAF hopes.

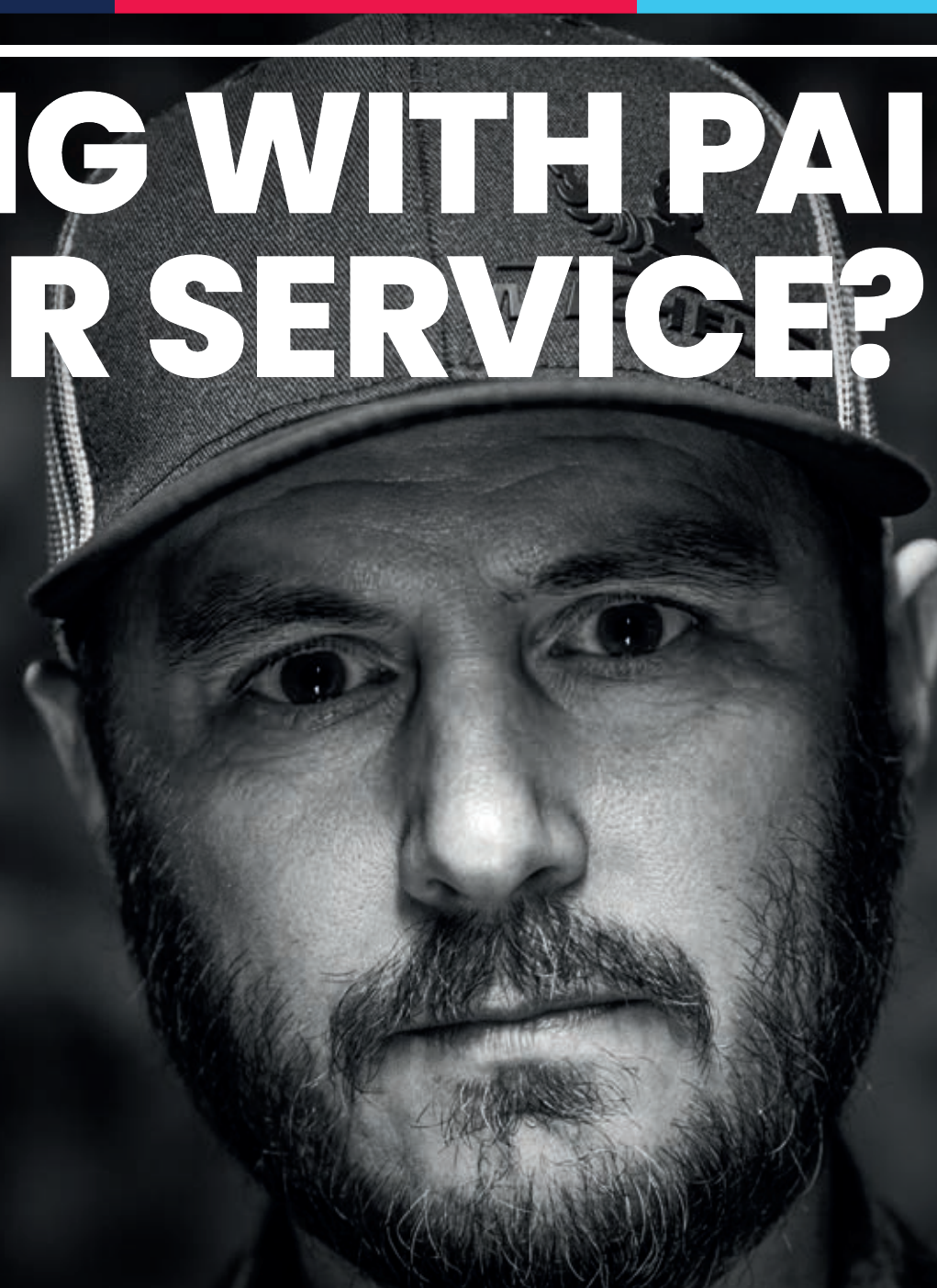
Prescott continued to trouble the Army defence and produced another moment of quality with 20 minutes left. Spotting a gap in the defensive line, he surged between two defenders before finishing superbly out wide to give the RAF their first lead of the match at 22-18.

The Army refused to relent and struck back in the closing stages through centre Niumata Corivuka, crossing to level the scores with 10 minutes remaining.

Thankfully, from the hosts' perspective, the conversion drifted wide, leaving the sides locked at 22-22.

Both teams searched for a decisive score during a tense finale. The Army created opportunities to snatch victory with two late drop-goal attempts, but neither found its target, ensuring the match ended all square after 80 high quality minutes.

