

The Forces' favourite paper

Coastal Command losses are recognised

Names added to database: See p9



ATA 'girl' celebrates her 107th birthday

See page 13

ROYAL AIR FORCE

Friday, September 18, 2026 Edition No.1640

Only 99p

RAF News

Recruits surge swells the ranks

See page 5



Shooting Dan's on target

See p23



Rugby Global XV honour for Flt Lt

See p24



Cycling IS joy in downhill



See page 27

Space pledge for UK defence

Staff Reporter

THE GOVERNMENT has pledged £7.8 billion to develop space-based technology to counter growing threats to national security.

The move outlined in the new space strategy includes £2.8 billion for the Skynet programme to deliver global surveillance for the UK Armed Forces.

A further £880 million will help beef up the UK's space control and intelligence capabilities to track military activity and potential attacks on satellites, said Defence Secretary Wes Streeting.

He added: "This space strategy recognises that our national security depends on our freedom of action in space and, if necessary, the ability to protect UK and Allied space assets.

"As threats in orbit grow more sophisticated, so must our ability to protect the interests of the UK and Allies.

"Backed by the Defence Investment Plan, we're investing more than £3 billion to ensure our defence capabilities in space keep pace with the threats we face."



A STUNNING shot of Officer Cadets celebrating after graduating at Cranwell, titled *Sisters in Service*, is one of the images to make the finals of the annual RAF Photographic competition.

See pp14-15 to see this year's winners.

BiteSize

“There are plenty of young officers to ensure the organisation continues to flourish,”



Cadet pair retire after more than 100 years combined service

See page 7

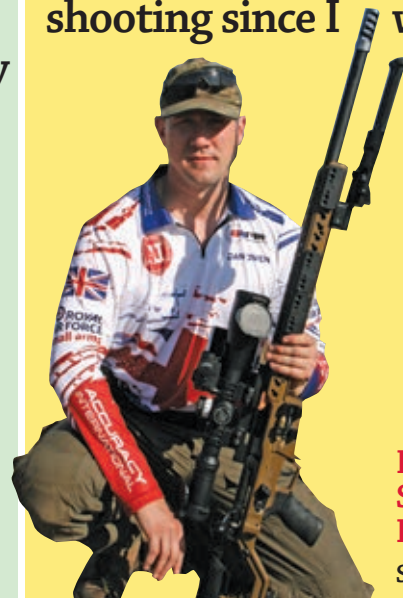
“We are all going through so much in our humanity right now,”



Singer Sheryl Crow releases her 12th album

See R'n'R page 4

“I’m 39 and have been shooting since I was 13,”



Rifle ace Sqn Ldr Dan Owen

See page 23



ROYAL AIR FORCE
RAF News

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Kinloss memorial for crew of XV230

Simon Mander

A CREW of 14 who died when Nimrod XV230, operated by CXX Sqn, caught fire and exploded mid-air near Kandahar in Afghanistan were remembered during a memorial service at Morayvia Aviation Museum in Kinloss.

The event marks the 20th anniversary of the disaster which caused the biggest single loss of life during Operation Herrick. It was attended by personnel from Lossiemouth, where CXX Sqn are now based, and relatives of the victims.

XV230 was on a routine reconnaissance mission over Helmand Province in Southern Afghanistan when it suffered a catastrophic mid-air fire after air-to-air refuelling.



This Week In History



1997 Speed king

TORNADO F3 pilot Sqn Ldr Andy Green sets a new land speed world record driving the Phantom engine powered Thrust SSC, hitting 714mph in Nevada.

1942 Mossie mission

105 SQN Mosquitos launch the first daylight bombing raid of Berlin. Six aircraft take off from RAF Horsham. Heavy cloud and bad weather hamper the mission resulting in only one crew hitting their target.



2004 Harrier flies in

HARRIER GR7As deploy to Afghanistan to deliver close air support and reconnaissance capability to coalition forces on the ISAF anti-terror mission.

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

Historic name change for space role

Air & Space command launched

Simon Mander

THE RAF'S High Wycombe headquarters has been renamed Air and Space Command reflecting the Service's role spearheading the UK's space operations.

The move comes as the Chief of the Air Staff prepares to make a key-note speech to international air and space chiefs outlining the UK's plans to expand space operations.

ACM Sir Harv Smyth said: "Space is essential to defence, security, prosperity and our modern way of life. But it is also a domain of growing strategic competition."

The redesignation reflects the growing dependence of air operations on satellites and other space-based capabilities.

He added: "The RAF's core mission of gaining and maintaining control of the air is fundamentally dependant on our freedom of action in and through the space domain."

Air & Space Command will be responsible for connecting strategic leadership with the delivery of operational capability.

The RAF's appointment to lead space service draws on its historic involvement in the domain, including the establishment of the ballistic-missile early-warning system at Fylingdales in 1963 and the launch of the SKYNET 1A satellite in 1969.

The change comes before the UK Space

Power conference which brings together senior speakers from the National Armaments Director Group, Government, the military, the UK Space Agency, international space commands, and the technology and investment communities.

Across two days it will get updates on defence reform, current operations, international partnerships, and the new National Armaments Group Space Systems Portfolio, setting out how the UK can become a globally competitive space power working closely with industry and the City.

Speaking earlier this year at the Chief of the Air Staff's conference, Sir Harv said: "If we wish to control the skies, we obviously must first master the cosmos."

"Against this backdrop, as lead command for space, we will build on the solid foundation led by UK Space Command since its inception five years ago and reset our defence space strategy."



ACM HARV SMYTH

The eat is on for catering aces

Simon Mander

SUCCESS WAS on the menu for Lossiemouth chefs who swept the board in the latest RAF Culinary Competition and Annual Awards ceremony at Worthy Down.

The team spent months preparing their menus, writing ingredients and kit lists and honing their culinary skills ahead of the final showdown.

Their hard work paid off, netting the kitchen aces seven

awards for a multi breads display, a torched fillet of mackerel dish starter, fillet of beef main course and a pistachio cake dessert.

Also passing the taste test were the team's Valrhona Macaé chocolate, mango lava cake and mushroom and spinach stuffed chicken breast.

The final practice round is completed in a competition environment, with 10 minutes allocated to competitors to set up their stations and lay out all the ingredients and kit on a trolley

ready to go.

The top two go forward to compete at the biennial Inter-Service Exercise Joint Caterer event which will be held at the NEC next summer.



COOK OFF: Lossiemouth chefs plate up against the clock during the Service Culinary Competition at Worthy Down, where the team netted seven awards





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their families

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veterans, their
families and
the bereaved

50,000+

serving personnel and family
members benefitted from
community and station-based
activities and events



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Peak bid

CLIMBERS SCALED Mount Kilimanjaro to net £3,000 for the RAF Benevolent Fund.

Personnel from 1 Air Mobility Wing and the UK Mobile Air Movements Sqn travelled to Tanzania for the nine-day, self-funded challenge.

The route took the team through rainforest, moorland, alpine desert and Arctic conditions, with temperatures dropping as low as -25°C.



Stu lands Brize role

BRIZE NORTON has a new Commander Air Wing.

Gp Capt Stu Patton (pictured right) takes up the post in charge of worldwide operations, exercises and humanitarian missions carried out by the station's A400M Atlas, C-17 Globemaster and Voyager fleets.

He said: "Projecting and sustaining our forces around the world, supporting humanitarian evacuation and delivering aid to the hardest to reach places, Air Mobility is at the heart of everything Defence does."

He succeeds Gp Capt Andy McIntyre who has served in the role since 2024.

Forces halt jobs drain

Simon Mander

MORE PEOPLE joined the Armed Forces than left over the last 12 months, according to figures released by the MoD.

Regular strength increased across all three Services over the past year, with the RAF up 840.

Defence Secretary Wes Streeting has welcomed the progress on recruitment, which comes after pay rises and a £7bn pledge to improve housing. He said: "Under this government, those serving and joining up now can be certain of increased investment in defence and our people. That means better equipment, better housing and better support for them and their families."

Statistics also show the number of full-time military personnel available to support operations rose by 1,450 since July 1, 2025.

Recruitment and retention targets have been missed every

year for the past 14 years. Measures to counter this include a 14 per cent pay rise since July 2024 ensuring every full-time member of the Armed Forces earns at least the National Living Wage.

Defence chiefs are also targeting better recruitment practices, with plans to scrap rules that blocked applicants with hay fever, eczema, acne or fully-healed injuries.

There will also be new entry routes into the military, such as the Cyber Direct Entry Scheme for high-demand specialist roles.

The moves come after the RAF hailed a new era of recruitment as a record number hit the parade ground to begin their training at Halton, in May this year.

A total of 145 recruits started their basic training, reversing the fall following the Covid pandemic as Aviator Training Academy chiefs recorded their highest head-count for decades.



Northern Ireland marks Battle of Britain anniversary



TRIBUTE: AM Reynolds joins cadets and the Lord Coker (right) at a recruitment event

Simon Mander

AIR FORCE leaders used Battle of Britain activities to strengthen ties with communities, industry, academia and civic leaders across Northern Ireland.

Beginning in Belfast and taking in Enniskillen, the tour highlights Air Force efforts to forge partnerships and support prosperity.

Air Officer Northern Ireland Air Marshal Sean Reynolds said: "Battle of Britain commemorations provide an opportunity not only to honour the courage and sacrifice of those

who served in 1940, but also to demonstrate the relevance and value of the RAF today."

Belfast's annual Battle of Britain Business Engagement Reception at the city's Harbour Commissioners' Office was attended by 200 guests, including the Deputy First Minister and Brigadier General Rory O'Connor of the Irish Air Corps.

Visitors gained a greater insight into the RAF's role with music from 502 (Ulster) Squadron Pipes and Drums and a Red Arrows flypast.

As part of the programme, the Assistant Chief of the Air

Staff met senior representatives from the defence, aerospace, manufacturing and technology sectors during an industry round table discussion.

The focus then shifted to County Fermanagh, where thousands of visitors were hosted over two days at Enniskillen Airport, formerly RAF St Angelo.

Among the highlights was a flypast by a Typhoon on Saturday.

A Red Arrows appearance proved a particularly memorable moment, with schools and colleges pausing to watch the aircraft sweep across the Fermanagh skyline.