● Head coach steps down, see page 23.



LIVING WITH PAIN AFTER SERVICE?

If you served and are now living with pain, Help for Heroes can help.

We know pain can impact every part of daily life, disrupt your sleep and take a toll on your mental health.

Our clinical team, including nurses, occupational therapists and medical advisers, can work with you to understand your needs and explore practical support.

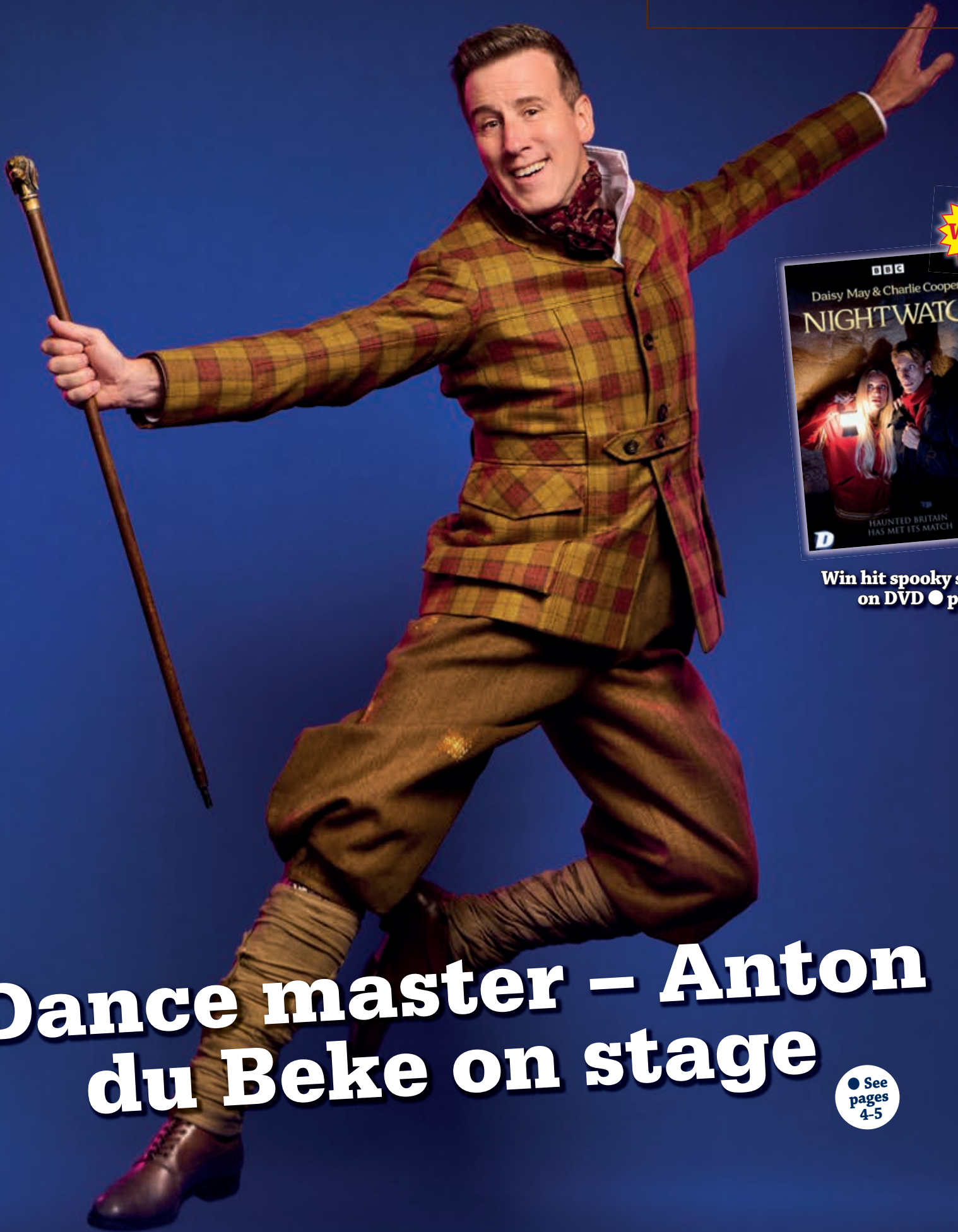
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0300 303 9888



H**LP for
HEROES**

R'n'R



Win hit spooky series
on DVD ● p3

Dance master – Anton du Beke on stage

● See
pages
4-5



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

90s icons at Tate Britain

TATE BRITAIN in London is staging the first exhibition to explore the art, photography and fashion of the 1990s.



SUPERMODEL: Naomi Campbell in Vivienne Westwood attire, AW94 'On Liberty'. Photo Guy Marineau, Vogue © Condé Nast

Featuring nearly 70 artists, photographers and designers, from the Young British Artists (YBAs) to Alexander McQueen, *The 90s: Art and Fashion* spotlights the emergence of this generation of artistic talent that reshaped Britain's cultural identity.

A spokesperson said: "Drawing on curator Edward Enninful's experience of the decade, the show, which runs until February 14, 2027, brings together over 100 photographs, paintings, sculptures and garments to re-evaluate one of the most transformative moments in British art.

Imperfection

"Following the gritty economic uncertainty of the 1980s, the 1990s saw the emergence of a resourceful new generation of young talent in Britain. The exhibition opens by exploring their taste for imperfection and



KATE MOSS: Juergen Teller, Young Pink Kate London 1998 © Juergen Teller, All Rights Reserved

realness with a Do-It-Yourself attitude, presenting photography by Corinne Day, Nigel Shafran and Juergen Teller for influential publications including *i-D* and *Dazed and Confused*, that were at the forefront of defining a new 'anti-fashion' grunge style."

As the influence of 'Cool Britannia' grew, many artists used their work to draw attention to those largely excluded from this narrative, the spokesperson explained. In the exhibition, Steve McQueen's first major film *Bear* 1993, a cinematic portrayal of an intimate face-off between two men, is joined by Chris Ofili's Turner Prize-winning painting



FACE-OFF: Sir Steve McQueen, *Bear* 1993 © Steve McQueen. Courtesy the artist, Thomas Dane Gallery and Marian Goodman Gallery. Tate.

No Woman, No Cry 1998, a poignant tribute to Doreen and Stephen Lawrence, and video by Keith Piper reflecting on sport and national identity.

Suits by Ozwald Boateng, runway footage of Joe Casely-Hayford's presentations, and fashion photography by Koto Bolofo celebrates the work of Black British designers.

The show also features work by artists including Helen Chadwick, Jake and Dinos Chapman, Rachel Whiteread and Damien Hirst.

The spokesperson added: "It also explores the emergence of visionary designers who blurred the lines between art and fashion spectacularly, from McQueen's provocative, dramatic and sometimes nightmarish presentations to Hussein Chalayan's design-led clothing inspired by everyday objects.

"The exhibition ends with artists and designers who, at the close of the 20th century, reckoned with Britain's past and dealt with questions of its future.

"Yinka Shonibare and Maud Sulter drew from European art history and dandyism to ask questions of diversity and representation, whilst designers such as Vivienne Westwood and John Galiano borrowed across history and cultures, interrogating style, class and national mythology with anachronistic fashion collections."

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



Film Review

Knife: The Attempted Murder of Salman Rushdie (15)

In cinemas now

The attack on Rushdie

IN 2022, author Salman Rushdie was attacked on stage at a literary event and stabbed 15 times. Alex Gibney's documentary charts his road to recovery, whilst exploring the life that led him there.

The Oscar-winning documentarian adapts Rushdie's book reflecting on the attack, using his wife Rachel Eliza Griffiths's video diary in the aftermath to chart his rehabilitation, and diving into his past through dreamlike reflections.

Initially, the stabbing is shown through re-enactment, but we are swiftly shown the real, immediate damage: Rushdie in hospital, his face and body swollen and stapled together, his right eyeball protruding from its socket where the optic nerve was severed.

It is a graphic sight that never becomes easier to look at, but over the course of the film we witness the gradual healing and support that sees him through. Alongside Eliza are calls from friends and also support from group Stand with Salman. The cruel irony of the attack, in New York, is that Rushdie was there to talk about safety for writers, no doubt connected to the fallout of his 1988 novel *The Satanic Verses*, which caused a global furore and a death sentence issued by Ayatollah Khomeini.

Born in Bombay to a middle-class Muslim but secular family, Rushdie came to England for boarding school in 1961. Though he assimilated into the culture from a young age, he also experienced racism and a sense of being an outsider. These complex feelings around identity and immigration informed *The Satanic Verses*, a magic-realist novel that blurred the sacred and profane, drawing on



TARGET: Author Rushdie had a fatwa issued against him

stories and names from the Koran. Subsequently Rushdie was accused of blasphemy, extremists threatened publishers and people were killed. And although the fatwa was supposedly rescinded in the late 90s, and Rushdie could come out of hiding, clearly a feeling remained.