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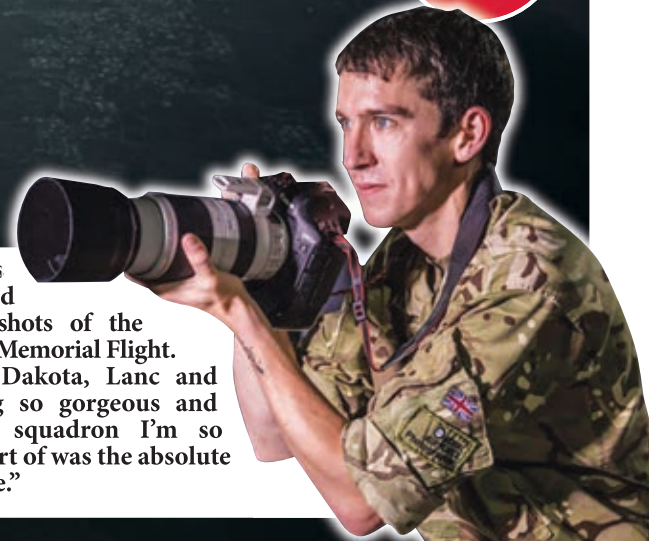


Shot in the dark nets photo win



SHARP-SHOOTER: Sgt Matthews' image of advanced parachute training was part of the portfolio that won him the Service's coveted Visual Communicator of the Year title

● See pages 14-15



Simon Mander

HOT-SHOT LENS MAN Sgt Lee Matthews is celebrating being named Visual Communicator of the Year in the latest RAF Photography Awards.

Known as Matty, he is the first person to hold the newly-rebranded title after impressing the judges with his portfolio of six images and

one video submission, including this stunning evening shot of advanced parachute training.

"I'm absolutely over the moon but honestly the real highlight was seeing my seven-year-old son Phoenix snag a highly-commended in the amateur category," he said. "To top off a pretty incredible competition, my team, Visual Communications Operations, took home the Section of the Year award."

"This year's event is packed with stunning shots of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight."

"Seeing the Dakota, Lanc and Spitfire looking so gorgeous and representing a squadron I'm so proud to be a part of was the absolute icing on the cake."



TON-UP: Veterans Sqn Ldr Swann and Sqn Ldr Hughes celebrate more than 100 years of service between them as they retire from the Royal Air Force Cadets



Veteran duo take a bow after 100 yrs

Simon Mander

TWO VETERANS with more than a century of RAF Cadet service between them are to retire from the youth organisation.

Sqn Ldr Brian Swann joined 2327 (Havant) Squadron in 1965 and left as a Cadet Warrant Officer in the early seventies.

He then became an Adult Warrant Officer, was commissioned in 1979 and appointed Officer Commanding 2327 Sqn in 1982 – a post he held for 25 years.

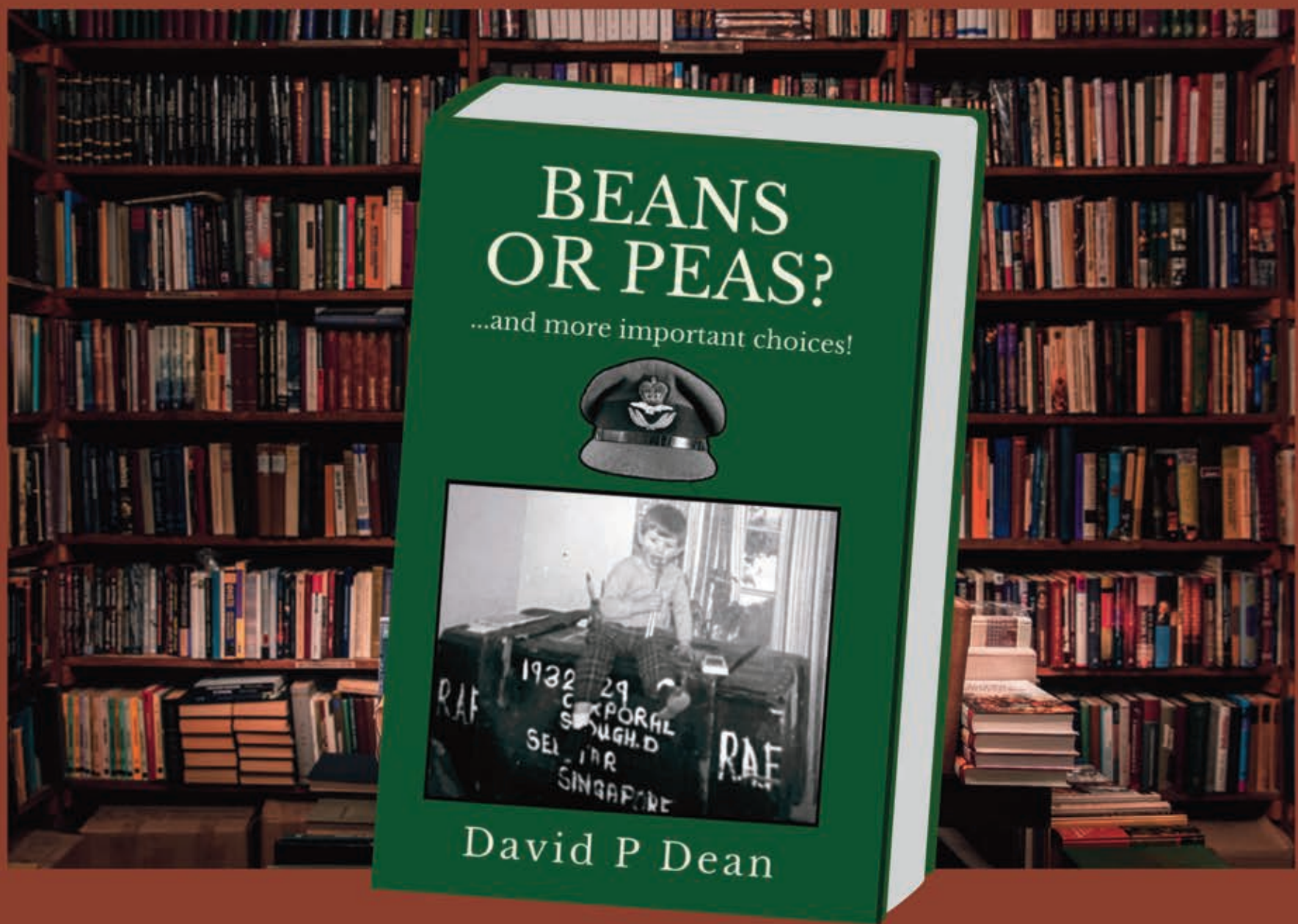
He said: "The opportunities that have presented themselves to me, flying in many types of aircraft, flying down the Mall (twice), flight refuelling sorties are far too many to mention."



MALL CALL: Sqn Ldr Swann performed for the crowds during national celebrations

Sqn Ldr Graeme Hughes was awarded an MBE in the King's Honours for his services to the RAFAC.

Brian added: "We will both miss the organisation, however, there are plenty of very talented young officers and instructors who will ensure our organisation is guaranteed to flourish in the future."



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



High fryer

AIR FORCE chef Joe Timmons has reached the national finals of a top trade competition.

The Wittering-based caterer reached the last round in the Craft Guild of Chefs Graduate Awards and will go head to head with rivals later this year.

The contest, now in its 24th year, is recognised across the hospitality industry for helping young chefs build their skills.

Guild Vice President Steve Munkley said: "The Graduate Awards are designed to encourage young chefs to challenge themselves and develop the skills they need for a successful career in hospitality."



NORTHERN EXPOSURE: An Atlas A400M delivers kit and supplies to Norwegian and US troops taking part in Operation Atlantic City
PHOTO: AS1 NILE AUSTIN

THE CREW of an A400 take in the dramatic scenery as they land at Jan Mayan airfield on the Norwegian fjords during Operation Atlantic City – Nato's latest exercise designed to secure the High North.

British forces trained alongside Norwegian and US forces as part of the Alliance's Arctic Sentry mission to counter Russian activity in the Arctic Circle.

Coastal Command crews join IBCC's roll of honour

Simon Mander

THE NAMES of thousands of WWII aircrew have been added to the Losses Database at the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln.

The addition of the personal details of 12,500 Coastal Command personnel will create the first truly comprehensive record of those who died fighting with the RAF's so-called 'Cinderella Service', bringing the total number of names to more than 70,000.

IBCC Trustee and archivist Dave Gilbert said: "If we are to understand the complete story of the bombing war – and more importantly the people who fought it – we cannot view Bomber Command in isolation.

"Using the Coastal Command's existing Book of Remembrance as a foundation, we have identified more than 2,000 additional Coastal Command losses not previously recorded.

"Each new entry includes details of crewmen's next of kin, their age and home towns, making each record comparable with those of the 58,000 Bomber Command losses.

"The addition of these 12,500 records means that families, researchers and the wider public

can now discover the individual stories behind the names and better understand the lives of those who served with Coastal Command.