After spending so much of the film alongside Rushdie and Eliza through the long, difficult process of recovery, seeing the actual footage of the attack is all the more shocking. It transforms an event recounted through memory into something brutally immediate, and impossible to forget.

Four roundels out of five ●●●●

Review by Sam Cooney



Competition

Nightwatch (E)

Out on Blu-ray, DVD & digital from Oct 26

Win!

Spend spooky nights with comedy siblings

DAISY MAY and Charlie Cooper, siblings and stars of cult hit *This Country*, have had a lifelong passion for all things paranormal.

Now, in the popular BBC series *Nightwatch*, they stay overnight at some of the UK's most haunted locations, visiting some of the UK's spookiest sites, including a historic castle in Northumberland, bat-infested ruins in Pembrokeshire and a disused prison in Gloucester.

Daisy's even brought along a few spectre-spotting devices, including a spirit radio and a temperature-testing teddy bear. As night closes in, the two are left to their own devices. And that's when things get really interesting, very silly – and just a little bit spooky.

We have copies of *Nightwatch* on DVD up for grabs – ideal for watching at Halloween. For your chance to win one, tell us:

What is the name



FRIGHT FANS: Daisy May and Charlie stay in the UK's most haunted locations

of the cult hit TV series starring Daisy May and Charlie Cooper?

Email your answer, marked *Nightwatch* DVD 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 October 26.



R'n'R



Music

Erasure

New album and UK and Europe tour



SOUL MATES: Erasure's Andy Bell, left, and Vince Clarke, now tour musical director

Bell rings changes as Clarke takes on the backstage role

ERASURE - **ANDY BELL** and Vince Clarke - have announced details of their new studio album *Radio!! Radio!!* out on March 12, 2027 and details of an arena tour in April/May 2027 across the UK and Europe.

Radio!! Radio!! is The BRIT and Ivor Novello award-winning synth-pop duo's first new studio album in six years and 2026 marks the 40th anniversary of their debut album *Wonderland*.

"Some of the songs [on the new album] are quite reflective of stuff that's been going on in my life, but not all of them," said Clarke.

"We didn't have to think about it or talk about it - it just happened that way.

"When you're a songwriting partnership for so long, it's very deep, kind of like a soul connection," said Bell.

"You trust that person with your life, and because of the nature of songwriting, you just lay bare your soul. That becomes a sacred space."

When Bell and Clarke came together to write again, it was as much in the spirit of uplifting an old friend as it was work.

"Vince has helped me through some terrible times, and so I always wanted to be there for him. I think that's what this album is about," said Bell.

When working on the album, Clarke was unusually drawn to piano, inspired by composers like Erik Satie, as well as

acoustic guitar. The use of these instruments adds drama and depth to Erasure's sound: "I found techniques - ways to use piano that sounded really organic, and the same with guitar."

Erasure will take to the road in 2027 for an arena tour, with special guests Ladytron, beginning in Cardiff Utilita Arena on April 25 before travelling throughout the UK, finishing with a date at London's O2 Arena then heading to Germany, Denmark and Sweden.

Clarke will be Musical Director for the tour, but will not be appearing onstage alongside Andy Bell. Clarke explained:

"I recently moved to California from New York, and I travelled from here to London. The travelling took a toll - it really messed me up. I never seemed to recover from it. I just thought 'I don't want to do this anymore'. I told Andy, and he made me musical director, and I thought, 'how fantastic is that?' I can do all my work and all my direction from here, but I don't have to leave sunny San Diego."

Bell added: "I'm so pleased that we were able to find a way for the tour to work for Vince. He's always too modest but he's so much more than the musical director, Vince is one of the great loves of my life and everything we do as Erasure we decide together."

● Go to: erasureinfo.com/concerts for tour details.



Theatre

Anton at Christmas

UK tour

Anton Du Beke is slipping on his dance shoes and hotfooting it to Christmas

ANTON DU BEKE is a busy man - not only is he back as a judge on the latest series of BBC One's *Strictly Come Dancing*, he's bringing his new festive show, *Anton At Christmas*, to audiences across the UK from December 10-22.

And next summer he'll make his debut in a National Theatre production playing Great Uncle Matthew and Fidolia in the NT's acclaimed production of *Ballet Shoes* by Noel Streatfeild.

Anton, who will be joined for his Christmas show by vocalist Lance Ellington, their band and a professional troupe of dancers, said: "As the song goes - Christmas is quite simply the most wonderful time of the year and everyone knows how much I love the festive season. I can't wait to don my dancing shoes once again for this dazzling show. And I'm looking forward to kicking off the Christmas celebrations with all the incredible audiences around the country."