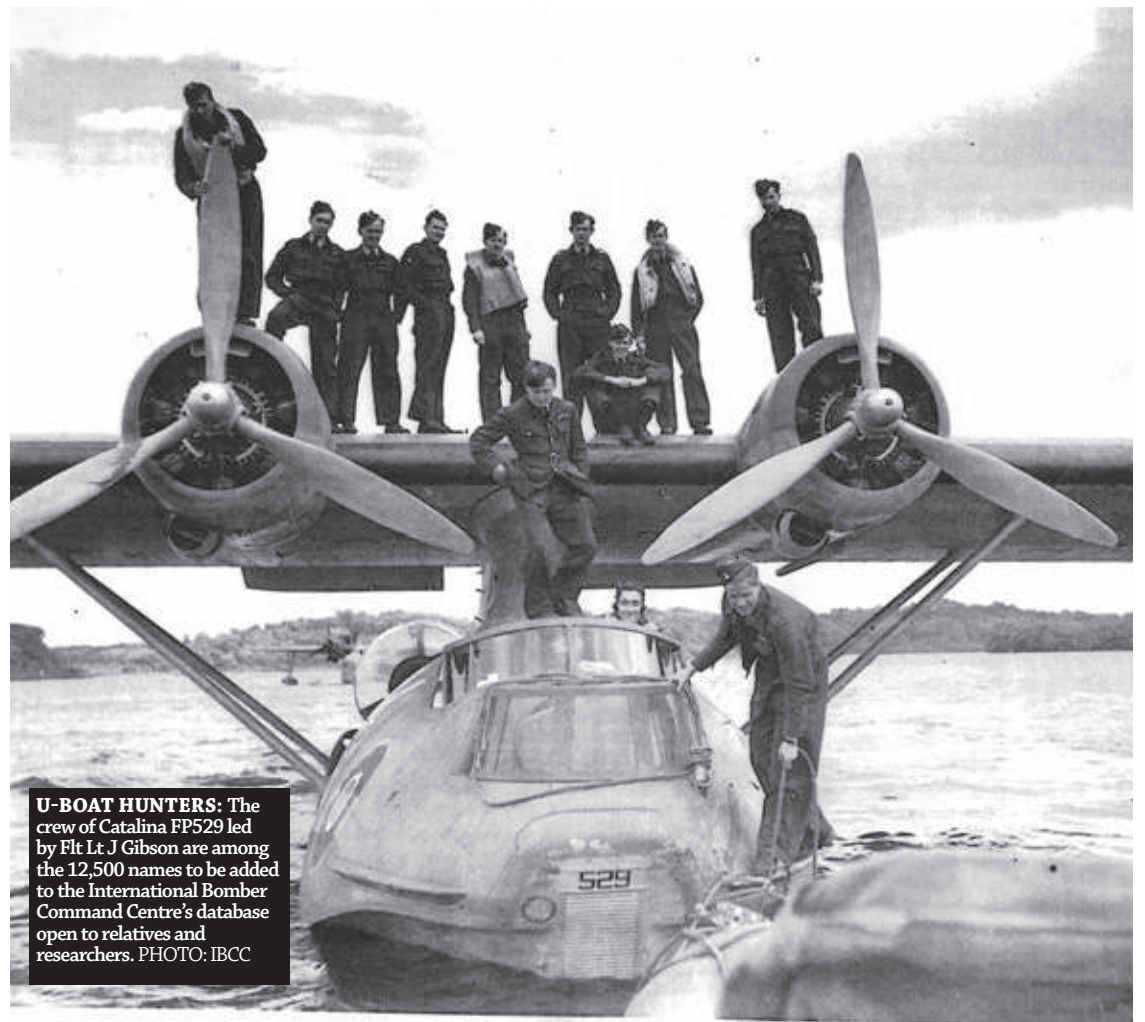
Bomber Command's remit was to take the war into enemy territory. Coastal Command was responsible for keeping the sea lanes safe from U-boats, escorting Allied shipping convoys, and for attacking the enemy's surface fleet.

More than half of those who lost their lives with Coastal Command have no known grave, an inevitable consequence of a war fought predominantly over the seas and oceans.

"Their role lacked the headline-grabbing drama of the other Commands, but in reality, it kept the war machine running and put food on the tables of our nation, making its role every bit as vital," said Mr Gilbert.

The IBCC hopes to erect memorial walls for all 12,500 Coastal Command losses at the centre along with interpretation boards.

Centre Chief Executive Nicky van der Drift said: "This will provide a huge additional resource, not only for military historians and visitors to our site, but also for family history websites which link to our site."



U-BOAT HUNTERS: The crew of Catalina FP529 led by Flt Lt J Gibson are among the 12,500 names to be added to the International Bomber Command Centre's database open to relatives and researchers. PHOTO: IBCC

News



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Iron works



THE BIG PUSH: 2MT team test their mettle during eight-hour sled push at Wittering
PHOTO: AS1 JASON BARFIELD

Simon Mander

WITTERING IRONMEN stepped up for charity – pushing a sled laden with hefty gym weights the marathon distance of more than 26 miles.

The 2 MT crew donned colour-co-ordinated kit inspired by the Marvel film character as they put the pedal to the metal to raise more than £4,000 for suicide prevention charity Campaign Against Living Miserably.

The eight-hour heavyweight challenge started out as a team-building exercise before organiser Sgt Declan Walsh launched the charity bid, doubling their original fundraising target.

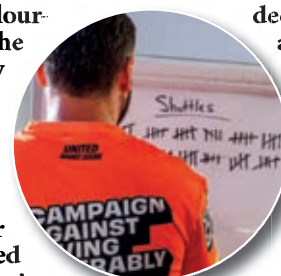
He said: “As a team of men, we

recognise that many still struggle to speak openly about their mental health, and that creating a culture of support is more important than ever.

“This challenge represents exactly who we are, a team prepared to dig deep, embrace adversity and achieve something together that none of us could do alone.”

“Sadly, suicide affects families, friends, colleagues and communities across the UK.”

“If our challenge can encourage even one person to start a conversation, or remind someone that they are never alone, then every single metre we pushed that sled will have been worth it.”





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Lossiemouth pacs them in

Simon Mander

ALPACAS HARRY and Bernie met personnel and their families at Lossiemouth on their tour of Scotland.

The South American camelids stopped off at the Moray airbase on their 750-mile road trip to raise £15,000 for a cancer charity.

They are part of a four-strong team visiting various locations leaving clues as to their whereabouts on their website called 'Where in the World is Bernie?'

Charlie One Charlie charity



founder retired colonel Stuart Roberts who organised the visit, said: "While the doctors and clinicians are excellent, they explain things in purely clinical terms."

"Sometimes you just need someone else. Someone with similar stories to you, someone that you can relate to and someone that relates back."

Established in 2021, Charlie One is run by current serving and veteran volunteers who have all been diagnosed with some form of cancer.



Flying visit for Nancy's 107th

Simon Mander

PIONEERING WARTIME pilot Nancy Stratford got a visit from UK Tornado trailblazer Air Cdre Nikki Thomas as she marked her 107th birthday Stateside.

The last surviving Air Transport Auxiliary female aviator, who flew for the RAF between 1942 and 1945, was visited by the RAF's first female bomber squadron commander at her Californian home to mark the big day.

Air Cdre Thomas, who is currently serving as the UK Air and Space Attaché to the United States, said: "Nancy was in every sense a real trailblazer."

"I wasn't sure what she would make of a random Brit coming to see her but I needn't have worried – she met me with a huge smile, a pile of aircraft-decorated cookies and wearing her best helicopter pyjamas."

"Passing on my favourite 'Fly Like A Girl' flying suit patch, I could see the pride in her face."

"Her favourite aircraft,

unsurprisingly, was the Spitfire and while I could not imagine jumping between that to a Swordfish bomber and having to fly them to a strange airfield, Nancy modestly shrugged it off.

"With a sparkle in her eye, she described flying a P-51 Mustang over an airfield 10 feet above the ground at just over 300mph."

"Asked if she was ever scared while flying, she looked at me saying, 'no, I had a job to do.'"

When Nancy got back to the US, she flew crop duster helicopters.

Air Cdre Thomas said: "She became Whirly-Girl No 4, the fourth registered female commercial helicopter pilot in the world, setting up and running a business in Alaska before being grounded in 1970 due to hearing loss."

"She accumulated more than 8,500 hours in 103 different aircraft types."

"The story of the ATA represents a rare moment where total mobilisation overrode institutional bias," said Air Cdre Thomas.



PIONEERS: Air Cdre Thomas presents 107-year-old ATA veteran Nancy with a Spitfire print

"It was not just a historical anomaly, but a critical operational success that proved women could handle frontline military technology."

"At a time when women faced deep wage discrimination, the ATA became a beacon of institutional parity after the 1943

Equal Pay Ruling.

"After the war female aviators were expected to return to traditional civilian roles, and combat flying was closed to women."

"That changed in 1994, building on the foundation of the ATA."



Tribute to Reds' tech

A FORMER Red Arrows ground engineer has died following a short battle with cancer.

Reservist Chf Tech Robert James 'Thatch' Thatcher served with distinction for 24 years, including six years with the Arrows, seven years with XV Sqn at Lossiemouth, and eight years with LXX Sqn.

Brize Norton Commander Air Wing, Gp Capt Andy McIntyre, said: "Chief Technician Thatcher was a respected member of the RAF family whose professionalism, humility and commitment to others earned him the admiration of all who knew him."

"Throughout his service, he exemplified the dedication and selfless commitment that underpin the Royal Air Force."

"He will be remembered not only for his contribution to our mission, but also for the positive impact he had on those who had the privilege to serve alongside him."

He leaves behind his wife, Frances, and his children Charlie, Alasdair and George.



The RAF Photographic C



BREATHTAKING IMAGERY from across the world showing all aspects of Service life featured in this year's RAF Photographic competition.

Frontline pictures of Chinooks training to move troops and equipment across the battlefield to the Red Arrows flying in formation with a C-17 to mark 250 years

of American independence are just two of the winners.

Other entries focused on the sporting prowess of personnel with boxers going toe-to-toe at a contest held at Brize.

Competition judge and Defence School of Photography trainer SSgt Dek Traylor said: "Judging

Visual Communicator of the Year



Feature



The full roll of honour

PEOPLE CATEGORY

1st: AS1 Leah – "Into The Light"
2nd: AS1 Emily – "Back in Goose"
3rd: Andrew (Contractor) – "Pride in the Uniform"
HC: AS1 Eleanor – "In the Wheelbase"
HC: Andrew (Contractor) – "Sisters in Service"

RAF SPORTS

1st: AS1 Nile – "Heavy Hitter"
2nd: AS1 Jason – "Champagne Supernova"
3rd: AS1 Christian – "Razor's Edge"
HC: AS1 Will – "Aim True"
HC: AS1 Will – "Hard Yards"

CURRENT EQUIPMENT

1st: AS1 Emily – "Into the Blue"
2nd: Cpl Amber – "Lightning Strikes Twice"
3rd: AS1 Richard – "Hold My Beer"
HC: AS1 Nathan – "Face the Dust"
HC: Sgt Matty – "I Volunteer As Tribute"

OPERATIONS & EXERCISES

1st: Cpl James – "Guardian"
2nd: Cpl Jake – "Heavy Is The Crown"
3rd: AS1 Nile – "Paradise"
HC: AS1 Emily – "Smoke Trails"
HC: AS1 Richard – "Twilight"

RAF FEATURE

1st: AS1 Jason – "The Titan"
2nd: Cpl Iwan – "Red Arrows 4th July Flypast over New York City"
3rd: AS1 Richard
HC: Sgt Matty
HC: AS1 Leah – "Time Flies"

VISUAL COMMUNICATOR OF THE YEAR

1st: Sgt Matty – 2026 Portfolio
2nd: Cpl Jake

3rd: AS1 Riley
HC: AS1 Jason
HC: AS1 Leah

SECTION PORTFOLIO

1st: Visual Communications Operations – 2026 Portfolio
2nd: RAF Waddington
3rd: Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team
HC: RAF Cranwell
HC: RAF Marham

THE MALLET STUDENT TROPHY

1st: AS1 Katie – "Bring It In"
2nd: AS1 Nicholas
3rd: AS(2) Liam
HC: AS1 Ellice
HC: AS(2) Natassia

VIDEO (LONG FORM)

1st: Sgt Will – "The Daily Grind"
2nd: Cpl Jake – "Battle Symphony"
3rd: AS1 Christian – "Training to Respond"
HC: AS1 Eoin – "Breach & Clear"
HC: AS1 Josh – "Bringing It Back"

VIDEO (SHORT FORM)

1st: AS1 Eoin – "Parlez-Vous Airborne"
2nd: AS1 Jason – "Iron Sharpens Iron"
3rd: Cpl Katrina – "Letters Away"
HC: AS1 Joe – "Swallowed in the Sea"
HC: AS1 Eoin – "The Old Boys"

AMATEUR

1st: Flt Lt Nick – "The Bench of Dreams"
2nd: Matthew Knight – "Battle of Britain Memorial"
3rd: Flt Lt Alexander – "Red in the Polish Flag"
HC: Owen Fleming – "Best of British"
HC: Phoenix Matthews – "Inline"

The People's Choice winner – see next month's *RAF News*

Competition Winners 2026



was incredibly difficult, the diversity of submissions was vast, both from a content style and perspective.”
With more than 1,000 images and videos submitted, the 11 judges found themselves spending close to a week narrowing down their final choices, before selecting a 1st, 2nd, 3rd and Highly Commended in each category.