Anton At Christmas is a limited run and tours venues across the UK including Watford, Oxford, Liverpool, London, Wolverhampton, Nottingham, Bournemouth and Brighton.

The Ballet Shoes tour opens at Aylesbury's Waterside Theatre on August 19, 2027. A spokesperson for the production said: "This five-star reimagining of Noel Streatfeild's beloved novel breathes fresh life into the classic story, while staying true



to its heart. In a crumbling house full of dinosaur bones and fossils, three adopted sisters - Pauline, Petrova and Posy - are learning who they are and discovering who they want to be.

"Under the watchful eyes and guidance of their new guardians and some unlikely lodgers, they fight to pursue their individual passions: but in a world that

wasn't built for women with big ambitions, can they forge a future, keep their family together, and even learn a dance or two along the way?"

Anton, who has nine-year-old twins, said: "I took my family to see *Ballet Shoes* at the National Theatre and I completely fell in love with the show. It was such a beautiful, joyful production, and

Compiled by Executive Features Editor Tracey Allen



ANTON:
Festive
show



when I was given the opportunity to be part of it, I jumped at the chance. I couldn't wait to step into that world and be a part of the magic. It gives me an exciting opportunity to test myself further as an actor – and dance and family are at the core, the two most important things to me.”
● Go to: antondubekelive.com and nationaltheatre.org.uk for more information.



Music
Huey Morgan
UK tour

Huey Morgan showing he's still Fun Lovin'

AFTER FOUNDING Fun Lovin' Criminals and writing and producing their seminal hits, Huey Morgan marks 30 years since the release of *Come Find Yourself* with a new band and a 13-date UK tour this month.

When *Come Find Yourself* landed in 1996, it didn't simply arrive, it exploded.

“After 30 years, this record seems as fresh as it did when I first released it.

“I am so happy to be playing this again. Please come and check it out. It's gonna be awesome,” Huey said.

Breakout single *Scooby Snacks*, famed for sampling dialogue from *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction*, became an instant cult classic, propelling the album into the UK charts for nearly two years.

From collecting glasses at Manhattan's legendary Limelight nightclub to world tours and a raucous Pyramid Stage appearance at Glastonbury Festival in 1999, the Criminals quickly became one of the era's most charismatic live acts, touring with U2 and collaborating with the late, great B.B. King.

Morgan's voice remains unmistakable. A respected broadcaster and cultural commentator, he now hosts weekends on Virgin Radio and has built a parallel career as an author and television presenter renowned for his encyclopaedic knowledge of music and film.

Tour venues include Nottingham, Manchester, Brighton, London, Southampton, Cambridge and Bristol.

● Go to: hueymorgan.com/live.



UK TOUR: Morgan is back playing live with a new band



Theatre
Singin' In The Rain
Nationwide tour

Karen set to Rain supreme as she stars in Gene Kelly classic

STRICTLY **COME**
Dancing star Karen Haier, *Emmerdale*'s Natalie Anderson and *Coronation Street*'s Wendi Peters are to star in the musical *Singin' In The Rain* that starts a nationwide tour in Sheffield on November 26.

Karen and Natalie share the role of Lina Lamont and Wendi is Dora Bailey in the roaring 20s-set musical that was a smash hit in the West End and across the world.

Based on the classic Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film starring Gene Kelly, the show features the movie's glorious score including *Good Morning, Make 'em Laugh* and, of course, *Singin' In The Rain*.

Beautiful, charismatic, and very much in love (if you believe what you read in the press), Hollywood's golden couple, Don Lockwood (Grant Almirall) and



MAMBO CHAMPION: Karen Haier

Lina Lamont have the world at their feet. But when “talkies” start to replace silent movies, and an aspiring actress is drafted in to



CORRIE FAVOURITE: Wendi Peters

save the day, life as they know it is turned upside down.

A professional Latin dance specialist and World Mambo Champion, best known for appearing on the BBC's *Strictly*, Karen was the longest-serving female professional dancer on the show. Her theatre credits include Mavis in the UK tour of *Stepping Out*, *Speakeasy*, *Firedance*, *Firedance*

Reignite and the original Broadway cast and international tours of *Burn the Floor*.

Wendi, probably best known for her role as Cilla Battersby Brown in *Coronation Street*, as well as series regular Cook Jenkins in CBBC's *Hetty Feather*, is scheduled to play the role of Dora Bailey until July 3, 2027.