Alongside the winning imagery, a selection of nine images was then chosen to go head-to-head in the annual People’s Choice category, where the public can vote for their favourite image with the result announced at RAF Bentley Priory later this month.
Top award of Visual Communicator of the Year award

went to Sgt Lee ‘Matty’ Matthews, with his portfolio of six images and one video submission.
The Section Category was won by RAF Visual Communications Operations with a diverse portfolio of imagery and video including both fixed wing and rotary platforms, and the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight.



“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.

German gunner's grave rededicated



CRASH SITE: The Luftwaffe Junkers 88 on Porlock beach in Somerset

Somerset villagers have tended burial place for 86 years

Simon Mander

THE GRAVE of a Luftwaffe gunner whose aircraft was shot down over North Somerset has been rededicated after 86 years.

Obergefreiter Wilhelm Reuhl, 20, was killed after his Junkers 88 crashed on Porlock beach after being attacked by a 152 Sqn Spitfire.

Now, a German War Graves headstone has been installed at his resting place in the local cemetery.

In 1959, the British and West German governments agreed to transfer the graves of those Germans who had fallen in the UK to a cemetery at Cannock Chase in Staffordshire.

But the family of Wilhelm Reuhl chose not to move him and for decades his grave has been marked by a simple wooden cross and adorned with flowers.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Director of Global Strategy Charles Garrett said: "I feel proud that in my country there is a village whose inhabitants committed themselves over many



JUNKERS 88: Luftwaffe multi-role combat aircraft

decades to a remarkable, and very personal, act of reconciliation." His German counterpart, Dirk

Backen, said the gunner's fate became the starting point for a unique act of German-British

reconciliation.

He said: "Wilhelm Reuhl is to receive a new, permanent



CEREMONY: German representatives attended the military rededication



YOUNG MAN: Obergefreiter Wilhelm Reuhl

gravestone, so that his final resting place will continue to be recognisable as a war grave and honoured as such in the future."

Wilhelm Reuhl's niece Sabine said: "Although Wilhelm's young life was cut short by war almost 86 years ago, our family has never forgotten him."

"This end marked the beginning of a new, different story, one full of hope and comfort – for the people of Porlock tended his grave, laid flowers, read out his name on Remembrance Day."

Before the rededication ceremony German representatives laid wreaths on the graves of four Porlock servicemen who had fallen during the war. The new headstone for Wilhelm Reuhl was then rededicated by English and German priests.

The CWGC will continue to maintain the grave.

In 1972, the pilot of the Junkers, Helmut Ackenhause, and his two surviving colleagues returned to Porlock to meet the local people they had met 32 years earlier and to pay their respects to Wilhelm Reuhl.



'A terrific storyteller'
BOOKLIST

'A pulse-pounding adventure'
PUBLISHERS WEEKLY



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

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DEVASTATION: Dam raids caused widespread destruction

©The Möhnesee Archive

Dams raid through the eyes of Germans is world first

Staff Reporter

THE FIRST-EVER display of the devastation wrought by the legendary Dambusters raid through German eyes is to go on display near Lincoln.

Hundreds of photographs and film recordings captured in the immediate aftermath of the bombing of the Möhne dam and its reconstruction by slave labour are to be shown at the International Bomber Command Centre.

Eight Lancasters were lost, 53 RAF personnel were killed and 1,300 people died in the mission more than 80 years ago.

IBCC CEO Nicky van der Drift said: "We're thrilled to be able to stage this unique exhibition and show these never-before-seen images and papers.

"Our aim is to deepen understanding of the

raid, show the effects and the aftermath from the German perspective, and tell the story of what happened after the 1955 film *The Dam Busters* ended. Many people's idea of the Dambusters raid comes from the film, but it is incomplete. The new exhibition shows the harsh reality and shared suffering of war. The dams were a strategic target but the effect on the civilian and POW populations was devastating."

The *After Me, The Flood* collection is expected to attract historians, politicians, and veterans from all over the world and opens

on October 6.

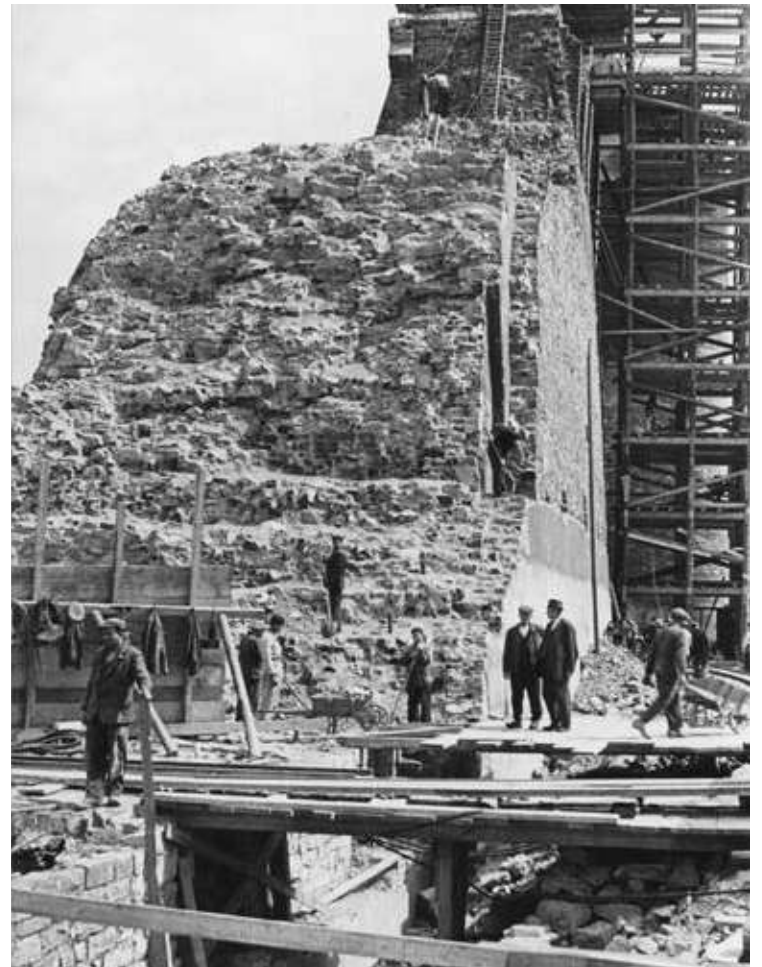
It is the result of a friendship which has developed between the people of Scampton and



RAIDERS: Wg Cdr Guy Gibson and his crew



EDER DAM: German photograph shows damage caused by 617 Sqn Lancasters



REBUILDING: PoWs were used to reconstruct dam walls

©The Möhnesee Archive



OPERATION CHASTISE: Raids were carried out by 617 Sqn Lancasters

the German town of Körbecke on the Möhnesee lake.

Sourced from town archives, private collections, and local historians across the Möhne region, the images have never been displayed collectively.

Also on display will be letters between Barnes Wallis, the inventor of the 'bouncing bomb', and the German historian Dr Helmuth Euler, as well as a diary kept by Dutch prisoner Piet

Hilkmann, who was forced to work on the reconstruction.

Once the exhibition closes in February 2027 it will be translated into German and will tour museums, libraries, and galleries in Germany, including the Museum of Military History of the Federal Forces in Berlin.

The photographs and films will also be added to the IBCC Digital Archive housed by the University of Lincoln.



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The official voice of the Royal Air Force

Sydney's picture perfect delivery

Chinook flight in front of HM

A FORMER Chinook pilot has relived some of the hair-raising memories he has of airlifting an armoured car in front of HM The Queen.

Retired Flt Lt Syd Bowsher (*inset left & below*) was aboard ZA673 which was tasked with flying the underslung load for a Royal Review involving the RAF Regiment in June 1982.

At the time, he had been flying Chinooks for only three months when he was part of a three-strong flight transporting Spartan armoured personnel carriers in formation from Cottesmore to Honington to deliver the vehicles in a carefully choreographed display.

He said: "On the practice run, a crewman reported that our Spartan was on fire. Then he realised that the driver was on board and had started the engine so he could be the first to drive off!"

"We made certain that this did not happen on the afternoon run. If we had an engine problem the armoured car would have been jettisoned!"

And the day before the Royal Review, Fg Off Bowsher, as he then was, found himself navigating some of the most challenging weather conditions of his young flying career.

Partnered with Royal Australian Air Force pilot Darrel Wilcox, they encountered a thick bank of fog on approaching Cottesmore and visibility dropped to around 50 metres, causing many aircraft to divert. Instead, the crew descended to low level and carefully picked their way through the countryside.

With Darrel concentrating solely on flying, Fg Off Bowsher used landmarks which appeared and disappeared through the mist and guided the Chinook around woodland, along roads and over familiar terrain.

While radar coverage struggled to keep track, he was able to provide precise positions using navigation aids, reassuring increasingly concerned controllers that the crew knew exactly where they were.

Eventually, a highly experienced controller at Cottesmore guided them towards the airfield using local landmarks including roads, farm tracks, married quarters and even the Station Commander's house.

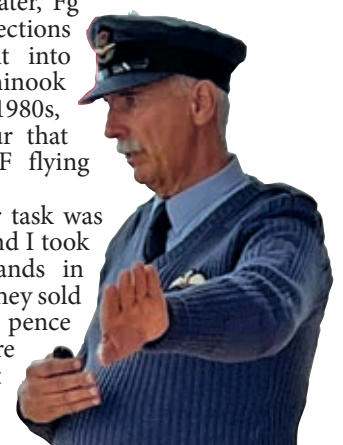
After threading safely between perimeter obstacles and lighting towers, the Chinook landed successfully and was met by a follow-me vehicle.

More than 40 years later, Fg Off Bowsher's recollections provide a vivid insight into life as a young Chinook pilot during the early 1980s, highlighting the humour that remains central to RAF flying culture.

"A photograph of our task was turned into a postcard and I took hundreds to the Falklands in September 1982, where they sold out very quickly at 10 pence each to soldiers who were experiencing their first flight in this new RAF helicopter," he said.



SLING SHOT: Photograph of Syd's Spartan delivery by Chinook was made into a postcard popular with Falklands troops impressed by the 'new' chopper. *Inset above*, HM The Queen during a tour of RAF stations in 1982





Rear-wheel-drive Volvo EX40's a sensible choice

WHEN I tell you that Volvo's baby, the EX40, is a relatively new name in the UK's most competitive electric vehicle (EV) segment, you may say 'hold on Morris, I'm getting my monikers mixed up here. I thought it was the XC40 Recharge when you took it up to RAF Valley, back in 2021?'

If that thought had crossed your mind, good spot, you're right. The XC40 Recharge has, indeed, been rebranded as the EX40. New badge, new wrapper and a lot of change under the surface.

Inside

The ambience inside the EX40 is all very calm and reassuring, with a crisp, minimalist vibe. There's plenty of space for four large adults, an impressive boot and an additional storage space under the bonnet. The Americans refer to this as a Frunk, from front-trunk, but here in the UK it's a front-boot. Which probably makes it a Froot. Not sure about that, but it's got one.

The front seats are some of the best you'll find in class, with electric adjustment on all but the lowest trim. Behind the steering wheel sits a clear digital driver's display that's very easy to read. It can be configured to give you all the information you need at a glance, including the SatNav. The car's speed, range and efficiency (the stuff you actually need to see in the display) are integrated stylishly into every set-up on the crisp 12-inch panel.

What's more, this binnacle now tells you the estimated remaining range. If memory serves, on previous versions you'd have to wade through the central infotainment menu to find it.

Temperature controls are still hidden in the infotainment menu, but Google voice assistant can be used to adjust pretty much anything and navigate you anywhere. Unlike many other systems, it seems to actually understand what you're asking it to do too. The real test will be how it copes with a broad Glaswegian, but it worked well for me.

On the road

You can order the EX40 in either single or twin motor form. The entry-level car is the single motor variant, producing 235bhp, delivered through the rear wheels. This will hit 0-62mph in 7.3 seconds, which feels like a petrol-powered family wagon.

A step up on this is the Single



Motor Extended Range version, which takes the bhp up to 249, with an official range of 348 miles on a charge. For comparison, that range sits snugly between the Audi Q4 e-tron and the Tesla Model Y Long Range, so it's a respectable offering. This was our test car.

Sitting above this, comes the Twin Motor version, which I haven't driven yet but looks very impressive on paper. The second motor on the front axle gives the EX40 four-wheel-drive and total output of 402bhp. That's 0-62mph in 4.8 seconds and the rollercoaster ride acceleration you might expect from an EV. A hefty price increase though.

The EX40 is a comfortable, silent companion around town, where its EV credentials avoid congestion charges and save you a packet in still traffic. It's only when you start throwing it around the winding country roads on the Welsh borders that you're reminded it's a boxy crossover. Being fairly tall and

heavy, it leans a fair amount through corners, but it's well controlled and everything feels reassuringly solid beneath you.

It may be the smallest Volvo but it's still hefty. The Twin Motor car weighs in at 2.1 tonnes and the Single Motor variant only shaves 130kg from that. Still, it has plenty of power to allow you to sling-shot out of corners with satisfying enthusiasm.

It's rear-wheel-drive, which gives it the edge over lots of EVs. There's none of the front wheel scrabbling that you often get from hefty EV SUVs, as they struggle to handle the torque. The nose of the car is also slightly looser through the corners, allowing for a more engaging drive. It's not

transformative, but a welcome bonus.

The front suspension gets MacPherson struts, with coil springs, and there's a multi-link set-up at the rear. As a result, the ride is nicely damped and the suspension copes well with the imperfections of the UK's tarmac.

There are no driving modes here, what you see is what you get. Push the right pedal harder, you go faster. Simple. What is more space-age is the keyless entry option, which takes some getting used to, because it does away with the start button. The car is ready to go as soon as you sit in the driver's seat. You just select Drive and off you go. The element that really plays on your mind is whether

Volvo EX40

Pros

- Respectable range per charge
- High-quality interior
- Plenty of space
- Nice lines

Cons

- Choppy ride
- Plenty of cheaper alternatives
- Fiddly infotainment menus

Verdict

In the EV crossover segment, buyers are spoilt for choice, but the Volvo EX40 stands out as one of the class leaders. It has a stylish exterior, is a practical family wagon that feels refined on the road and has a very smart interior. Our Single Motor/Extended Range variant offered competitive range for a reasonable layout, so would be my tip for the best buy. Ultra trim is particularly plush, but it's not a must. Plus trim lists everything you could need.

you've shut it down properly when you leave it!

The other innovation on this model, that I must mention, is the rear auto brake system, that senses if the car is about to be rear-ended and applies the brakes automatically to prevent you being slammed into the car in front. What will they think of next?

SHOOTING



HOTSHOT:
Dan Owen

Owen's got the World Champs in his sights

Dan's on target for success

Daniel Abrahams
SQN LDR Daniel Owen is making raising the profile of precision shooting his target with a World Championship tilt later this month.

It comes after he got the discipline formally recognised within the RAF Small Arms Association in 2025 – making the RAF the first of the three Services to do so.

Owen said: “I’m 39 and have been shooting since I was 13 in local clubs and the ATC, so it’s a long-standing passion that’s continued into my 21 years’ RAF service.

“My background started in RAF

Service Weapons disciplines before focusing on precision rifle shooting (PRS), with many of the skills transferable to it.

“PRS directly develops and complements core military skills including high-pressure problem-solving, real-time ballistics calculations, physical stability and rapid target acquisition.

“We are now pushing for formal recognition by all three services and UKAF Sport.

“We had serving RAF marksmen try PRS out at an Army Target Shooting Club [ATSC] training event recently and they loved it.”

Around 90 service personnel have attended or signed up for ATSC-led and RAFSAA-aided precision shooting events held at Bisley.

Team UK

They are then able to compete UK-wide for the RAF and even to represent Team UK internationally.

Derived from ‘practical dynamic marksmanship’, PRS balances speed and extreme accuracy over distances from 250-1000m, with shooters engaging reactive steel targets from unstable, improvised positions (barricades,

roofs, tripods) under tight time limits, typically 10 to 14 shots in 105 seconds.

Competing in PRS since 2019, Owen regularly competes nationally, earning selection for the UK at the 2022 World Championships in Bitch, northeastern France individually and finishing third in the Military Division; as well as the 2024 World Championships in Colorado, USA.

He said: “I’m the sole RAF representative qualified for the UK Team, competing alongside three serving Army personnel – Col James Sewall, Maj Paul

Calvert and Capt Rob Dunlea-Jones – in Texas in the World Championships this month.”

They hope to finish in the top four countries within the military division.

Owen said: “Personnel can start with zero private firearms experience or licences, join RAFSAA or the NRA at Bisley, take ATSC/RAFSAA training at Bisley, enter UK regional leagues, progress to national squad qualifiers, and ultimately earn international caps representing RAF and Great Britain worldwide.

“For personnel who don’t have a firearms certificate, the NRA

has rental rifles available for these courses.”

The next course at Bisley is on October 14. Scan the QR code below for more information.



SQN LDR OWEN:
Man on a mission



IMPROVISED POSITIONS: Precision shooting takes place from various unstable locations, including barricades and roofs
Photos provided and taken by SSgt Robert Weideman and Annie Charlton

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

RUGBY UNION

Cokayne set to go Global

Injury niggle shouldn't stop star hooker

Daniel Abrahams

A CALF 'niggle' may keep Flt Lt Amy Cokayne out of the WXV Global Series opener later this month, but she's confident she'll be there next game to help England win the tournament.

Speaking to RAF News from Lensbury Sports Resort in Teddington as the Red Roses prepare to defend their WXV crown, Cokayne said: "I want to win it all. Why not? Keep the winning streak going."

"There are some great events coming and now having Pidds [Flt Lt Rebecca Piddlestone, see story below] involved on the officials side, along with Bonar playing [Scotland's Flt Lt Sarah Bonar], it's really cool."

The Reds Roses kick off their WXV defence on September 26 against New Zealand at the Allianz Stadium, Twickenham –



with the aviator touch and go to start. The tournament reaches its climax on October 3.

She will not face her RAF team mate Bonar on the field again until the 2027 Six Nations, which begins next April.

Cokayne, left, who has made 94 international appearances for the Red Roses, could secure an elusive spot in the 100-cap club if her injury is not too serious.

"I have not given the 100th cap much thought, I simply focus on one game at a time," she said. "It really is the only way you can do it."

"My first call-up was as an injury replacement. I then went on to win 40 caps in a row, like then things can still change quickly in the opposite direction, so I do not think about it too much."

The hooker –



EYES ON THE PRIZE: Cokayne (here with May Campbell) hopes to win the Global XV

who carried out light running during the Red Roses training sessions at the stand-in Teddington venue because of pitch replacement at the side's usual Penny Hill Park home in Surrey – is being monitored by England team physiotherapists before the NZ clash.

Of her team's unbelievable 37-match winning streak, the aviator said: "We don't really think about winning, we break things down to smaller things

to achieve within a game, such as getting 100 per cent in our setpieces, that helps you keep the game in bitesize chunks."

"We also have a lot of new people coming in. We want to keep the standard as high as they are, so we must get them up to speed, and that forces you to be on your game and then it's win, win."

● Follow RAF Rugby @ [rafrugbyunion](#) and England rugby @ [englandrugby](#).

Pidds makes it three, and that's official

THE SELECTION of Flt Lt Rebecca Piddlestone to officiate at the upcoming Global WXV makes it a triumvirate of Service representation at the prestigious new rugby union tournament.