Natalie (below) is well known for her role as Alicia Metcalfe in *Emmerdale*. Other screen credits include Danielle Silverton in *Coronation Street*, Claire in Netflix's *Fool Me Once* and Stella Davenport in *The Royal*.

The tour runs until September 4, 2027, culminating at Cardiff's New Theatre.

● Go to: singintherainshow.com for the casting schedule and tour listings.





Your Announcements

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

Deaths

MABBOTT RGS, Wg Cdr (Ret'd) died peacefully on August 30 after a short illness in nursing home. Funeral took place on October 7 at Lincoln Crematorium.

STEPHENS David Lewis BEM. Sadly passed away on September 27 aged 81. He served in the RAF from 1961-2000 as a Telecommunications and Cryptographer Specialist (TG11 and was a founder member of (TCW) ending his career as a Warrant Officer. He represented the RAF in football and volleyball, he was a coach and was also a referee in both sports and when his playing days ended he served on the RAF Sports Board. He was married to Pilar, also sadly departed. A loving father to Natalie. The funeral service will be held at The Park Crematorium, Room 1, Merafield Road, Plymouth on Wednesday, October 21 at 1400hrs. Your legacy lives on in the lives you touched.



WO David Stephens

Seeking

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

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

SEEKING Con Roscrow/Roscoe (not 100 per cent sure of his surname). Con was a Col. engine fitter when I was posted to 56 Sqn at RAF Waterbeach in April 1956 as a young airman. Over the next four years he mentored me until I became Junior Tech (engines) and was posted to Australia. During this time we became good friends and I have looked for him for many years, problem being he would be in his early 90s now as I'm 88. Please contact: peterandell286@btinternet.com

FORTY years ago I interviewed a large number of veterans for a television series *The Road to D-Day*. Recognising the historic value of these interviews I archived them. Now that I am retiring, I am anxious that these historic contributions should not simply be thrown away. I am seeking to contact Dennis Sweeting DFC, 198 Sqn, Bunny Holden of 16 Sqn and Pat Porteous VC or their families/squadron historians. I am now nearly 93 and uniting these unique interviews with next of kin/units is an important part of my 'bucket list'. Given current privacy laws, making these contacts is a mammoth task; I hope someone can help. Please contact: Peter@pwtv.co.uk

Reunions

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

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

Associations

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

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

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



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

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

More than 130 people have

already requested tickets for this free concert, but tickets are still available.

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

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

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

Service for Sgt Patton



TRIBUTE: Family and friends gathered to remember Mike Patton (pictured inset left)

THE FAMILY of Sgt Mike Patton gathered at the helicopter memorial at RAF Odiham last month to hold a remembrance service on the 30th anniversary of the tragic accident that sadly took his life.

Amongst those gathered were his wife, daughter, and sister,

and personnel who knew him on 7 Sqn, including Wg Cdr Cole, who gave a reading along with his sister.

The service was followed by a flypast by a RAF Chinook. Everyone then retired to the Sergeants' Mess to share their fond memories of Sgt Patton.

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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New memorial honours RAF marine craft crews

THE BRAVERY and sacrifice of a little-known group within the RAF were celebrated at the Royal British Legion National Remembrance Gardens (formerly the National Memorial Arboretum) in Staffordshire last month.

A new memorial was unveiled to honour RAF marine craft crews who served with distinction from 1918 to 1986, when the service was contractorised, writes Air Cdre Nick Morris (Ret'd).



Throughout this time, marine craft crews saved or assisted in the rescue of 13,619 lives at sea. More than 7,000 were allied aircrew rescued from the seas around Britain between February 1941 and May 1945, most of whom returned to operations.

AVM Warren James (Ret'd), a former Search and Rescue helicopter pilot, performed the unveiling and the Rev Dr Sqn Ldr John Harrison from RAF Shawbury officiated.

The motto of the RAF's marine craft crews was 'The Sea Shall Not Have Them'. A specially commissioned piece of music under the same name composed by AS1 Kelly Harrison was premiered at the dedication.

The ceremony was attended by a lining party from RAF Boulmer, musicians from the Central Band of the Royal Air Force and the standard bearer of the Air Sea Rescue Marine Craft Section Club, alongside approximately 70 veterans.

Wreaths were laid by representatives of the RAAF, the Royal New Zealand Navy, the



DEDICATION: AVM Warren James (Ret'd) unveiled the memorial at a ceremony last month, attended by around 70 veterans

Coastal Command Association, the Air Sea Rescue and Marine Craft Section Club and RAF Boulmer, representing Trade Group 7, which comprises aviators of the Air Surveillance and Control Systems Trade Group and was originally the trade group number allocated

to marine craft crews.

The memorial (*also pictured left*) is in the form of a stele in polished black granite, with the front face engraved with the badge and motto of the Air Sea Rescue Service, images of marine craft to the sides, and a list of post-war units to the

back. Set on a compass rose, the polished black surface represents the finish of the hulls of RAF marine craft.

An embedded QR code can be scanned to obtain a full history of the RAF's marine activities.

● Go to: gardens.britishlegion.org.uk for more details.



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R'n'R



Prize Crossword
No. 419

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

- Across
- 7. Cramp I suffer in massive maritime exercise (6)
 - 8. Bird that had its day with Forsyth (6)
 - 10. Talk about French water in castle (7)
 - 11. Was his reign marked at regular intervals? (5)
 - 12. In Korea seeking comfort (4)
 - 13. Warder's propeller? (5)
 - 17. Blyton returns embracing a new girl (5)
 - 18. See 14 Down
 - 22. Set fire to hill attached to church (5)
 - 23. European Community polite about road damaged in country (7)
 - 24. They keep an eye on things for the RAF (6)
 - 25. Spock's favourite RAF bomber? (6)

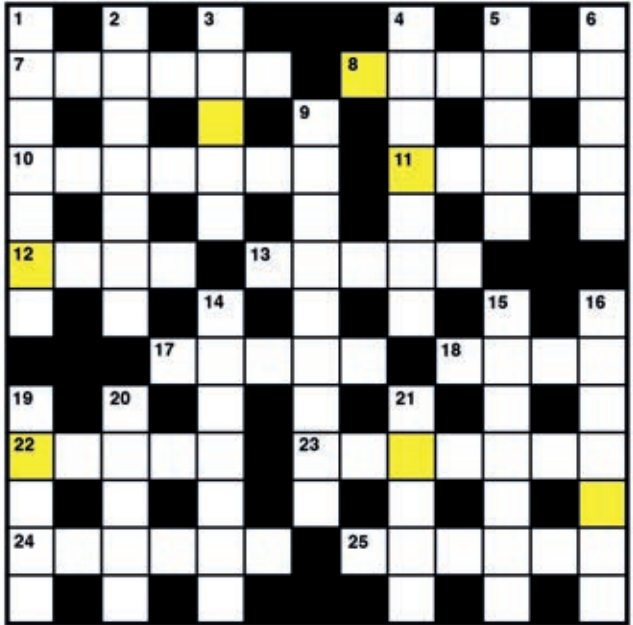
- Down
- 1. Jiminy's sport of choice (7)
 - 2. Drunken Bassey embraces Frenchman at residence (7)
 - 3. Father for each wrapper (5)
 - 4. RAF aircraft in pursuit (7)
 - 5. Southern quarry for talent (5)
 - 6. Burst of light reveals feral confusion (5)
 - 9. Sir Henry Morgan's RAF aircraft (9)
 - 14. And 18 Across. Jest freight damaged by RAF aircraft (7,4)
 - 15. Judgement passed on composer outside court (7)
 - 16. Sinatra confused by titled dame (7)
 - 19. Look closely at horse-farm yearningly, to begin with (5)
 - 20. 100 find bird thief (5)
 - 21. Sounds like Bond character in row (5)

Name:

Address:

RAF aircraft:Crossword No. 419

The winners of our Prize Crossword and Prize Su Doku puzzles will receive a recent aviation title – please send your entries to the address printed in the adjacent Su Doku panel, to arrive by October 30, 2026.



Prize Crossword No. 418 solution

Across – 6. Miracle 7. Lethe 9. Unite 10. Falcons 12. Interceptor 14. Globemaster 18. Mascots 19. Venus 21. Capel- 22. Le-Ferne

Down – 1. Piano 2. Halton 3. All 4. Teacup 5. Chinook 8. Sarcasm 11. Helmets 13. Almanac 15. Bucket 16. Eleven 17. Burns 20. Red

RAF aircraft: *Chimpunk*

The winner of Crossword No. 417 is MJ Wade, Swansea.

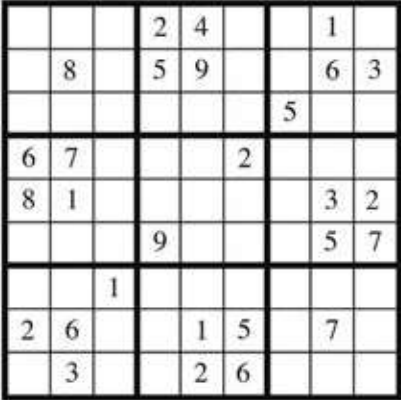


Prize Su Doku
No. 429

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 October 30, 2026.