She completes the service tournament triple header, with Flt Lt Amy Cokayne selected once again to play for England, and Sarah Bonar in the Scotland squad.

'Pidds' said: "I am delighted to have been selected as an official for the upcoming WXVI tournament and appointed to a number of exciting international fixtures."

She has picked up a huge amount of top-level experience over the past two years, officiating at big military games at Twickenham's Allianz Stadium and the Fiji v France clash in the final of the 2025 International Defence Rugby Competition.

Earlier this year, she made her debut at the Six Nations.

On that she said: "My first experience with world rugby during this year's Women's Six Nations provided an



GAINING EXPERIENCE: Piddlestone on National League duty ©Wind & Surf Images

unforgettable introduction to the international game – this appointment offers a further opportunity to develop and grow as an official.

"Working alongside world-class referees and support teams will enable me to expand my knowledge and experience, which I look forward to bringing back to RAF Rugby and the wider UKAF game to support continuous

improvement across the sport."

Piddlestone has been selected for three matches, starting with South Africa's away clash with Wales at Cardiff Arms Park on September 18.

Two days later, she'll be in action in Dublin as Ireland host the USA, before she completes her tournament with a trip to Western France as the French take on Canada at Stade Marcel-Deflandre on September 26.



INTERNATIONAL: Flt Lt Rebecca Piddlestone officiating at Barbarians v Wales at Twickenham, pictured with Major Nikki O'Donnell, right

SIDECAR

Duo are still on Trac

THE SERVICE'S sidecar team battled the Welsh weather rather than dragons as they tamed the beast of Trac Môn in Anglesey to collect valuable F1 Championship points.

Driver Cpl Rob Atkinson said: "Wet conditions have historically been the team's nemesis. You could say we've always been more fair-weather fliers."

"Despite the challenging conditions, Anglesey provided valuable experience, development and plenty of positives to take forward. It was also fantastic to return to such a brilliant circuit. Next stop is Donington Park next month, for the penultimate round."

The team had not visited the

Anglesey track since their F2 Championship days but were excited at the prospect of taking on one of the most challenging circuits on the calendar – although the Welsh weather would play a major role in the proceedings.

Practice began in the rain, with the team immediately finding themselves in second.

Qualifying took place on a drying but still wet circuit, where a fifth was secured.

Overcoming a series of niggles, the team had very little opportunity to really open up during the session. The rain forced the opening race to be moved to the next day, so a back-to-back schedule provided

another technical and physical challenge.

A hard-fought race one saw the team battling with an F2 outfit. The aviators stayed in contact and eventually cleared the F2 machine on the penultimate lap. From there, they went on to set a new personal best on the final lap.

The pace was clearly there, but it was just short of the podium, with the team coming home fourth.

The course marshals were touting a dry second race, but as the teams reached the start the heavens opened, requiring a rapid set-up change.

Responding brilliantly and completing the adaptations in



ANGLESEY ACTION: RAF team in the mix (centre)
PHOTO: Louise Corteil, lc-photography.co.uk

record time, the aviators headed out into the wet for a much closer battle, with the bike working significantly better in the conditions.

The RAF team eventually crossed the line in fifth, collecting

valuable championship points and, perhaps more importantly, gaining some much-needed knowledge on wet-weather set-up.

● Follow the team on Facebook @RAFsidecar.

SKATEBOARDING



LIFE ON THE EDGE: RAF skater

PHOTO: SGT WILL DRUMMEE

Skaters go with the Flo

RAF SKATEBOARDING will be getting into the flow next month, hosting the Inter-Service Skate Jam 2026 at Flo Skatepark in Derby.

The day of action will see boarders from all three Services battling for honours across a range of disciplines, including Bowl, Vert and Best Trick.

RAF Skateboarding member Sgt Will Drummee said: "We're seeing more people getting involved in the sport since last year's Jam, ranging from complete beginners through to

experienced riders, that's the same across all three Services, so we are expecting this year's event to be the biggest yet.

"It speaks volumes about how far military skateboarding has come in recent years that the community continues to grow and events like this are a fantastic opportunity to bring everyone together, push competitors' skills and enjoy a healthy chunk of Service rivalry."

● Follow RAF skateboarding on Instagram @royalairforceskateboarding.

FOOTBALL

Sgt Martin wins top ref title

Staff Reporter

FOOTBALL OFFICIAL Sgt Kenny Martin has been named as the Scottish Lower League Referee of the Year.

The Lossiemouth Logistics Support worker was nominated amongst a pool of 26 referees at Glynhill Hotel & Spa, Glasgow, with the field reduced to six after first round voting, with Martin coming out on top.

Martin (left) said: "I was both humbled and astonished to be announced as the winner on the night and to accept the award in person."

"While this achievement is a source of immense personal pride, it also reflects the support and encouragement I have received throughout my refereeing journey."

"I am extremely grateful to the RAF, my work colleagues, and the refereeing organisations that have supported my development and



MAN OF THE MATCH: Kenny at the awards ceremony

afforded me the opportunity to commit time to the game, particularly RAFFA, Moray & Banff Referees Association and the Scottish Football Association."

GOLF

Vets the way to do it

VETERAN GOLFERS at the Lossiemouth Golf Tournament raised more than £4,000 for charity.

Hopeman Golf Club, Morayshire, was the venue with play over 36 holes seeing veterans from across the Armed Forces compete with current serving personnel and local golf lovers.

All funds raised through raffles and competition tickets goes towards future veterans events and veterans' charities.

OIC RAF medic, Sgt (Ret'd) 'Stu' Law, said: "I've recently retired from service after 24 years in the RAF, and this was to be my swansong but after the event I had all the players come up to me and ask me to come back next year."

"So, while this is my final event during my Service career, it certainly won't be my last and we will continue to run this if we can for the local community."



BIG HIT: RAF golfers in Morayshire

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

ROWING

Rowers target Inters success

Staff Reporter

RAF ROWING is preparing for a busy autumn of competition as it targets further Inter-Service and international success following a bumper summer of racing.

First up, personnel will be aiming for the Joint Services Regatta (JSR) at Peterborough later this month, where the RAF will look to defend two Inter-Service titles, the Men's 8+ and Women's 4+.

The team will then turn its attention to Holland, travelling to Breda for another major fixture in its racing calendar.

Rowing Vice-Chair Sqn Ldr

Chris Nash said: "The Joint Services Regatta is always one of the biggest events in our calendar and we go into it this year with plenty to aim for."

"Winning two of the four Inter-Service titles last year was a fantastic achievement but retaining them will be a significant challenge. We've had RAF rowers competing throughout the summer and JSR gives us the opportunity to bring everyone together and see what we can achieve as a club."

Continued success in September comes after a summer that

HENLEY ROYAL REGATTA: CAS, left, presents Sgt Tom Jewell with the trophy for most competitive rower



HENLEY ROYAL REGATTA: Cpl Luke Marston (3rd from right) and Sgt Sam Slade (4th from right) in UKAF 8+

included RAF representation at one of the most prestigious events in world rowing, the Henley Royal Regatta.

Cpl Luke Marston and Sgt Sam Slade were selected for the UK Armed Forces crew competing in the Thames Challenge Cup, rowing in the three and four seats.

Nash added: "Henley is the pinnacle of club rowing and simply qualifying to race is a significant achievement."

"Luke, Sam and the rest of the UKAF crew were handed an extremely difficult

draw, but they produced a performance they could be very proud of."

Sqn Ldr Matthew Parle also came agonisingly close to Regatta qualification, finishing within seconds of the target time in the Wyfold Challenge Cup.

The club also held its annual Henley Royal Regatta luncheon, sponsored by CGI and hosted by Club President and Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Harv Smyth. It included the presentation of the Club's annual awards.

ICE HOCKEY

A n-ice little earner

Hockey game raises cash for US Forces children's charity

Daniel Abrahams

GOALS AND cash were the order of the day at the sixth annual RAF versus USAF ice hockey charity game in Cambridge.

The match saw RAF Vulcans face USAF Tri-base Lightning, with a resounding victory going to the American team, 13-6.

The USAF had the pick of the charity beneficiary this year, with £1,600 going to the United Heroes League, which provides sporting equipment for military children within the US forces.

RAF Vulcans head coach Cpl Matt "Gummy" Dunn said: "The game was closely fought throughout. USAF retained the trophy this year. Ultimately the game is always played in great spirit for a brilliant charity

choice every year. We enjoy the opportunity to raise money and put on a great show for the community, who love seeing our teams play each year for charity."

"The planning is already underway for next year, which will be the turn of the Vulcans to pick the charity."

The fast-paced game, played in front of a near capacity 450 crowd, had a single goal dividing the team until midway through the second period, courtesy of Sgt Edward Fothergill, before the American team scored four unanswered goals.

This gave them the freedom to play more open hockey as the Vulcans continued to push for goals till the end, with AS1 (T) Liam Archer netting a hat-trick.

● Follow RAF Vulcans on Facebook @RAFVulcansIHC.



FAST-PACED GAME: Vulcans and Lightning put on a good show at Cambridge @trishthompsonphotography.co.uk

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



Pidds eyes up official duties for Global WXV

See p24

CYCLING

Daniel Abrahams

BACK-TO-BACK DOWNHILL mountain bike wins were the order of the day for the Gravity Team at Caersws Bike Park in Wales.

Competing in the 2026 BFBS Downhill (DH) and Enduro Championships, the team produced some blisteringly fast times despite challenging conditions throughout the event, securing first in the individual and team DH, and second in the enduro.

Team spokesperson Flt Lt Lee Mallows said: "Another year and another fantastic championship. With the Army responsible for organising this year, they delivered a superb competition that ran seamlessly from start to finish."

The downhill kicked off proceedings, with riders facing a fast and steep course in dry conditions. The summer had left the tracks loose and slippery, meaning riders would have to be confident not to use their brakes to secure a good finish.

A run of outstanding form saw AS1 James Woods secure first place, with RAF Gravity Team teammate Cpl Robert Nijhuis taking second – his first of the weekend.

The Army also put in a strong performance, claiming the final podium position in third. To top off an excellent day, the RAF won the team competition, ahead of the Royal Navy in second place and the Army in third.

Downhill success for Gravity riders



NO FEAR: Downhill winner AS1 James Wood goes for it at Caersws, and the RAF Gravity Team, inset

The Enduro event was blighted by heavy downpours the night before race time, transforming the trails into a wet, demanding, and highly-technical challenge.