The winner of Su Doku 427 is: D Masters, Sheffield.



Solution to Su Doku No. 428

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



Music
Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers
Origins 1971-1978

Tom Petty: back to the beginning

Marking 50 years of Heartbreakers

THE TOM Petty Estate has unveiled a comprehensive new box set, *Origins 1971-1978*, out on November 6, in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the band.

Digging into the vaults, this collection traces the sonic formation of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers in the white-hot '70s era, and features collaborations with legendary artists Al Kooper, Leon Russell, Jim Gordon, Emory Gordy and more, across country, folk, punk, reggae, rock and soul originals.

Petty and the Heartbreakers received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Americana Awards recently.

The original members of the Heartbreakers – Mike Campbell, Benmont Tench, Stan Lynch and Ron Blair – opened the show with a special reunion performance alongside Grammy-winning superstar Chris Stapleton. Heartbreakers Steve Ferrone and Scott Thurston joined for a final song.

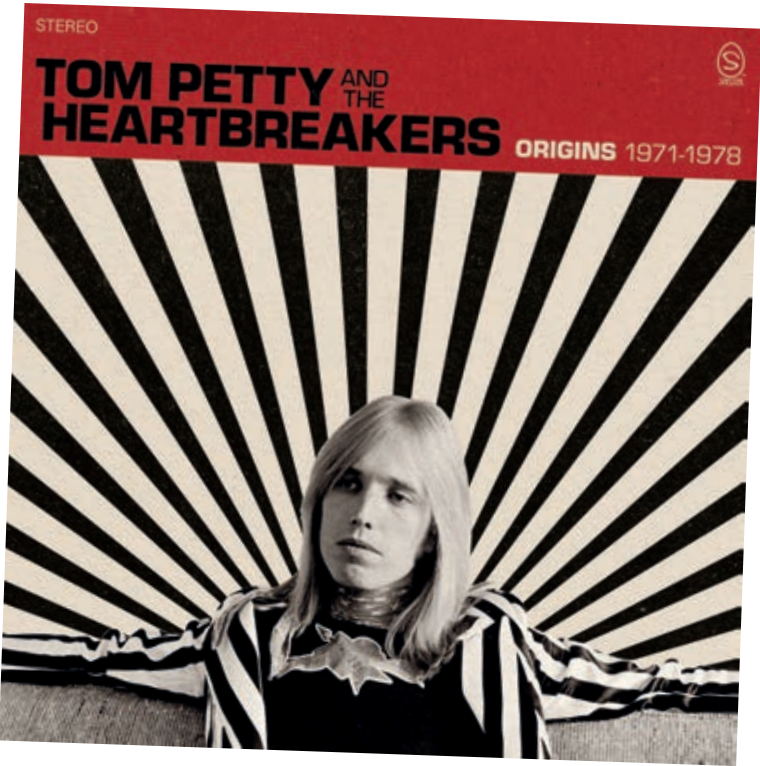
Fanzine

Origins 1971-1978 will be available in three configurations: a 5LP box set, a 4CD box set and an uber deluxe edition, each with Blu-ray and DVD. The centerpiece of the vinyl editions is an 88-page fanzine featuring liner notes by David Fricke and Bud Scoppa, track-by-track

annotations from the original band, complete album credits for the first two albums and a trove of unearthed archival photos and memorabilia, alongside polaroids, postcards, collectibles and more.

A DVD captures the band's live performance on *The Old Grey Whistle Test* in 1978 and a Blu-ray disc featuring the complete collection of all 51 songs.

Host Bob Harris, who wrote an essay for the Blu-ray booklet, said: "It was one of the greatest performances we had ever seen by a band at the top of their game. They played music from another planet to a room packed with manic fans, in one of the most iconic venues in the world.



It was an experience so powerful that five decades later we could still remember every chord, every song, every solo."

Over his 40-year career, Tom Petty became a beloved American rock and roll icon, world-renowned for his songwriting and his band the Heartbreakers. In addition to the 13 studio albums he made with the Heartbreakers, Petty recorded three solo albums, the acclaimed *Full Moon Fever*, *Wildflowers*

and *Highway Companion*. He was also a member of the supergroup Traveling Wilburys and in the pre-Heartbreakers band Mudcrutch, who reformed and made two more albums in the mid-2000s.

Tom Petty passed away in 2017 aged 66 shortly after completing his 40th anniversary tour, leaving behind a massive archive of unreleased material.

● Go to: tompetty.com for further details.