Across four stages, the aviators tackled some of the bike park's best trails, but further rain made practice runs fruitless. The racing proper proved incredibly close, with the Navy taking

the overall victory. RAF rider Cpl Robert Nijhuis finished in second place, just one second behind the winner, while the Navy also secured third place on the podium.

● To find out more about the RAF Gravity Team or get involved, visit the Instagram page @rafgravitimtb or contact Flt Lt Lee Mallows on Modnet.

Season of up and downs for BMX's Haywood and Taylor

THE SERVICE BMX team closed out their season at Regional, National and the British Championships with injuries leaving Sgt Matt Haywood as the last man standing.

Cpl Chris Taylor, in action at Round 9 of the Southwest Regional Series, took fourth, fifth and fifth in the motos in a merged class. Sadly, injury prevented him from riding in the final, finishing fifth overall for the day.

Next up was Sgt Matt Haywood riding in the final rounds of the British Cycling National Series at Derby. Day one saw him taking first, second and third in the Motos, backed up with a second in the semi-final. He followed that up with a sixth-place finish in the A Final.

Day two was all on the line, with Matt currently in 5th place



CONSISTENT: Sgt Matt Haywood in action (right)

PHOTO: BILLY WRIGHT

in the Nation Standings and points from second to fifth very close, he needed a strong finish to move up the rankings.

Matt started with second, third and second in the motos, securing a fourth gate pick for the semi-final. Hitting third down

the first straight and moving into second in the first corner, the aviator would hold that spot to the finish. With a fourth pick for the A Final, Haywood needed a good start and found himself third fastest and with the leaders heading down the first straight. Riding well, he held third to the finish, moving up the National Rankings to finish on the podium in third place.

Haywood was again in action in qualifying for the British Championships in Manchester with third, second and first in the Motos to progress into the A Final.

Holding gate three, he took the inside line into the first corner, from where he kept the other five riders behind him to cross the line in third and a place at the British Championships.

Two days of racing saw Haywood and Taylor race in the

same class of Grand Vets. Taylor started his challenge off well with second, fourth and third in the Motos, booking his place in the semi-finals with a fifth gate pick.

Electing to take the outside gate to give him room down the first straight, Taylor suffered a poor start after a rider lost his balance on the line. The airman fought hard throughout the lap, finishing in seventh.

Haywood kicked off his quest for a spot in the main final with fourth, first and first, to secure gate three in the semis. A solid start and strong ride saw him come home third, for a place in the main final.

From gate four the aviator was last down the first straight, he eventually came home in eighth.

● Follow RAF BMX on Instagram @ Royal Air Force BMX Race Team



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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**helpforheroes.org.uk/painawarenessmonth
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H**LP for
HEROES**

R'n'R



Viva Republica!

**Saffy's back &
Ready to Go with
anniversary reboot**

● See
page 3

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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.



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FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH



Film Review

Bitter Christmas (15)
In cinemas now

A SUCCESSFUL Spanish filmmaker breaks his hiatus by writing an autobiographical story, but increasingly borrows from events in the present day in Pedro Almodóvar's not-so-festive *Bitter Christmas*.

The story is split in two. On one level, we see Raúl (Leonardo Sbaraglia) dusting off the cobwebs to write a script; on the other, we see the story itself. Details of Raúl's life are altered in his story – focused on Elsa (Bárbara Lennie), a cult film director returning to her craft by writing about her friends and family.

Considering Almodóvar himself is a writer-director of much acclaim, this is already something of a Russian doll: a film about a filmmaker making a film about a filmmaker. It also allows Almodóvar to return to his familiar themes of artists, their art and mothers, here represented by the death of Raúl's mother in 2004, when his film is set.

Elsa's younger boyfriend is based on Raúl's own partner, while her migraines and panic attacks are inspired by his experiences. However, as Raúl's friends share their own personal hardships, he finds ways to funnel them into the film too.

When Raúl gives his first draft to his friend and producing



Art for art's sake in Almodóvar's Bitter Christmas

partner Mónica (Aitana Sánchez-Gijón), she is outraged that he has included details about the death of her son.

The film then becomes a pretty unapologetic case for art over

personal loyalty. As with all of his films, it is reliably sumptuous, with careful compositions, vibrant colours and a beautiful score, alongside the usual mix of sex, humour and melancholy.

But its cleverness comes at a cost. Constantly reminded that these people are characters, based on other people, makes it so much harder to form an emotional attachment.

Clever, if not confusing, *Bitter Christmas* is visually splendid but the puzzle-box nature of the story can be frustrating.

Review by Sam Cooney
○○○○



Music
Republica
Re-release

WITH SASS, swagger and ultra-addictive hooks and songs like *Ready To Go* and *Drop Dead Gorgeous*, Republica became an unstoppable force in the mid-90s.

Now the band are releasing a 30th anniversary edition of their debut after hit shows *Captain Marvel*, *Ted Lasso* and *Yellowjackets* gave them a renaissance, capturing a new generation of fans.

Republica's breakthrough saw them become one of the key artists in a year in which the music industry started supporting female singer-songwriters including Alanis Morissette, Garbage and No Doubt.

This 30th Anniversary Special Edition double-vinyl album adds a live recording of *A Day At The Races*, captured at Crystal Palace. Six songs from the set were

briefly available on CD while the remaining three are released here for the first time – all mixed and mastered from the original multi-track recording.

Lead singer Saffron said: "I'm delighted to announce the re-release of our debut album for our 30th anniversary. This is for all our fans and followers worldwide who have supported us from the beginning and lots of new ones too. Thank you."

The chart success of *Ready To Go* and *Drop Dead Gorgeous* set up the *Republica* album to be one of the biggest of 1997, certified Platinum, peaking at number 4 during a six-week run in the Top 10.

Chart success spread internationally with the band featuring on the soundtrack to the era's smash hit horror *Scream*, at the personal request of director Wes Craven.

Republica strikes back



LEADING LADY:
The band's Saffron (Samantha Marie Sprackling) and special 30th anniversary album, above

R'n'R



Music
Sheryl Crow
New album

REFLECTIVE:
Songstress
Sheryl Crow
Photo: Dove
Shore



Sheryl's pick-me-up

BACK IN the 90s, America's first lady of rock and Grammy grandee Sheryl Crow conquered the US charts with harmless hymns to hedonism with upbeat hits like *All I Wanna Do* and *If It Makes You Happy*.

Now in her 60s, she's fine-tuned her song-writing sensibilities to address more serious global issues with her 12th album, *Pick You Up*.

Featuring seven new songs co-written with long-time collaborator Jeff Trott, the latest release features timeless songwriting, haunting vocals and the storytelling prowess that continues to define Crow's artistry.

The standout track, *Freedom Bus*, lays the foundations for her more introspective take on humanity. She said: "I do not take freedom lightly because our freedom has been paid for in the lives of others throughout history and that is something I wish we could all remember when we are interacting with each other."

"Our dialogue and ability to disagree must reflect what has been paid for in the blood, sweat and tears of those who fought for every man and woman to be created equal and to enjoy the rights that our

constitution has allowed each of us."

The album delves into personal reflection while returning to the sound that earned her a worldwide following, shifted more than 50 million albums and netted nine Grammy awards.

"Each of these songs are a commentary on being human and wanting connection," Crow added. "There is a lot of chaos all around us and I definitely find myself feeling alone."

"My wish is that whoever hears these songs feels the hope I feel when I sing them. I hope these songs feel like a soothing moisturiser on our chapped hearts."

"We are all going through so much in our humanity right now that being awake can feel like trudging through a burning desert. But we are never alone. And there is beauty everywhere. We just have to keep our eyes open."

The *Pick You Up* album artwork (inset left) features *The Elephant Who Forgot The Ocean* by acclaimed artist Tyson Grumm, whose surrealist work evokes a melancholic world of lost nostalgia.

A longtime collector of Grumm's work, Crow snapped up the painting at auction and contacted the artist for permission to use it as the cover art for the album.



Theatre
The other Side of Murder
UK tour

Hound's acting

Divine role for as he takes lead Other Side of M

BOASTING A career in acting, comedy and TV presenting, Rufus Hound has revealed how theatre has always been his true calling – and how his latest role incorporates his comedic talents.

After leaving a job in PR in 2000 to become a comedian, he landed TV work hosting shows including *Top of the Pops* and the BBC's coverage of Glastonbury, and appeared as a panellist on the likes of ITV2's *Celebrity Juice*.

In 2012 he made his stage debut in a production at London's Soho Theatre. "That opened the door to being in theatre, which had been the dream ever since I was a kid," says Hound. "Once I was in theatre, I just held on for dear life."

He hasn't looked back since, appearing in shows including *One Man, Two Guvnors* at the National Theatre, in the West End and on tour, and *Wind in the Willows* at the London Palladium and on tour.

Hound's latest role, in Torben Betts' new comic thriller, *The Other Side of Murder*, calls upon both his comedy and acting skills.

"Lots of people talk about dramatic tension, but there's such a thing as comedic tension. And actually, what you learn is, it's tension," Hound says.

He argues that "if you can maintain the comedic tension of a farce, you can also understand that it's tension that you have to maintain for the mystery to work".

Starring in the production alongside national treasure Susie Blake and Carla Mendonça, Hound plays the role of Peter, a TV medium who uses the stage name Darius Divine.



CO-STAR: Susie Blake joins Hound on tour

Directed by Philip Franks, *The Other Side of Murder* revolves around a family dinner planned by Peter, which throws up more than one surprise.

Without realising it, Hound had already begun his research for the role before he even knew that he was doing the play.

He said: "You're watching a man who has made a living as a spirit medium. I did a play earlier this year where I was explaining that my grandad was an amateur at doing that kind of thing, and, when he died, I ended up with his stuff. So I'd done some investigation into, well, what was he doing? What was his act?"

He describes the parallel between the two productions as "weird or wonderful".

The play, which follows two other hits by writer Betts – *Murder at Midnight* and *Murder in the Dark* – is on a major UK tour until March 2027. Presented by Original Theatre

s dogged pursuit of career is paying off

Rufus d in *The Murder*

in association with Theatre Clwyd, the production will play Wycombe Swan on Tuesday, January 19 - Saturday, January 23, 2027.

While Hound is now hugely successful in theatre, and also has TV credits as an actor including *Doctor Who*, *Cucumber* and *Zapped*, it was a long journey to where he is now.

“When I was like three or four, I used to watch *The Muppet Show* on video over and over again, and got the idea of ‘oh, theatre is a place where weirdos all get together and put on a show and people love them for it,” Hound recalls. “So, all of my young life, all I wanted to do was be a theatre actor.”

At school, Hound was taken under the wing of a drama teacher, winning a scholarship and introductions to playwrights including Willy Russell, John Godber, Jim Cartwright and William Shakespeare.

But even with the scholarship, it became a struggle to attend the school, and he went to a different sixth form college and “the idea of going to university or being able to afford any of that or go to drama school felt like it was not viable”.

“Having spent all of my life dreaming of being an actor, I got to 19 and was like, ‘oh, that was just a dream I had when I was a kid. I actually have to buckle down and work out how I’m going to earn a living,” Hound recalls.

Working in PR, he met a comedy critic and began attending comedy competitions. “You didn’t have to have gone to drama school. You weren’t trying to get cast. You could just turn up at these open mic nights and give it a go. So that then led to ‘oh right, well I’ll build a career doing that.”

● Visit murderplay.com for more information and tour dates.

SITTING COMFORTABLY:
Comic-turned-actor Rufus Hound





Your Announcements

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

Deaths

JAMES RUSSELL (JIM) – Sadly passed away on August 26th, 2026 aged 96. Served as an RAF Policeman from November 1948 to June 1985, ending his 37-year RAF career as a Flight Sergeant. Married to Betty, also sadly departed. A loving father to Margaret, Jean, Tricia, John and James. Also a wonderful father-in-law, grandfather, great-grandfather and uncle. Rest in peace, Dad.



James Russell

Seeking

I'M seeking two mates from my days at St Athan on the early 70's – Wiggy McVey and Geordie Hepple. They were Painters & Finishers based at West Camp. Please contact me, Charles Bell, via: chabell36@aol.com

SEEKING Paul Bishop: I want to contact Paul who left Brentwood School in 1976 to join the RAF, possibly after a university scholarship. It's 50 years since our 'A'-levels and I've traced 11 of our class of 13 for a reunion. Contact me at matthewchell@yahoo.co.uk or pass this notice on to Paul.

Reunions

THE RAF Masirah and RAF Salalah Veterans Association AGM and Reunion Gala Dinner is to be

held on Saturday, October 10. This will be at The Eastwood Hall Hotel, Mansfield Road, Nottingham NG16 3SS. All members are very welcome to attend. If you are interested in attending the event, please contact Alan Teasdale, on joalteas@btinternet.com.

If you would like to join The Association, please visit our website www.omanrafveterans.org for further details and information.

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

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

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

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.

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

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.

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

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

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

RAF Catering Warrant Officers' and Seniors' Association: all serving or retired TG19 WO or FS and all former Catering Branch Officers are invited to join the RAF CWO&SA. We meet twice yearly. Please email: jbateson@gmail.com for more information.

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). We 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 there are many tickets available.

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

Readers of RAF News 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.



Mosquito model up for sale

FOR SALE: Boxed De Havilland Mosquito Die-Cast Model Plane; 1:32 (pictured above).

AA34604 Corgi 1:32 Die-Cast Model; The Aviation Archive; HX992-EG-F - 487 SQN - RNZAF - Group Captain PC Pickard; Amiens Raid February

1944. Offers to: 07817 202 838 Collection from Hartley Wintney, Hampshire or delivery within 50-mile radius.

Fully boxed in excellent condition. Just needs a good home (sadly grandchildren do not want it).

Experts offer free workshop



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

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

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

● Goto: christinepatersondeacon.com for more information

How to use our service

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

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Museum studies cost of war to civilians

A NEW community-led display at the RAF Museum Midlands explores the human cost of war and conflict. It brings together the personal experiences of civilians who endured the WWII Blitz alongside those displaced from Ukraine to the Midlands, following the 2014 and 2022 Russian invasions.

Told through photographs, archive material, personal testimonies and objects, the display connects these two periods of history through the experiences of Joyce Langford, who lived through the Blitz in the Black Country, and Daria Pyrozhenko, from Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine, who relocated to the UK in 2023.

Joyce recalled: "The sirens went off and Mum used to run with me in her arms and the old lady next door and go into the air raid shelter. You had one air raid shelter between two or three houses."

Co-created with community organisations and volunteers,

the display explores themes of destruction, communication and community spirit and how civilians volunteered in essential roles, organising emergency shelter and food, and helping to restore power, clear damaged buildings, while supporting one another.

Daria describes the continuing reality of life in Kharkiv: "Nowadays, the city is under constant attack, and destruction has become part of the everyday landscape. Yet the people who remain still deeply cherish the beauty and history of their remarkable town, finding small moments of peace and creating their own moments of happiness in daily life."

Grace Ries, Head of Exhibitions and Interpretation at RAF Museum, said: "What makes the Displaced Display particularly special is that it has been developed together with the communities whose experiences it explores."

"This is a community-led, co-created display, bringing together local histories of the Blitz with the



CONNECTION: Joyce Langford's grand-daughter Paris, left, with Ukrainian refugee Daria Pyrozhenko at the exhibition

lived experiences of Ukrainians who have made their homes in the Midlands.

"By sharing personal stories and working alongside

community partners, we have been able to create a display that feels both deeply rooted in the history of this region and relevant to the world around us today."

Entry to the Museum and viewing the display is free of charge, open daily from 10am. Visit rafmuseum.org/midlands for more information.





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Prize Crossword
No. 417

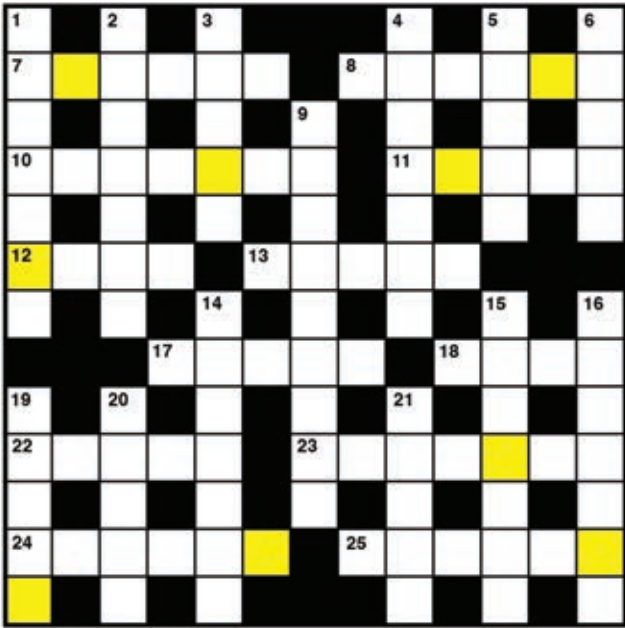
Solve the crossword, then rearrange the 9 letters in yellow squares to find an RAF station

- Across**
- 7. Creature destroys Manila (6)
 - 8. I enter conspiracies against RAF personnel (6)
 - 10. Spear donkey, say, outside Akrotiri (7)
 - 11. Snake found in Mexico, Brazil (5)
 - 12. Peddle RAF aircraft (4)
 - 13. Ballesteros' northern number (5)
 - 17. She falls short of Noah's boat of fish (5)
 - 18. RAF aircraft leaves Portishead with Thurman (4)
 - 22. I'll start the card game: perfect! (5)
 - 23. Originally sour and spicy, Harry is munching indulgent Japanese dish (7)
 - 24. Pointless peering round Swedish plane (6)
 - 25. I object to RNLI mis-using RAF aircraft (6)

- Down**
- 1. Greek god with a revolutionary style (7)
 - 2. Piecing them together is a pleasure (7)
 - 3. Plane goods include motor spark (5)
 - 4. Maybe wire car for RAF personnel (7)
 - 5. Mob returns outside Bo'ness with RAF weapons (5)
 - 6. Try writing (5)
 - 9. Erect firs used in WWII plane (9)
 - 14. Same revolutionary left water in London district (7)
 - 15. Club ice scattered around changing-room (7)
 - 16. Kilmer ain't upset by RAF jet (7)
 - 19. Out east, Boeing hits jackpot (5)
 - 20. Swiss hero almost in charge of RAF operation in Iraq (5)
 - 21. Daisy on a street with queen (5)

Name:
Address:
.....
.....
RAF word: Crossword No. 417

The winners of our Prize Crossword and Prize Su Doku puzzles will receive a recent top aviation title – please send your entries to the address printed in the adjacent Su Doku panel, to arrive by October 2, 2026.



Prize Crossword No. 416 solution

Across – 6. Blue Jay 7. Canal 9. Bully 10. Bravery 12. Angelfishes 14. Helicopters 18. Skilled 19. Aswan 21. In-law 22. Top Guns

Down – 1. Cloud 2. Merlin 3. Dan 4. Jarvis 5. Carrier 8. Profits 11. Devotee 13. Sea King 15. I'll Say 16. Resign 17. Faint 20. Row

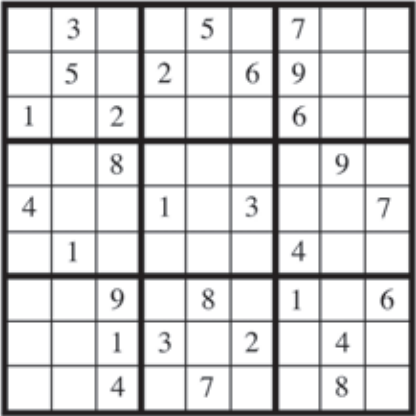
RAF term: Surveillance



Prize Su Doku
No. 427

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 2, 2026.



Solution to Su Doku No. 426

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

Sarajevo drive helping SSAFA



ON SONG: Teams outside Strasbourg Opera House in France

FORCES FUNDRAISERS who hit the road for a tour of wartime landmarks have netted £112,000 for military charity SSAFA.

More than 50 teams covered the 3,000-mile route, starting at Dunkirk and travelling across the Alps to Sarajevo and back during the Driving Force 26 event.

SSAFA chief Air Marshal Steve Shell said: "Attending the drumhead ceremony at the Dunkirk Memorial was a profoundly moving way to mark the start of ADF26.

"Dunkirk reminds us of courage, sacrifice, and the enduring bonds between allies, while the onward route to Sarajevo and back reflects how service continues to shape lives across generations."

SSAFA trustee and military veteran Keith Marriott added: "Arriving in Sarajevo served as a very real reminder of the cost of war and why we were all taking part.

"The battle scars, both physical and those still burnt into the memories of the citizens of that beautiful city, and of UK veterans of the Bosnian War, demonstrate only too well the need for a charity such as SSAFA, which is there to ensure that no member of our Armed Forces, or their families, faces challenges alone."



PEAK PERFECTION: SSAFA-branded Aston Martin in the Austrian Alps